



John 4:39-42
Hearing and Believing

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did."

40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.

41 And many more believed because of His own word.

42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

In seeking to answer the question, *what is true saving faith*, theologians have classically identified three components that must be present in someone's faith for it to be the faith that alone can save us spoken of in the Word of God. These three qualities are ***knowledge, assent, & trust***.

Knowledge: Saving faith has knowledge content to it, in order to be saved we need to know the facts of the Gospel. Our knowledge doesn't need to be exhaustive, but we do need to know certain essentials truths. For instance, I'd say that at a bare minimum, we need to believe in the Triune God of the Bible (God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit), in Heaven and Hell, and that Jesus is Lord and that He was crucified for their Sins and that God raised Him from the Dead. That knowledge is very important, for instance, if the Jesus I supposedly know is just a wise human being, that is not the Jesus of the bible and "knowing" about that false Jesus cannot save me.

But that bare knowledge alone is not enough, as Dr. Morton Smith of GPTS puts it "**Good evangelistic preaching is first of all the presentation of the facts of the Gospel. In order to believe one must first know, and yet this is not sufficient for salvation. Just to have intellectual knowledge of the facts of the Gospel does not bring a person into a saving relation with Christ.**"

Assent: I need to do more than just know those things, I need to judge those facts and acknowledge them to be true, to say "Yes, I personally believe that Jesus is the Son of God." But merely assenting to that truth isn't enough either. If you don't believe that, consider that as Jesus was casting out demons, they cried out "***Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are -- the Holy One of God!***" (Luke 4:34) So even demons know that Jesus is the Christ and intellectual assent to it, and even confess it verbally, and I don't think any of us would argue that they are saved and going to heaven, would we? No. Those demons know the truth about Jesus, they assent to it, but they have no personal relationship to him other than *hated enemy*. They do not love him, trust him, serve him. That Love and Trust is the critical missing element.

Trust: To quote Morton Smith again: "***There must be the final step of trust, of self-committal. This involves the engagement of the person of the sinner to the person of Christ. It is the complete self-surrender to Christ. To stop short of it is to stop with what has sometimes been called intellectual faith. ... Without this step of trust, there is no saving faith. ... This is the goal to which evangelistic***

preaching must strive. To attain it the facts of the Gospel must be presented, but we must not stop here, but go on to call the sinner to put his trust in Christ and Christ alone for his salvation.”

That full-orbed faith does not occur, unless a person has their own experience of meeting and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not something that we can have second-hand or that we can inherit from others. It can only come through Christ’s life changing work in us, and the evidence of it will be apparent in the profound change it produces in our lives. Now what I want to suggest to you, is that while the word belief is used in both verse 39 and verse 42 of this text, there is a critical difference in the nature of that belief. In verse 39 it is that second hand intellectual faith, and in verse 42 it is that full and personal saving faith that comes through the believers own experience of closing with and trusting in Jesus Christ.

The Samaritan woman goes back to her village and shares her own experience with Jesus Christ, and that willingness to share her own testimony is critical. The people in her village not only hear that she has met a Jew she believes is the Messiah, they can see the personal change in her. She lived with them, they knew her to be a great sinner, but now obviously a great change has occurred in her. She isn’t even ashamed anymore, it seems as if the burden of her sins has been lifted off her shoulders. And they can reason, if he could transform *her*, He might be the Messiah, but friends that is not the same thing as personal faith.

I may for instance know a man who had the same terminal disease I do, and who found a medicine that has made him well. And I might be happy about that and believe in that medicine, but what is that medicine to me? If I don’t take it, it won’t do me any good. If the plane is going down, and I know there is a parachute, and I know that it can save me, it won’t do me a lick of good if I continue to sit in my seat. Unless I put the parachute on and jump while there is still time, when the plane crashes I’ll be just as dead as the passengers who never knew about the parachute.

Generally you will find that the visible change in you may make others curious about what changed you, and YOU should by all means use that, but remember your experience can’t save them. Only hearing the gospel can change them. Unless they themselves meet Christ and trust in Him, their curiosity won’t save them. As Paul tells us in Romans 10:17 ***So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.***

Now I emphasize that because too many Christians believe that their own testimony will be all that is needed to change others, and they make the mistake of thinking that just because someone shows an interest in that experience, that person must be saved. Those people need to hear the gospel for themselves.

