

What Kind of Faith Do You Have?

(Saving Faith versus Spurious Faith)

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When evangelizing the unsaved, we often talk to people who claim to have faith. Sadly, some Christians will never probe any deeper into a person's statement and analyze what kind of faith a person really possesses. The Bible teaches that people can possess different types of faith that are not saving or salvational faith in Christ alone.

You may have heard people say something like this: "I have lost my faith in God." When a person makes a statement such as this, I often wonder what they really mean. They may have experienced a tragedy in their life, experienced some grief over a lost loved one, or accident of some kind. As a result, they claim to lose their faith in God, the faith that they once had. But what kind of faith did they have in the first place? Was it true saving faith? Was it the kind of faith that really saves a man or woman?

You may have also heard the familiar expression, "I have my own faith in God. Don't bother me." Immediately, I must ask myself the question, "What kind of faith does this person have?" Is it faith that totally rests in God's grace for salvation, or is it some kind of broad or generalized faith in God, which falls far short of genuine saving faith in His Son Jesus Christ? Here is another common expression we often hear today when witnessing to people about Christ: "I have always had faith in God." This sounds very spiritual but what kind of faith is it? Is it saving faith, the kind of faith that brings salvation into a person's life, or is it some kind of generic faith that says, "Hey God, I know that you are out there."

When a follower of Mormonism says that they have faith in Jesus or a disciple of Buddha says that they have their own faith, can we assume that they have the same kind of faith in Christ that saves a person for all eternity? In this study, we are going to discover that there are spurious or false types of faith that are portrayed in the Bible, which fall short of true saving faith in Christ for salvation. We will study these spurious or false types of faith from the standpoint of

true saving faith and conclude that many people, who claim to have faith in God or Jesus, do not have genuine saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Their faith is inadequate and they lack true understanding concerning the kind of faith that really saves a person and makes them right before God.

We really need to stop and consider that not everyone who claims to have faith has faith in the right person (Christ) or has faith in Christ for the right reason. What kind of faith do you possess? Is your faith Biblical? Is it a type of faith that will bring you into a right relationship with God? In this study, we want to reflect upon twelve different types of faith, which are mentioned, or alluded to in the Bible.

I. Saving faith

Galatians 3:26

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

The Bible teaches that we become one of God’s children when we express faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, to save our soul from hell. This is true or genuine faith that brings salvation into one’s life. This might also be called salvational faith for only this type of faith saves a person for eternity. If a person is going to be saved, they need to possess true or genuine saving faith in Christ.

A. The definition of faith

What is the definition of saving faith? We know that it’s grace that actually saves (Eph. 2:8); however, it’s faith that channels God’s grace into our lives. Therefore, it’s correct to say that faith in Christ saves us. Saving faith is a faith placed in Christ that results in a person’s salvation. Faith is simple; it’s trust or reliance upon Christ to be one’s Savior from hell. It’s a trust or dependence upon Christ that is expressed through a personal decision to reach out and take the free salvation that Christ offers.

Someone has stated it very well:

“Faith is accepting something as true and then depending on it.”

When a person believes or places faith in Christ, they depend upon Christ to save them. This occurs when they make a personal response to both the person and work of Jesus Christ to save them from the judgment of hell. This personal response to Christ is described in the following verses.

Acts 16:31 says, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 6:47

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

Ephesians 2:8

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

2 Timothy 3:15

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Belief, or saving faith in Christ, is not some kind of foggy and mystical experience that is hard to explain. It's not an obscure and difficult concept to grasp. It is very simple to understand. It's so simple that a child can understand it. In fact, R.A. Torrey once said, "The easiest thing in all the world is to lead a child to Christ."

B. The choice of faith

It is not difficult to determine if a person truly possesses saving belief or faith in Christ. A seeking sinner must believe that Jesus died and rose again for him personally, bearing all of his sins and judgment (1 Cor. 15:1-3). Personal belief involves the sinner reaching out to Christ in order to receive the saving benefits of that provision, which Christ has made for him. In other words, an individual must make the choice

to place his complete trust, reliance or dependence in what Jesus Christ has done for the lost sinner.

The personal response or choice to place faith in Christ is expressed by other words – “receive,” “come,” “take,” “eat,” “drink,” and “call.” These expressions teach that faith (trust, reliance, dependence) upon Christ for one’s salvation involves a person appropriating what Christ offers to him (salvation and eternal life) to his own life.

Let’s look at some of the illustrations or metaphors for faith, so we can understand that faith is a choice that people make, a choice to depend fully and finally upon Jesus Christ for the salvation of their soul.

1. Receiving and believing

John 1:12

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name.”

Receiving (taking for one’s own) speaks of choice. Faith in Christ is a choice. A person has not believed or expressed faith in Christ until they have received Christ or decided to “take for themselves” Christ as Savior. Receiving is used interchangeable with believing. It explains what true belief in Christ is. We can conclude that receiving is believing and believing is receiving. This is the true teaching about saving faith. Genuine faith involves making a personal choice to receive Jesus Christ, or “taking for one’s own self,” Jesus Christ, to be one’s Savior. When we believe on Christ we are allowing Him to become our own personal Savior from hell’s judgment.

Salvational faith is never passive; it’s active. Genuine faith involves taking for one’s self Jesus Christ as Savior. Many people talk about Jesus, but they do not take (John 1:12) Jesus, as their personal Savior. Many people believe about Jesus but they do not believe on (Acts 16:31) Jesus to be their Savior from hell and damnation.

2. Coming and taking

Revelation 22:17

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

John 6:37

“... him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Coming and taking involves choice. Faith in Christ is a choice. A person has not believed or expressed faith in Christ until they have come to Christ and taken something from Christ (salvation and eternal life). Coming to a person and taking something from that person speaks of a responsive faith, a faith that reaches out to receive what Christ is offering to an individual (salvation and eternal life). Faith is not something you just grow into over a period of time; it's something that a person does. It involves the movement of the will. A person reaches out and takes what God offers. Salvational faith is never passive; it's active. Genuine faith is willing to come to Christ and receive what He is offering to them.

3. Drinking and eating

John 4:14

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Jesus also said in John 6:54:

“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Drinking and eating involves choice. Faith in Christ is a choice. A person has not believed or expressed faith in Christ until they have eaten or drunk what Christ is offering them (salvation and eternal life). These expressions are also synonyms and metaphors for faith and explain that faith in Christ involves a definite response on the part of a person's will to appropriate what Christ is offering (salvation and eternal life) to one's own life. Genuine faith involves the application and appropriation of Christ's salvation to one's life. However, the

application of salvation to one's life does not come through Mass or human achievement.

Catholic Theology takes these words literally and teaches that during the Roman Catholic Mass (Christ's recreated sacrifice on the cross) people literally eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood in order to merit salvation. The Catholic view of salvation is cannibalism. Catholics teach the doctrine of transubstantiation (meaning a change of substance) which results in the bread and wine actually becoming (by the power of the priest) the literal body and blood of Christ. Therefore, Catholics view their salvation as something they must do. A practicing Catholic must eat Christ's literal flesh or drink Christ's literal blood in order to gain eternal life and acceptance before God. Their salvation is relegated to eating and drinking instead of believing in the finished and final sacrifice of Christ on the cross (John 1:12).

The Roman Catholic Church does teach that we are justified by grace through faith in Christ. What is missing, however, is the word *alone*. By omitting this word "faith alone in Christ alone" the Roman Catholic Church redefines grace, faith, and justification in a way that undermines and invalidates the teaching of Scripture about salvation by grace alone through faith alone. According to the Church of Rome, Christ did not accomplish a full, finished and final salvation in His work on the cross. According to Catholic Theology, Christ's death on the cross did not deal with the full penalty of man's sin. His death merely allows mankind to merit Christ's grace which is channeled to the individual through the Roman Catholic Church and its sacraments, such as Mass. Therefore, the mass becomes the means by which Roman Catholics merit God's grace.

"If any one saith that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation...and that without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain from God, through faith alone, the grace of justification...let him be anathema" (The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1919), Canon IV, p. 119).

For the practicing Catholic, salvation is applied to a person's life gradually and continually through the Mass. The more they eat Christ the surer they can be that more of their sins are forgiven and that

they will be released from Purgatory in the future. Salvation to the Roman Catholic is like an installment program that one must pay off through the process of eating Christ. Thus, the whole matter of salvation becomes a constant works-oriented procedure of eating Christ instead of believing on Christ for salvation.

The Catholic teaching of John 6:54 and 58 is a total pagan distortion of what Christ was teaching. Christ was not teaching that a person must literally eat His flesh and drink His blood to express faith and in the end merit eternal life. This is an absurdity and travesty of God's Word. Jesus was speaking in a figurative manner and teaching an important lesson about faith. He was using the expressions of "eating" and "drinking" to teach the meaning of faith or belief in Christ.

John 6:47

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Real or genuine belief in Christ does not involve literally eating Christ's body and drinking His blood but is comparable to eating and drinking. It involves an active choice to appropriate Christ's as one's Savior. In other words, genuine faith involves a person reaching out to Jesus Christ to receive His offer of salvation and appropriating salvation to one's life. Again, faith is not passive; it's active. It involves the movement of the human will, which reaches out and takes what Christ is offering to us (salvation and eternal life).

4. Calling and salvation

Romans 10:13

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

When a person decides to "call" upon Jesus Christ for salvation, he is expressing faith in Christ's person and work for salvation. This once again speaks of the nature of saving faith. Faith is active, not passive. Genuine faith reaches out to Jesus Christ which can be explained as actively and decisively calling on the name of Jesus Christ for the free gift of salvation and eternal life. Calling involves choice. Faith in Christ is a choice. A person has not believed or expressed faith in

Christ until they have called upon Jesus Christ to receive His free offer of salvation and eternal life.

