

# A Serious Look at Saving Faith

by Al Whittinghill

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of saving faith, which is accompanied by works and a heart change, and warns against unsaved faith, which is only intellectual and does not lead to a change in behavior.*

**Duration:** 1:06:32

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 13:5

**Topics:** "Saving Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for believers to examine their faith and live it out authentically. He prays for a divine intervention in the church to bridge the gap between what believers claim and how they are perceived by the world. The preacher acknowledges the current state of the church in America, where there are many scandals and a lack of credibility. He calls for believers to surrender to God's refining fire and allow Him to transform their lives, so that the world may see a church on fire with resurrection life and holiness.

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## Transcript

I heard a story the other day about a person that had a late model minivan. They pulled into this service station. This minivan had a lot of stickers on it.

I mean, of course, it had Ruby Falls and Rock City, but it had the Royal Gorge out west, and Disney World, and Epcot, and Disneyland, and something in Buffalo, and Quebec, and down in Mexico City, and even had one from Central America. I mean, this thing was really plastered. It looked very full, and a lot of stickers all over it.

Lake Tahoe, San Diego Zoo, and this fellow was watching this van pull in, and he was intrigued that how a late model minivan like this could have all these stickers. And so he kind of waited and walked over to the owner, and finally he said, I'm really intrigued by this, that you have taken this car and been to all these places, and it's in such great shape. It's a brand new van.

And the man looked at him kind of sheepishly and said, he said these words, he said, well, I just collect stickers. I've not really made the journey. Now let's pray together.

Father, we know we live in an hour when the church in America claims a lot of things and is very vocal about some of the things that it believes, but the world is looking at us as believers and wondering where

we're really coming from. And Lord, tonight, I pray that your refining fire will start at the very beginning of our faith and test us to the core. Lord, we know that when we gather like this and open your word and your spirit is teaching us all of us that it is more serious than open heart surgery.

Physically, there are moments that the inner man must respond to the blade or die. And I pray tonight that your word will have his way in our lives. And I pray that the world will quit being disappointed as they look at the church, that they will see a church that's on fire with resurrection, life and purity and the beauty of holiness, and that the world will see the captivity of those who are known by your name turned visibly and awesomely in this hour and that they will say there's no God like their God and worship you.

May we hear your voice clearly in these next moments together. Thank you for what you've already done in our hearts. We pray tonight that you'll bring us to the point of action on revelation.

We pray that in Jesus name. Lord, I want to submit to you now and in my weakness, trust your strength to make your your word known to all of us. And I pray that in your son's name.

Amen. Well, I know that you're burdened about what's going on in our country every day. It seems like there's some new scandal breaking the headlines and you wonder how many more body blows the church can take before she utterly loses credibility.

There's a gap that's so big between what we say the church is supposed to be and what the church appears to those who don't know the Lord to be that I'm wondering if we can ever recover without a tremendous divine intervention from the Lord. I believe that those of us who know the Lord must seriously get under his gaze and let him look down at the very core of everything we hold dear and have his way with us. And it starts right here.

It starts with me and my wife and you and your wife and your children and our churches and getting rid of the contradictions or the things we have to make explanations for. You know, America is a land of paradox. It's really something I was reading the other day where they said now, several years ago, Gallup did a poll and they said about 51 percent claimed to be born again.

I read something the other day that Gallup had just put out that said 74 percent now claim to have a personal relationship with God in America. Now, I don't know what they mean by that, but you see, it's a very religious nation that we're living in and we have churches on every corner and and people can have truth available. They may not hear it in its reality from many places, but yet truth is available still to us and the world is waiting to hear the truth, but they're not getting it.

You know, I was thinking that God certainly is long suffering, that he can keep on and keep on with our country, waiting for these contradictions to disappear. Sixty percent of all the deaths in America take place in the womb. Did you know that? And over almost two million teenagers a year try to commit suicide.

Why is that happening in the land that's printed more Bibles than any other since it's been a nation of BD and STDs off the street? And and literally you go downtown and you're wondering who's going to jump on you, whether it be some weirdo from this group or that group. We we have a day when there's they say probably as many as 50 homosexuals that they know of in Congress serving in Congress hidden and some that are quite open. One even had a prostitution ring running from his home.

He's still in. It's amazing. And and high officials can put their hand on a Bible and swear themselves into office.

One of them claim Galatians chapter six, verse four, that we heard quoted earlier. But yet his life completely contradicts everything that verse says about sowing to the flesh and reaping the flesh corruption. So we ban the Bible.

We ban prayer. We can't give out Bibles. I did a thing for the Gideons not long ago, and they were lamenting the loss of the freedom to give out Bibles in the in the schools.

You can't give out Bibles, but if you have condoms, you can get them out in New Hampshire. Your daughter cannot get her ears pierced without parental permission, but she can get an abortion without coming home. You see, it's a land of contradiction and paradox, and it's because you see, we are tried to carry two different things when we call faith, faith, and have it not be real.

I want you to turn, please, first of all, to Second Corinthians chapter five, the second Corinthians chapter 13, and we'll look at verse five, because there's an exhortation there to those of us that are in the church, those of us who are in the church. And I believe that Corinth faced a lot of the same problems that we face in this busy commercial land of America, where the church seems to be thriving, but is. Desperately needy.

And Second Corinthians chapter 13, verse five, it says, examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith and then it says, prove your own selves. That word prove you'll hear again this weekend because it's the word document in the Greek. It means to refine metals, to put to a fiery test.

And here we are commanded by God to examine our faith, put it to the fire, the fires of scripture, the fire of reality, and see whether we be in the faith, prove your own selves, put your life in the fire. Don't you know your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobate. The word there is a different word than documents, a document, which means exactly the opposite.

