***The Doctrine of Faith, No. 2
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We are looking at Romans 3:21-23.

One of the great advantages of living during the present dispensation of the church is that we today possess a completed Bible. God's divine viewpoint, therefore, is much clearer to us today than it was in the days before the cross, when all they had was the Old Testament. God's basis of salvation was indeed revealed in the Old Testament, but the details were not explained with the clarity with which we possess them today, simply because we have the New Testament, and thus the completed Old and New Testament Scriptures.

People have always, throughout the ages, possessed a type of righteousness which has been secured by human doing. This is what we call a relative righteousness, and it comes from one person matching himself up against another person. In that comparison, some people come out looking better than other people, but no one comes off perfect. In everybody, even the best, there are shortcomings.

The Bible makes it clear that God, in His holy character demands something more than relative righteousness. He demands an absolute righteousness – one which is equal to that of His own; that is, to be absolutely perfect. So, while people can often match themselves up to other people, and come off smelling like a rose, they cannot match themselves up to God and come off looking that good.

Since no human being can produce this kind of absolute righteousness which is required to go to heaven, God has made a way for all of us to receive it as a free gift. And that's what we've been learning here in this third chapter of the book of Romans, as Paul has come to these very dramatic verses, Romans 3:21, 22, and 23, which are a summit point in this book. This is the watershed. This is the going over the top from man sin into God's provision.

**Faith and Believe**

Romans 3:22 describes the absolute righteousness of God, which is secured not by any human doing, but by faith in Jesus Christ as Savior – believing the gospel. The human act, thus, in coming to eternal life, we have seen, is described by two keywords. And I hope that they have now been sealed in your thinking. The first word is "faith," which means reliance or trust; and, the other is the verb "believe,” which means, again, reliance and trust. It means to take the object of that faith as being true. In the matter of salvation, the object of faith and believe is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, in terms of his propitiatory work (His satisfying work) to the justice of God, and to the righteousness of God, upon the cross in behalf of our sins.

**The Doctrine of Faith**

So, we've been trying to bring all this together for you – this subject of faith, so that we have a very clear understanding as to what the Bible means by "faith." We have covered the first ten points of a 25-point summary of the doctrine of faith.

1. **The Words "Faith" and "Believe" in Classical Greek**

First of all, we pointed out that the use of the words "faith" and "believe" in classical Greek meant "to trust" and "to rely upon" the individual. We gave you some examples of how these were used in the remains of Greek writings.

1. **Trust**

We found that that was the idea – the idea of trust or reliance.

1. **The Word "Faith in the Greek Mystery Religions**

The Greek mystery religions use the word "faith" in terms of "abandonment to a god." You followed his instructions, and thus secured a salvation of the pagan type.

1. **The Words "Faith" and "Believe" in the New Testament**

In the New Testament, the basic words are "faith" and "believe." The noun "faith" ("pistis") means trust, reliance, and confidence. The verb ("pisteuo") means "to be convinced;" "to give credence to;" or, "to rely." That's another factor to notice about the word "believe" – that it means "rely upon." That's why we use the word "reliance." That is very critical.

1. **The Means to Salvation**

The words "faith" and "believe" are used in the New Testament as technical terms for the means to salvation. The real person is saved (the means by which a person is saved is described by the words "faith" and "belief."

1. **Bible Doctrine**

Sometimes we see that the word faith is used in the Bible to connote the body of Bible doctrine as it is revealed in Scriptures.

1. **Faithfulness**

Sometimes the noun "faith" has the meaning of faithfulness, in the sense of being trustworthy. God is spoken of as being trustworthy, and man is sometimes spoken of as being trustworthy.

1. **Miracles**

We pointed out that faith is used to describe trust which sometimes produce miracles. Faith does not always produce miracles. But sometimes in Scripture, it was so associated.

1. **Eternal Life**

We pointed out that the biblical method for securing eternal life is faith in God by believing the gospel message about the death of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world of unbelievers. That is the way to be saved: faith; or, believing the gospel.