If you have fallen off of a ship and are drowning, you must call out to those on the boat and ask to be rescued. You must receive a lifeboat or life preserver in order to be rescued. Without calling and receiving the lifeboat or preserver, you would die. A person must choose to be rescued. You don't get the free gift of salvation by default but by decision. Faith is a personal decision to believe in God's Son for the salvation of your soul.

All these words ("receive," "come," "take," "eat," "drink" and "call") are synonyms and metaphors of faith which convey that faith is a personal response and choice on the part of the sinner, which reaches out to appropriate Christ's free offer of salvation and eternal life to one's own life. No person can rely or trust in Jesus Christ to be their Savior without receiving, coming, calling, or taking what Christ is offering to them. The nature of all saving faith (salvation faith) is that it makes a valid choice to transfer one's trust to Christ alone for salvation. Faith or belief is when a person turns to Christ for his salvation by making a personal decision to trust or depend in Jesus Christ alone for the salvation of his soul.

We can illustrate faith in this way:

- A truck driver may believe the bridge is safe, but he does not believe in the Biblical sense until he drives onto the bridge.
- A person may believe that an elevator will carry him to the top of the building, but he does not believe in the Biblical sense until he steps into the elevator.
- A person may have their clothes on fire and believe that the swimming pool will save him, but he is not saved until he dives into the swimming pool.

I think you get the point. The Bible says that true saving faith or belief always involves a personal decision to reach out to Christ and take the offer of salvation.

- You must drive onto the bridge.
- You must step into the elevator.
- You must dive into the swimming pool.

Saving faith does not just happen; there must be the act of appropriating what Christ has done for us, to our own lives, by making a personal decision to accept the salvation that Christ paid for and offers to us. This is true saving faith. Biblical belief (trust or reliance upon Christ for salvation) means to reach out and accept Christ's offer of salvation. In fact, the salvation that Christ provides through His death and resurrection is called a gift that a person must freely take.

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

A gift is something you choose to receive from someone else. You simply must take it or receive it. When you depend, or rely upon Jesus Christ to save your soul, then you will take His free gift or offer of salvation. Without taking the offer of eternal life there can be no genuine faith in Christ or reliance upon Christ to save your soul.

Many people have a general faith in Jesus and God but not a genuine faith in Christ that results in the salvation of their soul. When witnessing to the unsaved, many people will say: “I have always believed in God or had faith in God.” “I grew up believing in God.” “I’m not an atheist.” I am a person of faith.” When a person tells you these things a red light should go off in your thinking. This is because no person has always possessed true saving faith or belief in God’s Son and not all faith is saving faith. The faith they have may very well be another type of faith that falls short of saving faith in Christ. When witnessing to other people, you will discover many times that they have an altogether different type of faith than what you are presenting to them – faith alone in Christ alone.

In the rest of our study, we want to deal with spurious, counterfeit, or false types of faith that stop short of true, genuine, saving faith in Christ. In actuality, these are not expressions of true faith in Christ, but types of faith that deviate from the path of faith alone in Christ

alone. We will refer to them as different “types of faith” only from the perspective of the lost human race and how unsaved people view faith.

II. Works faith

Ephesians 2:8-9

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

A works faith is a spurious type of faith that rests in the accomplishments of man, rituals, and other visual objects, instead of resting fully in Christ and Christ alone.

A. The exercise of faith

The Bible declares that we are saved by “grace” (God’s favor and kindness expressed to us through Christ’s death) “through faith” (the expression of a person’s faith in Christ) which allows God’s grace to be transferred into their lives. Salvational faith (faith that leads to salvation) is a faith that is expressed only in God’s grace for salvation or deliverance from hell.

It’s grace that saves us and it’s faith that brings God’s grace into our lives. Grace is the way of salvation and faith is the vehicle of salvation or the way God’s grace is channeled into our lives. Please notice that it’s only faith in God’s grace, which is trust or reliance in Christ’s death and resurrection that saves a person. The false religions and liberal denominations of today claim that grace is transferred or channeled into our lives through rituals, sacraments, and legalism (means of grace); however, the Bible says that grace is only transferred into our lives through faith in Christ alone. The only means to receive God’s grace is faith in Christ, which excludes man’s rituals and works.

B. The exclusion of works

The text in Ephesians 2:8-9 reveals that works are excluded from both grace and faith. God’s plan of salvation regarding man’s soul

has nothing to do with his self-righteous and putrefying human works of unrighteousness (Isa. 64:4).

The exclusion of works is illustrated in two ways.

1. Works cancel out grace

Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly defines that only God's grace, as seen in the death of His Son, brings salvation into our lives. A believing sinner is saved by grace which excludes all human achievements ("that not of yourselves"). This clause relates back to salvation. God could not be any clearer on the matter (Titus 3:5). Salvation by grace has nothing to do with man and his legalistic works. We are saved by God's unmerited, undeserved, and unbelievable grace.

Galatians 2:21

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

The word "frustrate" means to nullify, do away with, violate, set aside, and disregard the grace of God by adding works to grace. No form of works can coexist together with grace. If we add some form of human agency to grace, then grace is no longer unmerited. Grace is no longer free grace (Rom. 3:24 – "justified freely by his grace"). Grace is not earned; it's free! Therefore, sacraments, ceremonies, and Mass have nothing to do with grace. They are not the "means" to receive grace.

Romans 11:6

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

The one cancels out the other. It's either grace or works. You can't have both. Grace and works cannot coexist together in the salvation of the soul. Grace is God at work, works are man at work! The grace of God can only be received and applied to our life through simple faith in God's Son and what He has done for us. Saving faith is the kind of faith that totally relies upon the grace of God alone for salvation. When a person adds anything else to faith, then faith is

destroyed and it becomes works. Faith and works are diametrically opposed to each other.

We might view the grace of God as something that is behind a locked door. Only one key can unlock the blessings of His saving grace upon our life and that key is simple faith in Christ. However, there are many people today who are trying to unlock the door to God's grace with their key of baptism, church attendance, giving, Masses and many other man made attempts to earn God's grace.

Many are trying to receive the blessing of the grace of God through their own human efforts. The problem is this; no person can receive God's grace any other way but through faith. The only key that will unlock the door to God's free grace and unleash the grace of God upon our life is faith. No other key will work. And when a person places their faith alone in Christ alone for salvation, that faith becomes saving faith.

2. Works cancel out faith

This text in Ephesians 2:8-9 also reveals that it's "faith alone in Christ alone" that saves a person. It's a faith that excludes works. The expressions "that not of yourselves" and "Not of works" relates back to salvation. Since this is true, a person's salvation is based on faith in Christ and does not include human achievement and works. Salvation, which comes through faith, has nothing to do with man and his legalistic works. No human effort can be added to faith without canceling out or corrupting the true understanding or meaning of faith, which is to only trust in Jesus Christ for the salvation of one's soul. If you bring baptism, sacraments, Mass, righteous deeds, or good works alongside faith, then it cancels faith out, faith alone in Christ alone, which is the only kind of faith that saves an individual or delivers them from coming judgment.

Romans 3:28

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Galatians 2:16 also states:

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

When human works or achievements are added to faith, then faith is no longer saving faith, or faith that result in salvation, since it is no longer directed to Christ alone. For example, if you claim to express your faith in Christ through your baptism (Lutherans), Mass (Catholics), or other kinds of human works and achievements (Legalism), then this cancels out true and genuine faith in Christ. Instead of channeling your faith only to Christ, a person can channel their faith to their baptism or religious denomination. If a person needs to be baptized, become a practicing Catholic, or perform certain rituals to be saved, then their faith is resting in the rituals and not in Christ. Instead of placing faith in Christ alone for one's salvation, the individual ends up placing faith in something they must do in order to be saved. This cancels out faith.

Allow me to give you a faith test. Could you go to Heaven when you die:

- Without being a church member?
- If you commit a sin just before you die?
- If you lack a certain amount of good deeds or works?
- Without a priest?
- Without last rights being administered to you?
- Without being baptized?
- If you are not a Lutheran, Catholic, or Methodist?
- If you are not a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness?
- Without taking mass?
- Without church sacraments?
- Without praying through the rosary?
- If you have not followed the Ten Commandments?
- Without forgiving someone?
- If you are not very religious?
- Bypassing purgatory?
- Without Mary?

- If you have lied, stolen, cheated, committed fornication, adultery, or murder?
- If you have not given money to the church?
- If you have not helped the poor, given to charities, and supported other good causes?
- Without being a good person?

If you have answered “No” to some of these questions (“No, I couldn’t go to Heaven without doing or being some of these things”), then you have not passed the faith test, according to the Bible. This is because the Bible says your faith (trust, reliance, confidence) must only be rooted in Jesus Christ for personal salvation or deliverance from hell. Faith in Christ does not revolve around doing something, being something, becoming something, or promising something to God.

The Bible says we should only express "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21), "faith in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:4), and that we become "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). In order to pass the faith test, your trust, reliance, or faith must only be directed or channeled to Christ – not toward your baptism, sacraments, traditions, or church affiliation.

Whenever we introduce or add certain requirements for salvation, this cancels out both grace and faith. It takes away from grace (God’s free or unmerited gift of salvation) and from a person’s faith (faith in Christ alone), which is the only faith that can save them.

People will sometimes tell you that they express faith in Christ through outward rituals. However, if this is the case, their faith rests in rituals instead of Christ. Faith in Christ does not mean we must use baptism, Mass, or other rituals, as a vehicle or outward visible means to express faith in Christ. This is what Lutheranism teaches regarding baptism.

Although Luther left the Catholic Church, he never really intended to go that far away from historic Catholicism. Martin Luther was saved by hearing and believing the truth that only faith in Christ saves a person and that grace is transferred into one’s life through faith alone. However, when expressing this truth to others he muddied the waters and confused the clear message in regards to what faith is and salvation by grace alone. Being steeped in Catholic Theology for so

long he mixed together baptism and the Lord's Supper as necessary requirements for salvation and the forgiveness of sins.