Unrefined. It's saying that prove your own self by scripture and by the truth of God, whether you're really in the faith of the son of God, put your faith to the crucible of fire. Don't you know that if Jesus Christ is not in you and meaning living and operating, then you are a document or reprobate, which means there's full of dross and it's not genuine at all.

And so the test of his fire must come to every church members life. And tonight, as I prayed about this in a month ago, I felt the Lord was saying to me to start with this message, at least for my part tonight, to just call each of us to examine our walk with God from scripture and see whether we be in God's kind of faith. Now, that's the only kind of faith that's the one that'll last.

It's the test of fire. See, I've got to face the fire now or I'll feel the fire later. That's really the case.

And the fire may hurt me, but it won't harm me. I'll come out like Job, blameless and without blemish or spot. And so I want to take you to James, chapter one, chapter two, James, chapter two.

And I want to just look at this thing called faith for a moment. We're going to run a lot of references tonight, and I hope that you'll follow along with me. James, chapter two, and I want to begin in verse 14.

James, chapter two, verse 14. We're talking about lives that have a lot of stickers that haven't made the journey. James, chapter two, verse 14.

What does it profit my brothers, though a man says he has faith and has not works, can faith save him? Now, what this verse is saying, if you look at the original, it says this. What does it profit? What good is it, brothers, though a man present tense keep on saying he says it over and over again that he has faith, but he has not corresponding works. In other words, the works that result from his life don't match with what he keeps on saying.

And it says literally, in a sense, can that kind of a faith save him? And the inference is very clearly no. In fact, I'm thinking of the text in first John chapter two. Just listen.

Don't turn there in first John to four. It says he that keeps on saying I know him and is not keeping his commandments is a liar. And the truth is not in him.

So it's possible to have words that don't agree with life. And that's what I call wearing stickers and being in the right place and hearing the right thing and being with the right people, perhaps saying the right words, but not having a corresponding reality in our experience. And can that kind of a faith save him? The word faith is used very loosely in our country.

Verse fifteen, James to if a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food and one of you says to them with your mouth, meaning depart in peace, be warm, be filled, notwithstanding you give them not those things that are necessary for the body. What does it profit? And the sense of those verses is it's showing us how little good it does to say something without a corresponding action behind it. Someone can be starving to death and you can say, God bless you.

Jesus loves you. And if you don't meet their need physically, they'll die physically. And so it's saying here you can be very sincere, but if it doesn't add up, it has no practical results.

Verse seventeen, even the same way faith, if it has not corresponding works, it's dead because it is alone. Yes, a man may say you have faith and I have works. James says, show me thy faith without thy works.

I will show you my faith by my works. Now, this is not dead works. This is a work overflowing from a love of God in the heart.

Then verse nineteen, thou believest the one reading this, the one in the church, you believe that there's one God you do well. The demons, the devils also believe and they tremble. But will you know, oh vain man, that faith without works is dead? It's saying in verse twenty, are you teachable? Are you willing to know this? Do you really want to know? Do you really want to put your face to the fire and your faith to the test that faith without works is absolutely dead and cannot save? Now, a lot of people don't really want to know if their faith is biblical.

I mean, I go to a lot of churches and I can tell you there's some very happy people who have convinced themselves that they're right with God. But if you get behind the scenes, sometimes you'll see that people, everybody else knows that they're just absolutely not walking with God, but they're happy people because you see, they've been told they can have it in two worlds at the same time. If faith without works is dead, are you willing to know this? Oh, vain man.

It's me. That's you. That faith without works is dead.

Am I teachable? See, a lot of people don't want to be teachable as long as their faith makes them feel good. They don't care. They don't really want the truth.

You see, real faith is precious without real faith. It's impossible to please God. Now, what I want to do coming back to this in a moment is show you some examples in scripture of unsaved believers.

Sounds kind of funny, doesn't it? But you see, just because people believe does not mean they're saved. The devil believes it says that he trembles in John. I want you to turn to some some some examples of people who believe, but do not possess saving faith.

Now, the man that's in James we've just read about is not a conscious hypocrite. He is not trying to fool people on purpose. He is not consciously being hypocritical.

He's just not seeing the need for there to be consistency morally and truthfully in his life. Well, in John chapter two, we see in verse twenty three, the Lord Jesus, he's at the feast in Jerusalem at the Passover, verse twenty three. And it says now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover on the feast day, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles that he did.

Now, that's the same word for believe that's in John 3:16 a little later in the next chapter. But Jesus, it says, verse twenty four, did not commit himself to them because he knew all men. He knew these people's hearts and he needed not that any should testify of men, for he knew what was in men.

You see, these people here had a belief in Christ, but it wasn't the kind of belief that drew them into that saving faith. Jesus is not looking for sponsors. He did not commit himself to these people because he knew what was in their heart.

And even though on the surface it appeared that these people had a saving faith, he knew their heart and there'd been no heart change. And so he couldn't be bluffed that he did not commit himself to them. It's like a little later in John six.

Many people came out when they saw the loaves that he reproduced and they wanted to eat of the loaves. They wanted to see a miracle, but they weren't committed to Christ personally. And so Jesus was not bringing them into that saving relationship, but they were believing in the same sense of believing facts and believing what they saw had some belief in God.

Well, in John, chapter eight, we see another example of unsaved believers in John, chapter eight, beginning in verse 30. Jesus had spoken many things to them, and it says in verse 30, as he spake these words, many believed on him. And then Jesus said to the Jews that believed on him.

If you continue in my word, then you're my disciples. Indeed, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. Now, these people were under conviction and they believed him.

But then when he got personal, they answered and said, we are Abraham's seed or we're Presbyterian or we're Baptist or we're Methodist. You could say it like that. We've grown up in church and we have never been in bondage to any man.

We don't have all those things that that you talk about sin being rampant and all that. That's what they're saying. How can you say you'll be made free? And Jesus said, Verily, verily, I'm telling you, whoever commits sin is serving sin is the slave of sin.

