**The Cross & Faith** #5 in Series: At the Cross

Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:8-11; John 16:25-33 Psalm 126 4.7.19

Text: Romans 1:17 “*For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

Summary: The Bible teaches that faith is the key to everything for the Christian. By faith we come to Christ. By faith we live our Christian lives with joy and gladness.

REVIEW: Let’s review the four messages preached so far in our series “At the Cross.” We learned that at the cross there is FORGIVENESS, that at the cross is where we can become FRUITFUL for Jesus, that at the cross our FLESH, our old sin nature is crucified, and that at the cross we find FRIENDSHIP with God. These are all wonderful life-changing things that happen at the cross. But the final question is this, HOW do we acquire, how do we apprehend these blessings and make them a part of our life? The answer is in today’s message, The Cross and FAITH. But before we go there lets differentiate faith from… . .Gullible.

It never ceases to amaze me just how gullible people are. When P. T. Barnum said, "There’s a sucker born every minute," he was right. It seems that there is no limit to what we will believe.

Listen to some of the titles that have appeared in the tabloids found in grocery store checkout lines: Cow Mattresses Help Cows Produce More Milk ☺ Mom On Diet Of Only Chicken, Lays Huge Egg ☺ World War II Bomber Found On The Moon ☺ Woman Gives Birth To Two-Year-Old Baby: Child Walks And Talks In Three Days ☺ Adam And Eve’s Bones Found In Asia: Eve Was A Space Alien. ☺ My favorite of all was a tabloid in Manila, yes even in the Philippines there were tabloids, it read “Woman in Pangasinan Province Gives Birth to a Mudfish.” ☺

The sad thing is that many people believe this nonsense. Being gullible is certainly a word that can be used to describe many people. But gullible has also been used to describe Christians. Some people who consider themselves to be logical or rational, believe that Christians are gullible for their faith in God. They don’t believe in miracles or healings outside of medicine/science.

We believe in miracles and in an unseen God and to them that is evidence of our being gullible. My friends, there is nothing “gullible” about believing in the Lord. He has created all things and set in place all the laws of the universe. If He desires to work outside of those laws it is His choice.

The Bible teaches that faith is the key to everything for the Christian. Let us consider three statements about faith being the key: **1)** **By faith we come to Christ. 2) By faith we live our Christian lives with joy and gladness. 3) Without faith it is impossible to please God.** (Heb. 11:6)

**I. By Faith We Come to Christ.**

A famous Baptist evangelist once told the story of an elderly lady who was very upset by all of her real and imaginary troubles. Out of frustration her family told her, "Grandma, we’ve done all we can do for you. You’ll just have to trust God for the rest." A look of despair spread over her face as she replied, "Oh, dear, has it come to that?"

Dear friends, it always comes to that, so we might as well begin with that! Let’s begin with FAITH and see just what the Scripture has to say as it relates to our salvation and how we live our lives.

The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 1:17 “*For in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed.”*

This shows us that Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary is the center point of our FAITH.

When Paul writes that in the Gospel the righteousness from God is revealed, he is really speaking of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus Christ is the message of the Gospel. The Gospel centers in the person of Christ. It is all about His sinless life, the atonement of our sins at the cross, and the supernatural resurrection that proves His victory over sin, death and the devil. He is THE CENTER of the Gospel, so He is the CENTER OF OUR FAITH.

God’s righteousness is revealed to us in two very obvious ways.

1. Christ is righteousness – there is none other.

2. Christ imparts His righteousness to us – we have been cleansed from our sins.

This is the function and purpose of preaching the Gospel. This is why Paul emphasizes "*Christ and Him crucified*" in his preaching of the Gospel. This is one reason why we celebrate the Lord’s Table together to remember the righteous One who was crucified in our place. This truth is the basis for our salvation. The Gospel is an explanation of why and how we can be saved.

We can only be saved because of what God has done. The Bible teaches that we are all sinners for two reasons:

1. By nature – we were born into sin

2. By choice – we ignore, deny and/or reject God’s plan of salvation

The fact is we are totally UNABLE to save ourselves.

The Good News is this. Salvation has been made possible for us through God’s Son, Jesus Christ. We must first understand the message of the Gospel, so we will know how we can be saved, that it is BY FAITH THAT WE COME TO CHRIST.

**II. By Faith We Live Our Christian Lives With Joy And Gladness.**

*“. . . a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written:* *"The righteous will live by faith."* (Romans 1:17b)

The way that the righteousness of God is given to us is ONLY through FAITH. You see, that is why it is called Good News. If all we understand that Christ is righteous and we are not, that is not Good News. The Bad News is when we DON’T have faith in this truth.