1. **A Non-Meritorious Act**

Faith is not a meritorious act in salvation, but simply an appropriating instrument. We tried to stress to you that just believing is not of any value in itself. The value lies in the object.

1. **A God who cannot Lie**

So, we pick it up there with number 11, which states that saving faith rests on the testimony of a God who cannot lie. In Titus 1:2, we have this principle established: "In hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie, promised before the world began." We are in hope of eternal life on what basis? On the basis of the fact that we are believing a God who cannot lie. You must understand the essence of God. I cannot stress to you too often that if you would remind yourself of what God is like (His character), it would answer many questions and many problems in your life personally as a Christian. That is because God can only act according to the kind of a person that He is. One of the factors of His essence is veracity. He cannot lie.

So, faith rests on the testimony, as we've pointed out, of some authority. That's the ordinary meaning of the word. Faith means reliance. Whether a belief is a known certainty or a doubtful opinion depends on the value of the authority who is believed. You have some things that you believe very firmly. The reason you believe them very firmly is because of the authority from which you received those beliefs. Other things you hold as an opinion, but you're not so sure that they're right. You think maybe they're right, but the doubt is because of the authority through which you secured that opinion.

The Word of God provides us with true knowledge for faith. The Word of God gives us proof which is really true. There are many things that people say that are not true. There are many things that we read that are not true. But when it comes to this matter of eternal life, the Bible clearly gives us truth which is reliable. 1 John 3:2 says, "Beloved, we are now the children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Here is a definite statement of truth as to what is going to happen to the person who believes in Christ as Savior when he comes face-to-face with the Lord in eternity. He's going to be just like Him.

Well, one of the things that he's going to be like Christ in is this quality of absolute righteousness. He will have what he needs to be able to go to heaven, because he will have the righteousness of Christ. 1 John 5:18-20 say, "We know that whosoever is born of God does not sin. But he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one does not touch him. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

So, the Word of God provides us with true knowledge that we can believe. If we don't have true knowledge, then the results of our faith are in doubt.

Another factor to remember is that faith and knowledge are not two processes which are divorced from one another; that is, you have to have both. You cannot just have information and be saved. You cannot just have faith and be saved. You must have faith and information together. You may discover this in John 6:69, John 17:8, and John 4:42. There, the critical relationship is established: faith with information.

Therefore, salvation is faith in the knowledge or information which is recorded in Scripture (Acts 24:14). Salvation is believing the information that we have received – the knowledge from Scripture. Salvation is not based on believing a gospel which is merely a speculation – one that you *hope* is true. But salvation is believing a gospel that you know to be true because you know that the God who declared it is truth.

Our faith remains always subordinate to knowledge, but knowledge is the substance of faith. You cannot be saved without both of them.

The nature of saving face, therefore, we say, is knowing and believing that saving faith. First you have to know, then you have to believe (2 Thessalonians 2:13, Galatians 1:8-9). Believing God's testimony concerning the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world is to declare that God is true (John 3:33). To reject it is to call God a liar first (John 5:10). So, remember that we deal with information that comes from a God who cannot lie. When we believe Him, we are recognizing that He cannot lie. When we do not believe Him, we are casting the accusation against God that he is not trustworthy.

1. **"Head Belief" and "Heart Belief"**

There is no such thing as head belief and heart belief. You may have heard the expression such that if you want to be saved, it takes more than head belief. You must be able to have heart belief as well. There are many, many preachers who talk about this kind of a false distinction. I've sat in meetings with preachers where they carried on extensive discussion as to how they could get people to have a heart belief and not just a head belief. There is not any difference between the two.

Romans 10:10 is going to give us, later on, a little more information about this, where we read, "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made into salvation. It is with your heart that you believe the gospel. There is no difference between head and heart belief. The heart in Scripture is used in terms of the mentality of the soul. Your heart is what you believe with.

