***The Great Invitation, No. 2

RV252-02***

As the Book of the Revelation is brought to an end, we have observed that the Holy Spirit stresses the divine origin of this book. The Lord Jesus Christ declares Himself to be the source of the information which is found in this book. The contents of Revelation are delivered to the apostle John via an angel while John is in exile on the island of Patmos. The target for this special information about the end of human history is the churches, in order to guide the lives of the Christians.

The source of this revelation is Jesus Christ, who identifies Himself as both the root and the offspring of King David. He is the root as the creator of David and of his royal line. Therefore, that signifies the deity of Christ. He is the offspring as a descendant of David, indicating the humanity of Jesus Christ. So, the Lord Jesus Christ is both the ancestor and the descendant of King David. He is therefore the unique God-man who is revealing the future here in this book and the culmination of the world which He Himself will bring about. Jesus also, we have seen, calls Himself the Morning Star: the bright morning star, the one who will signal the dawn of the Day of Christ, which we learned this morning is the rapture of the church and the Judgment Seat of Christ. Don't forget that technical term. The day of Christ will give you a clue every time you read that in the Bible, what that refers to. He is also going to be the one who will signal the imminent dawn of the golden age of mankind, the Millennium at His Second Coming, which will be then followed by eternity, which in the Bible is called the Day of God. The Day of Christ deals with the rapture and the Judgment Seat of Christ; the Day of God two refers to eternity. Jesus Christ, the sinless God-man, is the rising star of the universe. He heralds the dawn of a victorious new day for mankind.

**Invited But Commanded**

So, we look this evening at Revelation 22:17. "And the Spirit." This refers to God the Holy Spirit "and the bride," which refers to the church, the bride of Christ, "say 'Come.'" The Greek word is "erchomai," e r c h o m a i. This word is a word of special invitation. It is extended by the Holy Spirit and by church age believers, interesting combination here. People are invited to eternal life by the Holy Spirit and by the individual believers. In the Greek language, this indicates that this is a constantly open invitation. People are always being invited to come. It is an active work of the Spirit of God and of the Christian witness, they work as a team. And interestingly, it is in the imperative mood, which means it is a command. Here is a command to come. It is an invitation, but it is a divine command to come to the water of life, which represents eternal life with God in the New Jerusalem in Heaven. It is very, very important to be aware of the fact that when God gives us that kind of an invitation, it is a serious matter. To reject it has eternal consequences.

This is an invitation to be saved. It is in the form of an urgent command because God does not want anyone to spend eternity in a Lake of Fire. 2 Peter 3:9 point that out to us. "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." God is not interested in anyone spending eternity in the Lake of Fire. This invitation is in the form of a command because that's what you should do. You should believe the gospel. This urgency is due also in fact that today is the day of salvation. Today is a day of opportunity to be saved. That opportunity will not always be there. 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 points that out to us, "And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain, for He says, 'AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU'; behold, now is 'THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,' behold, now is 'THE DAY OF SALVATION.'" It is always a hazardous game to play with God: to come around later to making your decision as to whether you are going to accept God's salvation or not, whether you're going to come to drink of the water of life or not.

And the urgency here is shown us by this command nature of this word "come" because God does not want anyone in that Lake of Fire. Yet the decision has to be made now.

Satan is always lying about this. This was, of course, the perennial great lie that is in the great religions of the day. There are only two religions in the world today. Here's another thing I hope you learned. What is one of them? Hinduism is one. And the other one is a combination, Judeo-Christianity. There are only two religions: Hinduism, and Judaism/Christianity. All other religions are breakoffs and splinters from those two. Hinduism says man is God and you are finding your way to your own Christ-consciousness. Christianity says, "There is a creator God separate from His creation. He is the infinite, eternal God. He has made us: we are finite, He is infinite, and He is separate from us. Therefore, we are not our own gods to make our own rules, to make our own judgments concerning our lives and how we will spend them. We are under the authority of the Creator to whom we are obliged to serve, and to whom we are obliged to be obedient. So, when He points out to us that now is the time for salvation, that means there is not going to be a second chance.

