

FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

Colossians 1:3-4

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

- a. **Colossians 1:3-4** “3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints”
- b. The title of this comes straight from the text (verse 4): “Faith in Christ Jesus.”
- c. We have finished studying the greeting of Paul’s letter (vs. 1-2), and now we are moving into the body of the letter.
- d. Paul begins by commending, praising, and encouraging the saints in Colossae for two things: their faith in Christ Jesus and their love for all the saints. Next week we will tackle the latter; this morning let us take the first – faith in Christ Jesus.
- e. When you praise your child for their obedience, it is because their behavior is a good thing, and an important thing.
- f. If Paul thanked God for their faith in Christ Jesus, then that means it was a good thing; an important thing; something that he wanted them to have; something needed to have. And that means faith in Christ Jesus is something we need to have as well.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

- a. Faith in Christ Jesus is the way of salvation.
 - i. **Acts 16:31** They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”
- b. Not only are we saved by faith, but by faith alone.
 - i. **Ephesians 2:8-9** “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.”
- c. All the gifts of salvation are received by faith.
 - i. Adoption into God’s family: **John 1:12** “But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name,”

- ii. Eternal life: **John 3:16** “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” (See also Jn 3:36.)
- iii. Justification (made right with God): **Acts 13:39** “Everyone who believes is justified through him from everything that you could not be justified from through the law of Moses.” (See also Rm 3:28.)
- iv. The gift of the Holy Spirit: **Ephesians 1:13** “In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed.” (See also John 7:38-39.)
- v. Forgiveness of sins (rescue from God’s judgment). **Acts 10:43** “All the prophets testify about him that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.” (See also Jn 3:18; Jn 3:36; Jn 5:24.)
- vi. Reconciliation (Peace with God). **Romans 5:1** “Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (See also John 16:27.)
- vii. Regeneration (the new birth). **1 John 5:1** “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of him.”
- d. My family recently went to Silver Dollar City, a theme park in Branson, Missouri. They will not let you unless you have your ticket. Salvation requires a ticket as well. It is faith in Christ Jesus. All the blessings of salvation are only available to those with the ticket of faith.

III. WHAT FAITH IS NOT

a. Mere mental assent.

- i. Faith is not just believing that something is true.
- ii. Even the devil believes.
- iii. **James 2:19** “You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder.”

b. Mere strong belief.

- i. Strong belief, if not in the right object, is worthless.

- ii. No matter how strongly you believe that $2+2=3$, you will still be wrong.
- iii. Faith must have the right object.

IV. WHAT FAITH IS

- a. **Believe in Christ Jesus.** Believe that the Biblical teachings about Jesus are true.
 - i. What does the Bible teach about Jesus Christ?
 - 1. Jesus is the Christ. **1 John 5:1** “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of him.”
 - 2. Jesus died and rose from the grave. **Romans 10:9** “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”
 - 3. Jesus is Lord (both Master and God). **Romans 10:9** “If you confess [agree] with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”
 - 4. Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. **Romans 3:25** “God presented him as an atoning sacrifice in his blood, received through faith”
 - ii. Faith in Christ Jesus is faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. **Mark 1:15** “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”
 - 2. What is the gospel?
 - a. Creation: God created you for a friendship with Him.
 - b. Corruption: You are a sinner, and your sins have separated you from God.
 - c. Cross: God sent Christ to pay the penalty for your sins on the cross.
 - d. Choice: You can be saved from your sins and reconciled to God by believing in this good news.
 - iii. To be a believer in exercise is to believe that certain ideas about exercise are true. For example, that exercise is both beneficial

and essential to good health. To believe in Jesus, or have faith in Jesus, is to believe that the Biblical portrait of Jesus is true.

- iv. Belief in the Biblical teachings of Jesus is essential, but it is not enough. Even the devil believes.

b. **Rely upon Jesus Christ for salvation.** Rely upon Christ's work for you, rather than your work for Christ.

- i. This reliance involves two things:

- 1. Do not rely upon good works.

- a. **Galatians 3:10-11** "10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written, Everyone who does not do everything written in the book of the law is cursed. 11 Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous will live by faith." (See also Romans 4:5.)

- b. Why not rely upon good works?

- i. "Everyone who does not do everything written in the book of the law is cursed."

- ii. We cannot rely upon good works because we are not good enough.

- iii. Two ways to heaven:

- 1. The Law Plan: Keep God's law perfectly. We have already failed at this plan. See Rm 3:23.

- 2. The Faith Plan: Rely upon Christ's sacrifice for your sins.

- 2. Boast in Christ Jesus. Rely not on self, but on Christ for salvation.

- a. **Philippians 3:3** "For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh" (See also Ephesians 2:8-9.)

- ii. To rely on Jesus is to be poor in spirit.

- 1. **Matthew 5:3** "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."

2. Recognize your spiritual poverty. You are a sinner, undeserving of heaven, unable to save yourself. Your only hope is Christ.
- iii. To rely on Jesus is to deny yourself.
 1. **Luke 9:23** Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."
 2. What does it mean to deny yourself?
 - a. Deny self-righteousness. Admit your sinfulness and that you are undeserving of heaven.
 - b. **Thomas Watson** "We must deny our morality in point of justification. Morality is a good staff to walk with among men—but it is a bad ladder to climb up to heaven! We must deny our holy things, in point of justification."
- iv. Christianity is the difference between Do and Done. All other world religions are about Do – they focus on what you must Do to earn heaven. Christianity is about Done – the focus solely on what Christ has Done for us for salvation.
- v. **Thomas Watson** said "In saving faith there are two things – renunciation and recumbency:
 1. Renunciation. A man renounces all opinion of himself; and he is quite taken off from himself. He sees all his duties are but broken reeds; though he could weep a sea of tears; though he had all the grace of men and angels, it could not purchase his pardon.
 2. Recumbency [the state of leaning, resting, or reclining (Google)]. The soul gets hold of Christ as Adonijah did of the horns of the altar. [When Adonijah realized that his treason against David and Solomon were discovered, he ran to the temple and clung to the horns of the altar, thinking surely they would not put him to death there.]
- c. **Repent of your sins. Turn from a life self-rule to a life of God-rule.**
 - i. Faith and repentance go hand in hand. They are two sides of the same coin.