The righteousness of God is offered to us ONLY if we exercise our faith to receive it. In fact, we are told that this righteousness comes to us by faith from FIRST TO LAST.

Faith is –

1. How we receive the righteousness of Christ.

2. How we walk in that righteousness.

Many of us have had faith to receive His righteousness. Aren’t you blessed of God for that?

But what is true biblical faith after we have received His righteousness? Is faith something we do?

No, on the contrary, true biblical faith is never a work we perform because we are somehow good and worthy. True Biblical faith means rejecting all of our works and TRUSTING COMPLETELY in Christ for everything.

True biblical faith is casting oneself wholly on the Lord Jesus Christ as your ONLY hope for salvation. Faith is TRUSTING in what Jesus did on the Cross is all you need.

ILLUS: There once was a man, named John Paton, who was translating the Bible for a South Seas island tribe. John Paton discovered that the natives had no word for TRUST or FAITH. One day a native who had been working hard came into the missionary’s house, flopped himself into a large comfortable chair and said, "It’s good to rest my whole weight on this chair."

This became a revelation to Paton. "That’s it," he said. "I’ll translate faith as ’resting one’s whole weight on God.’"

When we believe in God the way the Bible tells us to, we are indeed resting our whole weight on Him.

It is by faith that we have the righteousness of Christ IMPUTED or IMPARTED to us. But it is also by faith that we live our lives EVERY DAY. We must not only trust in Christ for our salvation, we must also trust Christ with our lives.

In our text, Paul quotes from the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk when he says, *"The righteous (just) will live by faith."* (Habakkuk 2:4). We also find this quotation here in Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38. It is one of the greatest statements of all of the scriptures.

Faith is the only way we can live. By faith our lives can be filled with peace and joy and gladness because we know that we are right with God.

**III. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6)**

Our scripture text for today was used by God to change the life of Martin Luther, and bring a spiritual revolution to Christianity. Martin Luther was a devout monk living in Germany.

He, like a lot of Christians in his time, had been trying to earn his salvation by doing good works for God. And anyone of us can relate to this story, in that, Martin Luther became very frustrated.

He wrote these words to himself, "But what works? What works can come from a heart like mine? How can I stand before the holiness of my judge with works polluted in their very source?"

These words may seem strange and ancient to us. But simply put, Martin Luther was having a very hard time being a Christian and was very discouraged with his relationship with God. Martin Luther began to study the Book of Romans.

He came across this passage of Scripture: "*The righteous will live by faith."* And God began to use it to speak to his heart.

On another day, Martin Luther was in the Church of St. John Lateran in Rome where there was a set of medieval stone stairs, which supposedly were the stairs leading up to Pilate’s house in Jerusalem.

Apparently, these were supposed to be the stairs upon which Jesus walked. They are called the Scala Sancta or "Holy Stairs." Many pilgrims to Rome would ascend these steps on their knees, pausing to pray at various intervals where there were stains said to have come from the bleeding wounds of Jesus.

It was there that God brought these words of Scripture to Luther’s mind: *"The just shall live by faith."* Luther saw clearly his superstition and shuddered at it. He realized that he could never save himself by good works. But he could be saved by the righteousness of Christ, received by FAITH.

He descended those stairs a new man. And, of course, he became the man God used for the greatest reformation that the church has ever known. In fact, it is known historically as "The Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century" or endearingly to Lutherans as “The Lutheran Reformation.”

Faith is not just something by which we enter into a right relationship with God, faith is also what we live with every single day. It is not that we come to Christ by faith and then we live by good works.

Remember, it is "*from faith to faith*." “…*by faith from first to last*…” (NIV) In other words, it is from faith to faith to faith to faith, and so on. Faith becomes a way of life for us. Faith is the principle of life for the believer.

QUESTIONS: Do you believe? Do you truly trust Christ? Have you experienced, in the Spirit, that Christ is your Savior? Does your heart call out to Him in childlike trust?

If you do not know Jesus, cast yourself on Him as your only hope of salvation. And, if you have trusted Christ and you have been touched by the power of the Holy Spirit - then it is time to set aside your own strength for living. Trust Him daily. Christ is all you need.

FINAL STORY: Missionary, David Brainerd talks about how this was proven in the mission field God sent him to: "I never got away from the teaching of Jesus and Him crucified. When my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christ and Him crucified, I had no need to give them instructions about morality."

In another place he wrote "I find my Indians have begun to put on the garments of holiness and their common life begins to be sanctified even in small matters when they are possessed by the doctrine of Christ and him crucified."

**PRAYER:** Almighty God, we thank You for the cross of Christ, crucified, dead, buried and risen to life again, so that we are blessed to receive His righteousness by faith alone. In the name of Jesus. Amen.