

What is Saving Faith?

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: 2 Timothy 1:12

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I have a most interesting subject today from a very familiar text. I will be preaching from 2 Timothy chapter one verse 12 and I will be preaching on the subject, "What is Saving Faith? What is Saving Faith?"

And this Scripture that I will read to you from 2 Timothy chapter one verse 12, Charles Spurgeon the outstanding preacher of Metropolitan Tabernacle in England said this is the most concise and best definition of saving faith that he has been able to find. In all of his ministry he said this is the most concise and best definition of faith that I have found here in 2 Timothy one verse 12.

Listen to it. Paul has been writing to Timothy his son in the ministry and he told him in the preceding verses, he said, "Don't be ashamed of the gospel and don't be ashamed of me the Lord's prisoner. And you be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel because," he said, "I am in prison now for the sake of the gospel." That's right, verse 12. Look at it. "For the sake of the gospel I suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed. I am not ashamed. For I know whom I have believed." This is the definition now. This is his confession, Paul's confession of faith. "I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded, I am confident that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

Now I have three points this morning and the first and most obvious one, the most obvious thing here is that Paul's faith and hope for eternal life was not in himself. It was not in his religious affiliation. It was not in his rituals and ceremonies and keeping of days and laws. It was not in the traditions in which he was raised and taught, but it was in a person. Did you see that? He said, "I know whom I have believed." He didn't say, "I know in whom or of whom..." He says, "I know him. I know whom I have believed."

And do you know? I found this to be true. If you examine the faith of every believer in the Scripture an through the years I have become acquainted with the testimony and confessions of these people in the Word of God, Old Testament and New Testament. And if you will examine the faith and hope of every believer in the Scripture you will find this to be the case. They believed a person. None of them based their hope for eternal life on law, obedience, works, religious rituals. It is always Christ. Christ.

Of Abraham the Scriptures says, "He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness."

And the Lord Jesus Christ said himself about Abraham, he said, "Abraham saw my day. Abraham saw my day. He rejoiced to see my day, my coming. He was glad. He saw my day and was glad."

And, you know, I told you this last week. When Abraham and his son Isaac were walking up the mountain and Isaac asked, "Where is the Lamb?" Abraham made this tremendous statement. He said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb."

That is Abraham's faith in Christ, the Lamb of God, the coming Lamb.

Abraham said, "God will provide."

That is one of the seven names of Jehovah in the Old Testament. God, Jehovah Jireh, God will provide. That was Abraham's faith, a person. You see that?

What about Moses? Christ said, "Moses wrote of me. I was the subject of Moses' writings, the subject of all five books." And Moses wrote five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. And Christ is the key, he is the subject in all of them. "Moses wrote of me."

Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 18 about Christ. He said this, "God will raise up a prophet like unto me. And God will put his words in his mouth and him you shall hear. God will send a priest," Moses said, "like Melchizedek." Moses is the one who wrote about Melchizedek, the type of Christ. Moses is the one who instituted the Passover lamb. Take a lamb without spot, without blemish. Put it up four days. Sacrifice it, roast its body. Put the blood on the door.

God said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you."

And Moses instituted that Passover to be observed every year as long as Israel the nation stood. And that Passover is Christ.

Moses' faith and confidence and hope was in Christ.

What about Job? Job supposed to be, according to most people. The oldest book in the Bible, the first patriarch. What did Job say in Job 19? "I know that my Redeemer liveth and he will stand on this earth. He will stand on this earth. My Redeemer. My God will stand on this earth. And though worms destroy this body, yet I will see him; myself, not another. I will behold him."

What did David say? "The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord Jesus Christ is my shepherd and he restoreth my soul. He restoreth my soul."

And then I told you a few weeks ago about this 53rd chapter of Isaiah. I think I brought a message on it. But this 53rd chapter of Isaiah, this is Isaiah's confession. This is Isaiah's gospel. This is Isaiah's faith and hope, Isaiah 53, as many chapters, but 53 especially.

