

The Anatomy of Faith

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[0 : 00] The book of Romans, and this morning we'll be looking at the first chapter of Romans, verses 1-17.

Paul, a bondservant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.

Which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures. Concerning his Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.

Who was declared the Son of God, with power by the resurrection from the dead. According to the Spirit of Holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith. Among all the Gentiles, for his name's sake.

[1 : 23] Among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ. To all who are beloved of God in Rome.

Called as saints. Grace to you. Grace to you. And peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all.

Because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of his Son.

Is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you. Always in my prayers making request.

If perhaps now at last, by the will of God, I may succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you.

[2 : 38] That you may be established. That is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you.

Each of us by the others faith. Both yours and mine. I do not want you to be unaware, brethren.

That often I have planned to come to you. And have been prevented so far. So that I may obtain some fruit among you also.

Even as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians.

Both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

[3 : 40] For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

To the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.

As it is written. But the righteous man shall live by faith. The Apostle Paul is actually quoting from Habakkuk.

When he says the righteous man or the man who is righteous will live by faith. And it is that very expression that so penetrated the heart and mind of Martin Luther.

That it resulted in his conversion. And his conversion was, of course, from unbelief to belief. But one might ask, on the surface at least, how can that be?

[4 : 50] How can the man be converted from unbelief to belief when all along he was an Augustinian monk in the Roman Catholic Church? And a monk was one who had dedicated his life to God and his talents to God's service.

And had taken vows of poverty and chastity and all the rest. How much more dedicated can a man be? And yet, Martin Luther knew that in and of himself, he did not stand in good stead before God.

And he agonized over that. He never could get release from his sin. He never could get any comfort or any solace that he had a right standing with God.

Many people would say, well, he just had a psychological problem or an emotional problem and he should have dealt with it. Well, he was trying to deal with it. And finally, he did deal with it when he came to grips with the reality of what it really meant to exercise faith.

And that was in the 1500s. Many today are still as perplexed about this subject of faith as was Martin Luther.

[6 : 05] So, when he came to faith, genuine faith, he of course became so excited about it, he was intent on sharing it with the whole of the Roman Catholic Church.

Unfortunately, the hierarchy of the church wasn't that interested. They were concerned that this man was an aberrant, that he was a theological pest, that he was a heretic.

And eventually, they excommunicated him from the church. And one of the great reasons behind this, and one of the things that needs to be taken into consideration, is that the Roman Catholic Church, as does some Protestant churches, considers salvation to be sacramental and institutional rather than personal.

And the idea behind that is that God's grace is dispensed to human beings through the sacraments.

That's how you receive the grace of God. You receive God's grace by baptism, by communion, by confession, by penance.

[7 : 33] That's how God's grace gets to you. But the scriptures simply do not recognize that vehicle. And the scriptures say very clearly and repeatedly that personal salvation is not institutional.

And it is not sacramental. It is personal. And the reason it is personal is because to each of us, God has given this thing called volition.

That means you are accountable. You are responsible to him. And because he gives you the power of making moral choices, you are going to be held accountable for the choices that you make.

And one of them has to do with whether or not our faith and our trust is in that which he has provided for our salvation in the person of Jesus Christ.

So we lament the fact that many who mean well, very well-intentioned and very sincere in the Roman Catholic Church and in a lot of Protestant churches, the same mentality is found.

[8 : 49] That if you are a member in good standing with the church, that's all you need to worry about. The church will take care of your soul. That's our responsibility.

All you need to do is follow the sacraments and receive the elements, etc., and you will be in good standing. And we are the custodians of your soul. No, they aren't.

And neither is a pastor. And neither is this pastor. You are the custodian of your soul. You are the one who is going to give an account for you.

And that's why this issue of faith becomes a very, very important thing because it is a personal thing. So, I want to ask you a series of questions this morning, and they are not designed, trust me, they are not designed, and I trust they will not do this, create doubt or uncertainty or produce a lack of assurance in the heart and mind of anyone who has genuinely trusted Christ as their Savior.

But at the same time, I trust that these questions will awaken anyone who may be counting on institutional churchianity or someone else being in charge of your soul, or whether or not you have ever really made a faith personal decision for Jesus Christ.

[10 : 14] I suspect that insecurity and doubt is probably pretty much true of everyone who has become a Christian at one time in your spiritual life or another.

And I remember I had not been a believer for even a year, and I entered into a period of tremendous doubt. Doubt. Doubt about my salvation. Doubt about the authority of the Word of God. Doubt about its truthfulness. Doubt about all kinds of things.

And I don't mind telling you I was in absolute agony. It kept me awake at night. Here I was, I think, 22 years old at the time and thought that I had been saved on December 8, 1956, but I didn't have the assurance.

And yet, I knew enough to know how much was at stake. And that really troubled me, because I wasn't certain that I was where I was supposed to be.