Now, there is a difference between head knowledge and head belief (or trust in Christ as Savior). The Bible does recognize that as a legitimate distinction. You can talk about a person having a head knowledge and his having a head belief. But it's all up in your head. When you talk about a difference between a head knowledge and a heart knowledge, the danger you run is that the word "heart," in our common terminology, is associated with emotions. Therefore, when you tell a person he must not simply have a head belief, but that he must also have a heart belief, he tends to interpret that in terms of having some emotional reaction. Of course, that is indeed what a lot of preachers are looking for. They're trying to give people the impression that they must have some kind of an emotional response to that acceptance of salvation. That is totally false. That's why you should not talk about having head belief over again heart belief. But you should have a head knowledge, and stress that you must also have a head belief in Christ the Savior.

James 2:19, says, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. The demons also believe and tremble." Here are the demons with a knowledge concerning God. It's a head knowledge, but these same demons do not have a head belief; a head trust; and, a head reliance upon God. They have the knowledge, but they do not have the reliance.

Then also in acts 26:27, we have this illustrated once more: "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe. Here, King Agrippa had a head understanding and he had a head belief. He believed what he had read concerning the prophets. He could not believe what he did not first know. The way he believed it was with his thinking (with his mentality). Saving faith is more than the mental assent that Jesus Christ was a good man. That won't save you. It won't save you to mentally agree that Jesus Christ was a miracle worker. It won't save you to agree that Jesus was a man sent by God – a God-sent teacher. What is necessary is to believe specifically the fact that Jesus Christ was sent to make provision for your sins. That is what you must believe in order to be saved. You must not only be aware of it, but you must trust in it.

So, saving face is submission to the truth of Scripture for guidance; for control; and, for consequences.

1. **Repentance**

Repentance is not a separate function from believing in Jesus Christ. You cannot repent (which means to change the mind) toward sin without believing in Jesus Christ as Savior. Sometimes people are told that they should repent first, and confess (feel sorry), and they're given a list of steps to salvation. "To repent" is one of the favorite items in the list. Anytime you tell a person to repent in order to be saved, he thinks it means to be sorry for his sins; to cry a little; and, to make some promises to God. The word "repentance" in Scripture means simply to change your mind. It means to turn away from your sin. And if you turn away from your sin, there's only one other direction you can turn to, and that's God. If you don't turn to God, you haven't turned away from your sins. Therefore, *repentance is not a separate step in salvation*.

Now, it is not wrong to say repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. The Bible does use that combination of words. But the repentance is not a separate act from believing. You come to researching the Scripture, and saying, "Now, what is the basic step (the basic action) on my part as a human being to be saved?" It is summarized by the words "faith" and "believe." Therefore, that is what we tell people to do if they want to go to heaven. We have to tell them what to believe. We have to give them the knowledge. We have to give them the content. Then they have to go from there in accepting it.

So, do not call upon people to make some separate act of repentance in the process of salvation.

1. **Believing on Christ's Name as Savior**

This one is a real beauty. Receiving Jesus Christ is defined as believing on His name as Savior. In John 1:12, we read, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the children of God." Then it adds the last phrase of explanation of that verse: "Even to them that believe on His name." And "receiving" is explained as "believing." So, we're back to our key biblical word (our key biblical act) for salvation.

I've heard very famous evangelists on public television go on extensively about the fact that it is not enough to have belief in Jesus Christ. What the Bible says is that you must receive Him." And here is a vast stadium full of people, and this evangelist is carrying on about the fact that you must *receive* Christ. That's what it means to be saved. If you do not receive Him, you will not go to heaven. Believing is not enough. Those were all the repeated phrases; on and on. It's sad when an evangelist hasn't even got the procedures of being saved entirely clear.