But in Isaiah 53 he uses this personal pronoun, these personal pronouns, he, his and him 43 times in this one chapter, 43 times. Listen as he gives us his confession of faith. He is talking about Christ. Christ. He said, "He shall grow up as a tender plant, a root out of a dry ground? He will be a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for iniquities. By his stripes we are healed."

This is a crucified Redeemer Isaiah is writing about.

"He shall justify many for he shall bear their iniquities."

Ah, my. These men didn't trust in a law or ceremonies or sabbath days or feast days or their works. They looked to Christ. And the apostle Peter, our Lord Jesus Christ fed a large crowd of people. Then he preached to them and they began to walk away. They didn't like what he was saying. His message was, they said, "It is a hard saying." And they left.

And our Lord turned to the 12 disciples and he said, "Would you also go away?"

And the apostle Peter spoke up and said, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" That is what Paul is saying. "I know whom I have believed." "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that you are the Christ. You are the Son of the living God."

Can you say that? "I believe and I am sure that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Yes, sir. This is the true God and this is eternal life. That is what John said. Listen to his testimony. "The Son of God has come and has given us understanding that we may know him that is true. We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and this is the true God and this is eternal life."

I don't know how that could be made plainer. Every...and I could take the rest of the evening or morning and I could go through all the Scriptures and give you the testimony of every believer. It is Christ, Christ.

Saving faith is in the person and work of Christ. I will tell you something else that Spurgeon said that I want to read to you. This is...this is one of his personal testimonies. He was a great preacher. He pastored in London, England from 1855 to 1892 when he died. But he said, "When I came to Christ I had no assurance that God would save me. I had no assurance and I had a personal interest in the death of the Son of God on the cross. I just knew I was a sinner, a great sinner. And I knew this. I knew that God said Jesus

Christ came into the world to save sinners. I knew that. And I knew that God said that he came to seek and to save the lost. And I knew that God said that he was made sin for us that knew no sin. Christ knew no sin. But he was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. I knew that God said, I heard the preacher read it, Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God, there is none else.” Spurgeon said, “I looked. I believed. I trusted him. I believed him on the strength and authority of his Word. With me it was sink or swim I go to him. He died for those who believe. I believe. He died for those who trust him. I trust him. He said, ‘All that my Father giveth me will come to me and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’ So I came to him.”

That’s a good testimony. “I looked to him. I believed him. I trusted him on the strength and authority of his Word.”

He said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my Word will never pass away.”

The great hymn writer, Edmund Jones in 1787 wrote these words. I love these words. He said, “I will go to Jesus though my sin hath like a mountain rose. I know his courts I will enter in whatever may oppose. I can but perish if I go. I am resolved to try. For I know if I stay away I must forever die.”

Paul’s faith was in a person and that person is the Savior of sinners. He is the sinner’s Savior. That is what Paul said in Acts 13. Paul said this to the congregation in Acts 13. He said, “Men and brethren, be it known unto you that through this man, Jesus Christ, is preached to you the forgiveness of sins, all sins. And by him all who believe are justified from all sins, from all things, all sin, past present and future, from which you cannot be justified by the law of Moses.

And then Peter in 1 Peter 3:18 says, “Christ, Christ Jesus the Lord has suffered, once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he himself might bring us to God.”

Now I don’t know how I can make this first point any plainer. Paul says, “I know whom I have believed.” Discount any affiliation or any association or any work you do or law you keep or morality you produce. Salvation is in Christ, the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the song of the people in glory.

Now you listen to Revelation chapter one verse five. This is the song of the heaven. It had better be the song of earth. It better be my song and your song because this is what they are singing in glory. “Unto him, unto him who loved us.” We didn’t love him. He loved us. We love him because he first loved us. “...And washed us from our sin.” We didn’t wash in the baptismal pool or the fount. We didn’t wash our sins away. The creek didn’t. He did. He loved us and washed us from our sin. How? In his blood. Don’t get so modern and so intellectual you forget to preach the blood, my friend. It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. I have given you the blood on the altar to make an atonement for your soul and it is precious blood. It is the precious blood of Christ. It is precious to the Father and it is precious to every believer.

