

DO I PROFESS OR DO I POSSESS FAITH?

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5 • TV-023A

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2 Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

I want you to take your Bibles and open them with me to the book of **2 Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 5.**

Now I’m going to deal with what might be considered a controversial subject, the message today: **“DO I PROFESS FAITH OR DO I POSSESS FAITH?”**

Now, Martin Luther once said, and I want you to listen to this; “If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, then I’m not confessing Christ, however boldly I may professing Him.”

Now, where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the true soldier of Christ is proved. In **2 Corinthians chapter 13:5** Paul wrote these words: *“Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith. (Do I profess faith or am I possessing faith, am I in the faith?) Prove your own selves, (not somebody else now) but your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Christ Jesus is in you except you be a reprobate?”*

Now, today’s preacher or evangelist gathers a crowd, sometimes a large crowd of people and entertains them with music, special treats, puppet shows, jokes, and famous entertainers. Then, he preaches a sermon. Then, after he preaches a sermon, he closes the service with a high-pressured invitation or some people say, “An altar call.”

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And in that high-pressured invitation and that altar call people are urged to come forward and make a decision for Jesus Christ. Great promises are made to those who will come forward. Their financial problems are supposed to be solved. Their physical problems are supposed to be solved.

Their lives from this moment on from the time they come forward their lives will be changed and from now on they will live for God. Their troubles will be over. And when they die heaven will be their home.

Now the evangelist leaves town claiming literally hundreds, yea sometimes, even thousands of people saved in these meetings. Now here is the problem; these people who come forward, most of them, and even the evangelist's themselves admit that the greater percentage and some say, "Even 95% of these decisions are false professions."

Now here's the problem; these converts have made an outward profession of faith but they possess no inward peace. They have entered into a profession but they do not possess any knowledge of Christ, love for Christ, or rest in Christ. Consequently, their lives are not changed.

And the churches have added to their rolls more and more names of people whom they never see. Like one person wrote to me just this week and said, "That many people joined a certain church back yonder last January and none of them have come back over once or twice since then."

Now the tragedy of this situation is this; here's the tragedy; most of these religious converts, these people who make professions of faith; most of them build their hope for eternity on false professions, made under emotional pressure. And they'll hear Christ say in the Day of Judgment; "*Depart from me I never knew you.*"

Now my friends, a note needs to be sounded as Martin Luther said in this article; "I may profess with a loudest voice and clearest exposition; every truth of the Word of God, except precisely that one point that's under attack, that one point where Satan looks like has the advantage." And if I refuse to let my voice be heard at that point I'm not professing Christ, however loudly; I may claim to profess Him.

Now, a note needs to be sounded today. A voice needs to be raised in this generation. A word needs to be said against all religious hucksters, "*Who are making merchandise of the souls of men.*"

Now my friends; you listen carefully to these words; Salvation is by faith alone for by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. I know that, the Word of God teaches that. That's what I preach.

Salvation is by faith alone. But salvation is not by a faith that is alone. A living faith will produce works. Living faith, a faith that saves is not a dead faith, it's not an isolated faith, it's not a faith that is alone; it's a living faith.

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Salvation is apart from works, apart from the deeds of the law. *“By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.”* God says that. Salvation is by faith in Christ. But salvation, though it is apart from works is never without works because living faith produces a Godly walk, a Godly attitude, and a Godly work.

Salvation is not by prayer. A person can pray from now until the Judgment and not be saved by praying. But a faith that does not pray is a dead faith.

You know, we’ve invented phrases like this; “Well, he’s a born-again Christian.” There’s no other kind. Or, “She’s a praying Christian.” All Christians pray. “Well that person is a Christian who really loves the Lord.” You mean there are some who don’t love the Lord? All Christians love the Lord.

My friends, salvation is by Christ alone. It’s not by love. You can’t be saved by love; you’re saved by Christ. *But “He that loveth not knoweth not God.”* That’s what the Scripture says. *“He that loveth not knoweth not God.”*

Our Lord dealt with false faith when He was here on this earth in the flesh; He exposed it. There are several kinds of faith that He exposed.

First of all: There’s mental faith!

Now this is what we’re wrapped up in, in 1976, mental faith. “Come down an aisle and believe there’s one God, believe the Bible is His Word, believe Jesus Christ died on the cross. Believe He was buried and rose again and you’ll be saved. Give mental agreement to these facts, mental acceptance of these facts, and you’ll be saved.” That’s not so!