And the servant does not abide in the house forever, but the son abides forever. He's talking about the slave of sin doesn't remain in God's house forever. If the son, therefore, will make you free, you shall be

free indeed.

I know physically he's saying you're Abraham's seed, but you're seeking to kill me because my words have no welcome place in you. Then he goes on to say, I'm telling you what I've heard from my father and you're holding on to what you've got from your father. See, it looks like these people have a saving faith.

They believed on him, it says. But, you know, even though they believed on him, they weren't converted because he goes on to say you are of your father, the devil. And the works of your father, you do.

And he's been a liar from the beginning. And these people that started out believing in him and had the right words at first actually picked up stones to stone the Lord Jesus and drive him out of their presence because his words were so intolerable for words without reality, unsaved believers. And there are many like that today.

They believed on him, but it says in verse 59, as you can see, they took up stones to cast at him. And Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. That's where they were going through the middle of them.

And he passed them by. There are plenty like that today. John chapter 12.

There's another example. And this is very, very disquieting. John chapter 12.

There were rabbis and chief rulers in verse 42. He done miracles in their presence. Some people didn't believe on him, but in verse 42, it says, nevertheless, among the chief rulers, many believed on him because of the Pharisees.

They did not confess him, lest they be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. They believed on him, but they would not confess him. Now, in Romans 10, it says in verse 10 and 11, whoever believes on the son of God will not be ashamed.

Whoever believes on him, meaning in a saving way, will not be ashamed of him. That means if a person has laid hold of the Lord Jesus in a way that has saved them, they will not be ashamed to be identified with him. And that's why the Lord Jesus could say, whoever confesses me before men, I'll confess him before my father.

But in Matthew 10, whoever does not confess it before man, I will not confess. It's a law, you see, of the spirit that if you are saved, you will confess him because with the heart you believe, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. You you believe.

Therefore, you speak and you can say if someone says they believe, but they won't speak out and say, I'm believing in him, then scripturally they don't have a leg to stand on failure to confess him due to fear of man, hazarding worldly possession, loss or temporal interest going. It's a serious indication of more respect for man than God convinced, but not converting unsaved believers. And there are plenty like that who are businessmen in the business community who are dedicated to a series of things they believe about Jesus.

But when it comes to confessing him, they will not confess him. There's a difference between saying I'm a Christian and confessing, agreeing with God in your heart, confessing him, identifying with all he is before men. And there are many that are like that in our churches who are so respectable and so afraid to be identified with the king of kings in his reality.

Well, not only in John, but in the book of Acts, we see in Acts chapter eight, we see in Acts chapter eight, a revival taking place in Samaria and there in Samaria as Philip is preaching, it says in Acts chapter eight that in the earlier part, verse five and following that there he preached Christ and people listened and they saw miracles and they heard the word of God and they were converted and there was great joy in that city and many were baptized and came to the Lord and many believe. Verse twelve says they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. They were baptized men and women.

Then Simon, who was a magician, this man who had been on the other side, then Simon himself, a great sorcerer, like someone that you might say was a great occultist today, he believed also. And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip and was astonished, beholding the miracles and the signs that were done. Now we would have probably put him on the platform at the next gospel meeting and had to give his testimony or he had written a book about about I was in the occult or something like that, and he had made a half a million dollars or something like that in our day.

But you see, then Peter and John came down and prayed for the Holy Spirit to fall upon people and revival power. And Simon, who has always been caught up with powerful manifestations of the invisible, he saw that verse eighteen through the laying on of the apostles hands, the Holy Ghost was given and he offered them money saying, give me this power that on whoever I lay hands, they may receive the Holy Ghost. You see, he had come because he had a fascination with the supernatural and he believed many things.

But you see, Peter says to him, verse twenty, your money perish with you because you thought the gift of God can be purchased with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter, because your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent.

You never repented. He believed, but he had never repented. His heart wasn't right in the sight of God, and he was an unsaved believer.

He'd even been baptized and was astonished at what God did, but he hadn't submitted himself to God. So I would tell you something. Philip was careful about who he baptized.

Remember when he baptized the Ethiopian? As my little kid says, you know, are the eunuch he baptized? He says, what does forbid me to be baptized? He says, do you believe with all your heart? He says, yes, and then he baptized him. Well, let me tell you, he didn't baptize Philip like this. Simon, the magician, lightly, but he baptized an unbeliever and we've done it today elsewhere as well.

In Matthew, chapter seven, in Matthew, chapter seven, again, we see these words. I'm going to get to my message in just a minute. In Matthew, chapter seven, verse 18, a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.

Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. That's why so many people have such a hard time living. The Christian life is because they've never received the only life that can live in Christ.

Christ, it's a futile thing to sponsor God in a religious environment. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. You may fail and fall like David, but God will point his bony finger through some prophet at you and you will write Psalm fifty one in your own experience.

God will chasten those that are his children. Verse twenty, by their fruits, you'll know them. Listen, there are plenty of people that are having affairs in the church and we wink with one eye and let them go right on.

And we think and we're content to call long term things like that. Believers, the Bible says to treat them like unbelievers. They may be a believer like David is making a hideous mistake, but I'm telling you, the Bible says to treat them like unbelievers, pray for them like lost people and let the Lord deal with them as to where they really stand over in that same chapter.

It says in it says in verse twenty one, not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only he means in the Greek, only he that is doing the will of my father, which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, haven't we preached in your name prophesied means preached. And in your name, haven't we cast out demons? That's supernatural authority.

And in your name, we've done wonderful works and I will profess back to them. I never knew you depart from me. You that practice it means keep on the lifestyle of iniquity, which means lawlessness, no inner monitor, no moral accountability to God, no repentance, no sorrow for sin ever.

