

The Source, Appearance and Conduct of Saving Faith

by Richard Owen Roberts

Richard Owen Roberts emphasizes the necessity of understanding the source and nature of saving faith, the importance of holiness, and the longing for God's presence in revival.

Duration: 1:19:46

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Peter 1:3-7, 2 Peter 1:10

Topics: "Saving Faith", "Self Control"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of adding self-control to our lives as Christians. He highlights how many people are governed by their passions and emotions, lacking self-control. The speaker challenges the audience to examine their own lives and identify any areas where they lack control. He also emphasizes that adding self-control is essential for a true Christian experience and a pathway to an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God.

Transcript

Now, there are many who cannot understand the concept of revival because they don't know God. Everywhere I go, I'm contradicted by someone who says, Why, Mr. Roberts, you just don't understand. My Bible says, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

And you go around telling people that God withdraws his manifest presence when he's displeased with his people. My God would never do that. Well, it's possible that your God wouldn't.

But somebody has to have the courage to remind you that your God is not the God of this book. Because the God of the Bible does just what he pleases. When he's pleased with his people, he draws near to them.

And when he's displeased, he draws away from them. You have only to know the Psalms to know the validity of what I've just said. Why do you suppose there's a gross misunderstanding of the nature of God? As if God were at our beck and call, as if God were a puppet whose strings we pull.

But the plain truth is, God is holy. And he hates all unholiness. And he has nothing to do with that which is unholy.

He never remains near anyone who practices unholiness. He is never in any church. When our lives are in conformity to his will and purpose, he has the right to withdraw.

It really needs to be spelled out for us in language that we can relate to. When we speak of God's presence, we need to understand the three dimensions of his presence. That which I have already referred to as his manifest presence.

That which must be referred to as his essential presence. And that which we need to understand as his cultivated presence. Those matters to you.

The psalmist wrote as follows. If I ascend to the highest mountain, if I descend into the depths of the deepest sea, lo, thou art there, whither shall I flee? And the young people will relate to what I'm about to say, if it was possible for us to put it. And shoot you out into space.

If you traveled outward for 10,000 miles, you would never pass. That is God's essential presence. But it would be a tragedy to compare it with his manifest presence.

Most of you have read when he encountered the burning. Some of you are familiar with the experience of the prophet Isaiah. When his lips and his tongue were touched with coals of fire.

Many have read the experience of John the apostle on the isle of Patmos. When he was in the spirit on the Lord's day. No one who understands their Bible would confuse with God's manifest presence.

For when God manifests his presence, there is always one unmistakable aspect of that presence. And that is holiness. That is why Moses cried out as he cried out.

Why Isaiah spoke the words that he spoke. Why John the apostle recorded what he recorded in connection with the experience of the manifest presence of God. Now, I'm going to be very gentle, and yet very pointed in what I say next.

For years, Pentecostal and charismatic people have sought to embarrass the rest of the church. And to cause the rest of the church to believe that you have something they don't. The Holy Spirit, in a power that they don't have.

But many of you have not been wise enough to know that you have lied about this. There is one unmistakable way to discern when the Spirit of God is present in power. And that is by this unmistakable mark of holiness.

Surely you are wise enough to know that the devil can duplicate virtually anything in the realm of religion. Can we discern that God is present because there is enthusiasm? Can we discern that God is present because there are prophetic messages? Can we discern God's presence by the use of tongues? Do we know God is with us in power because physical phenomena? No, dear friends. Satan can and does duplicate all of those.

But there is one mark of God's presence. And would not, if he could, duplicate. And that's holiness.

Because he despises holiness. And he is so far from holiness, there is no way he could even begin to imitate it. But when a congregation is made utterly quiet before God, and there is an awesome sense of the Holy Spirit, and people begin to fall on their faces, and an impure heart draws nearer.

