

What is Saving Faith?

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[0 : 00] I'm curious, how many of you like creme brulee?! That has been glazed with a little propane torch, right?

And then when you're getting at least a Cap City, and that happens to be a very nice restaurant, which my wife likes a lot, you have real whipped cream.

I'm not talking about that squirty stuff that comes in a bottle. You can put that in your mouth and go, you know, and not let anybody else know that you did that. But anyway, you know how it is. Don't come to my house for Thanksgiving dinner, right?

You know, real cream, and then on top of that are strawberries and, you know, raspberries and other things like that. The reason I bring this up is not because I want you to be kind of sitting here obsessing about food.

But as I was listening this morning to our singing together, and I am blessed by the way you sing. I have to tell you that listening to the woodwinds just knocked me out.

[1 : 32] Jeff, thank you. Kristen, and where is Angela? Angela, where are you? Okay, you sit towards the front. Yeah, that's like a throw me off. Okay, but I've got to tell you. How many of you like that?

I mean, we're just having a great time. And, oh, man, the woodwinds are in there. Just the right moment is like, yes! That's like the sugar that got glazed over top of the creme brulee.

Real good. Thank you, guys. What a blessing. My heart is full this morning. I suppose you would expect that if you pray for me, right?

Because when a man is instructed by God to preach the word faithfully, and he studies, and he prays, and you pray for him, what should happen is that he has a full heart to communicate to you the glory of Christ.

And so this morning, as you turn in your Bible, we're going to go to two different places in order to get to the main place.

[2 : 39] And I do that because I want to set something clearly in your mind. Go to Matthew chapter 7, if you would, first. Matthew chapter 7 is one of the more, well, this little piece that I'm going to refer to is one of the more sober texts.

Matthew chapter 7, verse 21, and I don't know if you have it underlined in your Bible. If you don't, I would encourage you to do it. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

We're all Lord, Lord people here. Do you follow? More or less. For the most part, you who have come today have decided that you're not going to rake leaves. You're not going to sleep in.

You're not going to watch something that you kind of recorded on DVR and decided, you know, like the football game or whatever. You're here to worship. But I want you to understand that Scripture gives us some sober thoughts in relationship to it.

And the truth of the matter is, is I pray for you as a congregation and I think about your faces and your lives. And I know, Tim Kenoyer doesn't know the hearts of men.

[3 : 58] I don't. Only God does. But one of the desires I have is that there would never be anybody who sits under the teaching of the Word of God here that does not come to grips regularly with the authenticity of their faith.

Do I really have what I think I have? So that in that last hour, in that moment when you step from this place into eternity, that you are not stunned to discover that where you thought you were going is not where you're going.

And I bring that by way of background because now we go to the passage we're going to study together. We're in John chapter 3. And we're in verse 23.

Now when he was in Jerusalem in the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. Stop just for a moment.

A little bit of Bible lesson that will help you in the remainder of your life. The books in the Bible are written in general with a certain thematic flow to them.

[5 : 21] There is a recurring melody. It's the line that kind of holds things together. And in the book of John in particular, the recurring melody is given to us, strangely enough, at the end of the book.

Does anybody know what it is? John chapter 20 verse... Hey, you should know this by now. Turn in your Bibles to John.

Hey, listen, if I'm not getting you to get this one, we're having trouble today. Hey, I want you to know. Why did John write the book? I don't know. I don't think pastors ever said that before.

You know, or if he did, it wasn't important to remember. You know, whatever. Here we go. John chapter 20. Why did he write the book? These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

And believing that you might have everlasting life. Why did John write his book? It's so that you can know Jesus is the Son of God and you can believe in him so that you can have everlasting life.

[6 : 35] I, as we were having our team lead us in our opening song, and some of the things we're scrolling behind here, I noticed the man that is in prison, been there since 10, 2010 in Iran.

John, and he has been physically abused. He's been mentally abused. He's suffered for the testimony of Christ. And he said that his spirit, remember what it said there?

That his spirit is not flagged under that adversity because he knows this. I know Christ. He says, I am in my beloved and my beloved's in me. I know my relationship with Christ.