You've never sorrowed over sin. Why do you call me, Lord, Lord, Jesus said, and do not the things that I say. Why do you do this? Jesus said, these people draw near to me with their mouth and with their lips.

They do honor me, but they have removed their hearts from me. Their fear of me is taught by the precepts of men. Their fear, their respect for me has been passed down from generation to generation for man, but it's not from God, not the fear of God.

So what I want to do the rest of my time tonight is to take a look at what saving faith really is now. And because the reason I'm doing this is because I believe that in a group like this, some of you have come under coercion, others have come because you really want to hear from God and God may surprise you. It never surprises me anymore.

And who I see that I thought was a Christian for years that has been convinced and living in a wonderful appearance who God one day mysteriously says it's all man made. And so what I want to do is talk about the real nature of saving faith. And this is what we need clarity on in our day, not only for ourselves, but for those that we seek to minister to so that they will get the real thing.

The Bible says earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. It came down. Jude three is where it is.

You contend for it, fight for it. It's first of all, what is saving faith? Well, first of all, it is the gift of God. It is the gift of God.

It is not of works. You don't you don't work to get faith. Works of faith result from real faith.

They're the result, the byproduct of faith. But faith is the gift of God. And saving faith is supernatural.

It is not of man. It's beyond the natural senses. It's not residual.

It doesn't reside in me. It's not logical. It's the gift of God and grace brings it.

So the Bible says faith is the desired response to the true revelation of God. God gives a revelation to you and me of himself. And faith is what I'm to respond with.

And I'm to live by and I'm to walk in and I'm to finish up by the just shall live by. They shall walk in and they shall shall be abide in faith. So what is faith? It is coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ as a living person

through divine revelation and consequently resting all that I am upon him as my life, as my hope, as my life faith is when I come to by revelation, know that God is who he says he is.

Jesus is who the Bible says he is. And responding to that revelation of a living person. With all that I am, it's not just an emotional hope, so you see a lot of folks today think faith is just kind of I hope it's really true.

It's more than that. But faith places me at God's disposal and it involves the whole man. So I like to call it like this.

Faith is making yourselves available to that person about whom the Bible speaks. Jesus, whom you've come to believe in by the grace of God. Faith is when you make yourselves available to the Lord Jesus based upon what you believe the revelation.

It's more than just believing faith and belief of the same word in the Greek, but the context many times are different, which makes it very clear that saving faith is different than just belief by the spirit. The spirit gives me truth and I'm convinced of it and I know it's true, but faith is when I act upon what I believe it is when I act upon what the Bible has shown me to be true about the Lord Jesus and I make my humanity available to God's spirit based on truth that has come by him. It's it comes faith by hearing, which really could be translated responding to coming under faith, cometh by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God, Romans 10.

And so until I'm available to him, all that I believe is only theory. But when I make myself available to him, then it becomes real. You see, until then it's bleak, but it could be that which puffs me up.

Religious knowledge puffs up, but real faith will break you down and put you at the feet of the Lord Jesus in a puddle of surrender and it'll always involve a choice, real faith, and it'll always be a love choice, not just an intellectual choice that's safe, but it will be a choice that's in a response to a revelation of God, who is love. It's a moral response. It's because of a living person.

I see who he is. Faith is action based upon what you say you believe. And if a person says he believes something and doesn't act on it, then God is saying you don't really believe it.

Anything you really believe you'll act on and it will be faith. But if you don't act upon it, if all you have it is in theory, then you only have deceived yourself. If any man thinks himself to be religious, but yet he doesn't respond by bridling his tongue and submitting to God and his religion is vain.

Will you know this? Oh, vain man. It says later that faith without a corresponding life is barren. It's dead.

Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. I'll never forget Jonathan used to stand up in his high chair and he would stand up and he knew I did not want him to stand up in his high chair. He fell out of his head several times and he would stand up and he'd look over at me and I'd say, son, sit down and he'd look at me and I and sit down, son.

And I found I said, did you hear me now? I know he heard me with these ears, but see, we know this is the truth in our very being, because every dad who ever says to his child said, son, son, stop that. Did you hear me? I mean, see, we don't think they've heard it until they act on what we said. They heard us with the auditory, but they didn't hear us until they respond.

And that's the same way with God. He says you didn't hear me because you didn't respond. You sit in church and you write it in your notebook and you academically say I believe that, but you didn't hear him.

Savingly, faithfully until you respond, faith is action, faith is an attitude and an act that bids eternal truth be fact. That's what it is. It says be real in me now, based upon your word.

I'm going to reckon your word is true and I'm going to risk it and not to act. Now, I get this. This is subtle, but not to act on the word of God when it comes, even though you understand it.

You see the word of God preached from a pulpit. You believe it with a certain part of you and you know what God wants. But if you don't respond, do you know what the Bible calls that? Unbelief.

See, we think if we believe it out in our mind that we have faith, but God says it's unbelief until you respond. That's what he says, and you can check it out throughout the whole Bible. And he always says that that it's unbelief until there's a response from the heart.

Doesn't mean your obedience to be perfect or even right. It means that you respond, though, moving toward the Lord. Even worse, it could be rebellion.

The question is not what I believe, but in whom based upon the word in whom I know whom I have believed. I like this definition for faith. Faith is the activity of a love relationship with God based upon his word.

Faith is a is the activity of a love relationship with God in response to the Holy Spirit, making his word real to me. It's what I do in response to him based upon what he's shown me of himself. And that's why real faith works by love, says in Galatians.

It doesn't work by just academically writing down what your preacher says. It works as you hear what is spoken and you respond to Christ in love. Faith works by love.

So F.A.I.T.H. forsaking all I trust him. That's what faith really is. And it always produces fruit of a changed life and reality.

