

What Must Men Believe to Be Saved?

by Benjamin Franklin

To be saved, we must believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and have faith in the gospel of salvation through Him.

Scripture: Matthew 16:16, Mark 16:16, John 3:36, Acts 8:37, Acts 17:30, Romans 5:1, 1 Corinthians 15:12, 2 Corinthians 6:2, Hebrews 11:6, 2 Peter 1:16

Topics: "Faith In Christ", "Salvation Through Repentance"

Description

Benjamin Franklin preaches about the importance of believing in Jesus Christ for salvation, emphasizing that without faith in Christ, one cannot please God or be justified. He highlights that the central belief required for salvation is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that this belief is the foundation of Christianity. Franklin urges listeners to focus on Christ as the central point of their faith, rather than getting caught up in theological debates or human doctrines. He stresses the need for all people to repent, believe in the resurrection of Jesus, and confess Him as Lord in order to be saved.

Transcript

"He that believes not shall be condemned."--MARK 16: 16.

HIS terrible sentence was uttered by our Lord in his last interview with His disciples before He ascended to heaven. It is a fearful utterance when properly considered in its relations and bearings. Paul says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and again, "He who comes to God must believe" (Heb. 11: 6). The Lord says, "He who believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3: 35). We learn from Rom. 5: 1 that justification is by faith. It is a matter of profound gratification, that, in the midst of the confusion, misunderstanding, and mysticisms of these times, there are some important points on which all are agreed. One thing in which all are agreed is that there can be no justification or spiritual life without faith. No man can come to God, please God, or be accepted of God without faith. Without faith, no man can be saved from his sins now, nor from eternal condemnation in the world to come. The condemnation of heaven rests on the man who believes not. This is stated in the Scriptures as clearly as language can make it. It is a matter settled and agreed to by all who receive the Bible.

If, then, it is settled, that a man can not be saved unless he believes, a question of momentous importance rises. That question is, "What must we believe?" This question contains the theme for the present discourse. It is useless to perplex our minds about the question whether justification is by faith alone, or by

faith and something else combined, till we settle the one about what we must believe. This lies at the [39] foundation. It is the first matter to be settled. We can take no other step correctly, do no other thing acceptably, nor please God at all till we believe. Nor is the question, What must we believe to become a Quaker, a Shaker, a Romanist, a Unitarian, or a Universalist. What a man must believe to become one of these, or one of a hundred more similar to them, is a matter of no consequence compared with the question, What must a man believe to be justified before God? This is the great question among those now agitating the minds of men. Among all the beliefs of our time, there is but one through which sinners can be justified and saved in the sight of God. Among all the questions of our day, there is none of the same importance with the one, What is the belief without which the soul of the sinner can not be saved at all? This is the great question. If this can not be settled, and that, too, without ground for a doubt, it is useless to proceed to discuss others. We must live in doubt and die in despair. But, thanks to our heavenly Father, it can be settled. By His blessing, it shall be settled in this discourse.

The inquiry is not what it would be well to believe, or what it would be better to believe than something else; nor what it would be respectable or popular to believe, but what is it that a man must believe, or be condemned--lost for ever?

No doubt, many look on this question as so plain and easy that it is useless to discuss it. True, it is so plain that all ought to understand it; yet many do not. Many of the fashionable and educated, in the highest circles of life, who go to and belong to church, could not tell what they believe if it were to save them from perdition. A reason why such can not tell what they believe is, that they do not believe any thing. They are simply non-believers. It is a fact, that a large number go into a church, commit themselves to the church, without ever reading, or hearing read, the creed, and utterly without knowing what is in the creed. It is useless for these to talk about faith, their creed, or any other creed. They know what church they have joined, [40] but know not what is in the creed, or what is the belief of their church. Faith has nothing to do with the action of such people. All creeds are the same to them. They know nothing of what is in any of them. They have started out with the popular idea, that "there is good and bad in all churches; that all ought to belong to some church, but it is no difference what church, 'if the heart is right.'" They have fallen in love with some church because of its fine organ, delightful music, pleasant minister, fine house, respectable members, or their special associates being there, and not on account of any creed or any belief, for they know nothing of any creed and have no belief. They simply know that they belong to a different church from some of their neighbors, but do not know what the difference is. They are deceived, thinking that they are believers, when they not only believe nothing themselves, but do not know what a man should believe to become a Christian.