They can't take that from me. And so as we look this morning, we're looking at a passage in which the apostle, remember that theme, all that I'm writing, John says, is so that you can know Jesus is the Son of God and that knowing him, you can have everlasting life.

That's what he's interested in. That being the case, we come to verse 23, and it says, Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name.

[7 : 55] Wow, that's good news, you'd think. What we are going to study this morning is really what is saving faith? What is saving faith?

Over the years of pastoral ministry, growing up in a Christian home, I've seen many who have been baptized. I've seen many come forward at various times in services and make professions of faith, and then you look later on and you see that their life and walk doesn't come anywhere near what the gospel indicates are the markers of genuine conversion.

And so as we look at this passage this morning, what we are going to see, first of all, is a belief that doesn't save. And I want you to look at that, if you will.

As we take up the text, there in verse 23, it says, Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name. When? When? When? When? They saw the signs that he was doing.

And so as we look at this, we notice that the early signs that Jesus performed were pretty convincing. Remember that John only records a small percentage.

[9 : 13] I was in my own personal devotions. I'm in the process of reading through John. Strange thing that I would be doing, right? I did that two years ago before I actually began studying for John.

But having finished the reading plan that I had, I thought, well, hey, I happen to like the book of John, so let's do that. And about every five days, I go back, six days, go back through it again.

And I hit that issue of belief and recognized in the, I think it's in chapter 8 or something, it says, and this is the second sign. Well, there are a lot more signs than two, but John only picks out a couple of them.

And in the passage that we're looking at, it is quite evident that a lot of people saw Jesus doing signs that were undeniably miraculous.

There was no way of discrediting them. And as you look at the following verses, however, you will find that despite the fact that they believed in him, and that's what it says in verse 23, they believed in his name even.

[10 : 19] It's evident from the passage that Jesus did not trust himself to them. And we have to understand that these were people who, while they had a form of belief, really did not have saving faith.

And so, if we were to carry the group here in John chapter 2 back over into the Matthew passage that we looked at, we'd have to say that many of them on that day will hear Jesus say, I never knew you.

Well, yeah, but we said, Lord, Lord, remember when you turned the water into wine? We were impressed. Or when you did this, we were impressed. Well, let's pay attention, however, to what is actually being said because it's important.

And so, I normally don't get into the Greek on this thing, but I think it helps us. The Greek word for belief or trust is used both in verse 23, pistou, you don't need to know all the details of it, but it says, many believed, they pistou, they believed in his name.

But then in verse 24, it says, but Jesus on his part did not believe in them, in essence. And here are people who believed in Jesus, but Jesus didn't believe in them.

[11:35] These are people who trusted in Jesus, but Jesus didn't trust in them. And so, you stop and ask yourself the question, what really is going on? And what we understand in this passage is that John wants us to understand that not every confession, not every belief that individuals may have is genuine.

It's not saving faith. And we come to that point of recognizing what we see there in verse 24, but Jesus on his part did not entrust, did not entrust himself to them.

It is letting us know that these are people who, even though they profess to believe in Jesus, they really were not converted. They were not saved. And it's interesting to actually find there are a number of different passages in Scripture where this issue of believing in Jesus and not really having genuine faith play out.

I want you to look at a couple illustrations of that. One, I'm going to take one of the longest passages in John, and I'm going to go push it together in one little bit. So bear with me.

By the way, how many of you know that John chapter 6 is one of those mega chapters? John chapter 6 has lots of verses if you're trying to read through a chapter at a time or whatever. John 6 begins, and let's kind of skip ahead just to set the context just for a moment.

[13:02] You'll remember that what happened in John 6 is that Jesus did a miracle, and he took five barley loaves. I actually did some research to find out what barley bread is like.

Just curiosity, probably going to bake it at home before we get to John 6 just to be able to say, I know what it's like, you know. But barley loaves and a couple fish, and out of the result of that, he fed a bundle of people.

And as a result of that, look at what it says in verse 14. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, this is indeed the prophet who has come into the world.

