

**Soteriology**  
**Lesson 14**  
**The Prerequisite of Faith Part Two**

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Well, understand something: that faith can grow and develop. We were talking about the development of faith. The Bible says we can “grow in grace and knowledge” (2 Peter 1:2-3). We can “grow in faith” (2 Thessalonians). What are we talking about? Because we see the finality of believing the gospel and believing in Christ; it’s a moment, it’s a decision. But does faith grow? Yes, it certainly does. What do we mean? I think two things we mean: one, increasing knowledge. That’s where we get the words “to be persuaded” that often flow off of the issue of faith. You believe more because you know more. I definitely believe more today than I ever have believed. And you have increasing trust as well. I love that. It’s true. You know, when you start out you think you’re trusting God but there may be some things around the corner you’re going to really need to trust God for. You don’t even know what’s coming.

But in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 it says,

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

So your faith in the Word, interestingly, then has an affect on you and works in you.

1 Timothy 4:6 says,

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine whereunto thou hast attained.

We do get increasing trust and assurance and knowledge, and our faith is, in that sense, growing.

But one of the issues that the Greek language is dealing with, is the issue of dependency and maybe this will help you to see whether it is saving faith or not. The very Greek word *pisteuō*, or *pistis*, as a noun, demands an object. It has to have an object. For instance, if I had a chair up here and I asked if you believe in the chair, you'd say, "Yeah, I've seen them before. Yeah, I believe in the chair." You're not saved yet with *pisteuō* faith. The only time you're saved with *pisteuō* faith in relation to the chair is when you sit down in the chair. Which means you entrust yourself to the thing you say you believe in. You're depending now on the chair to hold you up. That's what *pisteuō* means. Depending upon the object in which you have faith.

So, let's just take a little brief look at that. You're certainly depending upon Christ Himself, right? Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Romans 10:17 it says, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." In the Greek text it's Christ in that text, the Word. The word, 'word' is the spoken word, the *rhema* of Christ. You are trusting what Jesus said. And that's so important.

And it's certainly trusting on the Word of God in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 that we just read. You are trusting the Word of God. You have received the Word of God and you believe it not as the word of men, but as it is truly the word of God. So, what are you depending on is the issue. Are you depending upon your parents who told you that you should do this; or your church because that's what they do; or the altar call, or the invitation or the church service, or whatever? Or are you depending upon Jesus Christ, the historical facts about Jesus Christ? "Whoever confesses that Jesus is Lord and believes in his heart that God raised Him from the dead, he will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Are you trusting in the word of God itself?

Now dependency is a key issue. What are you depending on? Are you depending on your ability to keep on believing? It's not in one sense your faith that saves you, is it? It's Jesus Christ who saves you. So faith is the channel or the means by which you reach the object that alone can save you. Your belief in Him doesn't save you. It's Him that saves you. It's technical. But you can see the difference sometimes. People say, "Boy I sure hope I can keep on believing this."

Well, it's not up to you to keep on believing. The Bible says, "He who has begun a good work in you, He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). You're to trust Him, not yourself or your ability to believe it.

Now that brings us to a very important issue, the display of faith. How do we see it? How do we know we have it? Turn to the book of James. You might want to write this text in on your notes. James 2:14. And here we have the key text dealing with true saving faith. And some people say this contradicts Paul, but it doesn't at all. James talks about the fruit of one's faith, whereas Paul is talking perhaps about the root of it. Paul's talking about cause and James is talking about effect.

In James 2:14 it says, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and hath not works, can faith save him?" Now in the Greek text, it's that faith. Watch out what you're saying. Does faith save you? Yes, if it's in the Lord Jesus Christ. But can you have a faith that doesn't have any demonstration of it, in other words it never shows? Does that kind of faith save you? The answer is, no! True saving faith always displays itself and we're going to see how it does in just a moment.