That he has man, draws nearer. If you've ever studied the history, that in every revival that has ever occurred, there is a level of repentance that takes place in the lives of believers that goes deeper than anything they ever knew. The reason why there are so many multitudes of people converted, which has been driven to new levels of holiness, begins to look and act like that.

Now we need revival. But we don't need special meetings. And we don't need seasons of shouting and excitement, or rolling in the aisles, or laughing like hyenas.

We don't need to have... We need to have our dirty hearts made pure. We need to be changed from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness. Revival is the desperate need of the hour.

Now I want to add this very consequential... If I were to put this question to you, when you think about heaven, what is the most... How would you respond? Would you say to me, Why, I can hardly wait to get heaven. I would look at you kind of strange and say, You want to walk on streets of gold? Why, I can slip and fall on concrete. Gold, anything, doesn't appeal to me.

Why, you say the foundations of heaven are of precious stones. Well, granted, the Bible indicates that. But I can go by a jewelry store twelve times a day and never be tempted to even look in the window, let alone enter.

I don't find any appeal there. Well, you say in the midst of heaven is the tree of life. Well, that's interesting.

But I've got a lot of life in me. What do you find the most alluring aspect of heaven to be? Oh, well, you say let's talk about personality. Now my dear mother is there, and I long to see her again.

Well, I can relate to that. There's some beloved friend from the past who's gone on to glory. Yes, that warms me up also.

But is that the best thing that I can say about heaven? That some loved one from the past is there? No, let me tell you what appears to me to be the great allure of heaven. In heaven, we will know the unbroken presence of God. Now, I have been a Christian by God's grace for a long time.

But in all these years, I've never known the unbroken presence of God. Oh, I've known days that were like glory on earth, even occasionally weeks when the presence of God was perfectly marvelous. But I've never known the unbroken presence of God, because it seems before too many weeks pass, I sin again.

And that sin rises as a barrier between God and myself until that sin is brought under the blood of Christ. I have known many an interruption in my walk with God. Maybe some of you honest folks here would admit to the same thing.

But to be where God is and where his presence is, that strikes me as the reason I am so fond of the subject of revival, and why I'm glad to go anywhere at any time I can to speak of it, is because revival, and right now, it appears to me that our dear nation needs God to draw near. But just as I have pointed out the unbroken presence of God as the greatest mark of heaven, so I need to warn you that hell has a mark as well. If I put the question this way, what is the most awful thing about hell? Would you say to me, well, the thing I dread about hell is that hell is a place where the worms, they just make me feel corrupt.

But I don't believe it's the worst aspect. Somebody else says, well, no doubt the worst feature of hell is it's a place where the fire is never extinguished. It burns, and it burns, and it burns, and it burns.

Nonsense. Get out an old National Geographic magazine and study the pictures of... But is that the worst aspect of hell? Or someone else says to Mr. Roberts, I'm sure that the worst aspect of hell is that hell is a place where sin reigns unchallenged, unchecked. It is simply unleashed.

Day and night, evil prevails on every... But is that the most awful aspect? No. No, I'll tell you what the most awful aspect of hell is. Hell is a place where a person can be a thousand years, or a hundred thousand years, or a hundred million years, and not once.

In all that time, can they entertain the thought, sooner or later, God... Because just as heaven is marked by the unbroken presence of God, hell is marked by the unbroken absence... But I remind you of what I've said already. Revival is a time in the history of men and women like us, when heaven draws closer to earth than any other time, and we experience the presence of God. If that doesn't excite you, if that doesn't stir your heart to longing for revival, then I'll tell you the reason you remain unexcited.

You have an unregenerate heart. Oh, you may have religious experience, and you may be able to testify in your own way, but the regenerate heart craves the presence of God. But now some who believe in revival, and believe in the kind of revival I'm describing, are unwise enough to believe that revival is something that we can make happen.

For a long time in this nation, it was understood by our spiritual leaders that revival was an act of the sovereign God. It happened when he determined it should happen. And then, along about 1820, 1830, a whole new viewpoint was launched.