To prove what he was saying on one particular occasion, he quoted John 1:12, and he said, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God." Then he stopped. I'm sitting there waiting for the rest of the verse, because I knew that the rest of the verse tells us how to receive. Well, he wanted people to receive Him by a public action. He wanted people to receive Christ by getting out of the seats and coming forward. Therefore, he wanted people to receive Christ in some kind of an emotional response that had an overt expression. But he repeated it several times, and he always stop right there. Finally, one time I shouted at the television set, "Even to them that believe on His name." I often do that at the television set in order to get things straightened out. It's going to be terrible when they get one of these television setups where you can talk both ways. They're thinking about doing that, you know.

Anyhow, the explanation is very clear. Anybody can read that verse and see that receiving Jesus Christ means believing on Him: believing on His name; and, believing what He stands for. That's what His name represents. He is the Man-God, the sinless One, born without an old sin nature. He never committed a personal act of sin, either mentally or overtly. And He has gone to the cross, and He died spiritually and physically for our sins, so that He satisfied the holiness of God. God's justice and God's righteousness has been met toward us, so that now God is free to give to us, simply as a gift, His absolute righteousness, which we can't secure any other way. That's how you become a Christian – by believing all that. That's how you receive Jesus Christ as Savior – by believing all that. It is not by anything else.

So, get that straight. Don't let somebody con you. Don't you con some poor sinner, who has come to you for some information about salvation, by getting him all confused by playing on the word "receive," so that you give him the impression that he has to do something else besides simply trusting; accepting; and, relying upon what Christ has already done for him. Playing with this word "receiving" will cause you to lead people back into what Paul has condemned here – the act of human doing in order to be saved.

1. **Human Reason or Empiricism**

Spiritual truths about salvation cannot be discovered by human reason or the empiricism of the senses. There's only one way that you can receive spiritual information (information about spiritual phenomena). There is one, and only one, way, and that is by revelation from God as His personal testimony to you (John 3:11, John 31:33, John, 16:8-11, 1 John 5:10-11). Spiritual truth has to be given to us by God's direct revelation. And that's what we have in the Scriptures. That's why all spiritual phenomena (all spiritual truth) is to be learned through the Word of God alone. God will not speak to you in any other way.

For this reason, our mental capacities (our reasoning abilities) are subordinate to faith. But our reasoning is not opposed to faith. The truths of revelation are often beyond reason, but they are never contrary to reason. God reveals things to us that simply are beyond our reasoning capacity, but they are not contrary to those reasoning capacities. Holy Spirit-guided reason will therefore analyze and interpret the content of God's revelation, and faith will then appropriate it. The Spirit will guide your reason to analyze and to interpret what God has revealed, and then faith will appropriate it.

Sin has placed a spiritual blindness upon us. That's the reason for this problem. So, people cannot receive saving faith in Jesus Christ until they've been illuminated by the Holy Spirit. This is why we say that the Bible teaches that nobody seeks Christ to save you. Paul has already told us that: "There is none that seek after God. No, not one." That is because this spiritual blindness upon our minds does not even make us aware that we should seek Him, and that we should pursue Him. So, we are incapable in our own mental capacities of discovering anything spiritual (Ephesians 2:8, Ephesians 4:18, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 2 Corinthians 4:6, 1 Corinthians 2:14, John 6:44, and John 6:65).

So, faith is the only system of perception which will provide spiritual truths and spiritual understanding. The only way you're going to find out what God thinks is by believing what God has said. Faith is the only system whereby you can come to spiritual information. The only way you can be saved is that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate your need of the gospel, and He'll illuminate your need of believing in Christ as Savior. And then you can act upon that. God the Holy Spirit, to you as a Christian, will give you information of Bible doctrine. He'll illuminate your mind. He'll give you understanding of it. And then you can act upon it. But it's always because you have believed the testimony that God has given to you in Scripture.

So, if you look for spiritual truth in dreams, and in visions, and in your Christian friends, and in the good books that people have written that you have read, you're going to get in a lot of trouble. The only place you're going to find it is in Bible doctrine exposition.