You know, Thanksgiving dinner is coming. It's in the distant future, but it is coming. And we all know that in order to have a happy Thanksgiving dinner, it's going to take a lot of people working a lot of time to pull it off.

Correct? Here were people out in the middle of nowhere, and they all ate their fill, and they were quite impressed with what had happened.

[14:08] However, what we see as we work our way through there is that their belief in Jesus did not really produce a belief that was saving. They believed, perhaps, even that he was the Messiah.

But their interest in him as their Messiah was not someone coming to save them from their sins, but someone to save them from their political mess that they were in.

I kind of chuckle at Christians today that believe that messianic opportunity lies with one party or another. You know what? It doesn't. And the greatest interest that the Lord has in our well-being is not the politics of the moment, but our eternal destiny.

And Jesus, as he was dealing with these people and their interest in basic, hey, we want to make you king so you can do all these good things for us, he said, well, let me, why don't you give me a couple minutes here to preach?

And he preached a sermon that was an absolute zinger. And when it was done, it says that they all came to the point of saying, well, this is too much for us, it's too hard for us.

[15:20] And off they went. In fact, there were only the disciples, his apostles left, and he turns to them and says, are you going to? And Peter said, hey, where are we going?

You're the only one who has the words. I bring John chapter 6 to you because as you look at this, here's a classic illustration of people who believed the miracles but didn't believe in Jesus.

Probably another one that is even better is over in John chapter 7. Only three verses you can get this one, three, four, five. Here we go, John chapter 7. These are his famous brothers.

How many of you knew that Jesus actually had real brothers? R-E-A-L, real brothers. Does the Bible lie? No, the Bible doesn't lie. They're half brothers. But here we go.

Let's look at John chapter 7, verse 3. So his brothers said to him, hey. There's no hey in the scriptures. Leave here and go to Judea that your disciples may also see the works you are doing.

[16:22] For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world. Now look at verse 5. For not even his brothers believed in him.

What did they believe in? They believed he could do miracles. But they didn't believe that Jesus was the answer for the deepest problem they had, which was their sinful, wicked hearts.

So I want to remind you in the Bible that not every confession of faith is genuine. There's another one that in witnessing I have opportunity to use periodically.

And you don't need to turn to it, but it might be one of those that you tuck away and remember.

Because you'll have opportunity when you're talking with people about Christ. James chapter 2, verse 19. You say that you believe that there is one God.

How many of you can finish it off for me? You do well. Big deal. Even the demons believe and tremble. You see, just coming to grips with the fact that God exists is not sufficient.

[17:37] To bring eternal life or to gain eternal life. And so what we do need to know from this passage, going back to John chapter 2, is something about genuine faith.

In order to get there, let me begin, first of all, by pointing out that genuine faith is more than an acceptance of fact. Genuine faith is more than acceptance of fact.

I have no argument with those who engage in, hang on just a second, apologetics. Apologetics is the science of kind of putting together arguments for creation and putting together arguments for the sinfulness of man's hearts and different things like that.

But at the end of the day, here's what I know. That in the final analysis, people are not brought to the cross by apologetics. Because it's not just the facts that bring people to faith.

The demons had the facts. In the tribulation, and I want you to understand this, in the tribulation, God is going to tag people with more facts than they can take.

[18:49] And over and over again, the outcome of being hit by the facts of God's holiness and his judgment is going to be nothing other than brute rebellion against the truth.

You've heard the little saying, haven't you? A man persuaded against his will is of the same opinion still. Someone who has their mind made up is not going to have it changed by facts.

Secondly, I want you to understand that true faith is more than being moved emotionally. In case anybody here has a question about it, I want to confess that I'm an emotional person. It's just the way I was hardwired.

But one of the things I've learned a long time ago is that emotion doesn't really make the bus move. I mean, you know, crying in the bus seat doesn't make it go. And, you know, you can have emotion, you can be moved emotionally, and whatever, but it's not the same as the converting power of the Spirit of God.

That's one of the reasons why... Should I go there? Yes, I will. Why, I'm not one of those individuals who thinks we have to pay 19 verses of just as I am, because if God's working in your heart, he doesn't need one verse.