1. Sometimes repentance and faith are mentioned side by side. **Acts 20:21** "I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus."
 2. Sometimes only faith is mentioned. **Acts 16:31** They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."
 3. Sometimes only repentance is mentioned. **Acts 3:19** "Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out,"
- ii. Faith in Christ Jesus is not only trusting in Christ to save you from hell, but to lead you in life.
 - iii. Some people think that you can be saved without repentance. Listen to the words of the Puritan. **Thomas Watson** "Without repentance, no remission. It is not consistent with the holiness of God's nature to pardon a sinner while he is in the act of rebellion."
 - iv. Many people accept Jesus as Savior, but they reject Him as Lord. That is not saving faith. If you are not sorry for sin, and hate sin, then you cannot be saved from sin.
 - v. **John Piper** wrote, "Conversion, then, is repentance (turning from sin and unbelief) and faith (trusting in Christ alone for salvation). They are really two sides of the same coin. One side is tails -- turn tail on the fruits of unbelief. The other side is heads -- head straight for Jesus and trust His promises. You can't have the one without the other any more than you can face two ways at once or serve two masters. This means saving faith in Christ always involves a profound change of heart. It is not merely agreement with the truth of a doctrine. Satan agrees with true doctrine. Conversion is "repentant faith (or believing repentance)."
 - vi. Repentance is not merely turning from sin – doing wrong things. It is repenting of self-reliance. It is repenting of doing the right things for the wrong reasons. We must repent of sin and obey God, but not to earn our way to heaven. We must repent of the idea that it is possible to earn our way to heaven and

acknowledge that we can only be saved by the grace of God through faith in the Son of God.

- vii. Estranged friends cannot be reconciled unless the offending party repents. Salvation is the reconciliation of God and man, and it is impossible unless man first repents of offending God.

V. TEST YOUR FAITH

- a. **2 Corinthians 13:5** “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves.”

- b. If your faith is genuine, then the following fruits will be present in your life:

i. Knowledge of the gospel.

1. **Romans 1:16** “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.”
2. To be saved, one must believe the gospel. To believe the gospel, one must know the gospel.
3. **Thomas Watson** “There is no going to haven blindfold.”
4. **RC Sproul** wrote, “It is usual to analyze faith as involving three steps: knowledge, agreement, and trust. First is knowledge, or acquaintance with the content of the gospel; second is agreement, or recognition that the gospel is true; and third is trust, the essential step of committing the self to God. These steps go together in the sense that there can be Christian faith only when the gospel is known and truth is accepted.”
5. Do you know the gospel? Creation; corruption; cross; choice.

ii. Obedience.

1. **James 2:17** “In the same way faith, if it doesn’t have works, is dead by itself.”
2. What “works” prove that your faith is alive and not dead. Obedience.

3. **John 8:31** "Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples.'"
4. **1 John 2:3** "This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands."
5. A true believer is not perfect; nobody is:
 - a. Not perfection, but direction. You may be struggling, but you are trying to be obedient.
 - b. Not perfection, but progression. You are far from perfect, but you are becoming more and more obedient with each passing year.
 - c. Not perfection, but intention. There may be unknown sins in your life that you don't even yet recognize in yourself, but your intention is to be obedient with every bit of knowledge that God gives you.
6. **Thomas Watson** talks about how to tell if your obedience is evidence of salvation, since no Christian is perfect. He says that we cannot obey God perfectly, but if we are saved then we will obey God "evangelically."
 - a. When we mourn that we can do God's will no better; when we fail we weep. Mt 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."
 - b. When it is the desire of our soul to do God's whole will. Psalm 119:5 (ERV) "How I wish I could be more faithful in obeying your laws!"
 - i. "What a child of God lacks in strength, he makes up in desire."
 - c. When we endeavor as far as we are able, to do the whole will of God. Psalm 119:69 "I obey your precepts with all my heart."

iii. Love for others, especially believers.

1. **1 John 4:7** "Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."

- c. **Matthew 7:16-30** “16 You’ll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. 18 A good tree can’t produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So you’ll recognize them by their fruit.”
- i. You do not have to wonder whether or not you are saved. All you have to do is look at your fruit.
 - ii. Are you producing the fruit of salvation, or the fruit of sin?

VI. CONCLUSION

- a. **The HCSB Study Bible** says of saving faith, “This trusting faith is the “faith in His blood” (Rm 3:25) of which Paul spoke; faith that relies upon the death of Jesus Christ on the cross in the place of sinners. There Jesus bore the punishment of sinners upon Himself so that now God promises to treat as righteous those who believe in His name. Just as “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness” (Rm 4:3), so now all who repent of their sins, abandon hope of being made right with God on the basis of their own good works, and trust only in the mercy of God offered in the death of Jesus Christ in their place, will be saved.”
- b. There is nothing more important in life than putting your faith in Christ Jesus, and making sure that your faith in Christ Jesus is genuine. Your eternal destiny depends on it.
- c. If you are not sure if you have genuine faith in Christ Jesus, then make the choice right to believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior once and for all.