Luther taught that water and the Lord's Supper are the *tangible objects* a person needs in order to express faith in Christ and that these sacraments became the *channels* of grace or the way to receive grace into a person's life. Luther wrote in his Large Catechism (1529): "Moreover, it is solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized for we shall not be saved ... To put it most simply, the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of Baptism is to save ..."

Luther did not believe that an *invisible work of faith in the heart* would work in saving the soul. However, the Bible teaches just the opposite. Romans 10:10 says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Luther taught that people needed to have something tangible for people to see and feel. Luther wrote: "Faith must have something to believe – something to which it may cling and upon which it may stand. Thus faith clings to the water and believes it to be Baptism in which there is sheer salvation and life ..." Luther taught that the truth of God's Word about faith in Christ must be combined with water to bring salvation into a person's life. It's very clear that Luther taught what the majority of Lutheran's still believe today – baptism is the agent by which salvation or grace is transferred from God to man. The tragedy of this view is that one's faith become water-centered instead of Christ-centered.

However, faith in Christ alone, means that we need nothing else, no outward visible expressions, or no other ritualistic means, that come between Christ and the believing sinner. Faith in Christ does not mean that we must express faith through rituals, rules, and regulations. The danger of attempting to express faith in Christ through outward rituals is that a person's faith becomes ritual centered instead of Christ-centered. When it comes to true saving faith, there is nothing that comes between the sinner and Savior, except faith in Christ.

Some people touring a mint where coins are made were ushered into the smelting area. As they stood before the caldrons filled with molten metal, the tour guide told them that if a person were to dip his hand into water and then have someone pour the hot liquid over his hand, he would neither be injured nor feel any pain. Then, picking out one couple, he suggested that perhaps they would like to prove the truthfulness of what he had just said. The husband quickly replied, "No, thank you, I'll take your word for it." But his wife responded eagerly by saying, "Sure, I'll give it a try!" Matching action to her words, she thrust her hand into a bucket of water and then held it out as the molten metal was poured over it. The hot liquid rolled off harmlessly just as the guide had said it would. The host turned to the husband and remarked, "Sir, you claimed to believe what I said. But your wife truly believed in me."

The same is true in relation to Christ. We must place our total confidence and trust in Christ to save us if we are going to Heaven. It's faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone that brings a person into a right relationship with God.

Harry Ironside told the story that states the whole matter of works and salvation very well: "While presenting the Gospel on the street of a California city, we were often interrupted about as follows: 'Look here, sir! There are hundreds of religions in this country, and the followers of each sect think that theirs is the only right one. How can poor, plain men like us find out what really is the truth?' We generally replied something like this: 'Hundreds of religions, you say? That's strange; I've heard of only two.' 'Oh, but you surely know there are more than that?'

'Not at all, sir, I find, I admit, many shades of difference in the opinions of those comprising the two great schools; but after all there are but two. The one covers all who expect salvation by doing; the other, all who have been saved by something done. So you see the whole question is very simple. Can you save yourself, or must you be saved by another? If you can be your own savior, you do not need my message. If you cannot, you may well listen to it.'"

There can be no misunderstanding about the simplicity of saving faith. Saving faith, or faith that leads to a persons' salvation, involves

a person coming to Christ stripped bare of all his garments of human works and completely and totally casts himself upon the grace of God to bring salvation into his life. To be totally satisfied with Christ and his provision for your life is faith. Anything that includes works or man's effort becomes a works-oriented faith instead of a Christ-centered faith for the salvation of the soul. A works-faith falls short of saving faith. It keeps people from trusting in Christ alone for their salvation.

Remember:

“You cannot try and trust at the same time!”

A works faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ.

III. Demonic faith

James 2:19:

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”

As stated above, demons are essentially orthodox in their doctrine (Matt. 8:29, 30; Mark 5:7; Luke 4:41; Acts 19:15). Demons are not atheists nor are they agnostics. They believe there is only “one God” (monotheism) and shudder at the thought of their accountability to Him. They also believe in the deity of Christ (“What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God ...” - Matt. 8:29). Many people today are like the demons. They believe in the general doctrines of the Bible and yet remain unsaved. There are many church members like this today. They possess a “head” faith but not a “heart” faith (Rom. 10:10). They attend church, listen to sermons, recite prayers and doctrinal creeds, but are going to wind up going to hell. Why? It's because they have not placed saving faith in Christ.

Demonic faith gives mental assent or acknowledgment to God's existence, but never places faith in Christ, which results in transformation of living, as James points out in his epistle (James 2:20). Here is an amazing revelation of the Bible. Unsaved people can believe and yet remain unsaved. For instance, they mentally believe in the doctrines, which they cite in the apostle's creed, but

never express saving faith in Christ. Demonic faith falls short of saving faith. It is a mental assent to truth that falls short of embracing Christ as Savior. We can recite doctrines and not rely upon Jesus Christ to be our Savior.

You can go to church, recite the Lord's Prayer, and die and go to hell. And yes, this should cause you to shudder, as the demons shudder, in view of their coming judgment.

Hebrews 10:31

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The story is told that the Devil had a meeting with his demons to decide how to persuade men that God was nonexistent. Since they themselves believed in His existence, they wondered just how to do it. One demon suggested that they tell people Jesus Christ never really existed and that men should not believe such fiction. Another demon suggested that they persuade men that death ends all and there is no need to worry about life after death. Finally, the most intelligent demon suggested that they tell everyone that there is a God, that there is Jesus Christ, and that believing in Him saves, but all you have to do is profess faith in Christ and then go on living in sin as you used to. They decided to use this tactic, and it is the tactic the devil and his demons are still using today. It is profession without possession (real life).

On one occasion a demon spoke to Jesus and confessed this type of faith (intellectual or head faith) in Christ's existence but he never confirmed himself as having genuine faith in Christ through obedience to Christ.

Luke 4:33-34

"And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, *thou* Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God."

Demons can be doctrinal creatures. The demon knew and believed that Jesus was the true God and creator of the universe but that was all. Today the media and world at large talk about God in one way or

another. Many people recognize that God must exist and they use filler names for His existence, such as the great ruler in the sky above, the great power behind the earthquake in California, the great architect, the man upstairs, or father time. There are many people today who intellectually believe in the existence of one true God. However, they have a problem. They do not want to be accountable before God or live under His moral code. Like the demons themselves, many people believe in God, but then go and live like the demons in rebellion and open scandal against God!

Many Americans possess this type of faith today. They want to pledge allegiance to the flag and use God's name, signifying that their lives are under God's rule and guidance. Of course, we know that for many this type of pledge is a complete travesty and mockery. This is because the same people who make this pledge to God also want to murder babies before the every eyes of God.

In a similar way, many American people want to have a national day of prayer to God. People want to go to church and express thanks to the great God of the universe and be seen walking out of church with a Bible in their hand! The problem with America is that their belief in God is merely intellectual, but it's not a faith that relies on Jesus Christ as Savior (John 1:12) nor is it a type of faith that results in conformity to His ways and commands (James 2:20). This is why we are living in the midst of a degenerate society that is rapidly going downhill in its morals and decency. Demonic faith or mere intellectual faith in God never results in transformation of living.

I was talking to a man who was chewing on a 12-inch cigar. He was a health teacher that retired from the area school district! He said that he believed in God or the man upstairs. While studying the human body he came to the realization that there had to be a God who designed and created it. The human body is way too complex to just happen. Today, there are many people who believe in God and His existence, but that is all. Their belief or faith stops there. There is an intellectual knowledge of His existence and being. However, this certainly is not saving faith. Even the demons believe this about God. They know that there is one true God. The problem with demonic faith is that there is no reliance upon Christ as Savior nor is there any accountability and transformation of living before God. This is a faith

that is merely intellectual. It is not saving faith which results in a new way of life.

A demonic faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ.

IV. Vain Faith

1 Corinthians 15:1-2

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

A vain faith is a doctrinally deficient faith that does not believe in the resurrection of Christ. Not everyone has embraced the true and complete Gospel message. This chapter focuses on the resurrection. Paul is simply stating that if one does not embrace the truth of Christ’s resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12), then they were never saved. In other words, their belief would be in vain (empty, worthless, good for nothing).

1 Corinthians 15:14

“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”

1 Corinthians 15:17

“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

A saving faith is a persevering orthodox faith. The issue here is NOT faulty, immoral living, but incorrect doctrine. A “vain” belief is faith in a crucified but non-resurrected Christ. However, the death of Christ is only half of the Gospel. Therefore, this heresy (a non-resurrected Christ), which is embraced and revealed later in one’s life, would show that a person did not properly understand the full implications of the Gospel message when he made his original profession (1 John 2:18–19).

In order to KNOW that you are saved you MUST believe not only in the death of Jesus Christ but also in the resurrection of Christ.

Otherwise, you are an imposter! You have only made a profession of faith in Christ but it is empty (vain) because if Christ is still in the grave then your faith is not real. It's a hoax. You are not a real Christian if you don't believe Christ rose from the dead bodily, victoriously, and triumphantly.

Romans 10:9

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

A dead Savior cannot save anybody. He arose! This makes the difference between Heaven and hell, hope and hopelessness, and eternal life or eternal death. This once again reminds us that without the resurrection there is no Christianity.

1 Peter 1:3

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

We have hope today because Jesus Christ arose from the dead to save us and give us eternal life. Therefore, a vain faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ. This is because it does not rest in the completed Gospel message concerning Christ's resurrection.

On one occasion Michelangelo turned to his fellow artists and said with frustration in his voice, "Why do you keep filling gallery after gallery with endless pictures on the one theme of Christ in weakness, Christ on the cross, and most of all, Christ hanging dead?" he asked. "Why do you concentrate on that passing episode as if it were the last word, as if the curtain dropped down there on disaster and defeat? That dreadful scene lasted only a few hours. But to the unending eternity Christ is alive; Christ rules and reigns and triumphs!"