[20:08] And if he isn't working in your heart, then 19 verses really don't get it done. If the Spirit of God is convicting you, he will draw you to himself, and you will be deeply persuaded of the sinfulness of your soul and your absolute inability to save yourself.

Now, having said that, am I against emotion when we sing? Not in your life. I think emotion is a good thing.

When I tell my wife I love her, there's some emotion in that. And when I sing to Jesus, there's emotion in that. And I get excited when I think about Christ. As I was driving here this morning, I was thinking about, wow, I'm going to be with people that I enjoy being with, and I'm going to sing about Jesus, and we're going to make the place rock.

You know, it's like, that's what I was thinking. That's the truth. But you know what? Apart from the enabling of the Spirit of God, that's all phony baloney.

We have to have the Spirit help us. That's why I was praying this morning over and over again, Holy Spirit, work in Tim Kenoyer's life that I may worship you in spirit and in truth. Well, true faith is not

just mere emotion.

[21 : 23] True faith is even more than being carried away by some supernatural event. The miracles that Jesus did were truly signs of his deity.

And yet, the vast majority of people that were actually on site and saw the miracles and enjoyed the miracles really didn't have their lives changed.

Let me give you a couple of illustrations. I mean, the crowd that ate the barley and the fish, I really don't know about what it was like, but I can tell you this, if Jesus made it, it was five stars.

In fact, I bet you there were people in the crowd saying, Man, that is the best barley and fish I've ever had. I thought my wife was a reasonably good cook, but whoever Jesus has in the kitchen is better than she is.

You know, it was knockout dead gorgeous. It was good food. And they believed in him, but not for faith. People who saw Lazarus come staggering out of the grave, he'd been in there for four days.

[22 : 31] You understand, F-O-U-R, four days. Remember when they said, roll the stone away, what the sisters said? By now he's stinking.

You know, and roll it away. Get it out of there. And out he comes with the grave. I mean, that was a scene for Trunk or Treat, you know. Lazarus, you know, coming out of the grave.

You know, it's like, I mean, to tell you, it was impressive. And here's the deal. So many people believed that the Jews decided they needed to do something about Lazarus on top of Jesus.

Did they believe? Evidently not. As I recited before, during the tribulation, there will be one miraculous event after another that people will fully know was the work of God.

I mean, I have heard some people make kind of lame-brained statements like, you know what? If we could just ever get into Turkey and find where the ark really is, then people would believe.

[23 : 46] No. Or if, you know, people go off. People don't need more information. They need to work with the Spirit of God. So let's come back to this.

Saving faith happens because of the grace of God. How is it that you come to faith? Well, it's not because you're smarter than your brother or your sister or somebody else.

It is because the Spirit of God has worked to bring you to that place where you understand the absolute darkness of your soul. And you are convicted that apart from his grace and salvation, you have no hope.

And like an absolute impoverished, wounded individual, you cry out and say, Jesus, I need you.

And he saves you. And Ephesians 2, verse 8 and 9 hammers the point.

It says, for by grace you're saved. I mean, that's how we get saved. And saving faith rests its all on Christ alone for forgiveness, for sin, and for salvation.

[24 : 47] And as you look at this passage, you find people who, hey, they were believing in the things that Jesus did, but they weren't believing in the thing Jesus came to do. And so the question for you sitting here this morning, remember, John is all about, hey, I want you to be fully persuaded that Jesus is the Son of God so that you can have saving faith.

And it is a legitimate exercise to sit here and say, do I have it? Do I have it? There are some of you sitting here, when you really stop and think about it, apart from maybe an emotional moment when you made a decision, you have seen no evidence of the transforming power of the gospel.

Your life is still enslaved to bitterness. And underneath there is that spirit of discontent and dissatisfaction and a foreboding uncertainty of what your future is.

I can tell you, as you look at this passage, one of the things that should happen is you should sit there and say, well, I don't know if I have the real thing. And if you're sitting there and you don't know that you have the real thing, guess what?

The best time to zero in on whether you have the real thing or not is before you die. John chapter 2, verse 24.