That's why he says by their fruits, you'll know them and a bad tree cannot bring forth repeatedly bad fruit, a good fruit and vice versa. So dependence on Christ starts where dependence on self ends. Now we're being black and white in here tonight.

Very clear faith that's genuine, according to acts, purifies the heart, purifies that same word for for thy word. I received in my heart and it's in a vessel of and the word is pure and God sends the fire to to see if it's really genuine. It brings an appetite for God's word faith when it comes.

So I want to give you some examples of unsaving faith, because these are rampant around us. There are plenty of them. They're on every side and you'll find them all around us.

Unsaving faith multitudes think they have saving faith and the devil makes sure there's a lot of lookalikes. He makes sure he's feeding people on corn husks, not enough nourishment to make you healthy, but just enough to keep your stomach from growling and let you die slowly. And there's so many like that.

And some of the others have a mixture in their life. Some of the things that's in my life that I think are faith are not faith. And God wants to send that refiner's fire to burn out the dross and the counterfeit faith and

the things that are not real faith.

The only real faith is the result of the life of the son of God in me, giving freedom to be himself according to his word. And so what are some counterfeits of saving faith? Well, let me give you some of them, OK? And I think you should, if you are taking notes, write these down and you'll see these all around you. You'll see them in your friends, perhaps, and you may see some of this in part.

And even though you are a Christian, you may see part of this in your life that you're trusting this. Others of you tonight will see some of you in this room might see one of these counterfeit faiths as your whole life of faith and realize that you've never had saving faith. The first counterfeit or dross or rubbish is natural faith, natural faith, or let me call that human faith, human faith.

This is based upon my own ability to believe and dedicate myself to something that I understand on a human level. And plenty of religions around the world have plenty of people that operate with a human faith. They give themselves.

If you go to some countries, you'll see pagan religions and people giving themselves with a human faith. It says in the Bible, God has given to every man a measure of faith. There's a human kind of faith.

You're you're having it right now because you're trusting that chair you're sitting in. I've heard evangelists say it's like sitting in a chair. You just you just sit on what you think of Jesus and he'll hold you up.

That's not what it's like. That's natural faith, real faith. Saving faith is supernatural.

Natural faith is what I was born with. For example, that I trust a pilot when I get on the airplane, I trust him and that's a natural faith. And I trust the bank with my money and I trust the chair when I sit in it.

I trust my tires on my car. It's a natural faith. Natural faith can be very sincere.

Natural faith can be very dedicated. It can sacrifice. It can be like the Pharisees who have a zillion laws.

And the Lord says to us more outer righteousness is not enough. It's not enough. It's got to be on the inside.

It's got to be on the inside. Saving faith is supernatural. It's not of yourselves, it says in Ephesians 2, it's not of yourselves.

If your faith isn't supernatural, it's superficial. It's the gift of God. It's something you weren't born with.

God brings it. It comes faith coming and it's something that you weren't born with. God doesn't have a spark of saving faith in every man that you fan.

It's something that was totally not there before the grace of God came. So that's the first counterfeit natural faith. That's when a person is informed, but not transformed.

They're informed, but not transformed. And a natural faith can never say it can be based upon intellect or apologetics. It can get goosebumps when it considers the Shroud of Turin.

It can have humanism thoughts at the core and you can cry every time you sing Amazing Grace and you can get goosebumps when the when the sunlight comes through the face of Jesus and you're saying last one day in church and say, oh, God, you can get all emotional, but it can be all natural faith. You can't say,

but it can deceive natural faith. Apologetics can show you that the tomb is empty, but it can never show you the risen Lord.

Apologetics can only be natural. You've got to get beyond that to the risen Lord. Natural faith.

The second counterfeit is historical faith. Now, real faith always has some of these things in it. I'm not saying none of these are valid, but real faith is much greater.

Of course, our real faith has some natural aspects in it that God made us able to believe that way. Same thing with historical faith, the historical faith that we've had handed down from the real church over the years. But real, real faith is different than historical faith that I mean tonight in that historical faith is based upon history.

And what I quote, I know that it's true in the past, perhaps it's tradition. Perhaps you've grown up in a denomination and you've had facts or you've had certain rituals like I remember I talked to a man once that grew up in a very, very wonderful home. But for him, you see, it hadn't been saving faith.

It had just been cultural and he grew up loving going to church and he loved the things of of prayer meeting and singing. And he was a musician and he he loved all that, like preacher's kids might or missionary kids. They grow up.

That's all they know. And so it's a historical faith that's based upon the same thing you've done over and over. You've grown up in church or you might look back to memories and you prayed a little prayer and you look back, but your life never changed.

You never had any real contact with Jesus living the resurrection personally, but you've just been holding on to something years ago and you're trying to keep lifting yourself up based on a dedication because of an experience in the history past, something that you did or happened. And it's kind of a process of logic that you look back to. It's all past tense.

A lot of churches are like that. It's like kids that sit around saying, how old are you? I'm six. I'm seven.

I'm two. You know, looking back to how old they are instead of saying what's happening today. Today is the day of salvation.

It's not. Well, I was safe when I was nine. I was safe when I was 10 or I was safe when I was six.

But he hadn't done a thing since then. Let me tell you what. If God hadn't done a thing in your life since then, it's because you're illegitimate.

You've had something else because every son that he births, he carries for from the womb, he chastens and he'll discipline and he'll he will follow up on every true born again child of God tradition and facts and ritual and lifestyle or culture. They may you may have an orthodox view of Scripture. You may be willing to die for your view of Scripture.

It's the word of God and what you believe about Christ. We've got to follow his example. But I'm going to tell you, that's not a proof you're saved.

The absence of doubt is not even a proof of faith. You can have absolutely no doubt. I know I'm saved.

I had a man in my office just the other day. He came in for counseling. The first thing he said to me, well, I want you to know I love the Lord Jesus Christ and I know I'm saved.