Michelangelo was right. Even though the cross is vitally important because of the redemption Jesus accomplished for us there, we must not emphasize His death to the exclusion of His resurrection victory. We should think of Him now in His glorified state in Heaven and the

One who has opened the pathway to Heaven for us through His resurrection.

V. Spectacular faith

John 2:23-25

“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”

We might call this type of faith “spectacular faith” for it’s a type of faith that looks to Jesus for physical miracles but refuses to look to Christ for the greatest miracle of all, the miracle of salvation. This type of faith also falls short of saving faith. Multitudes followed Christ during His earthly ministry and possessed faith in Christ, as the miracle man. These people wanted to witness the miracles of Jesus. They were caught up in the spectacular element wrapped around Christ. He was the “man of Galilee” but He was not the God-man and Savior of their soul. As you read this account, you will notice that many were said to have believed in Christ after witnessing His miracles; however, this type of faith was not genuine saving faith. It was a faith expressed in Christ as the great “miracle man” and not the great Savior of mankind (John 4:42).

After seeing all the miracles that Jesus performed, this group is said to have believed in Jesus. In other words, these people were curious about all the miraculous hype and spectacular happenings surrounding the person of Jesus and they did believe in Jesus as the miracle man. They believed that Jesus was a supernatural person with supernatural abilities who was doing supernatural things. However, they did not believe on Jesus as their Messiah and Savior. The sad commentary on these people’s lives is that they were not saved.

Here is an important observation. These people believed in Jesus but Jesus did not believe in them (“Jesus did not commit himself unto them”) for He knew that their heart was not right. They believed in

Christ for their own personal satisfaction and physical well-being but not for the salvation of their soul.

How utterly amazing this is! Belief in miracles is not an indicator that you have genuine faith in Christ for salvation. There is a type of faith that is only interested in the spectacular but not in Christ as Savior. I believe that this could be the type of faith that Simon Magnus possessed as he watched the miracles that the other disciples performed.

Acts 8:13

“Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”

Simon was amazed at the miracles that Jesus did. He wanted to be part of the miraculous and spectacular element that was going on among the disciple's lives. He wanted miraculous power and was overtaken by the thrill of what was happening. He was like a boy watching a smash up derby which was full of cars running into each other. The excitement was overwhelming. His heart was not convicted about his sins and lost estate before God. Instead, Simon was convinced he could possess the same healing and miraculous gifts of the apostles. Therefore, Simon's belief was spurious or counterfeit, since he did not believe in Jesus for the salvation of his soul. He believed in Jesus in order to get what he wanted – the miraculous. He wanted the same miraculous powers the apostles were demonstrating before the people. He was not a prophet for hire but a sorcerer for hire!

Acts 8:18-23

“And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven

thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity.”

Here is a man who believed superficially in Christ because of the miracles and hype that were associated with Christ’s followers. Peter clearly reveals the counterfeit faith or belief of this man when telling him “Thy money perish with thee” and exclaiming “thy heart is not right in the sight of God.” Simon was an imposter. He was a tare among the wheat (Matt. 13:24-30). He possessed faith in Christ for miracles and money, but not a faith in Christ for mercy and the marvel of the new birth.

I believe this same type of faith is also recorded in the account of Matthew 7:21-23: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Here are the miracle workers themselves! These people had done the spectacular. They had cast out demons and supposedly performed great supernatural feats in the name and authority of Christ. But Jesus clearly reveals that when He returns to establish His earthly kingdom, He will say to these type of people that He never knew them.

Why? It’s because their faith was only a spectacular faith that was centered on the supernatural or miraculous. These people geared everything around what they could see, experience, or feel. Many people today have a faith in a God that can do a miracle in their lives and this is where their faith stops. It is faith in Jesus for the needed miracle but not faith in Jesus as the Savior of their soul.

With the expansion and promotion of the Charismatic movement in our world today, we have many professing followers of Christ, who are in the same predicament as these people will be someday. They are only following Christ for the spectacular element. People say that they believe in Christ but for what reason? Many believe in Jesus for

their supposed miracles and are surrounded by the tremendous hype and spectacular element that accompanies modern Charismatic healing meetings. They walk up on a stage and believe that God can do some miracle for them. The tragic result is that they not only leave without physical healing from God, they also leave spiritual healing from God. They leave the meeting the way they came into the meeting – unsaved!

Many people want Jesus for their health but not for the salvation of their soul. Their belief is merely a spectacular belief in the miracle maker called Jesus of Nazareth. Sadly, we have this type of individual today. We might term them as a curious disciple who is out for a quick medical fix, but is not interested in the salvation that Jesus really offers. The curiosity of these people reminds me of the old story, which my mother used to read to me, when I was just a boy. It was about a monkey who got into all kinds of trouble because of his curiosity. You guessed it. His name was “Curious George!”

John 12:37 says:

“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.”

This verse confirms that genuine faith does not need miracles to believe. In fact, just the opposite may be true; people can be caught up in the miraculous but never call upon Christ to be their Savior (Rom. 10:13).

I once talked with a woman who was rather disturbed by her husband’s lack of change after his alleged conversion at a charismatic service. She said that there was a real excitement that filled the air and he walked forward at the end of the service. However, she was disturbed to find out that there was absolutely no change in his life and no interest in spiritual things. What had happened to this man? The simple answer is this; nothing happened at all! He was no doubt caught up in the spectacular element of what was going on; he wanted to get a hold of something that was spectacular and supernatural. However, he never did get a hold of Christ and the salvation that He freely offered to him.

A spectacular faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ.

VI. Emotional faith

Jesus talked about this type of faith in the parable of the sower.

Matthew 13:20-21

“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy (emotional ecstasy) receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”

The picture that Jesus gives is that of rocky soil, but we should not think of this as soil with tiny rocks running throughout it, since the farmer who cultivated it would seek to remove the rocks from his field. Rather, the rocky soil in the land of Israel referred to strains of limestone bedrock running through it. In many places this bedrock or lower shelf of rock would come up within inches of the soil surface. The soil depth was actually shallow and could not sustain growth that would last. Farmers sometimes were unaware of the rocky shelf that was underneath the soil. As a result, they would sow their seed in those areas that contained very shallow soil since the soil was resting on stone.

If the seed landed on the soil that rested on the surface of the bedrock, it would germinate and try to send its roots downward, but there was no place for the roots to go. Initially, these seeds would spring up higher than the other grain. This occurred because the seeds could only grow up and would not use their energy sending roots downward like the other seeds. The plant that emerged was a shoot without any underlying root. The little surface moisture that was received by the seed caused initial quick growth. Eventually the promised harvest died from the heat of the summer because the bedrock hindered the seed from finding any moisture.

Jesus compares this type of soil which produces plant growth to the heart and faith of a person that seems to be initially full of emotional joy, energy, and excitement, at the offset of his alleged conversion,

but then fizzles out and dies in the long run. Like a plant in rocky soil, there is the type of person that springs up quickly, who claims to have a great religious conversion to Christ, and whose faith seems to be strong and sure, but in the end, that faith falters and disappears. Here is the type of person that has an emotional high as a result of believing on Christ (“with joy receiveth it” – Matt. 13:20).

This person is seen to possess great emotional ecstasy because of his conversion to Christ. This is the type of person who thinks that becoming a Christian is like taking drugs. There is an emotional high attached to it. A cold chill must run down the back of a person and they must do cartwheels in the isle in order to express real faith. This type of person claims to have received Christ and is now embarking on a heroic and historic mission to win the world for Christ and make changes in the lives of millions of people. There is a lot of emotional pizzazz and fizz that is attached to this type of faith.

Someone has humorously put it this way:

“It’s dangerously possible to have a dizzy whirl around a central emptiness.”

I think this best explains this type of person. There is a lot “dizzy whirl” and Jesus reveals the sad fact that when the rubber meets the road, when this person becomes confronted about his relationship with Christ, he becomes offended (“for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” – Matt. 13:21). In other words, these people are not going to stick with Christ and stand up for Him. They are going to fizzle out and all of their emotional high and hype will go with them. They spring up as some kind of super saint and then crumble by the wayside as a total flop.

We might view this type of faith as a fresh can of Pepsi soda. When you first pour out the soda into a glass there is a lot of fizz. It comes up over the top of the glass and runs down the side. There is no mistake about it. There is a lot of fizz. However, if you allow the glass of Pepsi to sit on the counter for several hours all the fizz will go out of it. All that you will have left is a flat glass of Pepsi. What has happened? The pop has gone out of the pop! That is exactly what happens to an individual whose faith is only an emotional faith. There are emotions associated with sin’s burden, which are involved in our

conversion to Christ (Acts 2:37; 2 Cor. 7:10); however, emotional zeal or ecstasy is not necessarily a sign of saving faith.

There are people today who possess a type of faith that only feeds on emotional frenzy. As a result, they are all fizz for a short period of time, but end up without any fizz at all, when they are faced with standing up for Christ.

Vance Havner used to say of these types of people:
“They go up like a rocket and come down like a rock!”

There are those today who blow in, blow up, and then blow out of the church! Let’s put this in a contemporary light and setting. I believe the pragmatic evangelism of today is a breeding ground to produce stony-soil hearers. The reality and likelihood of a shallow fleshly response is especially true when the Gospel is presented through the glamour of modern plays, pragmatic worldly programs, stage lights, and showbiz or Hollywood showmanship. These theatrical types of manmade atmospheres resemble a hockey game, instead of God’s House, and often are conducive to this type of shallow stony-heart response to the Gospel message.