And that could be represented by these words. The revival is nothing other than the right use of the right means. If you want a revival, you can have a revival any time you choose to have it.

And that is the prevailing view among professed Christians today. If we wanted revival bad enough, we'd have it. But in all the years that that viewpoint has been gaining ascendancy, revivals have been non-existent in this nation.

And they will remain non-existent until that time when the Church comes back to an agreement So I'm not here tonight or tomorrow to tell you the six things you need to do to force the hand of God in revival. There are no six things that will force God to do anything. God is the only being in all the universe who does exactly what he pleases.

Now, many a young person thinks they're going to do just what they please, but they never succeed. When I met and married my one and only wife, she made it clear to me early on that she thought it would be lovely to fly. Now, she never meant that she wanted to get on an airplane.

What she meant was she wanted to be able to flap her arms and just take off. Many a time she said to me, can't you think how lovely it would be just to be gliding? I wonder if you're able to notice how worried I am tonight. Worried, you see, that my wife may be flying somewhere.

No, friends, there are many things we will do and cannot. But God has never willed anything but what it's immediately accomplished, for God has only to will a thing and it happens. So don't misunderstand, I am not here to tell you how to force the hand of God.

But I have no hesitancy about encouraging you to long for the finest, the best, the grandest, the greatest of blessing ever known to man on earth, the manifest presence of God in revival. But now, my theme tonight

is different from that. I haven't started to preach yet, so if you're one of those... But just before I do, I want to put a very important question to you in that we cannot cause revival, or in any way, as I've said, force the hand of God in this matter.

The question is, what ought we to do while we're waiting on God to send revival? Ought we to continue to backslide? Ought the Church to grow weaker and weaker? Surely you know that in the last 20 years, the Church has gone from... There was a time when the Church... And would be heard... The world regards the Church as... And we live at a time when a very high percent... ..believe that they are... For instance, the Southern Baptist denomination, which says they are the largest... Though every one of those 16 million can tell you the day and the hour they accepted Christ. But there was a time when... In the morning. Is that true here now, Pastor? No.

No. Where in America would you find a Church that had as many people in the evening service as in the morning service? And have no spiritual interest. They never read their Bibles.

They have no family altar. So the question that I put to you is, in that we cannot force the hand of God in revival, what ought we to do during this period when we are calling upon Him in prayer and pleading with Him to revive us again? Well, you brought your Bible, and up until now you've been wondering whether I was going to get... But as I told you, I hadn't... I don't know whether you're familiar with this wonderful passage or not, but by God's grace you will be by the time we leave here this evening. 2 Peter, at chapter 2. Let me read to you from this blessed book of God.

Simon Peter, a bondservant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us by His precious and magnificent promises in order that by them you might become partakers that is in the world by lust. Now, for this very reason also applying all diligence in your faith supply moral excellence and in your moral excellence, knowledge and in your knowledge, self-control and in your self-control, perseverance and in your perseverance, godliness and in your godliness, brotherly kindness and in your brotherly kindness, Christian love.

For, now catch these words. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted having forgotten His purification from His former sins.

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you. For as long as you practice these things you will never stumble. For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Now let's carefully work our way through these words. I am talking, I repeat, about what to do until the Lord manifests His presence in great revival power. This passage teaches us three tremendously consequent things.

First, it speaks of the source of saving faith. Secondly, it describes the appearance of saving faith. And thirdly, it tells us how to conduct ourselves in saving faith.

Let me repeat those. First, the source of saving faith. Second, the appearance of saving faith.

And third, the conduct of saving faith. Now, let me tie it in with what I've said already this evening. We are living at a time when literally millions of people who call themselves Christians are as unsaved as Satan.

They never understood the source of saving faith. You study their lives and you say to yourself, they don't look like a Christian, they don't act like a Christian, and in many cases you can even say they don't even smell like a Christian. But they say they're a Christian.