15 If a brother or sister be naked, destitute of daily food,  
16 And one of you say unto them Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;  
notwithstanding you give them not those things that are needful for the body;  
what doth it profit? [I mean, it's no good for them. What does it do for them?]  
17 Even so, faith if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

In other words, when we talk saving faith, we're talking about a faith that will in fact display itself as being genuine.

18 If a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.

19 Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain [empty] man, that faith without works is dead? [It's not real at all.]

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar?

Now, how could he do that if he didn't believe that God could raise him from the dead? When God told him, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12). But the demonstration that he really believed what God said to him was his willingness to kill his son.

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? [or came to the end; that is, it completed itself]

23 The scripture was fulfilled which sayeth, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed [or counted to him] for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 You see then how that by works a man is justified, not by faith only.

25 Likewise was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and sent them out another way? (James 2:22-25)

She had to believe their report that they truly were directed by the Lord God of Israel to destroy Jericho. And you've got to get out here and so forth. She had to believe it. Well, she showed she believed it by helping them escape.

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Now this causes tremendous confusion among people, but it shouldn't. Let's just ask ourselves, real saving faith, how does it display itself? How do you know it's there? One, there will be confession, not doubt, not denial. There will be confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, there will be no doubt about it. Anyone who does not believe that Jesus is God in human flesh is not saved, even if they ask Jesus to come in their heart. And 1 John says so. In fact, it calls him the spirit of antichrist (1 John 2:22). Even if they claim to be a Christian, if they transgress in this doctrine, they have not God. They don't belong to the Lord. That's pretty strong!

So one of the quickest ways to demonstrate true, saving faith is the person doesn't have any hesitancy confessing that Jesus Christ is God, in human flesh. My trust is in him. I don't hesitate in declaring Him to be Lord of all.

Number two, is obedience. I'm not saying you don't have a struggle with it. I'm not saying you don't disobey. I'm saying that one of the ways true saving faith displays itself is there's a desire to obey God (1 John 2:3).

You know, my problem isn't with my desire to obey God. My problem is with my flesh, my desire to obey sin and they struggle with one another. That's why I need to walk in the Spirit. But in Romans 1:5, just in the opening greetings there, Paul made this statement: "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name." When you actually believe in the Lord, are you obeying what the Bible says to do? Yes! In the very act, you are expressing obedience to the Lord.

In Romans 16:26, right at the end of the book it says, "But now is made manifest and by the Scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." What he's talking about is that faith will obey what God says we are to do, to believe the gospel. If you really have saving faith, then you obey what the

Bible says you are to do. "Call on the name of the Lord, you'll be saved" (Acts 2:21). "Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord" (Romans 10:9). So there's an immediate obedience.

Now are there works? Yes, there certainly are. We just read that in James 2, but in Galatians 5:6, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by [what?] love." In 1 John 4:7-8, class, the Bible says that if you're habit of life is to hate people, you're not a Christian not matter what you say. Why? Because when you truly believe, the Spirit of God comes in you and His fruit is love. But when your whole lifestyle is characterized by anger, hatred, you are not saved. You see, true saving faith displays itself with love. And I like what some people say. It differs with the individual. Somebody who is abused and beaten up in their home and has deep anger, when they come to know the Lord, the love may be a degree. But they now don't hate like they once did. But somebody who never had that might find it easier to love someone until they cross them. And then when somebody crosses you the wrong way, now you're under pressure and a test to love them no matter what.

One of the evidences whether you're in the faith or not is certainly works. You "care about people," is a good summary of it. Because that's what the illustrations were in James, and that's what it means in Galatians; it works by love. When you just absolutely care nothing for anybody, maybe it would be best if you check into whether you're in the faith or not. Because saving faith, you get the heart of the Lord in you, and the work of the Holy Spirit and you care about people. You may be disobedient in terms of not doing anything, but you do care. It's hard for you not to. In your old sin nature, you don't care. But your new nature in the Lord, you do care and you have that war going on inside.

