

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

and Other Sermons

by

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SERMON FOUR

ONLY BELIEVE (Acts 16:31)

This is by far the most important, the most vital question in all the Bible, consequently in all the world. To obtain salvation is to receive everything worthwhile in this life and in the life to come. To lose salvation is to part with everything that is of any real value to the immortal soul. Tremendous as is the subject, in this question and in this answer is contained all you have to know to be saved. It is so simple that a child can understand it, so universal that it includes in its broad offer all the nations and generations of men.

God has conditioned salvation upon one proposition—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. “**Only believe and thou shalt be saved.**” Only believe, and all the untold blessings included in the plan of redemption will be showered down upon you from the bountiful hand of God. Let us consider first the foundation of faith; second, the meaning of faith; and third, the glorious consequences of faith.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

We are to believe, only believe; we are to believe not in a preacher, not in a church, not in a denomination, not in a theological dictum, but in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. His name includes His mighty offices and His marvelous work.

- As Lord, He is the King of all creation.
- As Jesus, He is the prophet of God, revealing God to the generations of men.
- As Christ, He is the High Priest, entering within the veil to intercede for the needy world.

He is possessed of all saving, keeping power. He is a Saviour adapted to all the sinner's needs, to the sinner's state, to the sinner's danger.

He is an all-accessible Saviour. By day and by night, at home and abroad, the Jew, the Gentile, all, will find Him ready, willing, eager, anxious to receive all those who come seeking His face.

He is an all-sufficient Saviour. Submitted to His power, though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

He saves to the uttermost,

- To the uttermost of the depths of depravity,
- To the uttermost degree of temptation,
- To the uttermost duration of time.

There is no circumstance, no condition that can stop or baffle His power. The vilest sinner, the most wicked transgressor, the weakest soul, all are alike to Him.

He is an everlasting Saviour, for He gives eternal life to all those who receive Him by faith. His salvation is guaranteed to outlast eternity, guaranteed by the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross. Nothing can rise out of the buried past, nothing can occur in the living present, no condition can leap out of the unfolding future to hamper or seriously hinder, let alone negate, the salvation obtained by faith in Christ. The soul that rests on Jesus is rooted in the "*Rock of Ages*." The winds may blow, the rains may fall, the storms may howl, the soul may tremble, but the "*Rock of Ages*" will remain forever intact.

He is the only Saviour. **"There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."** He alone is the only way to the Father, to the Father's love, to the Father's house.

The power of this Saviour is proved by the expressed declarations of God:

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

“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.”

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

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

It is proved by nineteen hundred years of wondrous Christian history. For nineteen hundred years, from the ends of the earth, men, women, children of every circumstance, of every clime, of every condition, have found the haven of rest, the salvation of their souls, the pardon of their sins, the deliverance from the devil, in the dying sacrifice and the resurrected life of the Son of God. The Great Physician has not failed in a single case. He has not turned down a single soul. His blood has never wanted effective power. The testimony of the myriad hosted Christian generations that have passed have proved beyond chance of argument or disputation that “the way of the cross leads home.”

It is in this Jesus that you are asked to place your faith. It is He upon Whom you are to believe. It is His promises that you are to accept. It is His power upon which you are called to rely. Had He failed in a single instance, had He lost a single case, you would have a right to hesitate. As it is, with all the unbroken records of His matchless victories, you need not fear, no, not for a moment, His ability to lift you out and hold you up, to present you faultless before the presence of His glory.

II. CONSIDER THE MEANING OF FAITH

There are three things that God wants you to know:

- First, you cannot do anything toward your own salvation;
- Second, God does not require you to do anything;
- Third, Christ has done it all Himself.

What Christ has done for you on the cross, God invites you to receive as the free gift of His love by faith. Faith has both a passive and an active element.

Faith is reliance on testimony, the testimony of the Bible, the testimony of Christian history, the testimony of the children of God about you.

“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Faith is believing what God has to say about His Son. The beginning of our knowledge of Christ is through the Word. When we accept that Word and step out upon its promises, Christ becomes ours by experience. Someone has well said, “The order in salvation is fact, faith, feeling.”

Faith is dependence on a person, on his personality, on his promises, on his power.

