

SAVING FAITH OR A RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5 • TV-047A

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2 Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates”

The announcer said that the 13th Street Baptist Church invites you to hear a sermon by its pastor. Now a sermon does not profit a person unless three things are true:

First of all: Unless God anoints it with the power of His Holy Spirit; if my voice is the only voice you hear; nothing of any eternal value will be accomplished for you. You’ve got to hear God speak through His Word and through His messenger. God must anoint the message.

Secondly: A sermon is not worth anything to us unless we hear it with our hearts, not just with our ears but with our hearts; *“For it’s with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”*

Thirdly: A sermon is not worth anything unless God anoints it, unless we hear it with our hearts, and thirdly, unless we intend to do something about it.

Now those three things are necessary. I have a sermon for you. I pray that God will anoint it with His Spirit. I pray that you will hear it, not just with the outer ear, but with the heart. And I pray that you will consider it, that you’ll think about it and that you’ll ask God to give you the power and the wisdom to do something about it.

Now our text today will be taken from the book of **2 Corinthians chapter 13: verse 5**. And I’m going to speak to you on the subject; **“SAVING FAITH OR RELIGIOUS PROFESSION.”**

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Which do I have? Do I have saving faith, or do I just have a religious profession? Now in **2 Corinthians 13:5** the apostle Paul writes these words; *“Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith.”*

“There is but one faith, one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” the Scripture declares. *“You examine yourself.”* Now don’t get busy examining me and examining your family membership or examining your neighbors but *“Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you are a reprobate.”*

Now it’s not true, it’s not true that a person must wait till the Judgment to find out if they’re really saved. It’s not true that a person must wait to the Judgment to find out if he’s a child of God or a child of wrath.

Our Lord commands us to examine ourselves and determine our interest in Christ right now. *“Beloved now are we the sons of God.”* And God commands you in the Scripture to; examine yourself now and determine your relationship with Christ.

He said in **2 Peter 1:10**; *“Give diligence brethren to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things you’ll never fail.”* Do it now. Determine your relationship with God. Determine your election and your calling now.

And then when we come to the Lord’s Table; Paul said, *“Let a man examine himself and so let him eat,”* examine himself whether he discerns the meaning of that Table, the Lord’s broken body and the Lord’s shed blood.

And then in **Hebrews 3:12** the Scripture says; *“Take heed brethren lest there be found in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.”*

So, you don’t have to wait till the Judgment, as someone says, “Till the smoke clears away and the dust dies down and you find out which side you’re on.” The Word of God commands you right now to determine your interest in Christ.

Now, believers, in the Old Testament and the New Testament, prophets of God, men of God, women who knew the Lord; they knew their interest in the Saviour, they knew that. Job said; *“I know that my redeemer liveth;”* I know that.

And David said; *“The Lord is my Shepherd.”* I’ve no doubt about that. He’s my refuge, He’s my strength, and He’s my Shepherd.” Paul said; *“I know whom I have believed. I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have already committed to Him against that day.”*

And John said; *“We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.”*

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We know that and we've experienced it. The assurance of our interest in Christ; (now get this, this is important) the assurance of our interest in Christ is what leads a man to leave all things and follow Christ.

Now, uncertainty leads to indifference. If a person is uncertain of his interest in the Saviour, uncertain of his relationship with God, it will certainly lead to a careless life and an indifferent life.

But when a person is sure of his interest in Christ he is confident of his relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It makes a man willing and ready to die for the Lord.

Paul was going to Jerusalem and the people of Ephesus knew that they'd never see him again. They knew what awaited him in Jerusalem, that they would put him to death. And they begged him not to go and they wept and cried about his leaving.

And this is what Paul said; *"Why do you weep and break my heart? Don't you know that I'm willing to go to Jerusalem and not only be bound for Christ's sake but to die for Christ's sake?"*

Did you ever read about the old Moravian missionaries who actually became lepers? They entered leper colonies and became lepers so that they could preach to the lepers. They were like the man who found the pearl of great price in the field and went and sold everything that he had in order to purchase that field, in order to purchase that pearl.

Our Lord said this; *"If any man puts his hand to the plough and looks back he's not fit for the kingdom of God."*

So, this saving interest, when it's determined, when a person has assurance of his interest in Christ, his relationship with God through Christ, why it leads him to be willing, not only to suffer for Christ, but to die for the Gospel.

He knows that Christ is his Lord and he's willing to lay down his life; he has as the Master said, "Turned his back on family, friends, vocation, possessions, yea, even his own life." He loves Christ more.