Gospel entertainment and Christian Rock Music (CCM) becomes a breeding ground for stony-ground hearers. Worldly music creates a carnal mindset instead of producing a repentant heart over sin. The message of Christianity is to save people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). This message is not portrayed when people are entertained in their sins through worldly music that sounds like their own music of rebellion and wickedness.

Jesus said that there is no “root” in this particular person (Matt. 13:21). This obviously means that they possessed no genuine repentance over sin and their faith was not rooted in what counts – Jesus Christ and His offer of salvation.

Dr. Paul Van Gorder made a very wise point when saying:
“I have never been in favor of getting a sinner up from his knees and showing him off in front of a crowd. Irreparable harm has been done to the cause of Christ by parading noted figures of the entertainment, sports, and political world across the evangelical platform before

sufficient time has elapsed to indicate whether the seed of the Word of God has penetrated and really taken root.”

Emotional or fantasy faith falls short of saving faith. Since these people have no root; therefore, there is no lasting, genuine fruit, which marks them as a true regenerate believer (Matt. 13:23).

You will note that in all the soil types, only one soil type produces fruit (“good ground” – Matt. 13:8, 23). The other soil types were unproductive. Fruitfulness is the sign of a regenerate life (James 2:14-26; I John 3:9-10). Therefore, the only soil that reflects regenerating life is the type of soil that produces fruit. Jesus was comparing the unproductive soils types to the hearts of unbelieving Israel who rejected Him as Messiah (Matt. 13:14).

The alleged conversion of the “stony heart” individual resulted in an emotional faith, which impressed everybody, but ended up as only a sham faith. This person’s feelings were changed but not his soul! There was no root and lasting fruit in this individual’s life. There are those people today who have this type of faith for a season (“but dureth for a while” – Matt. 13:21). However, this type of person, with their emotionally-crazed faith, eventually withers away, as the same old unregenerate person they always were. Give them six months. It’s always good to see where a person will be after six months!

Churches across America have many of these stony-soil hearts and hearers. They come and go. They “dureth for a while” (Matt. 13:21), they seem to flicker for a time and season, but then fall back into the same old sinful patterns of life and never evidence any lasting fruit or change.

1 John 2:19 reveals the end of the stony heart person who possesses an abundance of emotional faith, great zeal, and passion, but in the end falls by the wayside: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” In John 6:66 Jesus records the ending of the shallow or stony-soil hearted person who is a self-professed follower of Christ. The sad words read like this: “From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”

Charles Spurgeon wrote:

“If the man does not live differently from what he did before, both at home and abroad, his repentance needs to be repented of, and his conversion is a fiction.”

An emotional faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ.

VII. Worldly faith

Jesus reveals this type of faith in the parable of the sower.

Matthew 13:22 says:

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”

When Jesus talks about the seed that falls among the thorns (brush or briars) He is referring to those seeds sown by the farmer that fell into the weed patch, which was filled with a dense growth of bushes and shrubs. It was a thicket where prickly plants would grow and other kinds of brush reminiscent of the curse (Gen. 3:18). These types of thorny plants have snagged me from time to time. They tend to come up in a thicket area beside my property and overtake the whole area choking out the smaller trees on my property line. Those thorny bushes are also waiting to put one of their thorny fangs into your leg or arm when you are passing by them with the lawn mower!

The thorny soil depicts the worldliness of some people and how the world system keeps them from receiving spiritual life in their human heart. This is a “worldly faith” that stops short of genuine saving faith. This is the person who wants the system more than the Savior. As a result, no lasting fruit can be used by the Sower. The fruit and promised harvest once again prematurely dies before the divine Sower can harvest it.

This person “heareth the word” (Matt. 13:22) but the hearer does not allow the truth to remain in his heart because of worldly cares and loves. The cares and worldliness associated with this life destroy the seed of the Gospel and do not allow it to penetrate the heart and

produce saving faith. The seed does initially germinate giving once again both the impression and appearance that there is life existing in this person's heart. The early signs of fruit that are evidenced give the outward demonstration that there may be true life. However, something happens to this plant among the thorns. The thorns spring up and choke the new shoots that gave promise of a future harvest. By way of comparison, the cares of this life and love for worldly things choke out the truth of the Gospel and do not allow the truth to be permanently sown in a person's heart. In the end, the cares of this life and worldly love keeps this person from possessing spiritual life and fruitful living.

Our Lord describes three kinds of thorns that eventually destroy and make this person's life unusable. In short, there are three worldly thorns that destroy faith.

a. Cares of the world

This "thorn" which keeps the seed from bringing forth regenerating life in the hearts of people refers to the problems that are associated with everyday living. The cares or anxieties that are generated in our life come from the world or age in which live today. The pace of life, the schedules of life, careers, striving for success, making money, and the workload of life in general all have a way of keeping the Gospel seed from producing true and genuine life. It seems that the cares of this life can "choke (out) the word" (Matt. 13:22), or the Gospel seed, and keep it from generating true and lasting life.

These kinds of people become preoccupied with the lesser things of life and miss the most important thing in life, which is salvation through Jesus Christ. Along with the cares mentioned above we might add bills, lawsuits, theft, accidents, family problems, poverty, and ill health. There are a host of other things we could mention that creates anxiety in the hearts of people and which keeps them from making a clear profession of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.

I remember witnessing to an elderly woman one time about her need to place faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Her response to me was that she had many problems in her life over the years and that life in general was unfair to her. She kept talking about the hardships that

she passed through with her husband and her many health problems. I sensed that she was simply overwhelmed with the cares of this world. It's interesting how the worldly cares can capture the hearts of people instead of the Gospel message. They have a tendency to keep the eyes of people off their need for Jesus Christ. The cares of this life actually can occupy the mind and time of people to such a point that they keep them from placing faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. When people are overburdened with life they only care about making their life easier. Many times they are more concerned about getting rid of their problems than getting rid of their sins.

It's these types of problems that have a way of choking out the work of the Gospel seed in the human hearts of unsaved people. The seed cannot produce life that will last due to the pressures of the life that overtake and occupy a person's heart and time. The anxieties of the present life keep true life, growth, and fruit from occurring in this person's life.

b. The deceitfulness of riches

This is another "thorn" that keeps the Gospel from germinating in the hearts of people. Jesus reminds us how riches or wealth in life has a way of keeping people away from true faith in Jesus Christ. When a person is wealthy they often see no need for salvation in Christ. This is because they are placing all of their confidence in the wealth and riches that the world has to offer. There are those people today, who do not feel a need for Christ and His salvation, since they seem to think that they have everything that money can buy. But you cannot buy eternal life! People have the wealth of the world and this wealth becomes a barrier to them from believing on Christ. The things of this world have a way of stealing away the hearts of people from true saving faith in Christ. Many possess a sense of false security in riches, thinking that they somehow will help them on to Heaven. If they donate to charities and use their money for helping the poor, somehow, they truly believe that their riches will open the door of Heaven for them.

Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:17:

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”

When a man seems to have everything, he sometimes is deceived into thinking that he has no need for Christ. What the rich man fails to realize is that money cannot buy salvation (Isaiah 55:1). It seems that the riches also can “choke (out) the word” (Matt. 13:22), or the Gospel seed, and keep it from generating true and lasting life.

Jesus said in Mark 10:24-25:

“Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

I once heard an interview with Donald Trump. This particular verse (Mark 10:25) was quoted to Mr. Trump by a secular newscaster who didn't know beans about the Bible. However, the reply from Mr. Trump was very honest. He said, “I truly believe what Jesus said is true!”

Why did Jesus say this? It's because many people have a faith that is centered in their own bank account. They find security in their own wealth and position in life and see no need to place saving faith in Christ. If their wealth has gotten them this far, then surely it can take them the whole way to Heaven. What a sad day and rude awakening awaits those, who are trusting in their earthly wealth, instead of the wealth they can have in Christ!

Jesus said in Luke 16:22-23 that “the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” James 5:1 echoes the same words of condemnation: “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you*.” Only the miseries of an everlasting Hell await those rich people who die without saving faith in the Lord. Many die with faith in their material gain and hope that their wealth will provide the answer for the life after death. Jesus identifies these people as fools who are “not rich toward God” (Luke 12:16-21).

One man, who had more money than brains, has actually frozen his body, hoping that science will someday learn how to fix his body and bring him back to life. The problem with this theory is that you cannot freeze the soul! The soul lives on after death in the place of its choosing (Heb. 9:27).

Jesus said in Mark 8:36:

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

People today are too busy making money and keeping up with the Joneses to think about eternity. This means that people buy things they don't need to keep up with the things they don't even like or want. People who think they need a sports car, swimming pool, a fine home, and social life with certain people have no time to think about the Gospel and their need for salvation through Jesus Christ. They are too wrapped up with the riches of this life and the so-called finer things of life.

c. The lusts of other things

Mark adds another worldly “thorn” that keeps people from responding to Christ in faith (“the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful” - Mark 4:19). Luke calls them “the pleasures of this life” (Luke 8:14). The “lusts” (evil cravings) and “pleasures” (sensual desires) that the gospel writers are referring to are those fleshly and worldly pursuits in life that keep a person from coming to faith in Christ. They are the carnal cravings and hedonistic enjoyments of life, which lead a person away from Christ and salvation.

John 3:19

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

There must be a change of mind about one's sinfulness before God and a willingness to forsake sin. No person is saved in rebellion against God! Love and lust for carnal living keeps people from repenting of their sin and coming to faith in Christ (Luke 24:47). The occupation with sex and many other worldly vices steals a person's

heart from Jesus Christ and occupies the interests of a person's life, which in return, keeps them from repentance and faith in Christ. A person cannot possess a worldly heart and a repentant heart at the same time. The soul that is going to produce true life and lasting fruit must be cleansed of worldliness.