Now the book of **James chapter 2:19** says this: *“You believe there’s one God; you do well, the devil believes that and trembles.”* The devil believes that Christ died on the cross. He was there when He died.

Satan believes He was buried and rose again; he was there when He was buried and rose again. He believes all these facts. Facts do not save; a Person saves. And mental agreement with these facts, mental acceptance of religious doctrine does not save. *“With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”*

It is said about those people at Pentecost to whom Peter preached; *“They were pricked in their hearts. If thou shalt believe in thine heart Christ rose from the dead.”* It’s a heart-faith. It’s not mental agreement with some doctrine, mental acceptance of facts, and mental agreement with some truths; it’s a heart-faith, a living faith an experiential faith.

Secondly: Christ dealt not only with mental faith, but with material faith!

In **John chapter 6:26** He turned to a group of people who were following Him. There were multitudes of them following Him everywhere He went, right behind Him. And He turned to

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them in **John 6:26** and this is what He said; *“You seek me, because you did eat the loaves and were filled; that’s why you seek me. You seek me because I fed you.”* He took five loaves and two fishes and fed how many, 5,000 people and gathered up 12 baskets full of the remains of the fish and the loaves and they followed Him?

And He said; *“I’ll tell you why you’re following me; I fed you.”* And today we expect, if we believe on Jesus, if we follow Jesus; we expect to go to heaven. And we expect to get all the benefits of God if we make a decision for Jesus.

So, men today follow Jesus strictly as an exchange of service. “I serve God; He’ll serve me. I believe on Jesus and when I die Jesus takes me to heaven.” It’s just an exchange of service, an exchange of benefits; “I serve Him and He serves me.” That’s material favor.

Let me ask you this, if there was no such place as heaven would you still believe on Christ? If there were no hell would you still believe on Christ?

And then, our Lord exposed miracle faith. In **John chapter 2:43** the Scripture says; *“Many believed on Him; (because of the miracles which He did) when they saw the miracles they believed on Him.”*

But, now listen to this, and people today go to the healing meetings and they say; “Well so and so was healed of cancer and so and so was healed of deafness and so and so was healed of blindness. I really believe.”

What if God had not healed them; would you still believe? “Well I believe because God healed me.” If He didn’t heal you would you still believe? That’s what the people of our Lord’s day said; “Show us a sign and we’ll believe you. Come down from the cross and we’ll believe you.” Our Lord said, *“No sign shall be given to this sinful and adulteress generation, but the Word of God.”*

Many believed on Him when they saw the miracles which He did but the Lord did not commit himself unto them; He knew what was in man. That’s what we call miracle-faith. I’ll tell you this, you talk about miracles; Moses saw more miracles than any other man.

Moses saw the river turn to blood. Moses saw the plague of lice and frogs and flies. Moses saw the death of the first-born. Moses saw the dividing of the sea, the destruction of Pharaoh’s army. Moses saw the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day and the smiting of the rock and the water coming forth and the given of manna in the wilderness.

But after all of that and the bush that burned but was not consumed; in spite of all that he said; “Lord, show me your glory. I know your glory is not in just making rivers turn to blood. I know your glory is not just in healing somebody with a broken leg.”

“I know your glory is not just in bestowing financial assistance on people who are in need. Your glory is somewhere else.” And our Lord said to him, *“I’ll show you my glory. My glory is my*

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goodness. I'll be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I'll be gracious to whom I will be gracious."

Have you seen God's glory? Do you have mental faith, just mental acceptance of terms, facts, theology, doctrines, laws, rules, ordinances, ceremonies, rituals, just mental acceptance of those things or have the truth of Christ and the love of God burned in your heart and burned in your soul to recreate and regenerate you, convert you, make you in Christ a new person?

Do you have material-faith? Are you just following Jesus Christ because you don't want to go to hell? Are you just making a decision for Jesus because there's a heaven up there or somebody said there was and it's got streets of gold, gates of pearl, and walls of jasper?

Wouldn't you like to be one of those that live forever in a great, big, mansion, in heaven? Is that why you're following the Lord? Is that why you worshipping? Is that why you're serving? That's material faith; that's that outfit that followed Him everywhere He went because He gave them some loaves and fishes. And when the loaves and fishes stopped they stopped.

Or the miracle followers; they saw Him give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, walk, power to walk to the lame, raise the dead. They said, "My, that's great, that's great. Why we'll follow you and nobody will ever be sick." And that's why many are following today. The promises of faith are many.

John 3:16 says: "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life.*" That's right; salvation is by faith in Christ.