He washed us from our sins in his own blood and he hath made us kings.

I will tell you if we are a son of the king then we are kings. He has made us kings and priests to offer sacrifices of faith joy and praise. And priests to God and his Father. And to him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever amen. That's it. That is the song of heaven. That is the song of heaven. It would do us well to read that quite often when we get wrapped up in our doings and duties and religious and professions and experiences and talking about what we have done for God. It would be awful well for us to turn to the song of heaven and see if that is our song.

It is a song of Moses. It is the song of the Lamb. It is a song of redemption. It brings the praise and glory to him.

Well, the second thing I see in Paul's confession. Did you remember it? "I know whom I have believed. I am persuaded. I am confident he is able. I am confident. I am persuaded. I am fully assured that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him."

Our confidence is not in ourselves. My confidence is not in this flesh, in my holding out or holding on. That is right. It is not my hold of him. It is his hold of me. That's right. It is not my hand that keeps me. It is his hand. I am in his hand. We have no confidence in this flesh. That's right.

Over in Philippians three Paul gives us the three marks of true Israel. He said the people who are true Israel worship God in Spirit, not form and ceremony, but Spirit. The people of true Israel rejoice in Jesus Christ only. The true Israel has no confidence in the flesh, not in their flesh, not in anybody else's, not...our confidence is not in our church leaders. It is not in our churches. Our confidence is in Christ.

Paul had to rebuke the apostle Peter down there in Antioch when he came down and sided with the Judaizers and the law keepers and the legalists. Paul said, "I had to rebuke Peter to the face."

You can't trust Peter. You can't even trust Paul. You can't trust yourself. But you can trust Christ. That is exactly right. Our hope and confidence is in Christ our Lord, his blood, his righteousness, his intercession, his mercy, his grace.

Oh, Toplady's great hymn, *Rock of Ages*. Do you remember that verse? "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross of Christ I cling. Could my tears forever flow, could my zeal no respite know, these for sin could never atone. It is Christ that saves and Christ alone."

"I am persuaded," Paul said. "I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded he is able. He is able to keep."

That is the foundation of Abraham's faith. You know Abraham is called the Father of the faithful. He...we are exhorted to look back to Abraham's faith and study his faith, but Paul in Romans four summed up Abraham's faith. He says in verse 20 of Romans four, "Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief."

Abraham had a promise nothing more. He had the Word of God, a promise. He didn't see the promise fulfilled. He had the promise of Christ coming, Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, Christ's redemption. He had it in promise only. But he didn't stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith giving God the glory. And Abraham was what? Fully persuaded, fully persuaded.

What did Paul say? "I know whom I have believed. I am persuaded that he is able."

Abraham was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform.

My friend, you reach back to the Old Testament and you pull out Abraham. Three thousand years before Paul and Abraham believed God, the promise of the Savior, the Christ, the Redeemer and was fully persuaded that what God said he was able to perform. Here is Paul, after Christ died was buried and rose again, saying the same thing. "I know whom I have believed. I am persuaded, fully persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him."

He is able.

Hebrews 7:25 says he is able to save to the uttermost. You have never gone so far, you have never fallen so low, you have never sinned so black, you have never thought so wickedly that he can't by his precious blood make you as white as snow. Though your sins be as scarlet I will make them white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, I will make them like wool. He is able to save to the uttermost, to the guttermost somebody said.

You bring me a sinner, my Lord can save him. That's right.

And Jude 24 says, "And he is able to keep him saved. He is able to keep you from falling." That's right. None of his sheep are going to fall away. Oh, they stumble and fumble and fall, but they don't fall forever. He always lifts them up. He is able to keep you from falling and he is able to present you before the presence of his glory spotless.