A Calvinist and an Arminian can not fellowship each other, because the one is a Calvinist and the other is an Arminian. The one holds the five points of Calvinism and the other the opposite five points of Arminianism, and they cannot possibly fellowship each other on account of the difference in their faith. But inquire of the Calvinist what the five points of Calvinism are, and in nine cases out of ten he can not tell. Neither can the Arminian tell what the opposite five points of Arminianism are. Yet the one is a Calvinist and the other an Arminian; and, though the one does not know what Calvinism is, and the other does not know what Arminianism is, the one believes Calvinism and the other Arminianism, and they cannot fellowship each other because their faith is not alike! What is the difference to them whether it is alike or not, when they do not know what it is? This is the case with nine-tenths of the differences of our time. The people immediately connected with them do not know what they are, and if they did know, they would be none the more certain, on that account, of being saved.

In the commission, the Lord said, "Go into all the [41] world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The gospel is, then, what must be preached. The Lord proceeds, "He that believes." He that believes what? He that believes the gospel, certainly. The gospel, then, is what the Lord commanded the apostles to preach, and what hearers were required to believe. The amount of it is, then, that the Lord commanded the gospel to be preached, required the gospel to be believed, and declared that he that believes not the gospel shall be condemned. But some man will say: "All sorts of preachers profess to preach the gospel, and I see not how to determine which is the gospel." There is a way to test the matter. Does a man claim that he is preaching the gospel when preaching Calvinism? If he does, the Lord says, "He that believeth not the gospel shall be condemned." Dare he say: "He that believes not Calvinism shall be condemned?" He will not say this. Or, to place the matter in a different form, we will look at it as follows:

A man can not be a Christian and not believe the gospel.

Calvinists themselves admit that a man can be a Christian and not believe Calvinism, for they admit that there are Christians among the Arminians, and they do not believe Calvinism.

Therefore, Calvinism is not the gospel.

Nothing can be clearer than that if a man can not be a Christian and not believe the gospel, but can be a Christian and not believe Calvinism, Calvinism is not the gospel, and, consequently, not what a man must believe to avoid condemnation.

This same reasoning may be applied to Arminianism.

A man can not be a Christian and not believe the gospel.

A man can be a Christian and not believe Arminianism, as Arminians themselves admit.

Therefore, Arminianism is not the gospel, nor what a man must believe to avoid condemnation.

The same rule may be applied to Universalism.

A man can not be a Christian and not believe the gospel. [42]

A man can be a Christian and not believe Universalism, as Universalists themselves admit.

Therefore, Universalism is not the gospel, or what a man must believe to avoid condemnation.

Some man may say, "Try Campbellism by the same rule." There is no need of any trial in this case, for it is granted, if there is any such thing, that Campbellism is not the gospel. Whatever may be said of the "isms," of which an example is here given, and all such, whether true or false, they are not the gospel, nor what a man must believe, in order to justification, or what a man must believe, or be condemned. Whatever the Lord requires a man to believe, it is not any of these "isms." Belief in any one of them is not what the Lord requires; nor will unbelief in any one of them condemn any man. True or false, as mere questions, there is no salvation in believing them, nor condemnation in not believing them.

It is not necessary to pursue this negative examination further, or the inquiry touching what a man need not believe. The matter now is to determine what a man must believe. Among all the beliefs of the world, what belief is it through which the sinner is justified before God? By reference to John 20: 30, 31, we learn what he wrote out his testimony concerning Christ for. He says: "Many other signs truly did Jesus, in the

presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you might believe." This gives the purpose of the apostle in writing his book: "These are written that you might believe." The next question is, That you might believe what? He informs us, "That you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." This settles the question about what we must believe. We must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This is the grand proposition to be believed, and the belief of it is the faith that justifies the sinner, or through which the Lord saves his soul. Here some one may start the question, "Is this saving faith?" The apostle proceeds to refer us to the result of this faith, in the same connection, in the following words: "That believing you might have life through his name." [43] These things are written that you might believe. The truth to be believed is, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The object of this belief is, that the believer might have life through the name of Jesus. Here is the grand truth to be believed, and the belief of it is the faith for sinful man. If he has not this, he will be lost. There is no dispute about the belief here advocated. No church repudiates it. The doubts and disputes are all about other beliefs. If a man believes with his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, he has true faith, divine faith, saving faith, and there is no other faith through which man can be justified before God.

