

Intro:

We have been glorying in the great transition from the doctrine of sin to the doctrine of justification in Rm 3.21ff. This is one of the most dramatic passages in the Bible.

We are not going to move forward in our exposition of the passage at all today. Instead, I want to concentrate on one phrase in verse 22 and give you a topical message entitled:

What does it mean to Believe?

I have given it this subtitle:

from Christ's resurrection to your resurrection

Last week we emphasized the 'without law' quality of the righteousness from God. This is the real glory of justification by faith.

- It means we have an acceptance with God based on the work of someone else.
- It means we cannot perform any deed to make us worthy of this righteousness: we are completely *unworthy* of it.
- It means we have no authority to require any deed of anyone in order to make them accepted by God (*this is the error of Galatianism, something we are preaching about in the afternoon – be sure you don't miss these afternoon sessions, you truly need to understand what we are preaching about there.*)

But... does a 'without-law kind of righteousness' mean we simply need to 'have faith' and we're good to go, we can live however we want?

- Paul's opponents (probably Jews) had indeed made this charge of him, see Rm 3.8 and 5.20-6.2

What does 'believing' look like and how can we tell if we have it or not?

I saw an article in the paper this week that reported on a recent Ipsos-Reid poll. The headline had one of those amazing grasps of the obvious that we often see in the papers: "**Canadians divided over creation and evolution theories**"¹

There are many interesting things in this article, but for this message, these paragraphs stood out:

Also hinging on whether or not Christians read the Bible literally or metaphorically is the idea of Jesus as the Son of God.

¹ Canada.com, http://www.canada.com/story_print.html?id=1485662&sponsor=, (accessed 4.11.09)

Fifty-two per cent of Canadians — including 70 per cent who believe in God — think that He was ‘the actual Son of God who was crucified and then rose from the dead after being buried and then ascended into heaven.’ A quarter of Canadians, including 15 per cent of believers, think Jesus was ‘a Jewish preacher or prophet ... who was crucified and was buried but did not rise from the dead and was not the Son of God.’²

So what do you think? Do you think that 52% of Canadians are Christians?

After all, according to this poll, 52% of Canadians think that Jesus was ‘the actual Son of God who was crucified and then rose from the dead after being buried and then ascended into heaven.’

So I ask you again, *What does it mean to Believe?* What does it mean to believe so that you actually obtain the ‘without-law righteousness of God’?

Read Rm 3.19-22a

Proposition: Saving faith occurs when certain truths are personally embraced and is seen by those truths producing specific spiritual fruit in the life.

I. The truth that must be embraced

- A. We will have *some* exposition in this message: look at the phrase ‘by faith of Jesus Christ’
 1. Dismissing an errant notion: ‘subjective genitive’ – some are now teaching that this means ‘the faithfulness of Christ’, *i.e.*, Christ’s faithful work produces the without-law righteousness
 - a. It is true that Christ’s work does produce or make available this righteousness
 - b. It is *not* true that our verse is talking about that – the ‘unto all who believe’ phrase makes that emphatically clear
 2. The phrase is an ‘objective genitive’, *i.e.*, it describes the *object of saving faith* – Jesus Christ

Well, if that is true, does that make 52% of Canadians real born again Christians?

Let’s look at what the Bible describes as ‘the gospel’

² *Ibid.*

B. The content of the gospel outlined by the apostle Paul

1. The essentials contained in 1 Cor 15.3ff.

- a. Christ died *for our sins* – note the critically important qualifying phrase
- b. Christ was buried – he was really dead
- c. Christ was raised the third day (we will come back to this)
- d. Christ was seen

2. The additional components mentioned elsewhere

a. 2 Tim 2.8

- 1) Christ is of the seed of David – connected with the OT promises
- 2) Christ was raised from the dead (we will come back to this)

b. Rm 16.25 – gospel is able to *establish you* (we will come back to this also)

c. Rm 2.12, 16 – gospel includes Christ's return for judgement

3. Outline basic necessities for saving faith

a. I am a sinner who needs to be saved and cannot save myself – I am under judgement and I deserve judgement

b. Jesus Christ died for my sins

- 1) Not just that he died
- 2) But that he died to pay the penalty of my sins
- 3) God laid on him the punishment of my sins

c. I am able to be established (have without-law righteousness) by believing the gospel that Jesus died for my sins

d. The resurrection makes all the difference:

- 1) It confirms the truth of what I believe
- 2) It empowers the life that I now live

C. The critical importance of Christ's resurrection seen by comparing resurrections

We are going to look at the resurrections mentioned in the gospels, not exactly in chronological order...