Think about that. Holy, without blame before God almighty. My what a savior.

And Philippians three says this, verse 21. "He is able to subdue all things to himself." There is no sinner he can't save. He said, "My arm is not short that I can't save. My ear is not heavy that I can't hear. I am able to save."

He is able to subdue you. If he sets out to save you, he will. That's right. He is able to subdue all things unto himself. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess he is

Lord. You can write that in concrete. He is able to subdue all things to himself and he is able to raise our vile bodies some day and make them just like his glorious body. You think about that.

Those cemeteries are going to...graves open one of these days and every believer is going to be changed, his vile body is going to be changed from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality, from shame to glory, from temporary to eternal, immortal. That's right. Made like his glorious body.

Old Nebuchadnezzar was going to put the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. He was going to cast them in the fiery furnace. And this is what he said to them. "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Is any God able to deliver you out of my hands?"

And the Hebrew children said, "Our God whom we believe is able. He is able. He is able to deliver us and he will deliver us. But if he is not pleased to deliver us, he is still God and the only God and will not bow to your peanut gods."

Now that's...he is able. That is what Paul is talking about. "I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded, totally confident that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

What is this confidence in Christ? I will tell you what it is. When old Job was at his lowest point, everything was swept away. His wealth is gone. His health is gone, his children are gone, his friends are gone. His wife said, "Why don't you just curse God and die? Why don't you just curse God and die?"

And old Job said, "Though he slay me I trust him. I trust him."

It is not my hold of him that saves me. It is his hold of me. It is not my promise to him that I believe. It is his promise to me. It is not my works before God which I trust. It is his works of righteousness and holiness and truth.

So saving faith, number one, is in the Lord Jesus Christ. I know whom I have believed.

Saving faith is confidence and trust in him. He is able to keep that which I have...number three, committed to him, that which I have committed to him against that day.

You see, the knowledge of who Christ is and what Christ has done leads us to a confidence in Christ. And when we have a confidence in Christ it leads us to a committal to Christ. Do you understand that? If you have confidence in him, you will commit yourself to him. You will trust him. You will believe him. You will receive him.

And that commitment to Christ leads us to confess Christ. It leads us to publicly own Christ. It leads us to identify with his people, identify with his Word, identify with his Church, identify with his gospel and be baptized confessing Christ Jesus.

He is worthy of my full confidence and faith and commitment and confession. It is really...listen to me. Listen to me, will you? It is unworthy of the great name of Jesus Christ to talk about a token allegiance to him, to so great a person, a token allegiance. It is unworthy of his great gift of life to talk of a partial commitment, a partial commitment to such a great person? A partial surrender, part time discipleship?

I heard one time a young man say, "I am going in full time Christian service."

There is no other kind. You don't talk about a part time discipleship. Those who came to Christ came completely. They never turned back. Those who rest in Christ cease from their own labors and find in him all they need.

Paul says, "He is able to keep that which I have committed to him."

In closing, what have we committed to him? My sins, transferred to him, laid on him, paid for him. My sins, oh the bliss, of that glorious thought, my sins not in part, but the whole are nailed to the cross. I bear them no more It is well with my soul.

But I commit to him my immortal soul, committed to Christ. One day my body is going back to the grave, to the dust. But my soul is going to God, accepted in the beloved, in peace.

What have I committed? My possessions. I know how to abound. I know how to be abased. I have learned in whatsoever state I am to be content. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. And my God shall supply all my needs according to his riches in glory through Christ Jesus.

I have committed to him my family. The Lord gave. I know what Job is talking about. And the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

And I have committed to Christ and his Church like Ruth of old. She said to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee. For where you go, I go. Where you lodge, I lodge. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Where you die that is where I will die and be buried." That is the way I feel about him and his Church.

Now here is the message, "Saving Faith, What is it?" And the message I brought last week, "The Doctrine of Christ." Send two dollars and we will mail it to you. Until next week God bless you.