Along comes a satanic religion like Mormonism. And Satan has inserted into that system of theology the fact that after you die, you will be given a second chance to see the wisdom of the truth of the religion of Mormonism and you will be able to accept it then. Roman Catholicism says you die with moral guilt upon your soul, but you go to purgatory and you will have a second chance there to suffer it out and for your kinfolk to pay for it with masses and one thing or another and they'll get you out of there. Satan always leaves a way out that you don't have to make a decision today. It is a very serious mistake.

This word "come," as a command, makes it very clear that God says, "Don't fool around with making that decision. D.L Moody, on one occasion when he was having a great revival in the city of Chicago, for some reason closed the service after giving a powerful presentation of the gospel and said, 'I want all of you together here in this room one week from tonight, and I want you to make your decision about accepting Christ, and we're going to give you an opportunity to do that.' Well, there was no meeting one week later because the Chicago fire broke out and everything burned down that they had been operating with and ended that day. So, D.L. Moody said, I'll never again tell people to think it over and wait. That's exactly what Scripture says. Your point of time is when you hear the gospel and today is the day of grace; don't play careless with that. That day is going to pass away. The hour of God's judgment is always at hand. Then it will be too late for you to respond. There is furthermore, a natural hardening process toward the gospel from those who are persistently negative to it.

**The Danger of Saying "No"**

And this is part of the problem of witnessing to people like you and your relatives that are caught up in some heretical view concerning salvation. Every time you present them with the gospel of the grace of God and they say, no, you have hardened them toward the truth. Every time Pharaoh said no to the directions of God delivered to him through Moses, he hardened himself further. Then the Bible switches suddenly after a few plagues, and it doesn't say that Pharaoh his heart anymore, it says that God hardened his heart to God. How did God do it? God kept giving him directions that he was refusing and God kept giving him directions to which he was negative. And every time he was negative, he got harder and harder to be able to listen to God until he came to a climactic crisis of destruction of the first born.

So, this natural hardening process is a thing that is of concern to us as Christians too. Because when God puts upon your heart to do something, He gives you the means to do something and the thought crosses your mind that you could do that, but you don't do that. You become less and less sensitive to perhaps one of the great things that God has as your mission in life. So, be responsive to the leading of the Spirit of God.

**God's Witness Team**

The divine/human witness team, the Spirit of God and the witnessing Christian, is what is giving us this invitation. The Holy Spirit uses the gospel testimony of Christian believers to bring the lost to a conviction of sin and to bring them to faith in Jesus Christ. That work of the Holy Spirit is described for us in John 15 beginning in verse 26. John 15:26-27, "When the Helper [who is the Holy Spirit, Jesus says,] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." Jesus says, 'You are going to be working as a team with the power of God. You will tell people the gospel. You will tell people how they can go to Heaven and the Spirit of God will come into the picture and he will bring conviction. He will make that expression of come become a reality to the lost person.'

So, you give the gospel and the Holy Spirit says "come." He proceeds to extend that invitation by convicting the unbeliever of three things which are listed for us in John 16:8-11. As soon as you have told the person about the gospel, the Holy Spirit brings this conviction. [John 16:8-11] "And He, when He comes, [That is the Holy Spirit.] will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; [Those three things] concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; [He will make clear to the person that he is in a great condition of moral guilt. He cannot stand in God's presence. The reason he has that moral guilt is because he has not trusted in Christ, whose blood will wash away that moral guilt.] and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold me;" There is a standard of righteousness required to enter into Heaven, its absolute righteousness. Jesus Christ was the epitome, demonstrating that in every way. You can't get absolute righteousness through any given act. You can't be baptized for it, you can't take the Lord's Supper for it. You can't take the mass for it. You can't be good, you can't do good works. The only way you get absolute righteousness is by grace, a gift from God. If you try to add something, please remember, [like] 'I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and I have received water baptism to complete my salvation,' you're not going to Heaven. You're going to end up in the Lake of Fire. You have added something to God's method of grace. You have added a human work; and you cannot mix the two. So He convicts the unbeliever of what it is to have absolute righteousness. [continuing with John 16:11] "and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged." That is Satan! He makes it clear that the devil no longer has to hold you. You can escape the destiny in the Lake of Fire with the devil.