We can learn something of what a man must believe from what he is to confess with his mouth. We will now hear Paul tell, in the same connection, what a man must confess with his mouth and believe from his heart, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10: 8, 9). To believe that "God raised Jesus from the dead" is the same as to believe that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God; for if God raised him from the dead, He thus demonstrated that all He ever said was true. God would not have raised an impostor. If God raised Him from the dead, He thus confirmed His divine mission and all He ever said. His entire claim to be the Messiah, or to be from God, is confirmed, if God raised Him from the dead. Indeed, if He rose from the dead at all, it proves His divine mission. An impostor could not have raised himself from the dead. God would not have raised him, and thus have aided him in palming an imposition on the world. The belief, then, with the whole heart, that God raised Him, amounts to the same as the belief that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

But we will give an example showing the faith on which persons were received in the time of the apostles. [44] Turn your attention to Philip and the Ethiopian officer as they ride in the chariot. Philip is busily engaged in preaching to the officer. What is he preaching? The sacred historian says, "He preached to him Jesus." That is certainly a very brief history of what he was preaching, but equally plain. It is certainly what might be expected, that the officer believed what was preached. What did he believe, then? The sacred writer says, "As they went on their way, they came to a certain water." We will not stop now to speculate about that "certain water." Water is not the theme now; faith is the theme. What did the officer believe? This is the matter in hand. The officer said, "See, here is water! what doth hinder me to be immersed?" And Philip answered, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." (See Acts 8: 36, 37, 38.) On this belief the evangelist received and immersed him; and on this belief all the first converts were received and immersed. If this passage is rejected as spurious, we lose nothing but an example. The weight of authority, however, is in its favor, and the thread of the narrative is incomplete without it. It is, therefore, received here.

When our Lord was immersed by John in Jordan, and had gone up from the water, the heavens were parted above him, and the Spirit assumed a visible form, and descended on him. John the Immerser afterward referred to this, saying, "I knew Him not, but He who sent me to immerse, said, on whomsoever

you shall see the Holy Spirit descending and remaining He is He," or He is the Messiah. At the time the Spirit descended and rested on Him, the Almighty Father spake from the heavens, and uttered an oracle that He did not see fit to utter through the lips of man, angel, or even His own beloved Son, but, with His own voice, He said, "This is My Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased." See Matt. 3: 17.

Again, in the midst of that transcendantly sublime scene, on the mountain of transfiguration, in the [45] presence of the glorified and immortalized Elijah, from the eternal state; the mediator of the first covenant, Moses, from the intermediate state; and three witnesses of Jesus, Peter, James, and John, in the flesh; God again repeated the oracle, "This is My Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased;" adding to this utterance, made on the former occasion, the command, "Hear you Him." To this grand scene Peter refers, in one of his letters to the disciples, in his authoritative declaration: "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is My Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased." See 2 Pet. 1: 16.

It was in view of this wonderful oracle, that Peter, when the Lord said "Whom do you say that I, the Son of Man, am?" replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matt. 16: 16. In this instance, too, we have the importance of this fundamental truth fully brought out. The Lord replies, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but My Father who is in heaven." What is it the Father in heaven has revealed? The foundation truth of the new institution.

This the Father in heaven revealed on the banks of the Jordan. This central truth--the major proposition of the new institution--that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," is here uttered by Peter, and again repeated in the mountain of transfiguration. But now for the prominence which the Lord gives this truth. He proceeds in His reply to Peter: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Here the fundamental heresy of Rome had its origin.

It perverts this grand truth of the new institution in two important particulars: 1. It expounds the rock on which the Church is built to be Peter. 2. It expounds the meaning of the words "the gates of Hades shall not prevail [46] against it," to be, that "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Church." By "this rock," the Lord did not mean Peter. Peter was not the theme, but the person to whom the Lord addressed himself on the theme. What was the theme of the conversation?

The Lord himself was the theme, and not Peter. "Whom do you say that I am?" "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it," or this. "It," or this what? This confession, unquestionably, which Peter has just made, that "He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, I will build My Church," and "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Against what? Against this truth, against this rock, and not the Church.