1. The raising of Jairus daughter (Lk 8.40-56)
 - a. Note v. 42
 - b. Note v. 49
 - c. Note v. 54-55

How long was she dead? Just a few minutes
How was she raised? Christ raised her by his power

2. The raising of the Widow of Nain's son (Lk 7.11-17)
 - a. Note v. 12
 - b. Note vv. 14-15

How long was he dead? A few hours, probably (Jews usually buried same day)
How was he raised? Christ raised him by his power

3. The raising of Lazarus (Jn 11.1-45)
 - a. Note v. 39
 - b. Note vv. 43-44

How long was he dead? Four days
How was he raised? Christ raised him by his power

4. The raising of Christ (Jn 19-20)
 - a. Note 19.30
 - b. Note 20.1, 7-8
 - c. Note Jn 10.17-18

John 10:17-18 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

How long was Jesus dead? Three days

How was *he* raised? By the authority and the power invested in Himself by the Father and energized by the Spirit: he raised himself

This fact gives power and truth to everything else we preach about Jesus Christ:

- He did die for our sins
- He was buried, and was raised to give us new life
- He is coming in judgement, but by believing in him, we escape because we have 'without-law righteousness' obtained by him and through faith in him

II. Records of truth embraced

A. The converts of the day of Pentecost (Ac 2)

1. The specific application of the gospel (2.22-24)
 - a. Jesus authority and power attested by God through mighty deeds (22)
 - b. Jesus death — at their hands (23)
 - c. Jesus resurrection by the power of God (24)
2. The evident conviction of the gospel (2.37-39)
 - a. Guilty! What shall we do? (37)
 - b. Repent and be baptized into Christ (38)
 - 1) Repent: turn away from your sin
 - 2) Be baptized into Christ: embrace all that he is and make him Lord and God of your life
 - c. The promise is to all who believe (39)
3. Their evident conversion by the gospel (2.41-42)
 - a. Affirmative response: believe and be baptized (41)

b. Devoted response (immediate holiness) (42)

Holiness: root idea – separation (separated from world; separated unto God)

- 1) Devoting themselves to the apostles teaching
- 2) Devoting themselves to Christian fellowship
- 3) Devoting themselves to the breaking of bread [probably communion – remembering death of Christ]
- 4) Devoting themselves to prayer

All of these activities are ‘Spirit-filled’ activities flowing from the new faith in Christ.

Do you love to hear the preaching of the Word? Are you devoted to it?

Do you love to be around Christians more than anyone else? Are you devoted to it?

Do you love to break bread and pray? Are you devoted to it?

B. The dramatic conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Ac 7, 9)

1. Saul’s antagonistic character

- a. Supervising the death of Stephen (7.54-60)
- b. Pursuing Christians wherever he might find them (9.1-2)

2. The gospel preached to Saul (9.5)

- a. I am Jesus
- b. You are persecuting me
- c. Go to Antioch and do what you are told

Accusation of sin; preaching of Jesus; proclamation of the resurrection

3. The evident conversion of Saul (9.18-22)

- a. Preaching Christ (20)
- b. 180° turn around: preaching what he persecuted (21)
- c. Increasing in strength in Christ (22)

Have you turned around from your former way of life?

Are you increasing in strength in your inner man in your knowledge of the truth of God and your power to live it and proclaim it?

- C. The conversion of the Gentile jailer (Ac 16)
1. The daily ministry and demonic opposition (16.16-18a)
 2. The awareness of the slave-girl's owners (16.20-21)
 3. The fearful question of the jailer (16.29)
 - a. He has some knowledge of their preaching
 - b. He has personally decided to put them in stocks after the beating by the town authorities (16.23-24)
 4. The gospel preached to the jailer (16.31-32)
 5. The evident conversion to immediate holiness (16.33-34)
 - a. Immediately removed them from prison
 - b. Immediately cared for their wounds
 - c. Immediately was baptized
 - d. Immediately provided food for them

This is my point: Saving faith means wholeheartedly embracing the truth with the result of being embraced by the truth so that your whole life changes.

Conclusion:

Proposition: Saving faith occurs when certain truths are personally embraced and is seen by those truths producing specific spiritual fruit in the life.

What does it mean to Believe?

from Christ's resurrection to your resurrection

You were dead in you sins.

Jesus died for your sins.

Jesus rose to give you life.

You are alive in Him.

What does it mean to believe?

It means your whole life will change by the power of God, not the strength of your own self-will or self-discipline.

It means you will love and live for the things of God.

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