**Conviction is Not Conversion**

Now when the Scriptures tell us that the Holy Spirit convicts the unbeliever, please do not think that that is the same as conversion. Conviction is essential to conversion, but some people never go beyond conviction. They're under great conviction, but they just won't believe. The result is that they do not experience conversion.

**Invitation to Everyone**

The invitation to everyone is to come to salvation on the basis of God's one grace way. The believer who is in temporal fellowship with a true grace gospel message, directed by the Holy Spirit, is the great evangelizing force of this Age of the Church. As people give you openings to speak to them of the gospel and of their eternal destiny, pick it up. You know, the gospel of the grace of God and the Holy Spirit is opening a door. You do your part, and He takes over from there. The invitation is to whoever wants to receive a resurrected, glorified body in order to live with God forever in joy unspeakable and full of glory in the New Jerusalem.

So, those who thirst for the water of life must first be told the gospel, and then they must be told to believe it. The gospel is that Jesus Christ has died and paid for all our sins. Sin is not a problem between us and God anymore. But if we don't believe that and accept that provision of atonement that has covered our sins, then we have nothing. It is the Holy Spirit who enables the elect sinner who believes to be saved.

So, this is a powerful combination: a Christian who is in temporal fellowship, knows the doctrine of salvation, and thus doesn't muddy it all up with a bunch of nonsense, and then the Spirit of God backing up what he has said. And the result is that there's a powerful testimony given: the spirit and the Bride working together, the Bride, the Church of Christ.

Furthermore, it [Revelation 22:17] speaks now about the recipients. "And let the one who hears say, 'come.'" "The one who hears" refers to those who have received the prophetic picture of Revelation and they believe it. They have constantly been listening, they actively have been learning, and now they have accepted that what has been revealed is what is going to actually happen to the world, and to the people in it. And so therefore, they pay attention.

People who are unbelievers waste their lives. People who are unbelievers are not normal. I always like to say that, especially if there are strangers and visitors in our midst, because I always can almost see them jerk at that. And that tells me a lot about them. Anybody who is not born again is abnormal. You cannot be a normal human being until you are spiritually alive, because part of you is dead. And unbelievers, because they are spiritually dead, simply waste their lives. They pursue many things and many pleasures, which never bring them peace with God or satisfaction to their souls. What they long for is the water of life to satisfy their natural soul's thirst for God.

The water of life, however, can only be found through believing the gospel of free grace salvation. Anyone who is positive to the invitation of the Holy Spirit and the Witnessing Believer can come to drink of this water of life. Isn't it ironic that the Bible uses this image of water of life to drink as a picture of free grace salvation, and religions take water and say that a religious act like water baptism is going to bring them to the water of life? That kind of water will keep you away from the water of life because it has interjected something that you depend upon beyond the gift of the grace of God.

**Believers Commanded to Witness**

[continuing with Revelation 22:17] "And let the one who hears say, 'Come.'" Here again, this is a command. Let them say come to whom? Those who hear and believe the gospel invitation are to invite others who thirst for the water of life. They who want eternal life, those who believe, are now to say, 'come.' But the believers themselves, you see, become channels for the water of life. Isn't that a dignity placed upon us? John 7:37-38, "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, [thirsty for God,] let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water."'" What a dignity that is upon the believers. When God says 'come to the waters of life,' He also says, 'the channel that delivers that water is you the Christian.' You become a stream of the water of life to every unbeliever. And if you have a polluted gospel, you give out a polluted stream that does not give people eternal life.

This command to 'come' is in a grammatical form that indicates that this invitation is open until the person passes into eternity, through death. Then it becomes too late to act upon the invitation. But those who know and who believe what we have found in the Book of the Revelation are themselves motivated to sound the alarm to the lost about the terrible judgment of the Tribulation which awaits them. Come into eternal fellowship with God and escape the horrors of the Tribulation; that's the message.

So, the Holy Spirit says, "Come." The Bride, the Church says "Come." And the witnessing Christian who knows prophecy says, "Come." And all are commands to the unsaved.