[26 : 21] We come to the second piece. Remember, John is all about, hey, I'm telling you these things so that you know Jesus is the Son of God. That's why it's here. And now we have another sign of Christ's deity.

Now, there are many of our men who are married to incredibly sharp wives. Who said that? Tom? I agree.

I read something on Facebook that was really kind of humorous. We'll go there. Scott, something who is a missionary in Brazil, said that behind every successful man, you've heard the statement is an exceptional wife or an intelligent wife or something like that.

In Brazil, the saying is behind every successful man is a surprised wife. I thought that was inappropriate. But I thought I'd mention it so you could remember that I said something like that before. Here we go.

Don't go south. Stay with me. We do think that we married incredibly brilliant women. That's an intelligent thing to think.

[27 : 31] You did pick her with God's help. And parents can seem to be so profoundly perceptive. My children sometimes wondered how I knew some of the things that they were doing.

And my secret comment was, duh, I gave you the genetic code. The bad things you're thinking about already did.

I know. But then when I really didn't know, then there was that scary prayer that I would always tell my children I would pray. And it was this. It said, I don't know what you're doing, but I'm going to pray and ask God to bring it to my attention.

It was like, huh? Don't do that. I'll tell you. Okay. Here's the deal. When your wife says, I know what you're thinking, she doesn't.

She might be making an intelligent guess based on history, but she really doesn't know what you're thinking. And the way I can tell you she doesn't know is the Bible says so.

[28 : 36] 1 Corinthians 2, verse 11, kind of give you a free rendition of it. Here's what it says. It says, a man doesn't know what a man's thinking unless a man tells him. Kind of press that together. You don't know what I'm thinking until I tell you.

And I don't know what you're thinking until you tell me. That's one of the reasons why in counseling, biblical counselors spend the predominant amount of time listening to people talk.

Do you know why? They're gathering information on what the person thinks. And I love doing that. I kind of sit there and let people just kind of spill it all over the floor.

It's like, go ahead, drop pickup sticks. That's my job. Get them all over there. And then what I do is, didn't you say this? I guess I did.

And didn't you say that? Yeah, I guess I did. Well, you know, if I put those things together, it sounds like you have a pretty bitter spirit. I do not have a bitter spirit. No, no, no. I'm just saying, this is what you said, right?

[29 : 36] Self-indictment is just a real trump card. Okay, so here we go. 1 Corinthians 2 says, you don't know what another person's thinking. And in the Bible, it kind of hammers on this point.

Only God really knows what's going on inside of a person. Keep your finger there in John chapter 2 and go back to Jeremiah chapter 17.

Jeremiah really tags us about three or four times, and I just chose one of them. A good passage, but one that is repeated. Jeremiah chapter 17, verse 10. I, the Lord, search the heart and test the mind.

When your wife says, I know what you're thinking, she doesn't. When God says, I know what you're thinking, he does. In fact, to take it a little further on the basis of Psalm 139, he knows what I'm thinking before I think it.

No surprises. I want you to understand that as you look here at John chapter 2, we're dealing with the fact that here's Jesus who, it says, Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about men, for he himself knew what was in man.

[30 : 56] And that's an indication of the fact that Jesus is indeed the second person of the Trinity. He's God. He knows what you're thinking.

And he knows exactly what's in your heart. He knows and he pays attention to it. Now, is there benefit in that? Oh, yes. In fact, you would do well to remind yourself often that Jesus knows what you're thinking.

Because what happens a lot of times in all of our minds, mine included, is that we have a thought, and then we kind of think that since it's private, we'll mull on it.

How many of you know what it means to mull? I mean, it's kind of roll it over and over again. For me, it's when I get into attitudes. How many of you know what attitudes are? Attitudes, you know, it's like getting kind of a negative spirit towards something.

I shared with people on Wednesday night that I got a speeding ticket last week. I deserved it. But I will tell you that about three or four times in the days that followed, especially when I found out that I have to pay \$150, and that comes out of my hunting fund.

[32 : 11] I was saying, yeah, drop your jaw and join me in my, ah! I found myself struggling with an attitude, and I thought, you know what, Jesus?