If you don't understand the source of saving faith, you'll be confused about the appearance of saving faith. And you surely won't know how to conduct yourself in saving faith. So let's be certain we understand the source of saving faith.

Now, saving faith, the faith that saves, is not something that dwells within me, naturally. One does not search around in the bottom of their discover faith and then exercise it, because saving faith does not belong to us. We are not its source.

It is not something innate within every person. This passage makes it crystal clear what the source of saving faith is. Let me read it to you again.

Verse 1, A bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ to those who have received a faith. Saving faith is always received. Now there are millions who have never received the gift of faith, who have gone forward in a meeting, signed a decision.

You don't have to have saving faith to walk an aisle, to sign a decision card, or to pray a prayer. But you have to have saving faith to be saved. And the only source of saving faith is God.

Saving faith is a gift. We are in the remarkable difficulties we are in as a nation because we have lost sight of the gift of faith. And we have urged people to believe, and they have sought to do so when they had no capacity in and of themselves.

If you believe that the single source is as it's gifted by to increase the faith, well now our Bibles are pretty plain. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Much of what is preached in the pulpits of America today is nonsense, utter foolishness.

Very little real Bible preaching occurs. You cannot preach like this without making at least some people roaring mad. And the average pastor won't run that risk of offending anybody.

So he can't possibly preach in such a way that God can quicken the word and bring to the people that say it. Now I want to ask you a question personally. I wished I could come to you.

Have you received saving faith? It's important that we recognize that not only is saving faith a gift of God, but true repentance is a gift from God. Now one can go through what appears to be a repenting experience and yet not be repentant. The only truly repentant people are the people who have received these two blessed gifts of faith and repentance.

Now I am seeking to say to you tonight that we desperately need revival because for decades now we have been saving people. Now in the Bible, regeneration is that quickening of the Holy Spirit, but in decisional regeneration it doesn't require the Holy Spirit. And if you analyze what's happening in most of our evangelistic endeavors, now I'm asking you, do you have faith which came to you as a gift? And can

you say, by the grace of God, I am in possession of the gift of faith.

Well now if one is a little uncertain about that, and yet honestly grappling with the matter and desiring to know for sure, then the second point, let me read again from verse one, Simon Peter, a bond servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours. Now what is the appearance of saving faith? Why it looks just like the faith that the apostle Peter received after the resurrection. It looks just like the faith that the apostle Paul received.

It looks like the faith of Timothy. It looks like the faith of all New Testament believers. You look at a New Testament believer who has received faith, and is your faith the same faith that Peter had, that Paul had? Or do you have some cheap, some shoddy imitation, some attempt to believe? Now if you analyze the faith of those persons in the New Testament that I've named, or dozens or even hundreds of others like them, there are certain things that naturally appear in connection with their faith.

Their faith, it was active. In the Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke in particular, when a person is described as having faith, they were ordered to do so. Or in the book of Hebrews, in that classic passage in Hebrews 11, that great array, that cloud of witnesses, Noah was told to build an ark.

He didn't argue with God. He didn't say, why, there's not enough water on the ground to float the canoe, let alone a huge ark. If you send... No, no, he was told to build an ark, and he got busy building it, even though there was no physical evidence that an ark could possibly be useful.

He had faith. Or take the case of Abraham, described beautifully in Hebrews 11, or even Rahab, the harlot. Every person mentioned in Hebrews 11 had an active faith.

Not a pacifist, everywhere I go, I'm meeting people who know nothing about... The faith of the New Testament Christians was a life-transforming... You study their life direction, and he received the gift of faith. He became a pillar, a giant, a steadfast, reliable man, by the Lord Jesus Christ. All of you have that.

Now, true faith also involves doctrine. And the preachers tell me today, you can't preach doctrine. Doctrine is divisive.

Well, of course it's divisive. It was intended to be divisive. It was intended to separate... Why are there... Because there's so little doctrine preached.