**Water of life Has No Cost**

Then it [Revelation 22:17] also says, "And let the one who is thirsty come." The one who is thirsty is the one who desires the water of life. He is told to come to take of the water of life and to take it "without cost." That is one of the great and marvelous truths of the Word of God that what God has provided in the way of salvation is provided to us without cost. Come and take the water of life and take it without cost. That theme was sounded forth by the Prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 55:1-3, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David." So, Isaiah understood this principle: come to God for everything that is satisfying in life. Salvation and material things, they'll all come into perspective. And you may come to this salvation and you may receive it freely. And along with it, God freely gives you all those other blessings that come to those of you who are in fellowship with Him and who walk in integrity with God. The Spirit of God, the Christian, the thirsty one, without any cost, offers the water of life.

**No Cost, But Must Be God's Way!**

Of course, what we are talking about is something that a human being has to do to receive the water of life. That is where many Christians go astray. That is where the devil has come in and he has brought confusion. Whole denominations have interjected an element into what they're doing that keeps them from having the water of life.

All we have to do is put a few verses together. Here's Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace, you have been saved through faith; and that [salvation] is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." So, God says, 'I'll give you salvation. I give it to you on the basis of a grace gift. I will not allow you to do anything whatsoever in order to earn the salvation because you can't do anything to contribute to what Christ has done. There's no ritual, there's no good works. There is no merit that you can offer to complete what Christ has done.

In the Book of Romans, that book devoted to telling us how to go to Heaven, we have an interesting example of an Old Testament believer being saved. Romans 4:1-2, "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God." Immediately, that verse tells us that Abraham was a justified believer. He had absolute righteousness; that's what justification means. He is going to be in Heaven. This was long before Christ the Savior was born. But he looks forward and believed God's promise that the Savior would come. And Abraham did not do this by works, or else he had something to brag about.

People who believe in infant baptism for the purpose of making that child a Christian and opening the door to eternal life for that child, base that upon the fact that the Jewish boy had to have the right of circumcision, circumcision performed on the eighth day in order to bring them into the covenant blessings. That authorized them to enjoy the blessings of the Covenant. And the Jews foolishly made the mistake of thinking that that ritual act brought them salvation. So, these denominations today say we baptize our infants for salvation in order to conform to what they did with circumcision in the Old Testament that brought them into the Commonwealth of Israel. But that Commonwealth of Israel did not mean they were Jews who were saved. They were Jews like Abraham, who before Christ ever came they performed the ritual of circumcision, but that was not the basis of his faith. That's the point of this passage.

Romans 4:3 says, "For what does the Scripture say? It says, 'AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.'" That's it, he believed God, that's what made him absolutely righteous. It was not his ritual of circumcision. Romans 4:4-8, "Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness," just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: 'BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.'" And who is that person? Abraham was one of them. And it's very clear from this passage it was on the basis of something that God gave him as a result of his faith, not on the basis of something that he did.

Then there's one more passage. Romans 11:6, speaking of salvation, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace." That passage tells us that you cannot add one single work to God's grace basis of giving you eternal life and still get eternal life. A lot of people say, 'well, God knows I'm sincere. I may have made a mistake about my taking the Lord's Supper to be saved, about my infant baptism, He knows I'm sincere.' If you are offering that to Him, you have robbed Him of the only basis on which He'll give you that salvation, which is grace. So, therefore, this becomes a very serious matter indeed.

**Faith is NOT a Work!**

And don't let somebody trick you into saying that faith is a work. Faith is not a work. Faith is simply a non-meritorious act of recognizing that something is true or not true. You don't do something in faith.

