

Title: **THE WORK GOD REQUIRES**

Text: John 6:22-29

Subject: *Faith in Christ*

Date: Sunday Morning — April 5, 2009

Tape: John #46

Reading: *1 John 3:1-24*

Introduction:

I am going to preach to you this morning about **THE WORK GOD REQUIRES**. That's the title of my message — **THE WORK GOD REQUIRES**

The Jewish Talmud states that “The whole law was given to Moses at Sinai in 613 precepts.” **It was summarized** and given to the children of Israel in Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). Those Ten Commandments are holy, just and good. They reveal something of the character of God and show us our sin. Those Ten Commandments identify sin for us and show us our need of a Savior, a Mediator, a Substitute, a Redeemer and Representative: — One who can stand between man and God, to meet the demands of God for us and satisfy our needs before God as men. That Mediator is Christ, the Son of God.

Isaiah, writing by Divine Inspiration reduced all the commandants to six, promising that all who (1.) walk righteously, (2.) speak uprightly, (3.) despise the gain of oppression, (4.) refuse to be bribed, (5.) despise the shedding of blood, and (6.) turn away from evil “*shall dwell on high*” (Isaiah 33:15-16).

(Isaiah 33:14-17) “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? (15) He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; (16) He shall dwell on high: his place of defence *shall be* the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters *shall be* sure. (17) Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.”

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The Prophet Micah reduced all the commandments to just three (Micah 6:8).

(Micah 6:8) “He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to **do justly**, and to **love mercy**, and to **walk humbly with thy God?**”

And during the days of **his earthly ministry**, our Lord Jesus Christ declared that all the commandments could be reduced to just two (Matthew 22:37-40).

(Matthew 22:37-40) “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

The six hundred and thirteen precepts of the law, when reduced to their essence require but two things from us: that we love God and that we love one another perfectly. **Yet, these two great and good commandments condemn us all.** Not one of us loves God or his neighbor perfectly. Still, hope is not gone.

We can yet fulfill the law of God completely and perfectly. We can do all that God requires of man, if we keep the one commandment to which God promises eternal life. **Are you interested in the one work** which God requires of men and women, the one work by which sinners fulfill all the law of God?

Turn with me to John chapter 6. We will begin reading at verse 22.

(John 6:22-26) “The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but *that* his disciples were gone away alone; (23) (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) (24) When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. (25) And when they had

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found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? (26) Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

Our Lord Jesus knows the thoughts of every man’s heart; and he knew the thoughts of these people who pretended to honor him. He knew their secret motives. Commenting on this passage, **J. C. Ryle** wrote...

“Let us be real, true, and sincere in our religion, whatever else we are. The sinfulness of hypocrisy is very great, but its folly is greater still. It is not hard to deceive ministers, relatives, and friends. A little decent outward profession will often go a long way. But it is impossible to deceive Christ. *‘His eyes are as a flame of fire’* (Revelation 1:14). He sees us through and through. Happy are those who can say — *‘Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee’* (John 21:17).”

Read on...

(John 6:27) “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”

What our Lord forbids here is not labor and care with regard to material things. The Lord God nowhere promotes sloth and idleness, and nowhere encourages indifference with regard to our earthly responsibilities. What he does forbid is excessive care for material things. Rather than devoting ourselves to that which is marked for destruction, the Lord Jesus here instructs us to seek him, to set our hearts on him, to devote ourselves to the pursuit of everlasting life, to live not for time but for eternity.

- This life everlasting is that which is the gift of the Christ, our God-man Mediator, “*the Son of Man.*”
- This Mediator, this Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ is that One that “*God the Father sealed,*” — stamped with his royal signet, marked for security, and kept secret.

Now, read verses 28 and 29...

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(John 6:28) “Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”

We love works; don't we? Give us something to do; and we'll do it! That is the religion of man, the religion of the world, your religion, and my religion by nature. We all want to weave a web of righteousness of our own spinning, spinning a thread from our own entrails by which we might climb up to heaven. No man wants salvation free of cost.

Martin Luther was exactly right when he called works religion “the devil's feces.” Those who seek to be saved by works, he called “the devil's martyrs,” because they take great pains to go to hell.

Verse 29...

(John 6:29) “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

Did I read that right? — “**This is the work** of God, (The one and only work that God requires of you and me!), *that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*”

- The Work God Requires
- The Work God Performs
- The Work God Accepts

We read in 1 John 3:23, “*This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*”

Proposition: Faith alone is what God requires of man!

FIVE THINGS REVEALED

I do not claim to know a lot about faith. I feel like the centurion who said, “*Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.*” But I am very interested in this subject, and you ought to be. The Word of God has a lot to say about faith.

Our Lord said, “**If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth**” (Mark 9:23). — “**If ye had faith** as a grain of a mustard seed, ye might say to this sycamore tree, *Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you*” (Luke 17:6). — “**If thou wouldst believeth,** *thou shouldst see the glory of God*” (John 11:40). —

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He once said to a harlot, “*Thy faith hath saved thee!*” (Luke 7:50). — “*When he saw*” the faith of four men who brought a sick friend to him, he said to the one they brought to him, “*Man, thy sins are forgiven thee*” (Luke 5:20).