But true faith embraces the great doctrines. Take the objectionable doctrine. Many men don't want to believe in a God like that.

They want to think of themselves as sovereign. ...saves those he pleases to save, and allows to slip into a Christless eternity. Those... But the apostles say that enabled them to embrace the doctrines of Scripture.

Well, I needn't explore... And does the gift of... But if you're faithful, then you won't have any problem hearing the end of this matter. Let's drop... These qualities... And are increasing... Now you say, what qualities? Well, the seven qualities that are going to constitute the third point. Look at these qualities, just so you're sure that I'm talking biblically.

In verse 5, the first quality is adding diligence to your faith. The second quality is adding moral excellence to your faith. The third quality is adding knowledge to your faith.

The fourth quality is adding self... The sixth quality is adding godliness. Then we have brotherly kindness and Christian love. We'll come back to those seven qualities.

But now, let me read again verse 8. If these qualities are... And are increasing... Now let's get this straight. There are seven qualities that mark all those persons who have received saving faith. They are the qualities that identify us with others who have received saving faith.

But it is possible to have these seven qualities but not have them increasing. Now that's mighty sad, but that's a fact. These qualities can be yours by right of sonship, by right of being a joint heir with Jesus Christ.

But you may be lazy. You may be careless. You may have allowed something in your life to rob you of growth and development.

You might... Oh, but they rally in their love and they gather round that child and they pour their heart... He's always retarded. And there are people in the church like that. Retarded.

They've never grown past the infancy stage spiritually. They may have been professing Christians 30 years, but the qualities that are there as a result of receiving saving faith are not increasing. I want to ask you, are these seven qualities present and increasing in your life? Now notice what is said in connection with this.

If these qualities are yours, verse 8 again, and increasing, then they render you neither useless nor unfruitful. Now my observation is that a high percentage of the members of the average church are useless and unfruitful. I've never been here before.

I've never met your pastor until tonight. But I dare to assume that a high percentage of the members of this church are useless and fruitless. If that's not true, this is an extraordinary church.

But I don't see anything here tonight that makes me think it's extraordinary. Looks quite ordinary to me. Hopefully I'm wrong, but I doubt seriously that I am.

I have to ask you, have you been rendered useful and fruitful? Or are you in this great number who are basically useless and fruitless? Now, read on with me and notice what is added here. For he who lacks these qualities is, now two options are presented. He who lacks these qualities is blind, that's the first option, blind.

Or the second option is short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. If these qualities are not in you and are not increasing and therefore rendering you neither useless nor unfruitful, there is one of two reasons. Now those of you who love your Bibles know that in Scripture blindness and lostness go together.

You may think of yourself as a Christian, but if you're blind, you're not a Christian at all. Christians are those who have received light and life. They're not blind people.

So if the qualities are lacking, if the fruitlessness is present, if the uselessness, the other option, you're short-sighted. And notice how this is worded. Having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

Now what is said here is very powerful. If you're lacking usefulness or else short-sighted, somehow you got the silly notion that God just wanted to save you from hell and take you to heaven. And you've lived in

a short-sighted fashion.

You've forgotten your former purification from sins. You've forgotten why he purifies us to move us onward, to equip us, to make us beautiful. But notice now what is added in addition.

Therefore, brethren, verse 10, be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing you. For as long as you practice these things, that is, these seven qualities, as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble. Now it's very sad for me to say this, because everywhere I go, I seem to meet people who have stumbled.

They can tell me about former days that were happy and useful days. But they admit, I'm useless now, I'm fruitless now. If you abandon these qualities, if they're not increasing in you, you're going to be a stumbler.

And I want to tell you ever so plainly that America is cursed by a stumbling church. The big thing wrong with America is not rotten politicians, though we certainly have plenty of them. It's not a rotten judicial system, though our judicial system is a farce.