Now here's another thing; while we examine our faith and this is what Paul is talking about, *"Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith;"* we're not talking about are you in the right church, or do you hold the right doctrine, or this, that, and the other, are you in the faith of Christ?

And while we're examining our faith and our interest in Christ, we have to turn to the Word of God.

Now, building my hope for eternity on my feelings is folly. Building my hopes for eternity on a religious experience is foolishness. Building my hope for eternity on a profession of faith or on ceremonialism is sheer folly. I must turn to the Word of God.

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Isaiah said, *“If they speak not according to the law and the prophets it’s because there’s no light in them.”* We’ve got to speak according to the Word.

Paul wrote this; *“God hath said I’ll never leave thee nor forsake thee so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper (keeper).”* How can I say the Lord is my keeper? It’s only because He says He’s my keeper.

How can I say the Lord is my Redeemer? It’s because He says He’s my Redeemer. I have to say what God said. I dare not advance one foot beyond the Word of God. John wrote in **John 20:31**; *“These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God.”* That’s why the Scripture’s written, *“And that believing you might have life in His name.”*

Again, in **1 John 5:13** He says; *“These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know you have eternal life.”* Turn to the Word. I exhort you my friend; turn to the Word of God.

The Bereans were more noble, why, because; *“They searched the Scriptures to see if things be so?”* Paul said; *“Study the Word of God, study to show thyself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.”*

Peter said, *“As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby.”*

Paul said; *“I commit you to God and to the Word of His grace which is able to build you up.”* It’s the Word that’s most important; *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”*

It’s not our manmade creeds and catechism’s and literature. These things are fine in their place. But this is the foundation of faith, God’s Word. Now I know a lot of people think it doesn’t matter what a man believes as far as religion is concerned, just as long as he’s sincere. But it does matter, it does matter.

We must believe the Word of God. We have no other foundation for faith but the Scriptures. It becomes every person listening to my voice to weigh his hope in the light of the Word of God.

It’s not in the light of his feelings and not in the light of his experience and not in the light of his denominational dogma; a doctrine is true, not because I think it or I believe it, but because God says it.

Now my friend; I’m not ashamed to submit my belief in the absolute sovereignty of God to the Word of God. The Word of God teaches that. He says; *“I am the Lord; I change not.”*

They said, *“David; where is your God?”* He said, *“Our God’s in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He pleased. Whatsoever the Lord pleased that did He in heaven, earth, and the seas, and in all deep places.”*

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I'm not afraid to submit my belief in the fall of man to the Word of God. *"As in Adam all died. By one man's disobedience we became sinners."*

I'm not afraid to submit my doctrine of the blood of Christ to the Word of God. *"Wherewithal, shall we be cleansed from our sins,"* by our ceremonies, by our professions, by our decision?

Peter said; *"You know that you're not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ."* Paul wrote in **Hebrews 9:22**; *"Without the shedding of blood there's no remission for sin."*

I'm not afraid to submit my doctrine of grace to the Word of God. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith."* And Paul said: *"If it's of works it's not of grace. If it's of grace, it's not of works."*

I'm not afraid to submit my doctrine of believer's baptism to the Word of God. Our Lord said, *"You go and preach the Gospel. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned."*

I'm not afraid to submit my doctrine of covenant mercies to the Word of God. The Word of God all the way through talks about God will keep His covenant, God will keep His covenant. *"I am the Lord; I change not, therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed. The gifts and calling of God are without change."*

Now I'm not asking you if you believe these things, perhaps you do not, perhaps you do not. But this is what I'm asking you; have you searched the Scriptures, have you searched the Scriptures?

I don't ask if you believe in God's sovereignty, in man's fall, and in God's eternal grace, and in Christ's effectual work, and the perseverance of the saints; I don't ask you if you believe that, you may not.

But I'm asking you this question; have you searched the Word of God? The things that you believe; have you found them in God's Word or have you just accepted them because that's what you think, or that's what you feel, or that's what somebody said, or that's what they told you years ago?

Happy is the man whose faith is founded on the Word of God. Happy is the man whose faith who can endure the trial of the Book. God said it; I believe it, I believe it.

Now another thing I believe that's important about this thing of saving faith or religious profession is this: those who have been brought to real faith in Christ never cease to be amazed, never cease to be amazed that God almighty should condescend to dwell with them, that God almighty should condescend to give His Son to die for our sins. They'll never cease to be amazed.

Charles Wesley wrote:

**“And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour’s blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain,
For me who Him to death pursued?”**

John Newton said; “When I get to glory by God’s grace three things there will amaze me.”