And I had to talk about that. You know, I was like, Lord, I can either choose right now to indulge myself in wickedness, or I can confess that you are the Lord of this universe and in control of things, and I would have been paying better attention.

I should follow the law. So anyway, Jesus knows. And all you have to do is think about the different passages where Jesus did this. Two that I'll just kind of draw your attention to your attention.

One is when the paralytic was lowered through the roof. Remember that miracle? His friends really wanted the paralytic to be healed, and so they tore the roof apart. They let the guy down right in front of Jesus.

And what's the first thing that Jesus says? Huh? What was the first thing? He said, now listen, they had brought him for a little bit of leg healing, you know.

[33 : 20] And Jesus says, hey, your sins are forgiven. And there are all those Pharisees thinking, who can forgive sin but God alone? And Jesus says, hey, that's a good question.

So let me show you something. Hey, get up and take your bed and walk. Now, which was easier to do? Neither. Were they equally as hard?

Yes. Jesus knew. That had to be profoundly unnerving. To be a Pharisee, having an attitude towards Jesus when you're in a crowd and remembering the last three times he dinged you for what you were thinking secretly.

Should I think? He'll read my mind. No, don't go. Don't. Oh, well, I'm going to anyway. Case in point, Luke chapter 6.

There was a man who's paralyzed, you know, paralytic. And he's in front of Jesus on the Sabbath. And all the Pharisees, you know what they're watching? I wonder if he's going to heal on the Sabbath.

[34 : 21] Well, I'm going to add that to the checklist of bad things he's done. And Jesus says, hey, I know what you're... I was trying to get... You know, you want to see if I'm going to heal this guy? Bing!

There it is! Well, you know, when I think about this, the thing that just blows me away is that he knows each of our hearts and he still loves us.

I don't know about you, but that just tears me up when I stop and think about it. One of the things that I look forward to in heaven, and I will enjoy seeing Jesus...

My wife and I were talking the other day, and I said, you know, when I get to heaven, all these dumb questions that I thought I would ask, I probably won't. Why?

Because I'm going to be so overwhelmed with the glory and supremacy of Christ. But I will tell you, one of the small things that I'm going to enjoy is that I will no longer have a battle with my own heart and my mind.

[35 : 33] And I'm amazed that Jesus knows that and still loves me. And so here we are this morning, face to face with the Son of God.

And the fact that he knows what you're thinking should lead you to one of two places. Number one, it should lead you to a place of just overwhelming thanksgiving for his unconditional, unchanging, certain love.

Do you remember the woman at the well who ran back into town? She'd been married five times, and she was shacking up with a guy. And she scampers into town, and she told them something that most of them already knew by gossip.

She says to all of them, come meet the man. Is this not the Christ? He told me all that I ever did. And he still loves me.

And he loves you. And so when I think about the reality of Christ's knowledge of our thoughts, it will do one of two things.

[37 : 00] It will draw you to love him more when you consider that he loves you despite that. Or it should leave you this morning with a terrifying prospect that the day is coming when you will stand before the judge of the whole earth, and he is going to judge you according to the thoughts of your heart and the things that you've done, and he won't miss a single line.

And what's the purpose of preaching? It is to tell people of the glory of Christ and his readiness to forgive while there's time and hope, and to do so with affection and pleading, because I have no doubt there are some of you here that sit today whose hearts have been hardened by the

deceitfulness of sin, and I don't know how long you're going to live.

And I would plead with you as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. He says, I plead with you in Christ's stead.

That means in his place. Be reconciled to God. Let's close in prayer.

Holy Spirit, this morning we recognize the glory of Christ, who knows every thought that we think, and yet came to be the Savior of the world and to be the Lamb of God and to die for our sins and offer salvation to whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord.

[39 : 02] There are some here this morning that are believers who have carried a secret sin and a secret bitterness, and I pray, Lord, that your Spirit would convict them of that and bring them the point of genuine repentance, that they may walk in the joy of the Lord and in the victory of their salvation.

I pray for those who are here today that do not know Christ, that this morning your Spirit would grab a hold of their dark and hopeless heart and draw them to realize that there is no hope apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.