



The Life of Jesus (129)

The Crucifixion of Jesus
(7)

The Seven Last Words of
Jesus on the Cross (3)



Matthew 7:21

#1 True Faith

The doctrine of justification by faith alone doesn't necessarily diminish the importance of works.

The case of the criminal beside Jesus who was saved just before he died is a classic example of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith.

But the case of the criminal's salvation is very rare. It can't be applied to most Christians because no one knows exactly when they are going to die.

Therefore, **the doctrine of salvation by faith needs to be balanced with what it means to have true faith.**

When we believe in Jesus, it means that we accept everything that is written about Him in the Bible as the truth, such as who He was, what He taught, and what He did.

#2 True Faith

It also means that we accept Him not only as our Savior but also our Lord. For us to believe in Jesus means that the master of our lives changes.

Before we believed in Jesus, we lived as if we were the masters of our lives without realizing that we were deceived by the devil and that he was the real master of our lives.

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” (Heb 2:14–15)

That's why **we can't separate Jesus as our Savior from Jesus as our Lord**. If we accept Him as our Savior, we must also acknowledge that He is the Lord of our lives.

Believing in Jesus only as our Savior and not as our Lord is not half-hearted faith. It is false faith. And we cannot be saved by false faith.

#3 Faith and Works

This is where the relationship between faith and works is revealed.

When we believe in the Lord, it means that we make Him the Lord of our lives. It also means that we live our lives according to His will and in obedience to His word. So, **the evidence of true faith must be manifested in what we think, say, and do in our daily lives.**

Jesus said, “Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, **by their fruit you will recognize them.**” (Mt 7:17–20)

Here, fruit basically refers to one’s way of life—how we speak, act, spend our time and money, relate to others, and so on. These tell us what we really follow and belong to—the ways of the world or God’s will. That’s what really tells us if we have true faith in Jesus.

#4 Faith and Works

Going to church on Sunday or professing our faith publicly doesn't really guarantee that we are true Christians.

Just going to church once a week is not enough. Saying, 'I believe in Jesus' is not enough.

“If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, **we lie and do not live out the truth.**” (1Jn 1:6)

Beware that it's possible to profess faith in Jesus and still walk in darkness. If this happens, John clearly says that the claim is a lie.

When what we say doesn't line up with what we actually do, the Bible tells us that the genuineness of our faith is revealed in our actions more than our words.

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How do we know that Jesus dwells in our hearts? By how much our lives have been transformed to conform to His image. **The most powerful evidence of our faith must be tested and proven by how much we've become more like Jesus in every area of our lives.**

#6 Faith and Works

Jesus' words to the criminal next to Him, "today you will be with me in paradise," (Lk 23:43) must be balanced with what He taught, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Mt 7:21)

The two passages seem to contradict each other, but they don't. The first verse emphasizes the absolute role of faith in salvation.

The second verse must be properly interpreted in light of the first verse. What Jesus is saying in the second verse is not that works are important conditions for entering the kingdom of God. He is simply describing what true, saving faith is.

Our faith must be proven to be true by our obedience to our Father's will, not just by our words. And only those who have this kind of faith can enter the kingdom of God, not because they have done good works, but because they have true faith in God.

#7 Faith and Works

James puts it this way. “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead... [Abraham’s] faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (Jms 2:17, 22, 25)

It sounds like James is saying that actions are a condition for salvation. But that’s not what he’s saying here. James isn’t suggesting that action must be ‘added’ to faith in order for us to be saved.

Rather, he is clarifying what it really means to have faith. Faith that is not accompanied by action is dead. And, we can’t have assurance of our salvation with such ‘dead faith.’

So we must not allow our salvation to be based on a ‘dead’ faith. Rather, we should continue to test whether we have true faith in Jesus until we finally enter the kingdom of God.

#8 Faith and Works

The apostle Paul said in 2 Co 13:5, “**Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.** Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Co 13:5)

The most important factor in testing our faith is whether we have Christ in us. And we can know this by seeing how much we see Jesus in ourselves.

The definition of faith should be found in the Bible. We shouldn't base our salvation on what we think the definition of faith is. In order to have true faith, **we must first carefully examine what the Bible says about faith,** and then check if our current faith aligns with the biblical definition of faith.

Memory Verses

“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit... Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” (Mt 7:17-20) (1)

“If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.” (1Jn 1:6) (1)

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (Jn 15:5) (1)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” (Mt 7:21) (1)

“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (Jms 2:17, 25) (1)

Reflection Questions

1. What do you think true faith is? How is it different from false faith? List some characteristics of true faith and false faith.

2. Do you believe in Jesus? If so, what kind of faith do you have? How has it affected and changed your life since you first believed in Him?