

TRUE SAVING FAITH OR RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5 • TV231B

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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?”

I want to speak to you today on this subject: **“TRUE SAVING FAITH OR RELIGIOUS PROFESSION.”** Which of these do I have? My text is found in **2nd Corinthians 13:5.**

In this message I am going to deal with some critical issues. I think that there are things that need to be said in this day.

If you will, turn in your Bible to **2nd Corinthians 13:5** and let us read the Scriptures. Paul is the author of the book of **2 Corinthians** which was inspired by the Holy Spirit. He says, *“Examine yourselves.”*

I’m not talking about examining other people, or your neighbor, but *“examine yourself.”* Your heart is the only heart that you can examine as to whether you are in the faith. There is only *“one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.”*

TRUE SAVING FAITH OR RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

You and I are to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith. The Scripture says, *“Prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Christ dwelleth in you, except you be a reprobate, (an outcast)?”*

It is not true, absolutely not true, that a person has to wait for the judgment to find out if he is saved or not saved. That is not true; a person does not have to wait until he gets to the judgment, to the end of the world, to find out if he is a child of God or if he is a child of wrath.

The reason that I say that it is not true is because our Lord commands us to examine ourselves right now and settle this matter of faith in our hearts. This is what I just read to you; *“examine yourselves”* now, determine your relationship with Christ right now.

In other words, Peter said; *“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”* In **1st Corinthians 11:28**, when the apostle Paul gave the Lord’s Table to the early church said, *“What I have received of the Lord I delivered unto you.”*

What Paul is saying is, when you come to this Table of the Lord *“examine yourselves; let a man examine himself and so let him eat.”*

Why is he to examine himself? He has to determine whether he understands what this Table is all about. He has to determine whether he discerns the broken body and the shed blood of Christ and if he has an interest therein. He has to determine his own interest in this Table.

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

So, it is just not true that a man has to wait for the judgment to find out if he is saved or lost, if he is a child of God, or if he is a child of wrath. We can know now and we are supposed to determine that issue right now.

In fact, believers of the Old Testament and our early church fathers in the New Testament were sure of their interest in Christ. This does not sound like uncertainty on the part of Job when he said, *“I know that my redeemer liveth, that in the latter day, he is going to stand on this earth.”*

“Though worms destroy this body, (though this flesh goes back to the dust from whence it came), in the flesh I am going to see God, whom I shall see for myself and not another. These eyes shall behold my redeemer; I know He lives.” There is no uncertainty there.

David, when he was writing about the Redeemer, said; *“The Lord is my shepherd.”* He also said *“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

The apostle Paul said; *“I know whom I have believed.”* You will notice that he did not say, “I know when I believed,” though I’m sure he did. He says, *“I know whom”* and he didn’t even say, “I know in whom.”

Paul also said, *“I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day, (in that Day of Judgment).”*

Listen to the book of **1st John**. This epistle has to do mainly with two things, which run straight through that epistle: faith and love. He uses the word *“know”* so often. He says this; *“We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.”*

So, believers in the Old Testament along with our early church fathers in the New Testament were not uncertain about their relationship with God Almighty in Christ; they knew Him and had confidence. They were not over confident, presumptuous, or arrogant men but they were men who believed God.

They had inward evidence of that faith and had confidence in Him. Their confidence was not in themselves; their confidence was in Him that He would keep His Word.

My friends, this assurance which I am urging us to seek is our assurance of our interest in Christ and it is what makes a man leave all and follow Christ. You see, uncertainty leads to indifference. Confidence in Christ makes a man willing to die for Christ.

I read one time, many years ago, about some of the old Moravians who lived hundreds of years ago, who literally sold themselves into slavery in order to preach to the slaves.

Now, that man believed God. Some of the missionaries, many years ago, had themselves committed to leper colonies. They went in and lived with lepers and contacted the disease themselves and became lepers to preach to the lepers.

That kind of assurance leads a man to confidence in Christ and causes him, like the man who found the treasure in the field, to sell all to buy the field, to sell all to purchase the *“one great pearl.”*

I have a missionary friend on the Ivory Coast in Africa. He, his wife, and little girl, have been missionaries to Africa for five years. They live deep in the bush. They have no running water; they have no electricity. They live on the food of the natives.

Why do men do things like this? They have love for Christ, and have confidence in Christ. They have confidence in their relationship with Christ and have love for the Gospel.