This is why true salvation only occurs when there is a willingness to deal with sin in one's life. In other words, a person must face their sins, be willing to repent of their sins, wanting cleansing and deliverance from their sinful pattern of living. Without an inward change of heart toward worldly sinful living no person can be saved. There must be brokenness or conviction over sin (Luke 7:37-38, 47-48; 18:3) and a desire for deliverance from sin's power (John 8:32), if one is going to actually turn to God from sin (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

Look at it this way. Worldliness is characteristic to the heart just like thorns or weeds are to the soil. The two simply do not mix. Just as thorns choke out the young life of the plant so a love for worldliness chokes out true repentance and salvation from occurring in a person's life. God wants a repentant heart toward worldly sin that is seeking deliverance from the old way of life. Some people never respond to Jesus Christ in faith because they never desire freedom from their sinful way of living.

Mark says that the thorny soil hearer "becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4:19) after the things of the world choke out the truth of the Word of God that was sown in the heart. Luke adds that this person does not "bring no fruit unto perfection" (Luke 8:14). This means that the fruit dies before it has a chance to become ripe and harvested by the farmer. This pictures the person who in the end has no fruit to offer to God because his life has been choked to death by worldliness. It's a person who in the end has nothing that the Sower can use for His glory and service. Most certainly it pictures a counterfeit and simulated Christian life that cannot yield fruit and therefore will suffer the vengeance of God (John 15:2; 6).

Jesus revealed that when a person bears no fruit that God can use he is taken away to judgment. So, the young plant among the thorns in Matthew 13 points to an illegitimate life (Heb. 12:8), since this person tries to hold on to Christ with one hand and the world with the

other hand. It's the type of person who makes an outward and superficial response to Christ while wanting no deliverance or freedom from sin's power. But God will never settle on these terms! Many people want an escape from hell without an escape from their sin. They don't want to face the ugly nature of their sin and repent before God. This person wants to walk the "broad way" and the "narrow way" at the same time (Matt. 7:13–14) but it cannot be done.

A worldly faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of saving faith in Christ.

VIII. Impressive faith

This type of faith is seen in the lives of those religious people in the temple, who were impressed with the words of Jesus; therefore, they are said to have believed on Him. However, Jesus questions whether or not their faith in Him was real or genuine by what He says to them.

John 8:30-32

"As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

It's clearly stated by Christ that the religious scribes and Pharisees needed to possess true saving faith in Christ (John 8:24). The Scriptures declare that after hearing the words of Jesus (John 8:30), many of these same religious people, did believe on Christ (John 8:31). There is really nothing in the text to convince us that this was another group of Jewish people. Verses 24-33 seem to suggest one progression of thought and dialogue between Christ and these religious people, who were said to believe on Him. But what kind of faith or belief did the scribes and Pharisees possess? It certainly was not saving faith, because these people never admitted they were in bondage to sin (John 8:33) and Christ later said that these people were of the devil (John 8:44). Furthermore, it was this same group of people that decided to rise up and stone Him (John 8:59).

This type of belief or faith in Christ may be looked upon as an impressive faith. At best, the religious leaders of Christ's day believed

in a false view of the Messiah. They believed in a political Messiah or Christ that would provide physical deliverance but not a spiritual Messiah that would save their souls. Many people today, like the religious people of Christ's day, are impressed and even mesmerized with Jesus Christ, by what He says and does, but they are not ready to commit their trust to Him alone for the salvation of their soul. The religious people in Christ's day were said to believe in Christ but their "belief" merely indicates that they paid attention (gave mental assent) to Jesus' words without necessarily committing themselves to Him personally as Savior (John 6:53).

It is possible to "believe" in Jesus (superficially give mental assent to Jesus) because one is impressed with His words, wisdom, and wit, but not believe in Christ as the Savior of one's soul and have one's life transformed through new birth. These people were caught up in the hype that surrounded Jesus but did not want to be rescued from hell by committing their faith to Jesus. For instance, today there are many people, who claim to have a sentimental faith and feeling in the "baby Jesus" around the Christmas season. They claim to "have faith" in the birth and entrance of Jesus Christ into the world. But their faith is superficial and all their songs which they sing are empty. They are impressed with Christ, the way He came into the world, the things He has said, and what He did while on earth. But this kind of impressive faith falls short of saving faith in Christ.

Jesus saw through their sham and shallow faith by proclaiming that continuing in the truth ("If ye continue in my word" - John 8:31) is a sign that a person has placed genuine faith in Christ and that he has become a true follower and learner (disciple) of Christ. If they really grasped Christ's salvation message, these religious people would find liberation from their bondage in sin (John 8:32).

As Jesus spoke, this religious gang of legalistic hypocrites was astonished by the wealth of His words and the way that He presented Himself. They became mesmerized with what He said and told them. Although these religious Jews did not understand what Jesus was fully saying at this point (John 8:27), His words were impressive and brought a certain amount of enlightenment to them. Therefore, the Bible concluded that these people believed on Christ after hearing His words. However, their belief was not saving faith, but an

entertaining and impressive faith, because the people were merely caught up in what Christ said without committing themselves to Him personally as Savior.

Many people today talk about the words of Jesus in their Churches and Sunday school classes and develop a kind of impressive faith in Jesus because of what He said and taught while He was here on earth. This is the type of liberal Christian who hears the stories of the Good Samaritan from their liberal-minded preachers. They are impressed by what they hear and go to church to hear the stories of Jesus. They may even watch movies about Jesus and are impressed with what they see and hear from Jesus. I think Hollywood certainly tries to promote “impressive faith” in the minds and hearts of people today. They make movies quoting the words of Jesus and portraying Him as an impressive historical character.

As a result, many people become fascinated with the historical Jesus and the things He taught and said. For the most part, these people don't actually believe what Jesus said (John 8:37), but they are just intrigued with His speech and sayings. They are somewhat caught up in His person and hype. It's the type of worldly mentality, talk, and singing about Jesus today which says, “Put your hand in the hand of the man from Galilee!” However, you don't put your hand in the hand of the man from Galilee in order to be saved; you commit your faith to Christ's death and resurrection for the salvation of your soul.

Many people today are impressed with the person and words of Jesus and even talk and sing about Him. There is an impressive and entertaining type of faith which many people possess in regards to Jesus Christ. Many people give mental assent that Jesus lived during the days of old and they happily and merrily sing about Him in Country, Jazzed up Songs. They sing about Him at Christmas and Easter, as they are filled with the hype that surrounds the holidays, but their faith is never rooted in Christ for the salvation of their soul. They are impressed with Christ but they don't have internal saving faith in Christ.

Their faith in Christ is like a safari hunter going off into the jungle to hunt tigers. It is like an adventurous journey for them that generates

excitement and something to talk about. Their faith is an adventure instead of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ for salvation.

These people in John's Gospel certainly did not believe that Jesus was the Savior and Messiah. Perhaps they believed that He was a rather impressive prophet or superstar. There you have it, Jesus Christ superstar! That sounds like Hollywood today and the faith that some people have in Christ is not the faith that saves. It is an impressive and somewhat entertaining faith that inspires people to talk about Jesus and be impressed by the things that He said and did while living on earth. Of course, this faith is far from saving faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

I remember talking to a man one day who said he was impressed by what Jesus said about feeding the hungry and giving to the poor. He congratulated Jesus for doing such a wonderful thing as this. However, when I questioned Him about his sins and what Jesus said concerning his need to be saved, He wanted nothing to do with Jesus or me! There is a certain type of faith (mental assent directed to Christ) that revolves around Christ's words, works, and popularity, a faith that breeds or generates a certain amount of hype and excitement around Jesus. We might simply call it "impressive faith."

Many people are impressed with Christ, but they won't take Christ as their Savior. The question is not "Are you impressed with the person of Jesus?" but "Are you saved by the person of Jesus?"

An impressive faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ.

IX. Needs faith

John 6:26

"Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

In short, Jesus was saying that many people identify themselves with Christ in order to get their belly full. This is not saving faith. There is a type of faith, which people have in Jesus or God, which places trust in

Jesus for the provisions that are needed in one's life, but that is all. I call it "foxhole faith." This is a faith that prays to God to help meet the pressing needs in one's life but not a faith that calls on Christ for the saving of one's soul.

There are many people like this in the world today. Their faith in Christ is centered upon their own selfish needs in life. They claim to be Christians because they have faith in a God that will meet all of their needs and fix their problems in life. They trust in God enough, so He might patch up their life, and save them from despair and harm's way.

I would not believe it, if I had not heard it with my own ears! One day I asked a man if he was saved. His response stunned me. He told me of a day and time in his life when he was riding his bike. Suddenly, a vicious dog jumped out of nowhere and began to chase him while he was riding the bike. He alluded to the fact that God had turned the dog around and saved him from his viscous jaws. That answer caught me off guard, until it dawned on me that this man was looking at salvation from the standpoint of God saving him from an awkward and dangerous predicament, which he faced in life. This man's faith was rooted in God steering a dog in a different direction! Many people have a faith like this. They view Jesus as a Savior for their times of need and possess a faith in Him that might rescue them from the hardships and tough breaks within life.

Many people today simply have a faith in a God who can meet all of their pressing needs in life and deliver them from the dangers and difficult circumstances in life. They want a God or Jesus that will get them out of their jam in life. As the airplane takes off, they might say a little prayer that goes like this: "God, I believe that you will allow this airplane to land safely on the ground at its intended destination. Amen."

I once met an elderly lady, who said that she was a Christian, but gave absolutely no evidence of that fact in her life. And yet, she spouted off to me about how she trusted in God to meet her needs and thanked Him everyday for providing her needs, and allowing the little birds to land in her bird feeder. Of course, she gave God thanks

for all her money, food, and birds when she was not cursing God's name!

I really believe that there are multitudes today that have a very generic faith in Christ, much like these hungry people did during Christ's day. They are trusting God for their needs in a very generic and generalized way and that is all. Their faith is not genuine saving faith in God's Son for salvation. They have not placed their trust in Christ as their Savior from the damnation of hell. All they have is a type of "needs faith" in God.