1. **Heaven with the Triune God**

Believing in Jesus Christ as one's Savior not only reverses all that man lost by the fall in Eden, but it gains far more by elevating him forever into heaven itself and fellowship with the Triune God. Ephesians 2:4-6 makes that very wonderful declaration to us: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive together with Christ. By grace you are saved, and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." That's tremendous.

What did Adam have? Adam had a perfect environment, but Adam was on earth. Adam had a perfect place to live in the Garden of Eden, but he was on earth. You and I have everything that Adam lost, but we have more than that. We have what Adam never had. We have access to be in heaven itself, in the very presence of the Triune God. Adam never could do that. The angels could do that, but not Adam. So, this salvation has restored to us far more than we lost. That's the grace of God.

1. **Early Christian Evangelism**

Early Christian missionary evangelism centered on the act of faith in Jesus Christ, or believing the gospel. This is used by Paul as the key to salvation: faith; and, believing. You have this in 1 Corinthians 15:2, 1 Corinthians 15:11, Acts 16:31, Romans 1:16, and 1 Corinthians 1:21. We won't read all of those now, but everything in those verses says that the message of how to be saved involves faith in Jesus Christ, or believing the gospel. Those are the words that Paul uses. He uses these words to describe that which reconciles the sinner to God. (Romans 1:8, 1 Thessalonians 1:8). It is these words that are the means of reconciliation to God.

So, the biblical technique for evangelism (which is what we're driving at here) declares that he who believes the gospel has eternal life, and he will never perish (John 3:16, John 3:36, John 11:25).

I think you have seen enough in this summary already, and in our study thus far, such that the critical factor of believing the gospel, of trusting in Jesus Christ, and relying upon Him to save us, is what the Bible presents as information that a sinner needs to know as to what he should do to be saved – what his reaction is supposed to be.

Now, early Christian missionary evangelism that is here in the New Testament very clearly centered on these words of "faith" and "believe." Yet, today you hear a lot of modern, upbeat phrases to describe to the lost what they must do to be saved. These are inaccurate and very misleading, and I hope you will not use them.

For example: "Invite Jesus Christ into your heart," or "Invite Jesus Christ into your life." I think maybe you'll understand why that phrase is so bad in view of what we have studied thus far. The emphasis in Scripture upon telling a person that he must rely (he must trust) upon Jesus Christ in terms of what He did on the cross. In other words, you must believe the gospel. You explained the gospel, and then he is to believe it. Now, how in the world do the words "invite Jesus Christ into your heart" in any way connote these two critical scriptural words of "believe" and "faith?" There is no way. This is just some cute, human, 20th-century updating of Scripture, and you should not fall into that trap. That is Satan's way of confusing the issue, and making it just a little harder for folks to get straightened out, and get themselves saved in the right way.

Or you might say, "Reach out and take the Savior's hand." At a certain point in the preaching service, where the emotion has risen to a proper degree, that is a great phrase: "Reach out and take the Savior's hand." What does that mean? Now, put yourself in the place of a poor, dumb, unsaved, lost sinner, whether you're a kid or a grown-up. You're sitting there. You're unsaved. What are you doing>

Now, maybe you needed an experience to be as sensitive about this as I am. I went to a boy’s camp one time when I was a kid. It was very much like we run our summer camps. I probably was 12 years old. It was up in Michigan. And one of the things they did was took us to a revival service during the camp week. And it was in a regular church auditorium. And I remember sitting in that service, and it was just a regular church service, and the preaching was there. I couldn't tell you to think about what was said, but I'm sure it was evangelistic meeting. They talked about the gospel. Certainly they talked about being saved. In any case, they came to the end of the service, and they gave what they call "an invitation," which meant hoofing it down the aisle.

So, everybody is standing, and we're singing, and they're giving the invitation. Here a person is pulled out, and here another one comes out. I was standing with a friend next to me. My friend turned to me and said, "You want to go forward?" I looked at him and said, "Well, I will if you will." He said, "Okay, I will." So, we went forward. I have no recollection at this moment. I wish I had paid more attention to when I walked forward, but it was very important part of my life. But I can't remember a think about it – what happened to me up front. I don't think anything. I think we all just gathered around, and somebody sprinkled holy water maybe on us, and made the sign of the cross, or something. But anyhow, we went back to camp.