Several years ago, I think I told you before, when I was at the ski slopes in Winter Park, I was out skiing by myself and got on the lift. And a man got on with me and we began talking. And I don't know what he said, but he found out that I was a minister. I think I had my mask off. That's why he could tell. But usually I keep my mask and goggles on. So I asked him what church he went to. He said I go to the Church of God. I said, is that related to the Church of Christ? He said, 'yes, we're the same group, except we'll have pianos and instruments in the service and they won't.' So, I said, 'well, then you must believe that water baptism is part of salvation.' [he responded] 'Yes, yes.' 'Well,' I said, 'do you believe that salvation is by the grace of God?' [he responded] 'Oh, yes, it is by the grace of God.' Then I said 'doesn't it disturb you that the water baptism that you're offering God as part of salvation, is a human work?' About that time we had gotten to the end of the lift and were coming down to the exit, we had to get off the lift. When we got to the bottom, and stood at the top of the mountain, he says, 'Well, faith is a work too, ya' know?' I said, 'Oh, well then you don't really believe in salvation without works.' And he turned around and sped off down the mountain and left me standing there all alone with the wintry winds blowing about me because he recognized that he had been hoisted on his own petard, whatever that means.

This guy said, 'Oh, I believe in salvation by the grace of God, no works.' Then he says, 'Faith is a work.'

Well if faith is a work, then you must be saved by works. You see, faith is not a work and don't fall into that trap. Faith is a non-meritorious fact. You just recognize something is true or not true.

**Summary of the Doctrine of Salvation by Faith**

So, let's take a look this evening to tie this up: the Doctrine of Salvation by Faith summarized.

**The Different Greek Words for Faith**

The use of the word faith and believe in classical Greek - the noun faith meant the trust that one placed in people or in the gods. They trusted in God. Thus they had faith in the gods. The verb to believe in classical Greek meant to trust someone or something, thus to trust or to rely upon that person. So from the ancient use of the Greek language, whenever they said believe, or to believe, it meant simply to trust.

There are some examples in the use of this that we have from Greek manuscripts. On one manuscript, there's a record that says, quote, "Whom no one would trust even if they were willing to work." This refers to confidence in a person's character and in his motives. And when it uses the word trust, it's our Greek New Testament word for believe. Nobody would believe in him, trust him.

Another sentence we have from the Greek writings, quote, "I have trusted no one to take it to her." This refers to confidence in the ability of another to perform a certain task. I have believed in no one to take it to her. That is, I don't trust anybody to do this. So, it is very clear from the Greek language that the word believe means simply trust or to depend upon.

In the religions of the Greek, the Greek mystery religions, the secret religions descended from Nimrod, they use the word faith to mean that you abandon yourself to the gods by following their instructions and their teachings and by putting yourself under the under the protection of the gods. They secured salvation, they believe, by personal divination. They believe they became saved by themselves becoming gods. They did this by faith in their gods.

Now in the New Testament, we have these basic Greek words, and it is important that you understand them. The word for faith is a Greek word, pistis, p i s t i s. This word means to trust or to have a reliance or confidence. To believe, the verb, is pisteuo, p i s t e u o. All this means [is] to be convinced of something, to give credence to something, to rely upon a person or a thing. The overwhelming majority of cases in the New Testament when these words are used, their meaning is to trust or to have a reliance. It is a subjective sense you depending on something or someone else.

When it comes to salvation, these words become very technical. Faith and believe are used as technical terms as the means to salvation. Both words connote a self-renouncing trustful reliance on God for eternal life. In practice, the words mean believing what God is revealed. That's why we say you must believe the gospel. In the Bible, the belief is in what God is revealed in the Bible, then you act accordingly.

So, faith and believe are used in the New Testament to express the idea of unqualified acceptance of an exclusive dependence on the mediation of Jesus Christ alone to secure the mercy of God the Father in salvation based upon His own death and His own provision for you. This is pointed out by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5. "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." There's no one between you and God except Christ. He is the object of that faith.

Sometimes the Bible uses the word faith in what we would say is an objective sense, that is that it is used to describe the body of doctrine that the Bible teaches. And doctrine as a whole is referred to as 'the faith,' this is our creed, this is what we believe, and this is what is to be believed by men. Jude 3, Galatians 1:23, 1 Timothy 4:1 and 6, 1 Timothy 6:20-21, all speak about the faith, referring to doctrine as a body of truth.

Sometimes the noun 'faith' is used in the sense of faithfulness or trustworthiness. We have that in Romans 3:3 where God is said to be trustworthy, in Matthew 23:23, Galatians 5:22, and Titus 2:10. Those verses speak about a certain person being trustworthy.