Jesus Christ is that person. Faith is an opening of the heart, of the soul, of the life for the Lord Jesus Christ to come in. Faith says, “I will arise; I will go; I will say.” Faith is a coming to Jesus Christ now and a surrender of all to Him. Someone has well said, “The faith that recognizes our own lost condition, that earnestly desires salvation, that casts away all hope in anyone or anything but the Lord Jesus Christ, and that hopes, or has the assurance, that He will save, and puts Him to the test by crying to Him, is the faith that saves.”

Surely after nineteen centuries of promise-keeping and power-displaying, He is worthy of absolute trust. Faith leads us to anchor our souls in the “*Rock of Ages*,” in the “*Haven of Rest*.”

We cease struggling; we cease striving; we cease doubting; we cease fearing; we leave it all to Jesus. Our own personal morality, our own feeble efforts, our own works and practices, our own prayers, Bible study, baptism, church-membership, witness-bearing, all sink into the background. Our hope is in Christ. He is our all in all.

Faith is the acceptance of an offer.

Jesus said, **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”** Faith leads us to close with the proposition God proffers to each of us of eternal life as the free gift of His love upon the condition of our accepting Christ as our personal Saviour, humbly, penitently, by faith as little children. We strike hands with God upon that and similar verses of Scriptures. The unchangeable, unshakable, unmistakable, eternal Word of God, substantiated by His glorious holiness, sealed by the death of His Son, guarantees that God will keep faith with us.

Faith then becomes an obedience, a surrender, a committal, a consecration, no longer reformation or feeling, or profession.

It becomes in us a power, a motive, a driving force. The test of our faith is in emotion by devotion. It will lead us to do things for God and for others.

III. THE GLORIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF FAITH

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Saved! Hallelujah! What a word! How mighty its contents, how full its benefits, how eternal its rewards! The mind of man is dull, the language of man is beggared by the vastness of the oceans upon oceans of the grace of God falling upon us through salvation.

We are saved from the guilt of past transgressions.

Our sins are all blotted out.

“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.”

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

We are saved from all the tormenting fears of sin upon the conscience.

The fear of God’s wrath, and of God’s punishment are eternally banished from our souls. We are at peace with God. Death has lost its terrors, the grave its sting, the judgment its fears, eternity its uncertainty. Our names are inscribed in the Book of Life. We are children of the King and citizens of the kingdom. Our home is being prepared for us in the mansions of eternity.

We are saved from the bondage of present sin and temptations.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

The slave chains are broken. The devil's hold is torn loose. Freedom, peace, and joy are our heritage in God. We are regenerated by grace.

- Our affections are changed.
- Our aspirations are purified.
- Our ambitions are sublimated.

We become new creatures in Christ Jesus. New ideals, new motives, new purposes are implanted in the very warp and woof of our innermost beings. The things of the world that once seemed pleasant and attractive to us, we now see to be shoddy, tinsel, fool's gold. The things of heaven and eternity, that once seemed so distant, so unattractive, so joy-killing, are now the longings of our souls, the hopes of our minds, the very life of our hearts.

- We are saved from all the effects of sin in the world to come.
- We are saved from a gloomy, Christless resurrection.
- We are saved from public exposure and dreaded sentence at the judgment bar of God.
- We are saved from the bottomless pit of torment, from the **“worm that dieth not”** and **“the fire that is never quenched.”**
- We are saved for the love of God, for the service of Christ, for the home eternal in the heavens.
- We are saved to be made heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus, to reign with Him in a new heaven and a new earth forever.
- We are saved to wear crowns of righteousness that will outshine the brilliance of the noon-day sun.
- We are saved to sing the praises of God in a new world of life and light and love.

Will you now believe on that Christ? Will you now receive that bountiful salvation?

This night, this hour, I press upon your immortal, judgment-bound souls, Jesus Christ as the object of faith.

In His name, I offer you the blood of His cross to wash you from your sins, to make you children of God, to start you on the journey to heaven, never to finish until you drop your crosses at the feet of Jesus and receive your crowns of reward. Will you close with God's offer now?

Turn thee, O lost one, careworn and weary,
Lo, the Good Shepherd is pleading today,
Seeking to save thee, waiting to cleanse thee;
Haste to receive Him, no longer delay!

List to His message, think of His mercy!
Sinless, yet bearing thy sins on the tree;
Perfect remission, life everlasting,
Through His atonement He offers to thee.

Come in the old way, come in the true way,
Enter through Jesus, for He is the Door;
He is the Shepherd, tenderly calling;
Come in thy weakness and wander no more.

~ end of sermon 4 ~

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