I was listening to a talk show host, tearing into Christianity. I mean, I hated everything he said. But I found myself praying for the guy that he'd come to know the Lord, loving the guy. Wondering what made him like this? Wishing I could talk to him. And so in my heart, right there,

is a demonstration that there's something different about me. So there's a faith that displays itself that gives me a care and a concern.

I'm talking to this group of Moslems, I really cared for them. I wound up crying. The guy said, "What are you crying about?" It was like a little put down.

I said, "I was just hoping and praying that you guys wouldn't go to hell." And actually it just kind of ended the discussion. There was no answer any more that they had. But you know we all want to run away from this. But it's clear in the Bible, is it not? If you really have saving faith, it's going to display itself. There's going to be a concern, a care for people. You just can't live without it and call yourself Christian.

Maturity. In 2 Peter 1, this is kind of an interesting passage. If you have really come to know the Lord, you're growing, you're maturing in Christ. In 2 Peter 1:5 -7, it says:

5 And beside all this, [having these precious promises that gave us our salvation] giving all diligence, add to your faith [You need the faith to become a Christian; now you add] virtue; [morality, purity] to virtue knowledge  
6 And to knowledge temperance; [or self control] and to self control patience; and to patience godliness;  
7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [or love].

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He talks in verse 10 about "making your calling and election sure." You see, those things don't save us, in one sense. But in the other sense, they are the display of the true faith that we say that we have in the Lord. And even victory over the world, 1 John 5:4 says, "He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, his faith has overcome the world."



If the world and all that it offers dominates your life, I mean, it's totally dominating you; there's no war inside, you're not miserable, you love it, the world is where you're at, you're giving evidence that you're not a believer. I know we struggle with these things, but we need to be careful of what we're saying. If the world is controlling you totally— that's where your heart is, where your life is. That's what you want. You're not convicted, yet there's where you think, sleep, eat, so forth; you're giving evidence of an unbelieving heart. If you're miserable, then maybe you are a believer because the Holy Spirit's working on you. But if you can do this so easily, you're giving evidence you're not a believer. See these things are hard, but these are the display of faith.

Joy. Sometimes I look at Christians; they have no joy in the Lord at all! They look mean! We were hanging around the mall and I said to the pastor, "Find me one person that's smiling." He started looking at people. He said, "Boy that's unbelievable isn't it?" Not one. Even among the kids!

But 1 Peter 1:8 says, "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." I've never seen Him, but boy you talk about my Savior and His coming again and I get real happy! I mean, that gives me joy, man. You know it brings you a little peace in your life. And understanding, we're right back where we started. In Hebrews 11:1-3 says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God."

This gal came up to me at church, she was just blown away about evolution. She said, "I resent the fact that it looks like all Christians have to believe in creation by God."

And I said, "Well, there is a slight problem. The first verse of the Bible says, "In the beginning God created it. So we're kind of stuck with that."

She said, "That doesn't mean He created."

"I beg your pardon?" I said, "Are you Christian?"

“Of course I am! What do you mean? You think just because you have to believe in creation....”

I said, “Excuse me, I don’t want to fight over whether they are long days or short days, but what you just said is something different. I said, do you believe that everything that we see was created by God?”

“I can’t say that. Maybe He created the process of evolution.”

And the longer we talked there was no fellowship of light. This woman was lost and I knew it. So I wound up, and I hope you’ll understand this, but I wound up saying to her, “In my opinion, no one could be a true Christian, on the basis of Hebrews 11:3, and not believe that the world was created by God. That possibility simply doesn’t exist in the Bible.”

“Are you saying I’m not a Christian?”

“If that’s truly your belief, I guess I’d have to conclude that.” She stomped off. It’s like everybody wants to be anything they want to be and then also say, “Oh yeah, I accept Jesus. Oh yeah, I’m a Christian.”

This guy came up to me and told me he was a Christian this week. He came right into my office. He’s a drug addict, an alcoholic; he doesn’t go to church, he doesn’t read his Bible, he doesn’t pray; but he’s a Christian. I said, “What evidence do you have in your life that you’re really a Christian?”

“Hey, are you questioning me?”

I said, “Yeah.”