When I was nine years old, I'm saved. I said, tell me what you meant by that. Before he left that office an hour and a half later, he was on the floor crying his head off, getting saved because you see, all he'd ever had in his life was an experience.

His dad been a preacher for 20 years and his dad was a godly man. His dad was sitting across the table. His dad had told him the same thing, but this man wouldn't believe his dad because you see, he thought he knew that he didn't know the Lord.

He had heard all the truth. He believed, but he wondered why I didn't have any power to be a man of God. Truth is that all he had was a historical faith.

He was convinced of the truth like Agrippa. Paul, I'm convinced almost you persuade me to be a Christian, almost persuaded. I Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe the prophets, but you see, he wasn't saved.

He believed the word of God. He was convinced, but not converted. Orthodoxy, rigid forms, regular church attendance, piety, giving you money, a form of godliness can give you a false peace.

I heard someone the other day say being a church member will not keep you from sin, but it sure will take the joy out of it. Thought that was an interesting statement. I scratched my head.

I said, what do they mean by that? It's really true. You can be a miserable hypocrite in the church and try to act one way and have no joy. And you're like a walking contradiction and you're and you're ruined for both worlds.

You can't be right in church and you can't enjoy the world and you're just sitting there, but you have to act on what you believe. Let me ask you, like he had asked you, can you remember a time when you wept over your sins? Can you remember a time when you were lost? If you can't remember a time when you were lost, it's because you still are. Well, the third thing that's a counterfeit is what I'll call tonight a vain faith, a vain faith.

That word for vain is used over in James. We read that tonight when it says about faith that that a man's life that doesn't produce anything is a vain faith. James chapter one.

James chapter one, verse twenty six says, if any man among you seems to be religious, but doesn't bridle his tongue, his own heart is deceived. And this man's religion is vain. It talks about being doers of the word and not hearers only.

In fact, over in First Corinthians fifteen to when it talks about the gospel by which you are saved, it says it says the gospel by which you were saved. If you keep in memory what I preached to you, unless you have believed in vain. See, it talks about in the scripture of a vain faith being one that accepts, quote, it accepts what is heard about God, but doesn't continue to let it go down in the heart at a deep and living way, a lively influence.

In other words, it's not at the heart. It's like the person who's been jilted in a romance and needs something and goes into church and hears. Now, I'm not saying you can't be jilted in the romance and

going to church and be saved because you're lonesome.

But I'm saying that if all you're looking for is comfort for your feelings and you go in there and you hear Jesus loves you and you say, oh, a heavenly lover of my soul and you and you want that for comfort, you can be like the one in the parable of the sower who hears the word of God and believes for a season with joy. But when the the real words implications start to bite into my soul, I fall away, says, because it has no root, because just beneath that soft emotional surface that looked like it was open is a hard heart that's never yielded to God. The emotions were stirred and I wept under the word with deep longings for something more in life.

But you see. It's like it never got down to the core level of my being. Perhaps it was emotional comfort, but but for a while I believed, but it was like the thorns sprung up and I fell away.

People receive the word of God for what they can get, almost like a feedback. You see, this feedback gave out. So I'll go to church for a while and try this feedback.

And we're trying to offer the world a feedback to the gospel, trying to make the center feel more at home in church. Hey, why should a sinner feel more at home in church when God's spirit is there? When he came to convict the world of sin, I mean, the sinner should feel uncomfortable in God's presence until he repents. And if a sinner feels uncomfortable in church, it's because God is not there.

I'm not saying that you can't love him and make him feel loved. But there's a terrible battle. He'll feel loved and drawn, but convicted and torn and miserable at a real level.

The question for me is not. Am I certain sincere? But have I surrendered to what I claim to believe? The question is, has the power of sin been broken? Has it? Has the power of sin been broken? Because it says in the first chapter of Matthew, he you will call his name Jesus because he will deliver his people out of their sin. They will be being brought out of their sin.

I have a little expression faith that fails before the finish was faulty from the first. There's a lot of surprises coming up when it gets tough. You're going to see a great falling away.

But first, John says they went out from us because they never were of us. Had they been of us, they would have no doubt remained. They're going to be a lot of surprises ahead in the in the years ahead of us in America.

The fourth kind of counterfeit faith is, number four, a miracle faith. Now, I'm not saying you can't believe in miracles. I've I've had the privilege of seeing a lot of glorious miracles, but it says in Matthew seven that there'll be many who said we've done wonderful works in your name.

They've done miracles and nobody that can do a miracle in his name can speak lightly of him. But there will be people in the crowd that says depart from me that saw miracles that weren't that aren't saved. Nicodemus believed in miracles before he was saved.

Judas Iscariot believed in miracles. In fact, he probably did them with the other disciples in Luke 17. There are 10 lepers that are healed.

They experienced miracles and nine of them go on rejoicing, going to church. One of them turns around and says, who was that who healed me? And he comes back and he begins to worship the Lord Jesus.

And the Lord Jesus says, were there not 10 lepers healed? Where were the other nine? There's only one that's come back to give glory to God.

Go in peace. Your faith has saved you. You see, 10 of them were healed physically, one of them was saved spiritually, and a lot of people have had miracles on their body to draw them to the person who does the miracle and who have who has seen the living Christ who go away rejoicing about their miracle, but never get hooked up with the life of Christ on the inside.

They profess without possessing the antichrist is going to deceive many people by means of miracles. You wait till the New Age movement in the next three years unveils itself. And this man of sin begins to start illuminating people.

And many people are going to run after false religion and religious experience because you are going to see counterfeit healings and a lot of things. I'm not saying there aren't real healings, but I'm saying the enemy has a lot of lookalikes. God's blessing is no guarantee that you have saving faith.