Paul wrote, “*Being justified, by faith we have peace with God*” (Romans 5:1). — He also said, “*By grace are ye saved through faith*” (Ephesians 2:8). The Word of God highly exalts faith! **Here are 5 things revealed in the Bible about faith...**

1. **Faith is the foundation grace.** While love is the greatest of all graces and hope is the grace of comfort and expectation, faith is the foundation grace from which both love and hope spring (John 3:36; Mark 16:15-16; Romans 10:11-15).

(Mark 16:15-16) “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (16) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

(John 3:36) “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

(Romans 10:11-15) “For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (12) For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

The first evidence of life in the soul is faith. Faith in Christ is the proof that we have life. **Believing on Christ we have been delivered from...**

- Penal Death in Justification.
- Spiritual Death in Regeneration.

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No form of works, no religious profession, no amount of knowledge, no feelings and emotions can assure me that I am both absolved of guilt and born of God; but faith does (1 John 5:1).

(1 John 5:1) “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”

As faith is the first evidence of life in the soul, so all true, spiritual life is sustained by faith. The child of God does not trust his emotions or his devotions, his feelings or his doings. He looks to Christ. — “*The just shall live by his faith!*”

Spurgeon said, “Hearty belief in God, his Son, his promises, his grace is the soul’s life, neither can anything take its place. ‘Believe and live’ is the standing precept both for saint and sinner.”

John Flavel wrote, “The soul is the life of the body. Faith is the life of the soul. Christ is the life of faith.”

Faith is the foundation grace. If you do not have faith in Christ you do not have life. You are yet in your sins. The wrath of God is upon you.

2. **This faith is the gift of God.** (Ephesians 2:8-9). You may believe many things. And there may be many types of faith in man. But saving faith, that faith that unites a sinner to Christ in a living, indissolvable union, that faith is the gift of God. **It is not the product of the flesh!** (John 1:12-13; Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 1:19; Colossians 2:12).

(Ephesians 2:8-9) “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

(John 1:12-13) “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

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(Ephesians 1:19) “And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.”

(Philippians 1:29) “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

(Colossians 2:12) “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

3. I know this too: — **Sinners are justified by faith alone. Faith is not the cause of justification.** That is the grace of God. Faith is not the basis of justification. That is the blood of Christ. But **faith is the voice** of justification. **Faith is the means** by which we receive justification and by which God declares justification in the heart (Romans 4:25-5:1-11; Galatians 2:16).

(Romans 4:25-5:1) “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (5:1) Therefore being justified, — by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(Galatians 2:16) “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

(Romans 5:2-11) “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath

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through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (11) And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

4. **True, saving faith is a growing grace.** Everything that is alive grows. If our faith is the dead faith of religious profession and doctrinal orthodoxy, it does not grow and increase. But if our faith is a living thing it grows. — “*Your faith groweth exceedingly*” (2 Thessalonians 1:3). Believers “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 3:18).

- As faith grows assurance grows!
- As faith grows love for Christ and one another grows!
- As faith grows rest and peace increase!

The more we grow in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ –

- The less concern we have for life!
- The less interest we have in the world!
- The less fretful we are in trials!

5. I know this too: — **There are many imitators of faith, many kinds of false faith that cannot save.** False faith can do much to impress men and to impress us with ourselves.

(James 2:19) “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”

False faith...

- May be greatly enlightened and knowledge (Hebrews 6:4).
- Excites the affections. (The Stony Ground Hearer).
- Reforms the Outward Life – (The Pharisees).
- Speaks well of Christ – (Nicodemus).
- Confesses Sin with Great Sorrow – (Judas).
- May humble itself in sackcloth and ashes – (Ahab).
- May repent – (Esau).
- May do religious works with diligence – (Jews).
- May be very generous – (Ananias and Sapphira).
- May tremble at the Word of God – (Felix).
- May experience much in religion – (Hebrews 6:1-4).

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- May enjoy great religious privileges – (Lot’s Wife).
- May preach, reform miracles, and cast out demons – (Matthew 7:23).
- May attain high office in the church – (Diotrephes).
- May walk with great preachers – (Demas).
- May be peaceful and secure – (The Five Foolish Virgins).
- May even persevere and hold out until the Day of Judgment (Matthew 7:22-23).

THREE QUESTIONS

Let me wrap this message up by answering **three simple questions** from the Word of God.

First, — **What Is Saving Faith?** — I cannot give you a plan or a blueprint and say, “Follow this, do that, say the other, and you will have faith.” Anyone who tells you how you can obtain faith knows nothing about faith! The gift of faith is God’s sovereign prerogative!