The theme is not the Church, but the truth, on which it is built. The gates of Hades have nothing to do with prevailing against the Church. But the Lord knew that He would die, and go into Hades, and that he would have to overcome the gates, or powers of Hades, and rise from the dead, or the foundation of the Church, that "He is the Christ, the Son of the living God," would be overthrown. His prediction is an assurance that the powers of Hades should not prevent His resurrection, and thus prevail against the foundation of the new institution.

It was an allusion to the grand contest involved in His resurrection from the dead. The issue is over His resurrection. He was put to death. His body was laid in the grave. His soul went to Paradise, an apartment in Hades. At the dawn of light, on the third day, the grand question came: will he rise, or will the powers of Hades prevail? If he rises, the proposition that "he is the Christ, the Son of the living God," is sustained. If He does not rise, it is lost. All is suspended on this issue. To this grand issue He looked, and declared, "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it,"--the rock, or foundation.

In this light Paul viewed it, in his reference to those disciples in Corinth, who had fallen back into their Sadduceanism and denied the resurrection of the dead. [47] 1 Cor. 15: 12, he puts the question, "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" He then proceeds to show them that every thing rests on the resurrection of the dead, by bringing to their view the consequences of their denial of the resurrection, or rather the result, if there is no resurrection. He mentions these results as follows:--

Result 1. Christ is not risen. Certainly this is correct if there is no resurrection.

Result 2. The apostle's preaching is vain. If Christ did not rise, the preaching, that He did rise, is false.

Result 3. Their faith is vain. They believed what was preached, that Christ rose. If He did not rise, they believed a falsehood. This faith is vain. It could not save them.

Result 4. The apostles were false witnesses, for they testified that He did rise, and that they saw Him after He rose from the dead.

Result 5. They were yet in their sins. They could not have been justified from their sins by the belief of a falsehood.

Result 6. Those fallen asleep in Christ are perished, or lost. Their faith, being the belief of a falsehood, that God raised Christ, whom He did not raise if the dead rise not, could not save them, and they are lost.

Result 7. We, the apostles, of all men are the most miserable, for we have given up this world--suffered the loss of all things for Christ; but if the dead rise not all is lost.

After thus showing them where they placed themselves, in denying the resurrection from the dead, he comes out in the following triumphant language: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." If He rose from the dead, the preaching of the apostles, that He did rise, is true; the belief of that preaching is the belief of the truth; the apostles were true witnesses, in testifying that God raised Him; by this faith they were justified; those [48] who had fallen asleep in Christ had not perished, and the apostles were not of all men most miserable. Thus we see how beautifully he rests every thing on the great truth.

Please turn to Paul's opening address, in the Athenian court, in the presence of distinguished jurists, statesmen, and philosophers, as found in Acts 17: 30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent." The times of ignorance to which he alluded were before the Gospel came, and the "now," that he brings in contrast with these times of ignorance is since the light of the Gospel has come. Now, since the Lord has come, the light of the Gospel is extended to the nations of the earth--he commands all men everywhere to repent. Paul knew that this was a pretty broad affirmation, and the men before him were not prepared to receive it on his simple statement, and he quickly follows it with the reason for the command for all men every where to repent: "Because he has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has

ordained." Still, he knew that they would follow immediately to demand the proof of that also, and he instantly adds: "Whereof He has given assurance to all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead." In raising Christ from the dead, God has given assurance to all men that He will judge the world in righteousness, and He commands all men everywhere to repent, because He will judge the world in righteousness. This is not foreign nor difficult reasoning. If God raised Jesus from the dead He is divine. If He is divine, all He said is true. All He promised or threatened will be fulfilled. The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the whole spiritual system, revealed to the world through Christ. This foundation must be overthrown before the Christian's faith can be shaken.