Sometimes the word faith is used to describe the trust which produces miracles. Matthew 17:20, Matthew 15:28, and Acts 14:9 use the word faith as the thing that triggered a miracle. This does not mean we have no evidence in the Bible that any miraculous act like healing was the result of the person believing. One classic example of that, of course, is the lame man begging for alms at the temple entrance when Peter and John walked up. And the last thing on his mind was believing that these apostles were bearing the power of God and could heal him. But instead, Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold to give you, but such as I have, I will give you. In the name of Jesus Christ, arise and walk." Peter says, 'I can heal you, I can do that for you. I can't give money, but I can heal you.' Now the man didn't have the foggiest notion about being healed. But suddenly he felt something in his ankles and where he had been lame from birth, his legs snap together, and he jumped up and found he could run leaping with great joy. So, the word faith is used to describe sometimes the trust that does produce a miracle.

**God's Way to Secure Eternal Life**

So, now let's get to the biblical method of securing eternal life. It is what is connoted by these words for faith and to believe. It's to have faith in God and to believe the gospel message about the death of Christ for the sins of the world, period, and that's it! You cannot find anything else in the Bible to tell you how to go to Heaven except just that! You believe the gospel on the basis of the fact that you have faith in God who revealed it to you.

In the New Testament, faith in God is defined as trusting in Jesus Christ and acknowledging Him as your Savior because He is the incarnate Son of God. 1 John 2:23-24 and 2 John 9 refer to that. In the New Testament, faith means receiving a message of salvation expressed in the gospel as being true and trusting one's eternal destiny to it. It means, 'yes, I believe John 3:16. Yes, I believe that Christ died for my sins and that God the Father has been propitiated. He's been satisfied concerning my moral guilt. All I have to do is accept the gifts of salvation. That's it. My eternal destiny is dependent upon my trusting what Christ has done. I cannot add anything. I dare not add anything because then it cannot be a gift.'

Saving faith is trust in the historic event of Christ's death on the cross for one's sins. So, turning to God for salvation in the Bible is described as believing something. 1 Corinthians 15:2 and 15:11. Salvation is described as believing, and that is the word that we constantly have. Here in Revelation 22:17 it is described as drinking the water of light. Those who are saved are referred to in the New Testament as people who have believed; that is the emphasis upon describing them. Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." So, a person who has experienced the power of God and salvation, is that because he believes something. In Romans 3:22, "even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;" You can be a Jew or Greek or whatever, if you believe the gospel you will be saved. Romans 4:11, once more, those who are saved are referred to as those who have believed something. "and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness must be reckoned to them." This, of course, is speaking of Abraham. It says that Abraham was circumcised as the seal of righteousness of faith, the faith he already had before he was circumcised. Before he performed this religious ritual, he already was saved by faith in the Savior that God had promised to bring. He was going to be the father, therefore, of all who would believe and trust without any ritual act. Got it?

The father of all who believe without being circumcised. You put in whatever you want there: the father who would believe without water baptism, the father of all who believe without the mass, the father of all who believe without good works, the father of all who believe without anything that righteousness might be reckoned to them. You see, righteousness has to be given to you, imputed to you. The same in 1 Corinthians 1:21.

So, what is the condition to be saved? The sole condition for salvation is Acts 16:31: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Now you should know that believe means trust in Him and depend upon Him on the basis of what He did on the cross that has covered your moral guilt, that will take you to Heaven. Faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior secures our present permanent possession of eternal life in fellowship with God the Father.

If you ever find yourself associated with a group of Christians who are being told it is possible for them to lose their salvation, you should get out and flee like the plague is about to fall upon you. That is a deadly, deadly, spiritual plague. Scientists today are giving us some insight as to how billions of people will die very rapidly in the Tribulation from disease; that's been a little hard to understand. But suddenly now they've got a terrific scare in Virginia at one of the government laboratories when they have brought over about 40 or 50 monkeys from Africa and they discovered that these monkeys had some kind of a curious disease. When it broke out, they passed it from one to the other. The monkeys were dying in 48 hours because out of every opening of the body, they were bleeding blood. And this virus was eating up every cell in the body. A couple of the technicians had opened the vial that carried that germ or virus, whichever it is, and they had wafted it over to try to get an odor because they were trying to identify it. Fortunately, they hadn't inhaled it or they would have had that disaster to them. People who have been hit with this disease, in 48 hours, they're gone. Their body literally eats itself up before their very eyes. So, we are dealing here with the condition that is desperate and for which there is no solution but for us to depend upon God to solve it. Only God can solve the desperate solutions of our spiritual deterioration. If you interject the virus of human works, religious activity, into the faith basis, you're gone.