It's not even a lousy educational system. The big problem in America is a stumbling church. The vast majority of people in the world cannot believe in Christ, because they cannot believe in the people who... If these qualities are in you, you will not be stumbling.

But look at these words in verse 11. For in this way, the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be abundantly supplied to you. Now look, if you have received saving faith, and you can prove that it's saving faith because it has the same appearance as that of the apostles and the first century believers, and you know that these qualities are in you, and that these qualities are increasing, you are guaranteed an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

But I want to ask you to think for a moment about how sad it is that some people who sincerely believe they are going to heaven are sure their entrance is not going to be abundant. I've had people say to me, well, all I care is that I just squeak in. As long as I make it, that's all that matters.

And if you have that kind of a feeling, I want to rebuke you in the name of what is righteous and holy. If I was saving myself and I was just barely saved, well, that'd be all right. But I'm not my Savior, and you're not your Savior.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior. And do I want to blackmark against him, do I want his reputation to be that of one who barely saved? No, the grace of Christ is abundant grace. Well, you say, what do you think is meant, Mr. Roberts, when it talks about an abundant entrance being supplied? Well, let me put it this way.

There might very well be some here tonight who have received saving faith, and there was a time when there were evidences of this by the similarity between their faith and Paul's faith. And they did have something of these seven qualities, but they haven't been exercising them for a long time. And so now basically they're neither fruitful or useful.

But still, by the grace of God, they're going to enter heaven. But they're just going to slip in. But on the other hand, there are some who are going to have an abundant entrance.

Let me picture it this way. Word begins to spread among the lengths of heaven. He's coming.

He's coming soon. And so the question is, who? And your name is the name that's given. You don't mean to say that he's coming soon.

Yes? Yes. Well, let's get the banners up! And if you have a choice between barely slipping in and an abundant entrance, which would you choose? Well, now it depends on whose glory you're focused on. If you've caught something of the glory of Jesus Christ, and you long that he might be honored, why, an abundant entrance into the kingdom will assure his honor in your connection.

Which kind of an entrance do you expect? An abundant entrance, or merely slipping in unnoticed? But come along now to the third point. I said there were three. The source of saving faith, the appearance of saving faith, and the conduct of saving faith.

All those, as I've said, who have received saving faith have received these seven qualities. But these qualities are to be increased, they're to be utilized, they're to be exercised. Let's take a few moments to look at these seven qualities.

Diligence. But it's not a separate quality. It's the quality that is to mark all seven.

Notice the wording now. Now for this very reason also. Applying all diligence in your faith supply excellence.

Do you know what moral excellence is? A number of years ago, at a time in fact when my daughter seemed to be bewildered about spiritual things and didn't really seem to have taken a direction that was Christ-honoring, her mother and I were constantly praying and hoping that her life would begin to conform to Christ, but we weren't at all sure at this juncture. But one day, and he was quite eloquent, but when we left, my daughter turned to me and she said, Dad, I have often heard you use the expression moral earnestness. Yes, I said, that is one of my favorite expressions.

She said, in my opinion, that's what this preacher is lacking, moral earnestness. Well, I could scarcely believe what she was saying. That was exactly what I had said.

And he does a great job, but he might also enjoy hunting. He doesn't put any... Now I know that was pretty critical and I hope I'm wrong, but all of us who have received the gift of saving faith are to add to that saving faith this gift of moral earnestness. When people study your life, what is their conclusion? Do they go away saying, I tell you, if there's ever a genuine Christian on earth, there she is, I've just been talking to her? Or do they go away shaking their head and saying, I don't know about her.

She seems to speak out of both sides of her mouth. I can't tell whether she's serious or not. Have you been adding that quality to your life? Do you find that with each passing month there is a deeper level of earnestness about your walk with Christ? Or have you stagnated? Have you just gone up so high and then leveled there and never gone above it? Look at the second quality that the Apostle mentions.