Many people have a savior for their needs but not for their soul! Likewise, many people have a savior to fix their problems but not to fix their soul! Jesus said, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6:26).

Many people use God to see what they can get out of Him! The wealth and health movement of today with its prosperity theology is also promoting this type of faith. You heard the slogan, "Have a need plant a seed." In other words, give me your twenty-five dollars (tax deductible) and you will have your need met. This approach confuses many people to say the least. It causes people to place faith in Christ for the wrong reasons. Many simply have a "needs faith" in Christ today and that is all. It is not saving faith.

A needs faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ.

What kind of faith do you have? If you were to ask this question in a survey, you would get many strange and weird answers. Some would say, "I have a spiritual faith in the universe." "I have faith that I will come back in another life form after I die" "I have faith that everything will be alright after I die, I'm going to the happy hunting ground in the sky." "I have faith that someday I will get out of purgatory and go to Heaven." "I have faith that in the end God will accept me." As we have been seeing throughout this study, many people possess a counterfeit type of faith that falls drastically short of true saving faith in Christ. Let's examine three more types of faith which fall in the category of spurious and false.

X. Misdirected faith

Jesus said in Matthew 6:7:

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”

These people were chided by Christ for praying without meaning. Their prayers were nothing but repetitive and vain prayers, which meant nothing to them, nor did they mean anything before God. In other words, God did not hear their prayers. Some people today claim to be saved; however, they attribute their salvation to praying a prayer that had no meaning to them or to God.

I remember talking with someone about Christ and was seeking to pinpoint a time when they really trusted Christ as Savior. I asked if they had ever personally believed in Christ and received Him as Savior. I received an immediate response, “Yes, I prayed a prayer something like that.” I thought to myself, “Something like that!” My heart sank because I wondered if the listener really understood what it means to believe on Jesus Christ. It seemed as if they prayed about something but did not truly believe in Someone (Jesus Christ).

My guess is that this man and many others like him have been conned and misled into believing that if they just pray a quick prayer that God will save them. In other words, they are banking their eternal destiny on some kind of repetitious and meaningless prayer that they prayed. It was a prayer that they really did not understand, or a prayer that they were forced into praying, without any real conviction over sin or understanding of what they were praying. This is the type of prayer that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 6:7. It was a prayer that lacked any real thought or sincerity. When it comes to soul winning, it is called “easy prayerism.”

It’s true that a person must call upon Christ and invite Christ to be their Savior (Romans 10:13); however, when placing belief in Christ for the salvation of one’s soul, a person must understand what he is doing (1 Timothy 2:4) and be sincere (Rom. 10:0 – “for with the heart”) in what he saying.

The unskillful soul winner might say, “Now just repeat this prayer after me and then you will be saved.” I think that there are those today who are quickly led to repeat a prayer, after someone else, without any real knowledge or conviction concerning what they are saying. Then, after they are done praying, the one leading in prayer might say, “There, now you are saved, because you have prayed this prayer.”

There are those avid soul winners today who like to count numbers and display their names in the bulletin on Sunday morning. They are caught up in what I call “The black market of evangelism.” There is a destructive approach to evangelism, where soul winners try to quickly force decisions for Christ upon people, without the listener really having the chance to comprehend what is going on and what is being said. There are those who try to win souls by placing their foot in the door and by using unkind and inconsiderate methods of quick evangelism, which have misled people into thinking that salvation comes through some kind of quick prayer, instead of placing faith in the person of Christ.

I call this a misdirected faith. It’s a faith that is misguided and misdirected into believing that there is some kind of quick magical prayer that someone can repeat in order to be saved. How often have you heard people say: “Oh, I repeated a prayer that went something like that.”

Yes, I have led people to Christ by helping them to pray a sinner’s prayer for salvation. I am not opposed to such a method as this. However, in every case, I want the sinner to realize that the prayer does not save them; they must understand that it’s their faith in Christ that saves them. The prayer is simply a way to express their trust and reliance upon Christ as Savior.

There are those soul winners today who say, “All you have to do is pray a prayer and God will save you.” It seems like they are telling the poor lost soul that the prayer that they pray will save them! Understand what I am saying. There are people today who actually believe that a prayer saves them and that God will take them into Heaven because they repeated some kind of repetitive prayer.

Once again, Jesus said:

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”

We must remember that God does not hear repetitious prayers that are empty, meaningless, and heartless! There are those today who possess a misdirected and misguided faith. Salvation does not come from a prayer; it comes from placing personal faith in Christ. It's true that prayer is the avenue or way to express faith; however, it's wrong to make prayer the savior.

We have all heard about those soul winners who try and count their converts by the number of prayers that people have prayed or the number of hands that were raised during a meeting.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:15:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”

How can this possibly be? How can a convert be someone who is still going to eternal damnation in hell? It's because the convert is a convert of someone else, instead of a convert for Christ! They have been misdirected and never were born again and saved. First, these Pharisees were not interested in preaching the true message of salvation. Secondly, they were interested in numbers more than the spiritual condition of their soul.

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that all the soul winners of today are disguised Pharisees, who are refusing to share the true Gospel with lost people. What I am saying, and the principle I am drawing from this verse, is this; there are many people today who are still going to hell because all that they did was become a convert of someone else! They merely raised their hand for some reason and became a number on someone's list of alleged conversions. The sad result is this; many are still a child of hell (“twofold more the child of hell”)!

When you follow up with those who raise their hands or repeat prayers, you will discover that sometimes they have raised their

hands to overcome a problem or to try and find a way out of their desperate condition in life. They may raise their hands in order to try and reform their life through the help of Jesus. There are many that repeat prayers with a wrong heart, for the wrong reason, and with the wrong understanding.

The soul winner may say, "Eighty men got saved in the prison during the meetings this week: or "three hundred were saved last week on Tuesday night visitation ministry." I don't doubt the power of God. God saves souls and He saved many souls. However, let's call the bluff of some of these super soul winners today. What do statements like this really mean? They mean that 80 or 300 people probably raised their hands or prayed a prayer. That's what some people view as the sure sign of salvation. However, not everyone that raises their hand and prays necessarily possesses saving faith. Many raise their hands, they pray a prayer, and are still not saved. They raise their hands simply for other reasons unbeknown to the soul winner.

Again, there is a type of evangelism today that we might call "easy prayerism." I know that sounds rather strange, but none the less it is true. All that certain people are told to do is repeat a certain prayer after somebody else. Sadly, many don't understand what they are praying about and many pray for the wrong reasons.

There are those who have actually told me that they have repeated a meaningless prayer in order to get people out of their home and off of their back. Shame on the soul winners who are driving unsaved people to repetitive prayers. This is what the heathen do! "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

There are those within the "Black market of evangelism" who are more interested in their numbers and misdirect and misinform poor lost souls. I once heard about a Christian man who was taking an unsaved friend for an airplane ride. He began to witness to the unsaved man while he was flying up in the clouds. Suddenly, he took the airplane into a nosedive and headed toward the ground. It looked like doomsday for both of them. Then, the Christian pilot calmly said, "Ricky, I know Christ as my Savior and I am sure that if I crash this plane that I will go to Heaven. I would advise you to pray and ask

Christ to save you, or I am going to run this airplane straight into the ground!”

Talk about “quick prayerism!” But this is exactly what I am referring to regarding misdirected faith. Many will use pressurized evangelism and candy bar tricks in order to get people to make rash, non-convicting, unconvincing, and unreal decisions for Christ. This type of evangelism leads people into a misdirected faith, a faith that is not in Christ, a faith that is centered on a prayer, or some other experience, such as walking a church aisle, or raising a hand during a meeting. How very sad and deceptive this approach to evangelism really is. The act of raising a hand, walking a church aisle, or praying a prayer without the realization, understanding, and desire about salvation results in false hopes and unreal conversions.

A misdirected faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ.

XI. Experimental faith

Acts 17:22-23 reads:

“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.”

In Acts 17:22-23, Paul encountered a group of heathenistic people on Mars Hill, which was the court where all religious discussion took place. Paul said that these people were too “superstitious” or outwardly religious in their worship of all their deities. They had the well-known “form of godliness” that 2 Timothy 3:5 speaks about. They were a group of people that mastered the art of trying different God’s. They even had an altar with this inscription, “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.” They had a god for everything imaginable. They probably had the god of chewing gum! Well, Paul noticed that they had an altar, where they addressed an unknown God, just in case they left out one deity, or overlooked a certain god. These pagan people were willing to try and experiment with any new god that was invented, so that they could receive the benefits from each god. The heathenistic

people of Paul's day actually thought that the truth about Jesus and the resurrection was just another god to try. In Acts 17:18 the people chanted "...He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection." They actually misunderstood the Gospel message about Jesus and the resurrection as two different gods.

Remember that old familiar expression, "Try it, you'll like it." This is the mentality that these people had as they tried new gods, even the new god called "Jesus and the resurrection". This is the same mindset that some people have today when it comes to placing faith in Jesus Christ. They possess a kind of "experimental faith" with Jesus. They want to give Jesus a try and see if He will fit into their way of life and that Jesus will work for them. We have all seen those bumper stickers which read, "Try Jesus!" However, a sinner does not "try Jesus;" he must believe on Jesus (Acts 16:31). Salvation does not come through trying Jesus but by repenting of one's sin and resting one's faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

Many people today, like the people Paul encountered, believe in many gods. This is true with the New Age theories sweeping across the globe. People today like to try new things ("some new thing" – Acts 17:21). They are trying Eastern religions, transcendental meditation, and other "spiritual experience" in order to find some new answer or quick fix to life. Of course, there is also the newest book written by the daredevil motorcycle jumper, which promises you will never crash again in your life! So let's try what he says and see if it works!