First of all: “I’ll be amazed when I find that a lot of folks I expected to be there aren’t there.”

Secondly: “I’ll be amazed to see a lot of people there that I didn’t expect to see there.”

Thirdly: But he said, “I believe the thing that will be most amazing, when I stand in the presence of the Lord will be this; that I’m there.”

I’m amazed that God could ever love me, a sinner condemned unclean. I’m amazed that God almighty should send His Son into this world to be my Redeemer. Aren’t you amazed?

Solomon, when he dedicated the temple, that great, beautiful, magnificent temple that he built for the glory of God; this is what he said in his prayer; *“Will God indeed dwell on this earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, how much less this house that I built Him.”* And we claim that God dwells in us? And Solomon with amazement said, *“Is it possible that the God of glory should dwell in this house?”*

This is what David said: *“Who am I O Lord God and what is my house that you have brought me hither to?”*

The man who has real faith does not have it based on presumption and idle assurance; he’s always amazed that God should love him. He’s always amazed that God should save him. He’s always amazed that Christ should dwell with him. He’s always amazed that Christ should keep him.

Charles Spurgeon wrote this; “When I came to Christ I had no knowledge of any personal or saving interest in the blood of Christ, in the death of Christ, and in the work of Christ. I just knew this; I knew it was written in His Word, *“He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”*

“I just knew that the Word of God says; *‘Look unto me all the ends of the earth and be ye saved for I’m God and there’s none else.’* And I looked to Him. I trusted Him; I looked to Him and trusted Him on the strength of His promise, on the strength of His Word.”

And I said; “Sink or swim; I’m going to Him. Sink or swim I cast myself on Him. Great Son of God, thou hast lived and died for sinners who will trust in thee; I trust thee, I trust thee.”

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Now next of all; listen to this: A faith that saves (saving faith, not a religious profession, but saving faith) is a faith that stands alone. It's not faith and works. It's not faith and morality. It's not faith and church membership. It's not faith and baptism that saves; it's faith alone.

When that Philippian jailer came and fell at the feet of Paul and Silas and he cried; "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved.*" Now Paul, if baptism is essential for the cleansing of the soul and for a man to be vitally united with Christ; now is the time to tell that man.

He's asking one straight-forward, simple, question; "*What must I do to be saved?*" If this morality, morality or creeds, or standards, or church membership, or if these things are necessary for this man to be saved; tell him Paul, go on tell him now; now's the time to tell him: "*What must I do to be saved?*"

The answer comes of this inspired man of God, and it's written in His Word, God's Word; "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*"

Now baptism is essential in its place. It's essential to obedience. It's essential to doing what God tells you to do. It's essential to a confession of faith. It's essential to identification, morality, good works, and obeying God is essential in its place.

But when it comes to the cleansing of a soul, the redemption of a sinner, a relationship with God, putting away our guilt, and justification; faith stands alone. God does not require you to produce a righteousness; He commands you to accept one, to receive one.

God doesn't command you to create life, but to receive it. God almighty does not command you to live up to a standard of perfection; He requires you to receive a person who did live up to a standard of perfection.

God almighty does not require you to understand Him; He commands you to believe Him, to believe Him. Without faith there is no approach to God. In **Hebrews 11:6** the Scripture says; "*Without faith it's impossible to please God. He that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He's the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*"

Without faith the Gospel will profit you nothing. **Hebrews 4:2** says; "*The Gospel was preached to them, but it did not profit them not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*"

Without faith there is no salvation. "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not, (whatever he does) he that believeth not, (whatever he knows) he that believeth not, (whatever he claims) shall be damned.*"

And then without faith prayer is useless. "*If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like the storm-tossed sea.*" Don't let that man think he will receive anything of God.

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You've got to believe, you've got to believe, not me; you've got to believe Him, believe Him. And it's more than just believing on Him. The Scripture doesn't say, "Abraham believed on God or Abraham believed about God or even Abraham believed in God; it says, "*Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.*"

There's a difference. Now you think carefully on this. "*Abraham believed God.*" Paul said on that sinking ship, "*Wherefore, sirs, I believe God.*"

Now saving faith in the next place has to do with a person. Now this is most important. In **1 John 5:11** the Scripture says; "*This is the record that God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.*"

Eternal life is in Christ. Christ is the object of saving faith. Christ is the reason for saving faith. There's no other reason for faith. There's no other reason for faith at all, "*Except that Christ loved us and gave himself for us.*"

Christ is the hope of faith. We're going to be like Him and "*He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.*" What hope, that he'll be like Christ? Christ is the source of faith. "*We live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.*"

"*So this is the record that God hath given unto us eternal life and this life is in His Son. And he that hath the Son of God hath life. And he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*"

Now my friend; I want you to listen carefully now, very carefully. I'm going to point out some things that false faith can do. There's saving faith and there's a false faith. There's saving faith and there's an empty, religious, profession.