And I went down to Cedarville, and I talked to one of the saintly professors down there, and he was of enormous help to me, and gave me a little booklet that dealt with the authority of the Word of God.

[11 : 33] And I read that, and I just felt this overwhelming peace come to my heart and mind. And my assurance came, it was strong, it has grown stronger over the years.

And I've never doubted since. But that, for me, was a real crisis. And I know some of you have had similar incidents like that. So, I have a series of questions that I want to pose, and I just want you to give these serious thought, and see, as we read these questions, what your answers might be to them.

You know I'm really in good stead by asking questions, because our Lord frequently taught by the questioning method, What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?

And many times our Lord asked questions of his audience, not only told them things, but asked them things. And the beauty of asking questions to an audience is this.

It tends to make them more mentally alert, because it gets their mental gears turning as they think and try to formulate answers within their own mind.

[12 : 49] So, it usually involves the audience on a deeper and different level when they are asked questions, because they are more participating and brought into the process more than just sitting and listening.

So, I trust you will be sitting and listening and thinking. Okay? Why is it? Why is it that the lifestyle, actions, and attitudes of some who profess to be a Christian appears to be far removed from the biblical definition and example of a Christian?

In other words, why is it that many Christians who profess Christianity don't seem to be living in a Christian way? Why is that? Why is there such disparity among Christians who profess faith in Christ?

Disparity as regards their behavior? No doubt, personal volition enters into this, because people have varying degrees of obedience and compliance, and there are varying degrees of spiritual growth or lack thereof that contribute to one's behavior.

Additionally, there are varying opportunities for temptation and varying strengths and weaknesses in all of us that contribute to spirituality or carnality.

[14 : 20] I know some preachers who believe that anyone who exhibits carnality, and this is a charge that the Apostle Paul laid against the Corinthians when he accused them of their wrangling and divisions and fussing and fighting among them.

He says, you are carnal. You are not spiritual. You are carnal. And the word, of course, means fleshly, which means you are behaving out of an old human nature.

And there are some who actually believe that any Christian who displays carnality or fleshiness is proof positive that he isn't a Christian at all, because if you are truly a Christian, you can't be carnal.

Well, Paul never accused the Corinthians of not being Christians. In fact, he made it quite clear that the reason he took them to task was because they were Christians.

And he said, you are behaving as if you weren't. But he never questioned that they were. In fact, he called them saints. They just weren't behaving very saintly.

[15 : 35] How is it that some who have professed faith in Christ seem to reflect spiritual values with relative consistency, while some others who have professed Christ leave everybody wondering whether they are truly saved or not?

And what is it that makes you wonder? It's their attitude about certain things, and it's their actions about certain things. Now, no one is expecting perfection from any believer.

We all know how flawed we are. But we must confess that sometimes people who profess to be Christians say things and do things that give us pause.

We can't help but wonder. I wonder if he really knows the Lord. If he does, how could he say something like that? Well, it may be just gross ignorance or just being extremely untaught.

There are a lot of really stupid Christians out there. I mean, a lot. Just untaught. Ignorant. They just don't know. Straight up. I mean, it's sad, but it's true.

[16 : 56] And becoming a Christian is no guarantee that you're going to know everything that you need to know. Becoming a Christian is a guarantee that you have the potential. Now you have the potential for knowing everything you need to know in order to be what you need to be.

But realizing that is often something else. So, could it be that there are differences involved in belief itself?

Or is all belief essentially the same? Some would say. There really isn't any difference in belief. You either believe or you don't.

There is no such thing as a halfway belief. Let's go for a moment to Romans. We've opened for that scripture passage that Gary read.

Let's go to Romans chapter 10. And an expression that the Apostle Paul uses, and I'm sure you're familiar with it.

[18 : 05] Probably many of you are able to quote it. Romans 10 and verse 9. If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved, delivered, rescued.

For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness. And with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Now, this passage refers to believing in your heart that Jesus rose from the dead. Is there a difference between believing in your head as opposed to believing in your heart?

And if so, what is the difference? Isn't belief belief? You either do or you don't. Is there such a thing as believing partway?

I remember years ago attending an evangelistic meeting as a rather young Christian. And this evangelist was a very dynamic pulpiteer and was well-spoken and gave vivid illustrations.

[19 : 44] And his message for the evening was entitled, Missing Heaven by 12 Inches.

I was intrigued by the title and I wondered, What in the world could that mean? And of course the upshot of it was, he took a ruler and held it up in front of himself.

And he said, You see the difference between the top of this ruler and the bottom of the ruler? And the top came across right here. And the bottom came across right here.

He said, It's about 12 inches. That's the distance average between the mind and the heart.

And if you believe in your mind, but that's all you believe, you miss heaven by 12 inches. Because the scriptures require us to believe in our heart.