I have heard the testimony of an African preacher who used this analogy. He said that one of the things that the missionaries told them was that in their country it got so cold that the water of lakes and ponds became solid and hard enough to walk on. Many of friends didn’t believe them, but although he was skeptical he said, because I trusted everything else the Missionaries told me, I believed their story. But then he said, it wasn’t until many years later that I traveled to Europe in the winter and stood on the ice of a frozen lake, that I truly believed in ice and that it could hold me up.

Now thankfully, in these verses the kind of change that comes from meeting Jesus and hearing the gospel firsthand is exactly what happened:

40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.

41 And many more believed because of His own word.

42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

Now don't for a moment underestimate that change: They had come to believe that

Salvation is of the Jews, because of course the Word tells us that The Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah, and that he would be The Son of David, and the Son of God. And they knew that He had come, that His name was Jesus, and was standing before them. And they confessed that

He alone is *Savior*

Acts 4:10 "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

11 "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'

12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

But He is the Savior of the *world*

Not the Messiah of the Jews only!

This then was the beginning of the spread of the gospel to all lands, four or five years after, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, he found that the remnants of Christ's initial work were still bearing good fruit. We read in Acts 8 that when he preached Christ to them: ***"the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip"*** Truly what Christ had told the Apostles would happen was coming to pass: Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

So Then Let me give you three applications -

1) First in bringing men to Christ, do not fail to use your own testimony – as Spurgeon, who knew quite a bit about winning souls put it: ***"beloved, if we wish to win souls to Christ, there is nothing like telling to others what the Lord has done for our souls. It is of small use to tell them what we have learned in books, we must declare what God has written on our hearts. It is not describing what was said by the preacher, but what has been felt in our souls. Many a husband has been won to God by his wife's witness to the power of religion in her own soul; and many a child has been brought to the Savior's feet by the father's speaking to him of what grace had done for him. Publish, then, your personal testimony, each of you, for this is the most effectual weapon for overcoming human unbelief and bringing men to Christ."***

I'll give you an example of that from history: John Hutton, a Welsh Calvinistic Minister was preaching, when suddenly a man jumped up and lead the church in the Doxology. Hutton was unable to continue. Hutton later spoke with the man. "I have only been a Christian a few months and I cannot sit still while the Word is being preached. You see, I was a bad lot sir! I drank, pawned the furniture, and I knocked my wife about. ***Hutton asked the man how he was faring with his fellow workers in the mine. The man replied, "Well, just today working down in the mine they asked me,***

'You don't seriously credit that old yarn about Jesus turning water into wine do you?' I told them, 'I know nothing about the water and the wine, but I know this, in my house Christ has turned beer into furniture and that is a good enough miracle for me.'"

2) But secondly do not be content to stop there go on bring them the gospel, lead them to Christ, preach the Gospel, and this is critical, let them know the importance of their own closing with Him. Kid's let me apply this to you. Almost all of you have been raised in Christian households, you have heard about Jesus from your parents, you have seen the evidence of their own faith in Him. Because of that you probably know the facts about Jesus, and you would say that they are true. But that is not enough to save you. You need to believe in Jesus and love and trust him yourself in order to be saved. Now there isn't a magic age when that happens, but if it has, then you need to tell your parents about it so they can bring you to the session and we can interview you and if we see the evidence of that change, then we will allow you to come to the Lord's table. But kids don't be content until you know that you have closed with Jesus. I would say the same thing to everyone here. You may believe that what I have said today is true, but what is that to you? **"Faith is not faith as long as it rests on the testimony of another"** – have you yourself trusted in Christ, have you come to Him through your own personal faith, do YOU have your own TESTIMONY?

3) Finally for those of You who do, an admonition, I've told you to go out and share your testimony and lead them to Christ. Will you do that, and how will you treat those who do? Like his master Jesus, Phillip was willing to preach the gospel in Samaria to people of a different race, whom his own people had hated for generations and then admit them to full fellowship.

Will you do the same, would you admit them to full fellowship and have them in your home? In a word would you love them? The test of our Christlikeness in this area, is not in our saying "I want all sorts of people and big sinners to come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ" but how we act towards them when they do! If you will not then consider yourself rebuked and admonished today, that has had to happen in the past too:

Gal. 2:11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.