First of all: False faith can excite the affections.

Our Lord told about the man that went forth to sow and he sowed the seed. "*Some fell on stony ground.*" The stony ground hearer is the person who hears the Word of God and receives it with gladness and springs up quickly but soon the sun comes out and the plant is withered because it has no root.

But this person received the Word with gladness and with joy. "Say, that sounds good. Now that's what I need." False faith can excite the affections.

Secondly: It can reform the outward man.

The Pharisee stood in the temple and he said; "*God I thank you I'm not like other men.*" He was telling the truth. He wasn't like other men but he didn't know God. He said; "*I'm not an extortioner, I'm not unjust, and I'm not an adulterer: I fast and I tithe. I do all these things.*"

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Our Lord said of these men; *“You’re clean on the outside but on the inside you are full of extortion and excess. You’re like a grave with all of its beautiful grass and flowers but still on the inside, dead men’s bones.”*

So false faith can excite the affections and false faith can reform the outward man. And false faith can speak well of Christ. Nicodemus came and looked at the Master and he said: *“Why I know you’ve come from God because no man can do the miracles you can do except God be with Him.”* He spoke well of Christ.

Gamaliel spoke well of Christ. So many of those men spoke well of Him but they never confessed Him, they never believed on Him, and they never receive Him as far as we know.

Also, false faith can feel sorry for sin. Judas came back and threw the \$18.00 on the floor, the 30 pieces of silver and he said as he wept; *“I have betrayed innocent blood.”* Oh, he was sorry, and he went out and hanged himself, but he didn’t have saving faith.

False faith can tremble under the preached Word. Felix did; he trembled while Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment.

False faith can persevere to the Judgment. There are people who are going to; Christ said, *“To stand at the Judgment and say unto me; Lord; we preached in your name and we cast out devils in your name and we performed many wonderful works.”*

False faith can hang on and persevere until it stands before God himself and argue with Jehovah God. False faith is powerful.

And I’ll tell you something else; false faith can be baptized with Simon Magus. It can attain high office with Judas. It can sleep in peace with the foolish virgins. And it can associate with some of God’s choice preachers like Demas.

Paul Said, *“Demas hath forsaken me* (after all these years of companionship and our preaching together, why?) *Demas found out that he loved the world more than he loved God.*

But there are three things that false faith cannot produce. False faith can excite the affections, it can reform the outward man, and it can speak well of Christ. It can attain high office, it can persevere to the Judgment, and it can do all these things, but there are three things that false faith cannot do:

First of all: False faith can never produce a heart that is truly broken over sin.

The Scripture says; *“God saveth such as be of a broken heart.”* The Scripture says; *“The sacrifices of God are a broken heart and a broken contrite spirit.”*

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David cried; “*O God my sins are ever before me. Have mercy on me.*” False faith can’t do that. False faith stands in the temple and brags about how good it is, how religious it is, how much is given up for God.

But saving faith falls in the dust of repentance, in the dust of a contrite broken heart and says; “*O Lord; my sins are ever before me. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me in thy blood and I shall be whiter than the snow.*” Or like the Publican who said: “*God; let thy blood be propitiation for me on the mercy seat.*” False faith cannot produce a broken heart over sin.

Secondly: It can never receive and rest in Christ alone as the way of life.

Christ alone is the way of life. He said; “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.*” False faith has got to add something to Christ. It may be baptism, it may be the Mass, it may be church membership, and it may be doctrine. He’s got to add something to Christ.

But saving faith says; “Christ alone, Christ alone, Christ the Alpha and Omega, the author and finisher of our faith. He is all and in all. We are complete in Him and He is our life.” And anything else is just added by the Spirit of God to make us more like Christ.

Thirdly: False faith can never lie with a broken heart in the dust at the feet of Christ. False faith can never receive Him as the only hope and then false faith can never bow to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

In what character was He rejected by the people as King? They said; “*We will not have this man reign over us.*” In what character was He mocked and ridiculed and persecuted by the soldiers as a King?

They put a crown of thorns on His head and a scepter in His hand. In what character was He crucified and for what crimes? What did they write over His cross, “*Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews?*”

Is He your King? The whole world is accepting Jesus as Saviour, but somebody’s my Lord!