I don’t know if you understand what’s happening. I’m trying to use as many illustrations as I can, but I could spend an hour with the illustrations and try to wake up our culture to the fact that we’ve got a problem in life. People can say the words, folks. They can act, they can make out like they’re Christian. “Well, isn’t everybody?” “He’s really a Christian; I know he hates God right now, but he just really...”

He hates God, but he's really a Christian? Do you understand that there is a toleration of anybody who just says they are a Christian; we just throw them all in the same camp. See, that's what happened to Europe. And that's what's happening to the United States. Like Dr. Francis Shaeffer said, it was a post-Christian era. Everybody got mad at him. He was kind of a quiet, philosophical thinker from L'Abri in Switzerland and he kept saying that America was in a post-Christian era, when people love themselves more than God. And it is getting in the way of the true gospel. People want to get their act together.

This lady told me just yesterday that she wanted me to talk to a friend of her husband. She said, "He's an alcoholic. Please help him to stop drinking."

I said, "Is he saved?"

"Well, I don't know, but he's a drunk, so we need to get him to stop drinking."

I said, "If I get him to stop drinking and he goes to hell, what have we done?"

"Well, you're not going to tell him that are you?"

I said, "Ma'am you'd better get someone else to counsel him because I'm going to tell him the truth about heaven and hell and his need of a Savior."

"Well what about his drinking?"

"I think we can handle that after he gets saved."

"Well, we'll probably have to get somebody else."

"Well, fine."

I run into this everyday. So what I'm trying to tell you is that out of a lot of the things that I see, it's not just a momentary thing. We have a culture that has fast moved away from the true gospel. And I want you to be saved. I really do. I want you to be saved. And I hope every one of you are. I assume a lot in the class, but I don't know whether you are or not. And I don't want you to go to hell. I've read about it. I mean, can you imagine suffering forever and ever—tormented day and night, where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth, outer darkness, lost forever! I don't want anybody to go to hell. I'm working hard to keep people out of that place.

And I went on the radio in New York, I had a direct call in. A guy said, “Why don’t you get the hell out of New York.?” That’s what he said to me—a lot of hostility there.

So, I answered him. I said, “You know, I appreciate that. That’s exactly what I’m trying to do. I’m trying to get the hell out of New York.” The guy, he cracked up laughing on the other end. And he listened to me present the gospel to him.

My point is that folks, this is a serious issue. We’re not messing around here. And I want you to be saved and I don’t want you to mess around either. If you haven’t really settled this in your heart, maybe you just kind of cruised into Christianity from a Christian home or Christian church or whatever. You’re not real sure. Wouldn’t it be great to be sure right now? Wouldn’t it be a wonderful time?

Let’s bow our heads in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for Your wonderful love to us. You tell us, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life,” to live forever with You; have all of our sin forgiven, have a new heart, be a new creation in Christ, born of the Spirit of God. It’s so wonderful and it’s so easy to doubt it because it’s invisible. We can’t see it. One day we will see. Lord, You know us so well. We can easily say the words and we can keep up the front where other people around us really think that we’re part of the in group here. But Lord, You know those among us that maybe do not have that real assurance in our heart. Something’s wrong and we know it. And we’re embarrassed now. Oh God, thank You that You love us like You do. Thank You that there is an open door into Your heart made possible by the work of the Lord Jesus. And we have access into Your presence. We can come now and call on the name of the Lord. We can pour out our hearts to you and say, God, I know I’ve said a lot of things, done a

lot of things that have not pleased You. And I know my heart has often been elsewhere besides You. And though I might have told people I came to know You, I'm just asking You now Lord, the best way I know how to come into my heart, my life. I commit my life, my future to You. You are the only One that can save me from sin, death and hell. The only One who can forgive my sin. The only One who can make me brand new and give me eternal life. I receive You now, Lord. I trust You. I believe You. You are the Lord of my life. Thank You for loving me and saving me. And it's in Jesus name that we pray.

And all God's people said, "Amen."