When somebody does interject human works, that's why they say, 'I hope I'm going to go to Heaven.' You go, are you going to Heaven? 'I hope so.' Are you saved? 'I think so.' Can you be lost? 'Yes.' How? 'Well if I perform a bad sin, a gross sin.' Usually it's some sweet old lady who would know a gross sin from a vanilla sin, but the idea is that they can get away with a lot except bad sin. That's a Catholic idea of mortal and venal sins, some you can't have forgiven, others you can. That's another doctrine of Satan. It pops up in Mormonism. You know how it pops up in Mormonism? Mormonism says that there are certain sins that are so bad that the blood of Christ alone will not cover it, you must shed your own blood on behalf of it. That's why in the state of Utah, dominated by Mormons, you can choose to be executed by firing squad so that you may shed your blood for your crime that the blood of Christ would not cover. Footprints of Satan are all over these religious systems and they all have one thing in common: you add something to what God has done and then it'll be perfect.

Faith says I don't add anything. Believing the Word of God says, "I believe what it says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and I will be saved.'" John 5:24 is the verse we're looking for here. Faith in Jesus Christ the Savior secures a permanent relationship to eternal life. John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, [cannot be eternal life if it could ever be terminated. You see, it can't be 6 weeks of life, a week of life, or until I misbehave life. It is eternal life because it is God's life now interjected in you] and does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life." He never comes back into a position of judgment because it is a work of God. Of course, the famous John 10:28-29, says we're in God's hands, in Christ hands, and nobody can remove us. So, faith is not a meritorious act in salvation. It is simply an appropriating instrument.

Faith in itself has no value. The idea that if you just believe all will be well, that's nonsense. It is what you're believing in that makes a difference. The object of faith is what gives it its values. The subject himself receives no credit for what the object is. You can't just have an optimistic attitude and call that faith. Faith in the Bible that is saving is faith in Jesus Christ. As a Christian, what is our faith in? Our faith is in the Word of God. That is what we believe. The object of faith in salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ. The object of faith in a believer is the Word of God taking him to spiritual maturity.

Saving faith rests upon the testimony of a God who cannot lie, Titus 1:2 tells us. Faith rests on the testimony of some authority. Whether a belief is a known certainty or doubtful opinion, its value is based upon the authority who tells you that. And the Word of God provides us with a true knowledge of faith. And the Bible has proved itself to be reliable authority. It has no error in it, and it always tells what is true. Faith and knowledge thus, are 2 processes which cannot be divorced from one another. Salvation is faith in the knowledge of what Scripture has told us. Salvation thus is not based on believing a gospel which is a mere speculation, but one which in fact is true by the statement of God.

The nature of saving faith is knowing it, believing it and accepting, trusting it, believing God's testimony concerning the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There is no differentiation between head and heart belief. The word heart in the New Testament represents the mentality of the soul. Romans 10:10, you believe with the heart. The heart to us means emotion. You cannot believe with your emotions. The heart in the Bible means the mentality.

There is a difference between head knowledge, of a head belief, and a knowledge of trust in Jesus Christ. Saving faith thus is a mental assent that commits you to Christ. Saving faith is submission to the truth of the Scriptures. But the only way you can do that is when you know and you mentally make the decision to go with it.

Furthermore, repentance is not a separate function from believing in Jesus Christ. Repentance means to change your mind. You can't change your mind about sin without changing your mind about Christ. You turn from your sins. The only place you can turn to Christ. Receiving Jesus Christ is defined as believing on His name as the Savior.