John 3:36: "*He that believeth on the Son hath life. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on Him.*" It's by faith!

Our Lord said to His disciples, "*Now you go into all the world. (I've got all authority in heaven and earth. And you go into all the world as my representative, as my ministers, as my preachers, as my ambassadors), and you preach the Gospel to every creature:*

"And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. And he that believeth not shall be damned." It'll all hinge on faith, it'll all hinge on faith. And **Acts 16:31**; the Philippian jailer came trembling and fell at the feet of Paul and Silas and looked up and said, "*Sirs; what must I do to be saved?*"

All right Paul; if salvation is by works, now's the time to tell him, if salvation is by baptism, now's the time to tell him. If salvation is by some deed of the law, now is the time to tell him. There he is; he's asking you point blank, toe to toe, the question; "*What must I do to be saved?*"

Here it is and Paul replied; "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*" But here's the question, here's the question; what is it to believe, what is it to believe? What is this believing that saves the soul?

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It's not mental faith because the Lord condemned these people. It's not material faith because the Lord wouldn't reveal Himself. It's not miracle-faith. Then what is it to believe on Christ?

Let me give you four things and I want you to listen carefully. If you're interested, if you're concerned, if you want a saving relationship with God almighty, if you want to know Christ; here it is.

First of all: To believe on Christ is to come to Christ!

The Word of God says in **Matthew 11:28**; "*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest,*" not come to the church; come to Christ, not come to the front, come to Christ, not come to the altar, come to Christ, to a person.

Not come to the preacher, not come to the law, not come to the Pope, not come to the preacher; come to Christ. "*Come unto me*" He said, "*You will not come to me that you might have life.*"

Listen to Him in **John 6:35**; "*He that cometh to me shall never hunger.*" And in **John 6:37**; "*All that my Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,*" to come to Christ.

It's to come to Him as the Publican came in the temple, confessing my sins, looking for mercy: "*Lord; be merciful to me the sinner.*" It's to come to Him as the Canaanite woman; she said, "*Lord, have mercy upon me.*" Great sinners need great mercy!

It's to come to Christ as the woman with the issue of blood when all else had failed. The Scripture says of that woman; "*She tried many physicians. She spent all that she had. She was no better.*" And she said; "*If I can just touch the hem of His garment I'll be made whole.*"

Our Lord turned to His disciples one day after 5,000 people had walked off and He said; "*Will you also go away?*" And they said, "*To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*" And when you and I come to the place where we see that everything else has failed.

**"In my hands no price I bring
Simply to the cross of Jesus Christ I cling
Could my tears forever flow?
Could my zeal no languor know?
These for sin could never atone
Christ must save and Christ alone."**

It is Christ alone. It is to come to Him when I'm without hope, without help, at my wits end. That's Scriptural terms, to come when all else is failed.

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And then, it's coming to Christ as the leper came to Him in **Matthew 8** to a sovereign Christ. Now He doesn't owe us anything. God's not obligated to you and God's not obligated to me. God's not a beggar, I am, and you are.

You see; He's not in our hands; we're in His hands. And He can save us or pass us by. He can give us eternal life or leave us in our sins and that leper knew that. You read **Matthew 8:1-3**; "*When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*" The leper called Him Lord, he fell on his face and worshipped Him as Lord; that's a good word, you need to learn it Lord. That's what the thief on the cross said, "*Lord remember me.*"

Yes, to believe on Christ is to come to Him. Can you get to Him? Get past the personal workers, past the soul-winners, past the decisionists, past the high-pressure evangelists, past the religious workers, and get to the Lord and do business with Him.

You don't need a mediator between you and Christ. You need a mediator between you and the Father and that Mediator is Christ. But you need to do business with God in the person of Jesus Christ. Come to Him.

All right, what is it to believe on Christ? It's to receive Him. In **John chapter 1:12** it says: "*To as many as received Him; to them gave He power (the right, the privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.*"

"*To receive Him;*" now note the word Him, not to as many as receive His doctrine; that's not what it says. I hear people telling me all the time, "Well I believe this and I believe that and I believe the other." Do you believe Christ? It's to receive Him.

"Well, I'll tell you, I'm a Baptist or I'm a Methodist or I'm a Presbyterian." Have you received Him, not just received his minister? "I've got a lot of faith in brother so and so. I was converted under brother so and so. I found the Lord under somebody else."

Paul wrote to those Corinthians down there and He said; "I'm worried about you. You're acting like carnal, natural, men. You run around talking about I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, and I'm of somebody else. And we are not of any one; we're non-denominational, we are of Christ. He said, "I'm worried about you souls."