It is of no consequence whether we can explain the questions where Cain got his wife, why the Canaanites and the Midianites were commanded to be destroyed, why God hardened Pharaoh, or how the additions were [49] made to the books of Moses after he was dead, etc. These matters, and numerous others of the same kind, introduced by Tom Paine, in his infidel book, may all be explained, and the difficulty existing in the minds of unbelieving men may grow out of their ignorance. One tolerably clear evidence of this is found in the fact, that the men who have studied the Bible most closely and critically, find the least trouble about these matters. Why have not the great and profound men, who have studied antiquity a life-time, searched the quotations in ancient writings, carefully read and compared the oldest manuscripts, read all the principal histories--Jewish, pagan, infidel, and Christian--stumbled and fell over these difficulties? Because they have found clear and satisfactory solutions of many of them, which leads intelligent people rationally to conclude that if they knew more they could solve all these supposed difficulties. True, it is well for a Christian man to examine and explain these matters as far as he can. Still, his faith does not rest on these matters. It rests on something more certain.

The man of understanding begins with Jesus. Whose son is He? What think you of Him? Is He the Alpha and Omega--the beginning and the ending--the resurrection and the life? Did He speak the truth when He said, "He who sees me sees the Father," and "before Abraham was, I am?" That "He was before all and by Him all things consist?" That "it was by Him, and for Him, that the worlds were made?" That "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily?" In a word, is all that is said of Him in the Bible true? It is, if God raised him from the dead. It is all true, if He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. When this is received with the whole heart, or without any dissent, we have found an anchorage. We turn to Him, in the language of one of old, "Thou knowest all things." We inquire of Him about Moses, Abraham, and the prophets, and find him quoting their language as the Word of God. This ends all questions about the Old Testament [50] writings. We see Him commission and send out the apostles, and thus indorse them. This settles their authority. He is the chief corner-stone--the foundation. The prophets and the apostles rest on Him. The Old Testament and the New rest on Him. The salvation of the world rests on Him. He is the tried stone, chosen of God, and precious; though rejected by Jewish and infidel builders, He is made the head of the corner, and there is no other name under heaven nor among men by whom we can be saved. He is Lord of all, head over all things to the Church. He was dead, but is alive, and lives for evermore. He has the keys of Hades and of Death; can open, and no man can shut; can shut, and no man can open. He has gone into heaven; angels, authorities, and powers being put in subjection to Him. All authority in heaven and on earth is given to Him. He says, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to Me." And again He says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father but by Me." Converts must then be made to Him, learn of Him, and follow Him. Implicitly we should receive what He says, because it comes from Him.

There is a large amount of unscriptural language used in our time, and which has no foundation in correct principles. Hence, we hear people say they believe in prayer, baptism, communion, etc., but this is not sensible. The faith is not in or does not rest on baptism, prayer, or the Lord's Supper, etc., but on Christ. The entire belief is on Him. Men are baptized, not because they believe in baptism, but because they believe on Him who commanded baptism. We do not believe commandments, nor believe on them, but obey them. We believe on Christ, obey his command to be immersed, to pray, commune, etc., and hope for the things which He promises. He is the foundation of all authority in the kingdom. The man who believes on Him, receives Him, and obeys Him, is moved by His divine authority to do all he does in religion. He is the central idea in the new institution. [51]

Every system in the world has a central point in it. The foundation proposition, on which every thing rests in Mormonism, is that Joseph Smith was a prophet from God. The man who believes this is a Mormon. It is the major proposition of Mormonism, and has all the minor ones in it; or, in one word, has all Mormonism in it. The proposition that Emanuel Swedenborg was a divine prophet has all Swedenborgianism in it. The central idea in the Baptist church is baptism. The church takes its name from baptism, rallies round it, and makes it the central idea. The central idea in the Presbyterian church is government by a presbytery, and the church is named after this one idea. The central idea in the kingdom of God is the living and glorious person of the Lord from heaven. The faith of the saints rests on Him, and all their life, light, and joy are from Him. He is brought to man in the proposition, that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. All Christianity centres and embodies itself in Him, as a man's whole political creed embodies and centres itself in his favorite candidate. When he goes for the candidate, he goes for his political creed and party, whether he understands it or not. So, when a man believes on the Saviour, goes for Him, and devotes himself to Him, he goes for all He taught, whether he understands it or not. He is then a Christian--a disciple of Christ, and nothing else. It is the concentration, the embodiment of all Christianity in a person, a living and glorious person.