Did you know that God's rain falls on the just and the unjust as well? And he blesses us to bring us to repentance. He blesses us and ministers to us many times to convince us that we should trust him. Is there truth in the inner parts? That's the question.

Well, another kind of counterfeit and this is the one that really scares me. This really scares me because I see this everywhere I go is what it says in James to 19. It says you believe that there's one God you do.

Well, the demons also believe and they tremble. I'll call this a devil faith, a demonic faith, because, see, this is frightening because so many people are here. Jesus cast out more demons than anywhere else in the synagogues in his day.

Right where the word was being read all the time. You see, this is definitely out of the ordinary. This is even supernatural in some sense in quality, but not in the spirit of God.

There is a kind of belief in God, but it's it's it's it's agitated. It's it's coarse. It can believe the Bible.

It can fight for truth. It can split a church over a technicality. It can appear to be wonderfully orthodox.

But you see, here's the key. Many people who have this counterfeit demonic faith, here's how they came to Christ. Now, again, I'm not saying you can't come to Christ because of fear of hell, but if that's all it was, you hadn't come yet.

Fear of hell is to bring you to the one who can save from hell. You see, these demons have a faith. They have a belief, but it's not saving faith.

They believe the Bible more than you or me. They have a view of scripture that's right. They know God's holy.

They know his sovereign. They know he's just, but they are unsaved. The reason they serve God demons when they're told to is because they're afraid not to.

And there are a lot of people in church who make a confession of faith at the altar because they don't want to go to hell. That I don't really they don't really want Jesus. They don't really want an intimate relationship with Christ personally, but they don't want to go to hell because they do believe that hell is real.

So they come down, they fill out a card, they mutter a little apology to God, and they never link up by faith with the Lord Jesus after repenting and they think that they're saved. But the real reason they come is strictly to save their skin. They're more concerned about the skin of man than the sin of man.

And you see, it's fire insurance. The demons also believe and they tremble. They bristle up.

It means their head goes up with fear, like a cat like this. That's what the word means. They're they're they're so afraid of God.

When God says be gone, the hardest demon on earth, he's gone. He obeys God out of have to. But real faith, saving faith works by love.

And so the devil believes everything in the Bible from kibber to kibber and is a demon still. And some of the most wicked people on this earth claim to believe this book from cover to cover and they obey God on the outer level because they don't want to go to hell. But their hearts have never been changed in his demonic faith.

I'll never forget being in a church in Powder Springs one night and a man came up on a motorcycle and he reeked of garlic and he had a big black Bible and he looked real spiritual at first. But he walked in the service and at the end of the service, God was blessing. I said, are there testimonies here? This man looked at me funny.

I mean, he was saying, praise the Lord, brother. You know, we said this guy's a little weird, but he must be just one of God's weirdos. I mean, bless him, Lord.

I mean, you know, he was dressed in all this weird. I mean, he really needed a bath. And I mean, I mean, I'm just saying he looked strange, big, long ponytails, but he had a big black Bible that was well used.

And so he said, I'd like to come to this church tonight. So he said, come in, brother. He sat over there and I said, are there those here that need to give a word of what God did in their life last night? And this man kind of looked over at me like this and I kind of went like this because I could see this strange look in his eye.

And I said, are there those that need to share? And this man stood up on the pew right there and he went, I've been fasting on garlic pills for the last 30 days that I've been traveling across the country, preaching gospel. And I want to say to you people, you need to repent. I mean, he was absolutely his veins were in his neck and I said, sit down, please.

He looked at me with this kind of, I mean, kind of like a, like this, you know, this weird look. And I said, sit down, please. He didn't.

I said, sit down in the name of Jesus. And it was like I'd taken my fist, but I was as far as me and went like that. It was like you knocked your feet out from under him.

The man hit the pew, went down, went underneath the pew, like you jammed an orange beneath the refrigerator. And he was under there and needless to say, the effect on the congregation was astounding. And, and so I quickly prayed and dismissed them to go home.

They had a great effect. They all sought God that night. The next night we had revival.

I'll tell you right at the end, at the end, at the end of that message that night, I gave an invitation. We sang out of my sorrow bondage and night, Jesus. I come.

I come. That's that beautiful song. The second verse goes out of unrest and arrogant pride, Jesus.

I come. I come into thy glorious will to abide. Well, right in the middle of that verse, the religious education director of this Baptist church raised his hand, had stopped the music, stopped the music.

He says, if there's anything that describes my life, it's unrest and arrogant pride. And last night when that man over there stood up and I saw spiritual warfare and I, I don't know a thing about that. I saw the devil and I saw God put him down and I don't, my God, I need to be saved.

And the man ran down to the front of the church and started beating the floor. And I said, praise God, that that'll help your education program in your church when your religious education man gets really safe for real. He had a demonic faith.

He had always come to church because you see, he didn't want to go to hell. I'm telling you, it's a sad thing. There are no atheists in hell today.

A sixth counterfeit. And I'm finishing soon. A dead faith, a dead faith.

And this is simply this. It says in James 2, 17, that if that if a faith does not produce works, it's dead being alone. By that, I'm saying if it doesn't produce a practical godliness, I mean, I'm not talking about big Jesus grapes.

You may have a little hard Jesus grapes, but they'll be hard Jesus grapes and not the world's grapes. You will have fruit in your life and you'll have corresponding works. You can, you can claim to be biblically saved, but if you're going on in sin as before, you're not.

It's a dead faith. It's produced no change. If any man is in Christ, he is not wants to be not needs to be not should be.

He is a new creation. All things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

And until the church in America preaches this, we're going on with church as usual. And our country is goodbye. The church must recover the flame of God.

The refining fire must first come across us. It says in second Timothy, chapter two, verse 19, the foundation of the Lord stands sure. Having this seal, the Lord knows the ones that are his.