I have a friend who has been in Mexico who has been a missionary for 20 years. All of his children are grown now and have moved back to the United States. He and his wife are still there.

I asked him one time; *“Are you happy in Mexico?”* He said, *“Happiness has nothing to do with it; I am where God wants me.”* This is faith! That is what I am saying, this assurance of our interest in Christ is what makes a man willing to die for Christ.

TRUE SAVING FAITH OR RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Do you know what Paul said to those people when he was leaving them in **Acts 20**? He said, *“Why do you weep for me; why do you break my heart? I am not only ready to go to Jerusalem and be bound but I am willing to die for the Lord.”* Paul believed.

Uncertainty will not give you that confidence, it just won't do it. Our Lord said, *“If any man put his hand to the plow and looks back, he is not fit for the kingdom of God.”*

Here is my question: On what basis or how can we examine ourselves to determine faith? Here is the key: When we are examining ourselves and trying to determine whether we are in the faith, our faith and our interest in Christ must be determined by the Word of God. Can I make that clear to you?

Building your hope for eternity on a feeling is folly. It is sure folly. Building your hope for eternity and trying to determine your interest in God based upon an experience that you had years ago is folly.

Building your hope for eternity on a profession of faith or ceremonialism, ritualism, or a church standard, is sheer folly. Let our saving interest be determined by what is written in the Word of God. This is our only foundation of faith; *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”*

Listen to **John 20:31**; *“These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you might have life in His name.”*

Isaiah 8:20 says, *“If they speak not according to the law and the prophets it is because there is no light in them.”*

1st John 5:13 says, *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”*

You cannot determine your saving interest by your feelings; feelings change. You cannot determine your saving interest by some experience; Satan can give you an experience. Drugs can give you an experience and so can alcohol.

All kinds of circumstances can give you an experience. You cannot determine your interest in Christ and your relationship with God by a profession of faith or by going through a religious ceremony. Your interest must be determined by the Word of God. *“Let God be true and every man a liar.”*

“He hath said, I will never leave you or forsake you so that I can boldly say; the Lord is my helper.” How can I say that the Lord is my helper? The reason is because He hath said, *“I will never leave you.”*

What I say must be based upon what He says; it is not what I think. My thoughts are not God's thoughts and my ways are not God's ways. He said in **Isaiah**, "*As heaven is high above the earth so high are my thoughts above your thoughts and my ways above your ways.*"

He says again, "*There is a way that seemeth right unto men and the end is destruction.*" Let our faith and our relationship with God be determined by what He says.

Some people think that it doesn't matter what a man believes. He thinks that it really doesn't matter just so long as he is sincere. It does matter, it most certainly does. We must believe God.

The revelation we have of God is Christ His Son and His Word, the incarnate Word and the written Word. We must believe the incarnate Word and we must believe the written Word of God. We have no other foundation for faith but the Scriptures.

So, it becomes every man to weigh his hope in the light of the Word of God. A doctrine is true because God says it. It is not because I feel it, I think it, or even because I believe it, it is because God says it.

We need to read the Scripture in its context. This is not taking a verse out of the Scripture and context and making it to say what we want it to say, for "*no scripture is of any private interpretation.*"

The context must fit in with the whole Word of God. We must put the Scripture with the Scriptures. The best commentary on the Scriptures is the Scriptures themselves. So my friend, it does matter what we believe.

I heard about a sign in front of a Bible College down south which says; "God said it and I believe it; that settles it." What's wrong with that? What is wrong with it is the middle line; "God said it and that settles it" whether I believe it or not.

My believing it does not have anything to do with settling it and you believing it does not have anything to do with settling it, it is what God says.

I'm not afraid to submit my belief in God's absolute sovereignty to the Word of God. I believe that God is absolutely sovereign and that is what it says in the Book; "*I am the Lord; I change not, therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed.*"

"Our God is in the heavens and he has done whatsoever he pleased in the heavens, the earth, in the seas, and in all deep places."

I am not afraid to submit my doctrine and my belief in the fall of man and the consequences of that fall to the Word of God. The Scripture says, "*In Adam all die. In Adam, death passed upon all men.*" Because of one man's sin, we became sinners.

TRUE SAVING FAITH OR RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

I'm not afraid to submit my doctrine and my belief in the blood of Christ; *"without the shedding of blood there is no remission."*

"We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish or spot." I am not afraid to submit that to the Word of God.