Any one, with a grain of reflection, can see the wisdom of this. In what other way could ignorant and prejudiced Jews and pagans have been proselyted in a single day? How could they have been discipled to Calvinism, Arminianism, Unitarianism, or Trinitarianism in a day? What could they have done with the Nicene creed--the Augsburg, the Westminster, or Philadelphia confession, in hearing one discourse? It requires years to indoctrinate a man in the twenty-five articles of Methodism, or the thirty-nine of Episcopalianism. The result is, that a large number never know [52] what the Church believes, but every one must understand the belief which God requires, and must have that belief himself, for "he that believes not shall be condemned." The Lord has, therefore, embodied the belief in a living and glorious person, and demands of all men that they believe on Him, as the grand and glorious concentration of all that is divine. Hence, on Pentecost, on hearing one Gospel discourse, three thousand believed and became Christians in one day. Nor did they join the Church without believing, or knowing what they were doing. They learned what to believe on hearing one discourse, and believed it. They were justified by faith, and not received without faith. They believed what was preached--that God had raised Jesus from the dead--that God was with Him--that He was divine, and they willingly bowed their souls to Him, and took Him for their leader; gladly and implicitly received all He taught, and did all He commanded. On becoming His disciples, they placed themselves under Him, as his students, pupils, learners, to be taught by Him, and guided to the everlasting city of our God.

The time has now come when this belief is thought not sufficient; that a man must believe something more than this; that if he knows nothing but Christ and Him crucified, and specially determines to know nothing

more than this--will glory in nothing but the cross of Christ, he falls vastly short, much below the standard of our times. The popular tendency is to take the mind and heart of the people away from Christ and occupy it with something more, or something else. The time was in this country, when the popular teachers expressed fears that we did not make enough of the Messiah, and they talked of His divinity, His equality with the Father, His eternity, and the like; but what do they now think of Him who has all authority in heaven and on earth; the chief among all the ten thousands, and altogether lovely? They treat the belief on Him, and those that have that belief, as unworthy of regard and fellowship. Talk to them about uniting on Him, [53] following Him, believing all He taught, receiving it into good and honest hearts, obeying Him implicitly in all things, and hoping for all He promised, and they stand and look on you with amazement, and affect to pray for you as one deluded. But the Lord Jesus is the power in this work, and the men who oppose it must be shown that they stand in exact antagonism to Him. "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, he will be accursed." He is the grand centre, and in Him men must be united and saved if they are ever united and saved at all.

The authority of men should be set aside and destroyed, and the authority of Jesus restored to the people. The philosophies, metaphysics, and speculations of designing men must be set aside, and the clear, intelligible, and glorious teaching of Christ and His apostles restored to men. There must be a clear issue made between Christ and all human leaders, between His teaching and all human teaching, between His kingdom and all other kingdoms. There must be no question in the minds of men except about Jesus and His salvation, no issue except between the sinner's soul and Jesus. There must be no question about the theories and speculations of men. There is but one issue, and that one is concerning Christ. Shall I believe on Him? Shall I receive Him as my teacher, leader, and head? Shall I follow Him? Shall I bow my soul to Him? obey Him? Shall I be His disciple? These are the questions with which the world must be pressed. The great work of the preacher is not to defend himself, his views, or theories, but to defend his Master, Lord, and Redeemer, His cause and kingdom. His work is to lift up his Lord before men, and plead with them to believe on Him, trust in Him, learn of Him, follow and honor Him.

The work of all the preachers of Christ is the same. They all have the same Lord over all, blessed for ever and ever. They all have the same gospel. The man who can understand it most fully, enforce it most successfully, and bring the largest number under its [54] hallowed power, and make the most friends to the Lord Jesus, is the best preacher. The main work now to be done is to divorce the people from the rudiments of the world, from the doctrines and commandments of men, from priestcraft, error, superstition, and human traditions, and espouse them to Christ: turn their hearts from men to the Saviour, from the love of party to the love of union, from party fellowship to the fellowship of the saints. The problems now to be solved are, Can we teach men to love the Saviour more than all other leaders; to love His teaching more than all other teaching; to forsake all other leaders and follow him? Is it possible, after the long night of darkness, superstition, and error, in which the people have been trained, to restore to their hearts confidence in the Saviour of the world, and in His infallible teaching to save men? Can the hearts of the people be won back to the Lord? These are the grand questions now to be tested.