Illustration: “*Romans Road*”
“*Sinner’s Prayer*”

I do know this – If you want faith in Christ, if you are seeking this great gift, if you are seeking the Lord, you have come to the right place (Romans 10:17). — And **I can tell you this** – Saving faith has three characteristics (2 Timothy 1:12).

(2 Timothy 1:12) “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I **know** whom I have **believed**, and am **persuaded** that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

1. **Knowledge** – “**I know** whom I have believed.” A man cannot believe what he does not know. You cannot trust an unknown, unrevealed Savior (John 20:30-31).

(John 20:30-31) “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: (31) But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

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No one will ever have faith in Christ until he knows...

- Something of the Bible!
- Something of the Character of God!
- Something of the Sinfulness of Man!
- Something of the Person and Work of Christ! — **Who is he?** – The God-man! — **What did he do?** – Died as the sinner’s Substitute! — **Why did he do it?** – To Satisfy the Justice of God for Sin! — **Where is he now?** – On the Throne!

Saving faith is not a leap in the dark. Saving faith is based upon revealed truth and knowledge (Romans 10:13-14).

(Romans 10:13-17) “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

But there is more to faith than knowledge. There must also be a...

2. **Persuasion** – “*I am persuaded.*” Paul said, I know what God has revealed, and I am persuaded that it is true. I not only read the Scriptures and understand what they say about the Person and Work of Christ, but I give full consent and agreement to them!

NOTE: It is impossible for anyone to have saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who puts a question mark on the Word of God!

Still, there is something more to saving faith than knowledge, or even persuasion. Many, I fear, are persuaded of Gospel Truth who do not have faith in Christ. This third, vital element of faith is missing in them.

3. **Commitment** – “*I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*” —

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Paul committed himself to Christ. He trusted to Christ all the affairs of his life and trusted Christ alone for his everlasting acceptance with God.

- Christ said, “*Believe on Me*” – I do!
- Christ said, “*Come unto Me*” – I do!
- Christ said, “*Trust Me*” – I do!

“My life, my love I give to thee,
Thou Lamb of God who died for me;
O may I ever faithful be,
My Savior and my God!”

“*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!*” (Acts 16:31).

Thomas Brooks wrote, “He that believeth on Christ shall be saved, be his sins never so many. He that believeth not on Christ must be damned, be his sins never so few!”

“*He that believeth on the Son (of God) hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (John 3:36).

Second, — **Why is faith in Christ necessary?** — Much could and should be said in this regard. But for the sake of brevity, let me just give you three reasons for the necessity of faith, three reasons why we must trust the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The only way fallen men and women can ever please the holy Lord God is by faith in Christ (Hebrews 11:6).

(Hebrews 11:6) “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

- No man has ever pleased God, except by faith in Christ.
- Abel – Enoch – Noah – Abraham – Moses – Etc.
- Every sinner who trusts the Lord Jesus pleases God and fulfills all the law of God (Romans 3:31; 8:4).

(Romans 3:31) “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

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(Romans 8:1-4) *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

2. **There is no true humility apart from faith.** — Grace is for the humble. God gives grace to the humble and resists the proud. But the only humble person in the world is the one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone else has something to claim as a ground of merit before God, or imagines that he does! Believers are truly humble.

- We **need** a Savior and know it!
- We **come** to Christ with empty hands!

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.
Naked come to Thee for dress,
Helpless look to Thee for grace!”

- We **receive** Christ and the grace of God in him as a gift, not a wage or reward.
- We **trust** Christ alone for our total, everlasting acceptance with God (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

Illustration: *“Is Christ enough?” — “He is if He’s all you’ve got!”*

3. **Faith in Christ is necessary because there is no other way for a sinner to come to God and be saved** – (Rom. 4:16).

- Not by Works
- Not by Rituals!
- Not by Sacrifices!
- Not by Emotions!

Christ alone is The Way (John 14:6). — Christ alone is The Door (John 10:9). — You cannot be saved any other way (Acts 4:12).

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(Acts 4:12) “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Third, — **Do you have this saving faith in Christ? — Do I?** — This question is vital. It must not be passed over lightly – (2 Corinthians 13:5). Find the answer to this question and you will make your calling and election sure. Do you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? I cannot answer that question for you. You must answer for yourself – But this much I know...

He who has saving faith experiences the power and grace of God in his Son. — Faith is more than Doctrine! Faith involves personal experience, and the experience is a growing experience.

- Repentance! — A Turning!
- Transformation!
- Love!
- Commitment!

He who has faith in Christ has great, high esteem for the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. — “*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious*”(1 Peter 2:7).

- His Blood!
- His Righteousness!
- His Name!

And he who has faith in Christ has renounced and continues to renounce his own righteousness.

- “*Our righteousnesses are filthy rags!*”
- “*Woe is me!*”

(John 6:28-29) “Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? (29) Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

This is the work God requires. — “*This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent!*”

- The Work God Requires!
- The Work God Performs!

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- The Work God Accepts!

Amen.