I am not afraid to submit my belief in the grace of God, *"salvation by grace through faith, it is not of works less any man should boast."*

Paul said, *"We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law. If righteousness come by the law Christ is dead in vain."*

I am not afraid to submit my belief in God's grace, believer's baptism, the Lord's Table, to the Word of God.

I am not afraid to submit my belief in the everlasting Covenant of Grace and the perseverance of the elect in the Word of God. This is what the word teaches.

The word covenant is used in the Scripture almost 300 times. God is a God who works by covenants. I do not ask you if you believe these things, (this is not the issue) I am asking you, *"Have you searched the Scriptures?"* Is this what the word of God teaches?"

It is not a matter of what you believe or what I believe; it is what God says. What we believe is not the issue at all; it is what God says.

Have you only accepted what someone said? This is dangerous. Have you only accepted what you think or feel ("this is not right and that is not right")?

You listen to me; God is the standard of right. God doesn't do something because it is right in your eyes. If God does it is right. *"Shall not the judge of the earth do right?"*

When God was going to destroy Sodom, Abraham prayed and asked that if he could find 10 righteous men, would God spare the city. This is what Abraham said; *"Shall not the judge of the earth do right?"* Yes He will; He is right. God is truth; God is just, and God is holy and righteous.

Have you only accepted what someone has said or what you think? I dare not advance one foot beyond the Word of God. Happy is the man whose faith is founded on the Word of God. Happy is the man whose faith can endure the trial of the Book.

I'm not talking about the trial of public opinion. He does not preach to please men. He does not seek to please men. He knows that if he seeks to please men he is not the servant of Christ. Happy is the man whose faith can stand the trial of the word of God, who dares to say; "I don't fully understand all of this."

Who can say with Paul, *“I prophesy in part; I know in part; I see through a glass dimly, but one day, I will see him face to face and I will know as I have been known; I speak to you the Gospel of God in a mystery (hidden wisdom).”*

Those who have been brought to saving faith never cease to be amazed that God should condescend to dwell with them. That is what amazes them; they are amazed that God would even condescend to dwell with them, to give His Son to die for them or to take any notice of them.

David said, *“When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy hand, the moon, the stars, the things that thou hast made, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visiteth him?”*

Charles Wesley wrote that hymn:

**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?**

**Amazing love
How can it be?
That Thou, my God,
Should die for me?**

Most people today expect God to save them. Most people today expect God to show mercy. Most people today expect God to redeem them. Isn’t this what God is for?

That is not what John Newton said; (he was the one who wrote what you sing), *“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.”* He said this; *“When I get to heaven, by the grace of God, three things are going to amaze me:”*

First of all: *“I am going to be amazed to find some people there that I never expected to see.”*

Secondly: *“I am going to be amazed to miss some people; who won’t be there, the ones that I thought would be.”*

Thirdly: *“The greatest and most amazing marvel of all is that I will be there.”*

Solomon said this; *“Will God, indeed, dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, how much less the house that I built.”* Do you expect God to dwell in the house that you built?

Most do, we take it for granted. We build us a church, put a rug down the aisle, put a few pictures on the wall, stand a pulpit up and put a man behind it. We say, "Come on in God; we fixed this thing up."

Solomon built that magnificent temple and said; "*Will God dwell in this place?*" David said, "*Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that thou hast brought me hitherto?*"

Charles Spurgeon, (who was the great preacher of England), back in the last century, said this; "When I came to Christ, I had no knowledge of any personal or saving interest in the work of Christ. I just knew that it was just written in God's Word."

The Scripture says, "*He was made sin who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*"

He just knew that it was written in God's Word; "*Look unto me all the ends of the earth and be ye saved for I am God.*" He looked to it on the basis of His Word. He trusted in Him on the strength of His promise. "Seek or swim," he said; "I am going to cast myself on Him."

"Great Son of God, you have lived and died for sinners. Here is a sinner that trusts God," he said, "I trust you and I believe you." God spoke peace to his heart.

My friend, it does matter what a man believes. You cannot base your faith nor can you determine your faith on feelings or experience.

Some people will say, "I know that I am saved because God hears my prayer." They will also say, "I know that I am saved because I saw a great light; I had a vision." Some will say, "I know that I am saved because I saw Christ standing at the foot of my bed."