An immense army is now in the field, with no mission but to push the conquests of King Jesus. They have no cause nor conquests of their own to defend. They have no leader but Jesus. Their war is about their great Leader and Head. They are pressing Him on the attention of men everywhere. They maintain that every man is for or against Him, and call on men as they value their lives, their souls, and their eternal all, to decide whether they are for the Lord, or against Him; whether they will have Jesus for their leader or not: whether they will have the teaching of Christ and the apostles or not. They intend, by the favor of God,

to push the teaching of Christ and His authority through the world. They are narrowing the controversy down and bringing it to a single point. It is Jesus and His teaching. They are for nothing else. Those opposed to Jesus and his teaching are their opponents, and no others.

They have the faith in God, that He will strengthen their hands and sustain them in their great work of restoring, in all its fullness, the authority of the Christ, His pure worship, His teaching, and all things as they [55] were at the first, and unite in Him, who is all in all, to live in one grand and harmonious fellowship, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, in the one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one immersion, and one God and Father of all, above all, through all, and in all, that one triumphant hallelujah may arise, as a precious incense, to Him that lives forever and ever.

Then, when we shall have finished our course and lie down on the bed of death, we can rest on His blessed words: "As I live, you also live." "I will never leave you or forsake you." "I am able to keep you from falling." "None can pluck you out of my hand." "Be faithful till death." And again, "He who endures to the end shall be saved."

But, before closing, attention must be given to such as are aliens, foreigners, and strangers, without God, and without hope, in the midst of all the uncertainties of this world. These are separated from the Lord, living as if they did not believe He existed. They have never even sanctified their lips by confessing His name, nor made a solitary effort to obtain His mercy. In one moment all possibility of their being saved might be cut off for ever. They might go away into the outer darkness, with all the foul, the corrupt, degraded, and disgraced spirits that inhabit the regions of darkness and despair. They may then look back, think of their folly, their indifference, their hardness of heart, their impenitence, when mercy's sweet voice, in tones of affection, love, and compassion--in kind invitations, heart-felt pleadings, and entreaties with tears--all failed to bring them to the Lord. They may then think of the cross, the crown of thorns, His writhings, struggles in death, his expiring, the Roman spear, and His blood as it ran down, in crimson streams, to the ground, and believe it to be an infinite exhibition of divine compassion, and inquire: Why did all this fail to reach my hardened heart? They may then call to mind all the precious invitations of the Saviour, the apostles, the preachers of [56] their own time; the reasonings, expostulations, and arguments; the prayers and tears, the solitudes and anxieties of fathers, mothers, brothers, and friends--all expended on a hard and ungrateful heart, and yet it lost for ever! The harvest is past--the summer is ended! The soul is lost. No more lovely invitations for ever! no more entreaties to turn to the Lord! no more grace, nor mercy, nor compassion. The day of grace is gone for ever! the door of mercy is for ever closed!

O man! who will you blame for all this? God loved you; Jesus died for you; the gospel was preached to you; the saints loved you, prayed for you, wept over you; the Spirit of God said "Come"; the Bride, the Church, said "Come"; and whoever will was invited to come. God was not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The Saviour said, "He who comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." You did not come! You resisted all the love, grace, and mercy of our kind and gracious Father in heaven; you resisted the Saviour of the world and all the entreaties of the best friends you had on earth, and rushed down to ruin. You will have to say: "I have done all this myself; I have pulled down ruin on my own head. Against the will of my gracious and most merciful Creator, all His love, kind entreaties, and expostulations; against all the advice, warnings, and persuasions of the truest and best friends I ever had; against the voice of reason, my own judgment, and revelation, I have persisted and done all this! Against all that was good, and pure, and lovely, I persisted, rushed blindly on and down, till I have landed in bottomless perdition. Let others be warned not to come to this place of torment."

Be entreated, then, by all that is good, and pure, and lovely; by the love of Christ, the mercy of God, and the sufferings of the Saviour; be warned by the threatenings of heaven, the terrors of the Lord, and the danger of being lost for ever, to turn to the Lord and live; be persuaded by the tender mercies of our God, [57] by all his goodness, by the value of the unfading heavens, and the value of precious souls yet to come, while it is called to-day, and be happy for ever and ever. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." [58]

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/benjamin-franklin/what-must-men-believe-to-be-saved/>

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