Well, a few days later, we were all back home in Chicago. The next Sunday morning, I was sitting in church, and the pastor got up, and was reporting on the summer camp, and some of the good things that had taken place. And he said, "Two of our boys were saved in the meeting." And he looked down at me and smiled at me. For the first time, I realized what had happened to me. I had no connection with going down that aisle and being saved. They hadn't even gotten my mind to listen to what was being said in that service, let alone to get my will to make any kind of an intelligent reaction. But I hadn't believed anything. I wouldn't be surprised but what the preacher came and used some of these phrases that night: "Invite Jesus Christ into your heart." He may have even said, "Come up and reach out for the Savior's hand." He may have said, "Make Christ Savior and Lord in your life." That's a favorite. Or: "Open your heart's door to the Savior."

You can buy tracts which use Revelation 3:20 where Jesus is knocking at the heart's door. However, that is the door of a Christian's heart who is out of fellowship. Christ is knocking and saying, "Christian, let's get back in temple fellowship. Open the door. Make your confession, and let Me back in into running your life." They'll use that for an unbeliever: "Jesus is knocking at your door. Open the door of your heart to Christ." So, you reach over, and you your coat, and you open your shirt? What do you open? How are you going to let him into your heart? You can't do that.

So, then you close your eyes, and you look heavenward, and you meditate, and you think, and you kind of peek down to see if He has come in. These are meaningless phrases to an unbeliever. And I mean that you have to put yourself in the condition of this person who is dumb; stupid; blind; backward; out of Christ; and, without hope. And you're asking him to do something in order to come into an eternal relationship with God, and you're coming up with these modern, upbeat, phrases that do nothing but confuse the person on what God really wants him to do.

Every one of these phrases (if you think about them long enough, you will discover) have one common ground, and that is that they all encourage human doing to be saved – every cotton-picking one of them. They encourage human doing. You should only tell a person: "You just believe it. You just rely on Christ." Only that really makes it clear that there is no human doing. There is nothing for me to do. All I do is take it.

I have heard unbelievers who have objected to that very fact. They says, "Well, what do you mean: just believe it? What do you mean just trust Him? Man, I've been a terrible sinner. He's not just going to give it to me." What does that tell me? That tells me that those are the words that convey what God is trying to say: "I'm going to give it to you." That's exactly what God wants to say: "I'm going to give it to you. You're not going your door of your heart and invite Me in. You're not going to reach out and take my hand." All of these divert from relying upon Jesus Christ.

Well, there are many more, and I'll leave you to keep your ears open for them. But they are not compatible with Scripture. Neither are the addition of any external acts. That should come under this point also. Any external acts in the matter of being saved are also out of line, such as: "confess your sins;" "walk the aisle;" "raise your hand;" "come forward and pray to be saved;" "ask God to save you;" "express sorrow;" "plead with God to save you;" and, so on. None of these should be added. They are all human viewpoint additions, just like these phrases are. And what they do is sidetrack (through Satan's ingenuity) a person from knowing just exactly what he can do in the simplicity of his soul to receive what God has already fully provided for him in Christ. Don't add external acts. They're wrong, and they're unnecessary.

You must be prepared for the fact that some people will sometimes attack a church like ours as not giving people an invitation. Whenever they say that, I know exactly what they mean. They say, "Well, you don't ever give an invitation at Berean, do you?” So, I ask them, "An invitation to do what?" I try to gently push them to the wall before I drive the nail in, as to what they're actually saying, and how ridiculous, and how unscriptural, they are. What they mean is: "You don't give people a chance to do something to be saved." And finally, you get them back here to our passage in Romans where God says, "Salvation is by non-human doing." And you have invited a person to do several things. Therefore, you have not been God's messenger. You have been Satan's messenger. And that shatters them down to their eyeteeth with their invitation.