My friend, have you received Him? "*To as many as have receive Him,*" not His ordinances, Him. Not His law; we love these things, but it's Him. **Colossians 2:6**; "*As you have received Christ, Jesus the Lord; walk ye in Him.*"

Living faith receives Christ as Prophet. He has a three-fold office, Prophet, Priest, and King. As prophet He reveals the Father. "*Moses wrote of me,*" He said. Moses said, "*The Father will raise up from among you a prophet, one like unto myself and Him you shall hear.*"

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And when that prophet was raised up and brought into this world in the likeness of sinful flesh; the Father spoke and confirmed that prophecy and said, *“This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him.”*

That’s when Moses wrote 4,000 years ago; *“Hear Him.”* That’s what the Father said 2,000 years ago, *“Hear Him.”* And that’s what I’m saying in **1976**, *“Hear Him.”* He’ll reveal the Father to you.

“Show us the Father and we’ll be satisfied.” Christ said, *“He that has seen me hath seen the Father.”*

It’s to receive Him as our Priest, to offer up a perfect atonement. It’s to receive Him as our Priest, to intercede. I don’t need an earthly priest. Don’t come to me and confess your sins. Go to the Father through Christ. He is our Mediator.

“There’s one God and there’s one mediator between God and men” and that Mediator is not a human being on this earth. And it’s not Mary the mother of Christ; it’s Christ himself. He’s our Priest and I’ve received Him as the Priest.

Secondly: And then it’s to receive Him as King, Lord, to reign over us!

And Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 1:30**; *“He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”*

**“Jesus Christ is made to me
All I need, all I need
He alone is all my plea
He’s all I need, (wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption).”**

To believe on Christ is to come to Him. It’s to receive Him.

Thirdly: It’s to look to Him!

Now **Isaiah 45:22** says; *“Look unto me and be ye saved.”* Don’t look anywhere else. Don’t look in here (in your heart). *“Well I hope I’m good enough to be saved.”* You can look through eternity into this heart and if God the Holy Spirit gives you eyes to see what’s really there; you’ll see nothing but a cesspool of iniquity.

Turn your eyes from within, and look without; look to Christ and don’t look to the preacher, you’ll be disappointed. And don’t look to the church; it can’t save. And don’t look to baptism or the Lord’s Table. Christ said, *“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. I’m a just God and the Saviour. There’s none else.”*

And I’ll tell you this, salvation is not only to look to Christ at the beginning but it’s to look to Christ all the way through and keep on looking. Listen to this verse in **Hebrews 12:2**; *“Looking*

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unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking, and looking, unto the Lord Jesus Christ, always looking to Him.

Faith is not an isolated act that takes place back yonder in the past somewhere and it’s forgotten. I am believing as I have believed and as I will believe. I have repented. I am repenting. I shall repent.

If I don’t keep on looking to Christ it’s a sure sign that I never did look to Christ. If anything can take the place of Christ it’s a clear indication that I never met Him because He exceeds anything in glory, beauty, satisfaction, pleasure and anything.

Ephesians chapter 2:8-9 says; *“For by grace have you been saved.”* **1 Corinthians 1:18** says; *“To them who are being saved.”* In **Romans 13:11** it says; *“Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”*

So, salvation is something God does for us in the past, in the present, and in the future. We are being saved.

And this thing of believing on Christ is to keep on looking. And I clearly say this; John said this and Paul declared this over and over again. Those who quit never knew Christ. Those who return to the world and to their evil and wickedness never knew Christ. They’re dogs that return unto their own vomit and sows that return to the wallow. And John said, *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”*

It’s looking to Christ; that’s salvation. There’s no such thing as a use-to-be Christian. Salvation is looking to Christ.

And last of all, to believe on Christ is a committal to Christ!

Now over in **2 Timothy 1:12** Paul said; *“I know whom I have believed.”* I know Him. I know who He is. He’s the God-man. He’s my representative. He’s my Redeemer. He’s my Mediator. I know Him.”

And I’m persuaded He’s able. He’s able to save me, He’s able to keep me, He’s able to perform all that He promised, and He’s able to raise my body and make it like unto His glorious body, that which I have committed to Him privately and publically.

I’ve committed my soul, my body, my family, and my all, to Jesus Christ. It’s a committal. That’s what it is to believe. It’s not just to walk and aisle and shake a preacher’s hand; it’s to come to Christ, to receive Christ, to look to Christ, and to commit myself to Him!