Some think they are saved because they remember the time and the place. They say that they are saved because they were there when it happened.

God have mercy on your soul; that is no foundation for faith at all. We know that we are saved because of what He says in His word. Salvation is based on His word and His word alone. You cannot know a thing about God apart from the Word of God.

You cannot determine anything about a relationship with God at all except by the Word of God. We know these things because He has said it. "*Abraham believed God that He was able to perform all that He promised.*" If He hadn't promised it, you wouldn't have believed it.

Paul summed it up as he was standing on the deck of that ship by saying; "*Wherefore, sirs; be of good cheer for I believe God that it shall be exactly as he told me.*" That is saving faith!

All right, look at this now; faith that saves (saving faith) is a faith that stands alone. What do I mean by that? What I mean is that it is not faith and my works. It is not faith and my morality. It is not faith and my church membership and it is not faith and my baptism.

TRUE SAVING FAITH OR RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

It is not faith and my feeling; *“For by grace are you saved through faith but that is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”* What is the gift of God? Of course, faith is the gift of God. *“It is given unto you not only to suffer for him but to believe on him.”*

Repentance is the gift of God. *“God hath granted repentance to the Gentiles;”* this is what the apostle says. *“The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”* Any saving grace is the gift of God; it is not of works.

God does not require you to produce righteousness; He requires you to receive one that Christ produced. God does not require you to create life but to receive Him who is life. God does not require you to live perfectly to a standard; (you would fail this very moment). But rather to receive a Person, Christ who kept that standard and who became your Representative and your Surety and fulfilled all that the standard the holy law of God required. God does not require you to understand Him but to believe Him. Do you see what I am saying?

A lot of people say, “Well; I don’t believe anything that I can’t understand.” Oh, you believe a lot of things you can’t understand. For example:

That sun that comes up in the morning comes precisely at the right place and the right time. All of those stars are on their given courses. That little baby that is born from a microscopic seed that you can’t even see, along with his personality, is incorporated in that seed.

There is not only his personality but there are his gifts and talents. He has strength of brain and heart. Every fingernail and toenail is already in that microscopic seed. You don’t understand that but you believe it. Well then, I believe God.

“What must I do to be saved?” Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Without faith there is no approaching God. *“He that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”*

That is the first approach to God; it is by faith. There is no coming to God or approaching God except by faith. Without faith, the Gospel profits you nothing. As I preach the Word of God to you, if you cannot receive it by faith, (not by understanding), but by faith, it will profit you nothing.

Do you know what it says in **Hebrews 4:2?** *“Unto us was the Gospel preached as well as unto them.”* What this is talking about are the people of the Old Testament. *“The Gospel did not profit them.”* Why? The Gospel was *“not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”*

They did not believe so it profited them nothing. They heard what you are hearing but it did not profit them because they did not believe. Without faith there is no salvation.

TRUE SAVING FAITH OR RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Listen to our Lord when He sent His disciples out to preach; He said, *“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”*

What does baptism have to do with it? He is confessing his faith. He is publically and openly identifying himself with Christ. *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.”*

Then, without faith, prayer is useless. *“If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God. Let him ask in faith;”* that is believing God.

You see, saving faith has to do with a person. I told you this last week and I will tell you again; *“Abraham believed God.”* He wasn't saying that he believed that there is a God or that he believed in God but *“he believed God.”* He believed Him, personally.

“This is the record that God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.” I'm talking about sanctification, redemption, righteousness, wisdom and revelation. All things are in His Son. *“He that hath the Son hath life.”*

It is not he that believes that there is a Son, *“the devil believes that and trembles.”* It is *“he that hath the Son hath everlasting life.”*

The one object of faith is Christ. Oh, for faith to embrace Him or to lay a hold upon Him and believe Him. The one reason for faith is Christ.

The one hope of faith is Christ. He said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.”*

Now, you see my message for you was, “saving faith as opposed to religious profession.” Let me give you two or three things and I will close:

False faith can do many things; it can excite the affections, reform the outward man, speak well of Christ, feel sorry for sin and tremble at the Word of God. As I told you last week, false faith can never believe, trust, love, or rest in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

I'm talking about Christ for all things; Jesus Christ, for acceptance with the Father, Jesus Christ for sanctification. It is not my sanctification or my holiness; I do not have any holiness. My holiness is Christ, Christ alone.

Do you rest in Him, look to Him, believe Him?