Let everyone that names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity. Worse off than the prostitute on the street is the man in the church who thinks he's saved. It's not because he has a false confidence that he's far, far, far from conviction.

Titus one, 16, some profess that they know God, but in works they deny him being abominable and disobedient and unto the good works of faith, a stranger. You see, these are so practical things and we're afraid to bring these to bear because we have budgets that are stretched. We don't want to offend anybody, but I'm telling you, it's better to offend men and have them leave than it is to offend God and have him leave.

And most of our churches, many of our churches, and I'm not trying to be negative on churches. That's what I'm giving my life for churches. But I'll tell you, most of our churches in America are afraid to offend those who come.

And therefore, the offense of the gospel has ceased. Real saving faith puts me in the arms of the Lord Jesus. How much of what you call faith in your life is phony.

This is his promises fruit, real fruit. That's why if his kind of works aren't there, it only shows it's the reason is because he's not there. Are you being quenched? You say you say, oh, well, what you describe is rare.

I mean, what you describe is very, very rare. And that's what I'm trying to tell you. Exactly.

Jesus said, few there be that find it. We've changed his words for that broad gate that leads to destruction and say in America broad is the gate that leads to life and salvation. And many there be that go in there at he says straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life.

He says, few there be that find it. And the crowd will be saying, Lord, Lord, the whole way. It's the difference in religion right there of of reality of what you say is rare, but it's a gift.

It's a gift. One last scripture, Mark, Chapter 10. I want to finish with this.

Mark, Chapter 10, the refiner's fire. Lord, change my life, make my faith the faith of the son of God. Give me the faith of the son of God.

In Mark, Chapter 10, it's a perfect illustration of saving faith. Verse 46, there's a man named Bartimaeus means son of the unclean Bartimaeus. He's a leper.

What a picture he's sitting as a beggar beside the way outside a place called Jericho, which means the place of the curse. Here's a man who's blind. He's a beggar.

He's a leper. And he's sitting outside the place of the curse. What a picture of a man in need.

And it says in verse 46, they came to Jericho. And as he went out of the place of the curse, that's Jericho with his disciples, a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus, set by the highway side begging. And when he heard it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

You see, right in this little verse right here, Bartimaeus is who God is after. He's after him. And many people, verse 48, charged Bartimaeus that he should hold your peace.

But he cried all the more a great deal. Thou son of David, have mercy on me. Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called.

See, there has to be a response. And they call the blind man saying, be a good cheer, a comfort rise. He calls you that space.

He calls you his command has come to come to him. He's calling you and he casting away his garment. Some people think that's a garment that the state gave to allow you to beg.

And they did have those in those days. It was his livelihood. It was everything.

If you didn't have his garment, he couldn't beg and he couldn't even live. But whether or not that's true, don't know. But he casting away his garment rose and came to Jesus.

And Jesus answered and said to him, what do you want me to do for you? He's qualifying it. He's putting the fire to that faith. And the blind man said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

And in a figure that means all that I've missed, I want. And Jesus said to him, go your way. Your faith has made you whole.

And immediately he received his sight and he followed Jesus in the way. Well, you see, like some of you, I believe at this conference, this was Bartimaeus is moment of truth. God was seeking for Bartimaeus, even though he was sitting by the wayside in his leprosy, in his blindness, Bartimaeus believed in God.

He believed in the Messiah. That's why I said, son of David, because only a religious man would ever say that thou son of David be propitiated is the word. Have mercy.

Let the blood cover to me, son of David, Messiah. That's what he's saying. Have have blood mercy on me.

I mean, he knew the right words. He believed he believed in the Messiah. He believed Jesus was God's Messiah.

He was awakened, but he wasn't saved. He knew the scriptures. It said, call upon the Lord while he is near.

That's why he was doing it. Faith had come to him. His ears he had heard with.

He heard other people believing, but see what he saw or what what he heard and what he believed left him no better off. It didn't change him up to then. I mean, he just was an unsaved believer.

It left him in the gutter like some of you, maybe what you've seen of God and what you believed of God and what you've known of him and know to be true has left you in your gutter and your life is not changed. You stay in your perspective gutter. And this kind of faith that's at a distance leaves you right where it finds you without any life change.

Your speech is the same. Your friends are the same. Your habits, your ambitions are all the same.

You just come to church and you just maybe read the Bible every now and then. And you're always hoping and sentimental and wishing and trying. And maybe there's a poor beggar here tonight.

I feel like you have leprosy. You're tired of pretending you're tired of the gutter life. What made the difference for Bartimaeus? What made the difference? Well, he became aware of the Lord Jesus Christ personally.

He became aware of Christ himself, and he became aware of himself being bankrupt and his dead creed, my dead creed. He said, God, I'm tired of believing things that haven't changed my life. I'm tired of it.

I'm asking for mercy, unashamed acknowledgment of need. Jesus move in on me. I'm tired of of hoping and wishing and not having my life empowered.

And the crowd said it's too radical, too radical. Sit there and be polite. Stay in your place.

It's always the same. It's in your church, my church, the same way. Don't be radical.

But he wouldn't let anything stop him. He got louder. Bring him to me, says Jesus.

And so this man jettisons his rags and he comes to Jesus and he leaves all he leaves off. And what do you want me to do for you? Jesus asking you that tonight. What do you want me to do for you? I want him to change me just like it's just like we're starting over.

I want to keep on changing. But you've got to begin with the whole initial first beginning for real. Jesus opens his eyes and that's seeing God and that's faith.

It wasn't your your faith has saved you, Bartimaeus. It wasn't your conservative Bible believing. It wasn't.

It wasn't your sacrificial service that left you in the gutter. Now, for the first time, you have acted on what you claim to believe and it has saved you. Your faith has made you whole.

And you know what happened? Jesus. Jesus. It says that he was followed in the way by Bartimaeus.

He got up and he followed Jesus in the way.

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