Today, people take pleasure in trying new and different things. This is true even in connection with the person of Jesus! In our modern society, we have heathenistic people walking across the concrete jungles and asphalt pavements of our land, who want to simply "try Jesus." Today, all people need to do is give Jesus a try, and if they don't like Him, they can return Him and get a full refund! In fact, they don't even have to pay for the shipping and handling! How very sad. There is an experimental faith in Jesus that is not salvational or saving faith. It is simply a faith that is looking for some new thing! It is a faith that wants to give Jesus a try and see if He is better than the last new thing on the market.

An experimental faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ.

XII. Philosophical faith

1 Corinthians 2:5

“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

When Paul brought the Gospel to Corinth he made sure that he preached to the people a pure Gospel message so that a person’s faith would be rooted in the Gospel and not the philosophies of men.

a. Our determination

1 Corinthians 2:2

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

If people are going to be saved, this too, must be our determination and goal. We must be determined to share the pure and unadulterated message of Jesus Christ with the lost. I am determined! Are you determined?

“I am determined, I will be faithful,
Till He has finished His purpose in me,
And nothing shall shake me
For He’ll not forsake me.
I am determined to live for the King.”

We need Holy Spirit determination today! We must stand up for the Gospel and not back down! God’s Gospel message is what we need to share with the lost. We have the right message. Let’s shout it from the rooftops! Remember that it’s only the message of Christ that saves people and prepares them for eternity! Every other message will send people to hell. Pragmatism will send people to an eternity without Christ. Why did Paul make this commitment to only preach the Gospel? It’s because he wanted people to place their faith in Christ, instead of following some kind of divergent philosophical teaching, which could not save their soul.

b. Our delivery

1 Corinthians 2:4

“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

When we mix man's philosophies (ways of thinking) with the Gospel, we confuse the clear message and reroute people to hell. In Paul's day Greek philosophy was very prevalent, but today we have many other philosophies parading our land, such as humanism and the Eastern religious teachings regarding salvation and the afterlife. These are all forms of “man's wisdom” but they are not the message and display of God's wisdom as found in the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 1:20-21). Hallelujah for the cross!

Paul did not use persuasive or enticing speech. Why? It's because our words do not bring salvation into the hearts of the lost; it's God's Words (the message about the cross) that lead to the salvation of souls. God is the real soul winner! It's the Holy Spirit who convicts the heart and draws the sinner to Christ (John 16:8) through the message of the cross. Therefore, we don't have to use the manipulative words of “man's wisdom” to try and win people and make converts. In short, Paul did not preach philosophy (man's wisdom) to the unsaved masses; he preached Christ! He did not mix any other message with the Gospel message.

This reminds us that we should not be caught up in the pragmatic worldly techniques of today that are being used to allegedly win the unsaved. Let me remind you of something; techniques, or all the gimmicks and gadgets that man uses today, does not save souls. It's the power of God that saves souls through the preaching of the cross.

The reason for Paul's pure preaching or delivery is now given.

1 Corinthians 2:5 declares:

“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

You see, a person's faith can rest in the wisdom and folly of man's teachings, which runs contrary to the message of the Gospel. A

person's faith can stand "in the wisdom of men" (man's teachings and philosophies). People can possess a wrong type of faith that is centered in evolution, modernism, humanism, and legalism. When an individual believes in the message of the cross, they are saved by God's power, which was previously mentioned as the Spirit's power of convicting and bring them to Christ (1 Cor. 2:4). However, when they reject this message for some other message, they possess a counterfeit faith.

There are many who claim to possess faith in some philosophical system that runs contrary to truth, the Gospel, and the only way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Therefore, Paul needed to keep the message simple and clear. In our world today, people have faith in the philosophical messages of liberation theology (salvation comes through the distribution of wealth), the traditional liberal and humanistic message ("We are all good and going to Heaven"), and other pagan philosophical teachings regarding God and the afterlife which do not align with Scripture (Mormonism, Seventh Day Adventism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Muhammadanism). Man's human reasoning on spiritual things do not matter; it's God's reasoning that matters! You can only go to Heaven through God's philosophy or way of thinking – the way of the cross!

"I must needs go home by the way of the cross,
There's no other way but this;
I shall ne'er get sight of the Gates of Light,
If the way of the cross I miss.

The way of the cross leads home,
The way of the cross leads home;
It is sweet to know, as I onward go,
The way of the cross leads home."

A philosophical faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ.

XIII. Farewell faith

Have you ever witnessed to someone who was dying and heard them say, "Don't worry about me, I've made peace with God." Often, when

people are dying, you will hear what I call, “farewell expressions of faith.” People will actually believe that they have gotten right with God through some kind of mental transaction that takes place between them and God, prior to their death. They say, “I’ve settled my accounts and now I am at peace before God.”

I was talking to a man one day who told me that when his dad died he was ready to go. His exact words, “Dad made peace with others and made peace with God. He was ready to go.” I have often wondered what people mean by this statement. If they mean, they confessed their sins before God, then they are sadly mistaken that this will bring them peace before God.

Romans 5:1

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How does a person make peace before God? It’s not by confessing our sins but believing or expressing “faith” in the Son of God (Jesus Christ) to be one’s Savior. This is the only way we are “justified” (declared legally righteous before God) and it’s the only way we can have “peace with God” (possess a settled sin record before His presence and have God’s wrath withdrawn). You can’t settle your sinful record or account before God by the mere confession of known sins; you settle it by placing faith in Jesus Christ to save your soul.

Many believe that “making peace with God” involves confession of one’s known sins before God just prior to their death. It’s a “farewell faith” that rests in a person’s confession of sins, which they claim makes them fit for Heaven and somehow makes everything okay between them and God. However, we must remember that salvation does not come by confession of sin; it comes by believing. Confession is for the Christian life and pertains to restored fellowship with God (1 John 1:9) but belief is for the unsaved and pertains to receiving justification before God (John 5:24; Acts 16:31).

A farewell faith is a fraudulent or counterfeit faith that falls short of true saving faith in Christ. First, a person could never remember all their sins which they have committed against God. Therefore, their confession would be incomplete. Second, confession does not bring

the sinner to God because it lacks trust or confidence in Jesus Christ alone for one's salvation. We do not CONFESS our sins in order to be saved; we BELIEVE in the Son of God who grants us forgiveness for all of our sins and delivers us from hell (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

In this study we have discovered that people express faith in Christ for many different reasons. They also claim to have a type of generic faith that is not centered in Jesus Christ for salvation. The Scriptures should lead us to the conclusion that not everyone who claims to have faith in Jesus Christ is necessarily a genuine blood-washed believer, who has trusted in Christ alone for the salvation of his soul. Not everyone who claims to have faith possesses the right kind of faith – saving faith.

2 Thessalonians 3:2 says: “for all *men* have not faith.” This is talking about genuine faith that rests in Christ alone for one's salvation. There are multitudes who possess a works type of faith, a demonic or intellectual faith, a spectacular faith, an emotional type of faith, a worldly faith, an impressive faith in Christ, a misdirected faith, an experimental faith, a needs type of faith, which is a very generic and generalized faith in God or Jesus to meet one's pressing needs in life. Many today have a misdirected faith, philosophical faith, and even a faulty farewell faith that does not prepare them for Heaven and the afterlife. These types of faith fall short of true saving faith in Christ.

The active soul winner must press the issue of faith alone in Christ alone and point people to true and genuine faith in Christ. Today there are many tares among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30). False professions of faith, misdirected faith, and fraudulent and shame faith result in “tares” (Satan's children) among the “wheat” (God's true children). Are you a tare or wheat? When I place genuine faith in Christ to save me, I become part of God's wheat (true crop and harvest) that will one day be harvested for Heaven.

I am so glad that I can sing along with the hymn writer who said:

“My faith has found a resting place,
Not in device nor creed;
I trust the Ever-living One,
His wounds for me shall plead.

I need no other argument,
I need no other plea,
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that he died for me.”

Let me ask you several personal questions before closing this study. These are questions that the soul winner can ask people when dealing with them about salvation.

Questions to Consider

- What kind of faith do you have?
- Where is your faith resting today?
- Is your faith resting in some prayer that you prayed?
- Is your faith resting in the fact that you walked down some church aisle?
- Is your faith resting in the fact that you raised your hand in some church meeting?
- Is your faith for salvation resting in something that you have done or in something that you are presently doing?
- Are you trusting in your works to save you?
- Do you only have a faith that believes in the existence of God and Jesus?
- Do you only have faith in a God that meets your needs?
- Do you only have faith in God to do some miracle in your life?
- Do you only have a faith that revolves around some emotional experience that is connected with God or religion?
- Are you merely impressed with Jesus?
- Do you only want to try Jesus?
- Do you only have a savior for your problems?
- Do you only have a savior for your needs?
- Do you have a Savior for your soul?
- Does your faith rest in man’s philosophies and dogmas?
- Where will you go after you die?
- How do you know that you will go there?

If you are not sure that you are saved, I invite you to believe in what Jesus Christ did for you. Christ died on the cross bearing sin’s penalty and rose again the third day in order to give you eternal life (1

Corinthians 15:3-4). If you will place your faith in Christ, what He did to save you, then you can be saved.

Remember, a prayer will not save you. It's your faith in Christ that saves you. However, prayer is the way we express faith in Christ. So below is a simple prayer that may help you to express meaningful and genuine faith in Christ.

“Dear God, I am a wicked sinner before Your presence. I deserve the judgment of hell because of my sins. Today, I believe that Jesus Christ, your only Son, died for me upon the cross, to free me from sin's penalty. I also believe He rose again to give me eternal life. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

Here is the Promise:

Romans 10:13

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

You can know that you are saved today by expressing simple faith in Jesus Christ to be your personal Savior. Have you transferred your faith only to Christ, so He can be your Savior? If not, express faith in Him today. Make a choice or decision to commit your faith only to Christ, so He can become your personal Savior from hell and give you everlasting life.