I don't think it's an excuse to say, "Well, I know that that's true, and I know that there's that danger, but I try to make it clear. When I ask people to come forward to my meetings; when I ask people to raise their hand; or, when I ask people to do these other things, I try to make it clear to them what the real issue is. Well, then why do all these confusing things? I'll tell you why. It's because the poor, average preacher is under a congregation that dominates him to be "a successful preacher," and by that they mean to build up the membership of the church. The poor, average preacher is looked upon as the one who is supposed to bring members into the local church rather than the members themselves bringing others in. His success is viewed by the number of public moves he can get out of people on a Sunday service. I know that. I know this professional realm of the preachers, and I know what they talk about on Mondays. And this is what they talk about – how successful they were to getting you off your seat and into the aisle, for whatever reason. The early Christian missionary evangelism centered on the act of faith.

1. **"Weakened Faith; Growth in Faith; or, Steadfastness in Faith"**

The concepts of weakened faith (as we have in Romans 14:1); growth in faith (2 Corinthians 10:15); and, steadfastness in faith (1 Corinthians 15:58) – all of these refer to spiritual maturity, and not to salvation. You don't grow in your salvation. You don't grow steadfast in your salvation. It is already steadfast because it's built on the rock, Jesus Christ. All of these are references to developing spiritual maturity.

1. **Gaining Knowledge**

Faith is the basic system for gaining knowledge in all areas of life. This is the source of most of your beliefs. It's faith in something you read; faith in something somebody said to you; or, faith in some authority. This faith may be, for example, in your intuitional abilities. Your own discernment then becomes the authority. This was, as we told you, in the case of John Speke, when he stood on the shores of Lake Victoria, and he had an intuitional impression that this was the source of the Nile. And he was right. His confidence was unmoved to the day of his death, even though it had not fully been proved to the day he died. His confidence was unmoved in his own intuition that he had had a proper insight here – that this was the source of the Nile.

Or your faith may be your own reasoning ability. Your own IQ then becomes the authority. Or faith is your observation through your senses. Your empirical abilities then become your authority – how capable your senses are of gathering information. Or your faith may be in someone else's testimony. Then that person is your authority. The source of evolution, for example, is the authority of the scientists who teach evolution. Or the use of a medicine is on the basis of the authority of the doctor who gives it to you. That is faith in his testimony. Your convictions will be equally strong by any of these authorities. As long as you don't question the reliability of the authority, whether it's your intuition; your senses; your reasoning; or, someone's word to you, the convictions will be equally strong. But if the authority is wrong, then your convictions are ill-placed.

1. **Divine Good Works**

Genuine living faith response to God's word with divine good works (James 2:26, 1 Timothy 5:8). Good works are involved in salvation, but they come after you have been regenerated. They are the results of divine good produced through you by God the Holy Spirit after you have received Christ as Savior. They do not contribute to your salvation.

1. **Faith Makes the Lord Jesus Christ Real to the Believer**

Faith makes the unseen Lord Jesus Christ real to the believer (John 20:29, 1 Peter 1:8). As you grow in spiritual maturity, you'll find that the person of Jesus Christ begins to grow in reality in your life. Even as the people in your family are real to you, so you discover that Christ becomes a very real person. You discover that you're talking to Him; you're functioning with Him' you're sharing your thoughts with Him; and, you're living your life with Him, just as you live your life with the people who are immediately close to you within the family.

1. **Faith Brings Reality**

Faith enables a believer to treat the future as present, and the invisible as seen (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is what brings reality.

1. **Faith in Salvation**

Faith in reference to salvation connotes:

* 1. **Jesus Christ is Worthy of Trust**

The act of considering Jesus Christ worthy of trust on the basis of His character; His essence; and, His motives;

* 1. **Jesus Christ can do What He Says**

The act of placing confidence in Jesus Christ's ability to do what he says he will do to save us; and,

* 1. **Jesus Christ Does it Alone**

The act of committing the work of saving one's soul to the care of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

All of this is connoted by faith in salvation.