You cannot discover spiritual truth by human reason. The Bible is replete with telling us that we must have the revelation of God. Reason is always subordinate to faith. It is not opposed to it. The truths of revelation are beyond reason. God has to tell us how these things can be done, and faith is the only system of perception which will provide spiritual truths and understanding. The only other way you can learn things is by empiricism, your actual experience, but you will never come to salvation that way. The other way of salvation is by your rationalism, your reason. You could never think your way to salvation. The only way you can come to salvation is by the method of faith gaining knowledge.

Believing in the Savior in Jesus Christ as one's Savior, we reverse everything that we have lost in Adam's fall. The early missionaries always centered their message on the act of faith, the act of believing the Gospel. That was true of the apostle Paul. That has been true through the ages of Christian missionaries. They have stressed what the Bible stressed, believing.

**Caution About "Modern" Catchphrases**

So, I caution you about the modern pop Christianity phrases. You should not use them. They're distracting to the unbelievers, but they're considered cool and they are considered to be a sign of being in with the real religious gang of our day.

So, they say invite Jesus Christ into your heart, or invite Jesus Christ into your life. Boy, the red signals ought to fly in your mind. The red lights should go flashing because you know you're listening to someone who does not understand the principle of faith and believing that we've been talking about tonight, which is the way that you can come to drink the water of life.

Somebody says, "Reach out and take the Savior's hand." The phone companies use that same expression: reach out and take the phone companies bill. But you don't reach out and take the Savior's hand. The Bible makes it clear that no one seeks after God.

"Make Christ Savior and Lord in your life" - but they don't say it that way, do they? They say, make Christ Lord and Savior, they even get it backwards. They're going to say that you have to make Him savior first and then you can make Him Lord. You do that [making Him Lord] by full temporal fellowship, walking with Him, confession of known sins. But that is not the invitation to make Christ savior and Lord. The invitation is to make him Savior. Lord is something else.

"Open your heart's door to the Savior - A little booklet put out by Campus Crusade, The 4 Spiritual Laws, uses the verse in Revelation 20 about Christ knocking at the heart's door, to open the door. They use that as the way one becomes saved. I remember on one occasion at a meeting, pointing that out to one of their officials, that that verse does not apply to unbelievers, but to Christians. It is Christ knocking at the heart door of a Christian who is out of fellowship and wants you to confess and admit and come back to walking with Him. He says, "Well, yes, that's true. We know that. But it seems like such a good verse to use." So, you are deliberately saying we know that isn't what God the Holy Spirit meant by that verse, but we're going to use it because we like the picture of knocking on the door. Who's that knocking on my door... just moves the soul, doesn't it? As a Christian, it should. But it's wrong to tell that to an unbeliever.

All of these phrases, many more, only divert the unbeliever from understanding the biblical requirements, believe the gospel, trust in Jesus Christ.

Faith is the basic system for gaining knowledge in all areas of life. Genuine faith responds to the Word of God with good works. Yes, you do perform good works, but you do that after you're saved. And it is faith that makes Christ so very real to all of us.

We may strengthen our faith by taking in the Word of God, maintaining our temporal fellowship, exercising the faith rest technique, and certainly by our occupation with Christ. Those are all great principles which we can't get into tonight.

So, we sum it up. You want to come to the water of life, you have to do it on the basis of faith, because Christianity is the unique faith event. The absolute righteousness of God for your personal justification can only be obtained by means of faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. The absolute righteousness of God is always available for such faith in Christ without exception. So, the regenerated believer lives by faith in the Word of God. The Christian life is a faith event from start to finish.

**Benediction**

Our Heavenly Father it is a great joy and a great sense of relief that we know we can come to the water of life on the basis of such a simple act as faith in the gospel. We can drink our fill. When we have drunk that water through faith in Christ, we ourselves become channels of that divine faith, that water of life. We know that when we have drunk of this water, we will live forever. Like Jesus said to the woman of the well, the water that she was drinking, she would have to drink again and eventually she would die, but if she would drink the water of life that He was offering, she would live forever. We thank Thee that Thou has led us to an understanding of that principle and that we have by our faith in Christ, drunk of that water of life. Thank you for our evening together. Bless these offerings which we bring to Thee and take us safely to our homes and rejoicing this week.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1989

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