Having added this moral excellency, now go beyond that and add knowledge of faith. Now not the knowledge concerning Christ and his saving grace and the power of his blood. Those are essential elements to saving faith.

But knowledge in becoming discerning, in studying the scriptures, in understanding the will and the purpose of God and living to the glory of God. You see, there's many a Christian who has never yet used their Bible rightly. I am regularly meeting people who act as if the Bible, they're so south-centered that they

think but those who are adding knowledge to their saving faith are people who've gotten serious about discovering, who reveals themselves in Holy Scripture and arranging their lives so that they are in control.

There's much I might say about each of these seven qualities. Oh, how tragically missing this is from most professed Christians. Most people seem to be governed by their passions, by their emotions.

Few seem to exercise self-control. We rise to great peaks and we sink to deep valleys because all the circumstances of our lives keep churning us up and churning us over. But people who have added self-control have learned to walk stably with their God, uniformly, and they're not disrupted by the experiences of life.

How about you? Have you added self-control? Is there any habit in your life over which you do not have control? Any pattern of thought that keeps leading you astray and you can't control it? Any response to what other people say or do that repeatedly results in an uproar? I am thinking of a person that I've known for a long time who, no matter what is said, somehow always seems to interpret what is said as being a slap. She doesn't have self-control. She's never learned to act reasonably and justly.

Christ didn't just come to save us from hell. He came to save us from our sins. And if you're still under the government and control of sin, what grounds do you have to describe yourself as a Christian and what hope do you have of an abundant entrance into the kingdom? But take the next word that the apostle utilizes here.

First, moral excellence. Then, knowledge. Then, self-control.

Persevere. I've known many people who seem to come to saving faith, who seem to have experience to change life. But a few years later you meet them again and they're nowhere in the kingdom.

They're lacking perseverance. How about you? I wonder how many here tonight have added to their faith perseverance. And no matter what happens, you are going to march straight forward with Christ.

You're not experiencing hot and cold. You're not up and down. You are a persevering person.

You've added this spirit of perseverance to your faith. And look at the next word that the apostle uses. Add to perseverance godliness.

Godliness. There was a time when godliness was a much-used term in our churches, when holiness was expected of all professing Christians. But somehow we've lost sight of this quality.

Have you been adding holiness to your life? Can you honestly say before God, year after year others see the change in me as I grow in Christ-likeness? And look at the next term that he uses. He speaks in the sixth place about adding brotherly kindness. Now, in the church we talk a lot about Christian fellowship.

But we don't even like one another often. I've been in many a church where there has been conflict and tension and war going on. Many a great church has been dragged down to the bottom by a lack of brotherly kindness.

Brotherly kindness is to be increasing among us. And his last word, Christian love. Brotherly kindness is what we exercise, believer to believer.

And Christian love is what we exercise, believer to unbeliever. The love of Jesus Christ. Well, dear friends, I put in front of you this truth.

Revival happens when God determines to send it. And what ought we to be doing in the meantime? Well, we ought to be adding these qualities. And if we're doing so, this church, your church, will never be useless and never be fruitless.

But if you have been failing to add these qualities urgently, systematically, regularly, then you're part of the problem and not part of the solution. And I want to plead with you tonight to think in terms of an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven. If you're going, why not go with flying colors? Why not be received by a glorious reception committee? Why not have others in heaven anxious for your arrival? And why not be determined while on this earth to never know a day when you are not useful and not fruitful? And if you long to be useful and fruitful and to look forward to an abundant entrance, then get busy adding these qualities to your faith.

Revival might come this week. It might not come for another ten years. And are you willing to be near useless and unfruitful until revival comes? I'm not.

By God's grace, I've said it in my heart to follow this passage. If these qualities are yours and increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, be prepared to make certain about his calling and choosing you for as long as you practice.

For in this way, the entrance into the eternal kingdom Some of us have been mighty careless about these. Some of us have foolishly supposed that we had a lot more.

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