1. **Strengthening your Faith**

The ways for strengthening your faith as a Christian are:

* 1. **Bible Doctrine**

Regular intake of the Bible doctrine into the mind through the grace system of perception (Romans 10:17). This will strengthen your faith as a believer. That is, it will cause you to grow in spiritual maturity.

* 1. **Temporal Fellowship**

You may strengthen your faith through maintaining temporal fellowship with the Father (2 Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 5:18). Those first two are the most critical of all if you want to grow in your confidence in God.

* 1. **Faith Rest**

Next is the exercise of the faith rest technique (Hebrews 4:1-3). As the first two factors (your intake of the word, and your maintenance of temporal fellowship) are secured, you will then find that faith rest follows very naturally.

* 1. **Divine Testings and Pressures**

You may strengthen your faith from the divine testings and the pressures that God brings upon us (1 Peter 1:7-8), and how we respond to those.

* 1. **Occupation with Christ**

You may strengthen your faith by occupation with Christ (Hebrews 12:1) – centering our minds on Him.

1. **Christianity**

Finally, we may sum it all up by saying that Christianity is a unique faith event. The absolute righteousness of God for personal justification can only be obtained by means of faith in Jesus Christ as one's Savior. The absolute righteousness of God is always available for such faith in Christ. Everyone, without exception (the regenerated believer), lives by faith in the Word of God. So, from start to finish, Christianity is the great, unique faith event.

So, I hope that this will help you to understand why we say you cannot reason your way into heaven. You cannot take your rational processes and arrive at how to be saved. You cannot take your senses, and observe this. You cannot look around you and learn simply by looking in the capacity of your senses that this is how you can be saved. The only way is by this matter of faith. Please remember again, that it means trusting God. It means relying upon His Word. It is faith in an authority that is worthy of that faith.

You perform your ambassadorship for Jesus Christ when you execute your role of being a witness. This is what you are going to do. You're going to try to convey to people this very critical piece of information – that God says, "I have a righteousness to give you which will take you into heaven, which you can only receive apart from human doing. But you can have it if you'll believe Me."

**Anything else would be Unfair**

So, the Bible tells us we receive the witness of men. We believe people in many, many things. Why would we not more likely believe the God who cannot lie, and who has demonstrated Himself to be the essence of truth itself? That's the question. Why would we not believe Him when we are willing to believe people with old sin natures? And of course, the answer is that that is foolishness. There is no other way for salvation. Anything else would be unfair.

If only the people who were really smart (who were able to reason themselves into salvation) would be saved, that would be most unfair for people with lower IQs. If it was only the people who have sharp perception (who use their senses in a very critical, analyzing way) would be saved (because they could get the information), that would be most unfair – because others do not use their senses with that kind of discernment. If it was because you have culture, and therefore you had a certain level of responsible morality (and that God would view that as the basis of accepting you into heaven, that would be most unfair, because as a child, you might have been reared in a home where your mother was a slut and your father was a pervert. And then what chance do you have? Where are you going to receive your culture? Where are you going to receive your influences for morality? That would be terrifically unfair. If it was because the people who have the wealth can therefore give their money (and therefore produce a good work which would earn them salvation), that would be most unfair to people who have not been blessed with wealth to be able to do that.

Any system that you think of (any human system), any way you look at it, you come back and say, "Here's the wisdom of God in those two words: "faith;" and, "believing." It is the one system that puts everybody at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ equal. And it's the one system that opens the doors to heaven wide open. Anybody can come.

So, the Bible really, literally, truly can say, "Whosoever will may come." If you will accept this; if you will trust Christ as Savior; and, if you will believe the gospel, and rely upon that information as coming from a God who has told you the truth, then He will give you the absolute righteousness you need. Christianity is the unique faith event of all the ages. That's God's way. Your way will never work. We trust that you have accepted His way.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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