[20 : 46] Well, we who have studied the scriptures somewhat have concluded that the Bible does refer to the heart many, many, many times. Hundreds of times it refers to the heart. But it never speaks of it as the blood pump in the middle of the chest.

It always speaks of the heart as being the core or center of our being. When we say we believe something with our whole heart, what do we mean?

We mean that we give ourselves unreservedly to that thing. It means we're in it for the whole nine yards. It has a totality and a completeness about it, as opposed to superficiality or something on the surface.

So, is there any validity at all to this idea of heart belief as opposed to head belief? We can be certain that when the Bible enjoins us to believe, it must contain a simplicity that would not confuse the reader.

I don't think that there is anything obscure or difficult or in any way obfuscated in the scriptures when it comes to belief.

[22 : 07] I think that it is set forth in simple terms because it wants everyone to be able to understand and benefit from what it requires of being able to believe and thus doing so.

So, if belief, if belief is all that is required, what precisely was it that one was to believe? And could one believe in one way and be saved, whereas another could believe in another way and not be saved?

Is there a difference? And if so, what is the difference? What does it mean to believe in your heart? What is your heart? As we've already said, the term heart is used multiple times in the Old and New Testaments, never refers to the blood pump in the chest.

It is in reference to the core or center of our being. To believe something in one's heart indicates a depth, as we have said.

It means to believe with all of one's being, to believe without reservation, to give yourself completely and entirely. And this is a way, by the way, that we are supposed to be married.

[23 : 27] And keeping yourself wholly unto Him until death do you part. That means, when you attach yourself to another person through marriage, you are giving yourself without reservations, without reluctance, without holding back.

It is not tentative. It is complete and entire. And if you were not prepared to do that, then you certainly ought not to get married, because that's what it requires.

So what does it mean to believe in your heart? What is all of one's being?

Now, we are going to dissect and analyze this, and I don't want to give anybody the impression that, well, this is what you have to do in order to be saved.

You have to go through this mechanics that we're talking about here and understand the intricacies and the differences and all the rest, or you cannot be saved. I am convinced that is not the case.

[24 : 37] I am convinced that when the Scriptures say to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, that has a simplicity to it that even a child can understand.

But there are other factors involved, and maybe we should think of them as just being a given in connection with that believing. But I want us to see them pulled out and separated and analyzed so that hopefully we can get a clearer picture of what is involved here.

And please don't think for a moment that I'm suggesting that anybody needs to be this intricate in order to be saved. I'm certainly not saying that. What is it to believe with all of one's being?

Well, first of all, and by the way, remember the little thing we gave you on the overhead, the Latin words, the three words that are levels of belief?

What I'm giving you now is essentially another way of expressing those. We're just using a different avenue of saying the same thing. Remember the first one was notitia, which means to note or to notify.

[25 : 48] All that means is you have been put on notice about Jesus Christ and who he is and what he did. And then the second level of belief is essentia.

And all that means in English is the word assent. It means the same thing as to agree. You hear about who Jesus Christ is, and that he died on the cross for the sins of the world.

Okay? You've been told that. You've been notified that that is a historical reality. What do you think about that? If you say, well, I don't buy it.

I don't believe that. I'm not sure that Jesus ever existed. And if he did, I don't believe this stuff about dying on the cross. And I certainly don't believe about coming back from the dead the third day. Well, then you've been notified, but you don't agree.

You do not give assent to that. You say, hold it right there. I don't buy that. Okay? You've got the first level because before you can believe anything, you have to know about it.

[26 : 54] You have to hear about it. You can't make a choice to believe or not believe if you've never heard of it. But once you've heard that Christ died for your sins, then you've got the basic information.

Now, what are you going to do with that? You say, well, I believe that. I agree with that. All right? That's the second level of belief.

That's called assent. You agree. You say, I hear about what happened 2,000 years ago, and I buy it. I believe it.

I agree with it. But, if that's as far as you go, that's not adequate. Is that just believing partway?

Yeah, it is. Just believing partway. Because the third level of belief is fiducia.

[27 : 52] Remember that? Fiducia. And that's the word from which we get the word faith. We know about fiduciaries and fidelity and all of those words comes from the Latin and it means faithful.

For the Muslim population, an infidel is someone who is not a Muslim.

They are considered an infidel. That's another word for an unbeliever. So, that third level of belief, which is fiducia, requires something that the first two levels do not require.

First level, notify. You're put on notice. You've got the message. Second level, you agree with the message.

Third level, fiducia asks the question, what have you done about it? It is the level that requires some action.

[29 : 11] Movement. What is it that's being moved? Where are you moving to?

What is it that you're moving? It's your emotions. It is no coincidence that the word motion is in emotion.

It means movement. movement. Have you ever seen something or heard a song or saw a beautiful picture that moved you to tears?

Boy, I have. I've seen and heard a lot of things that move me. And you know what? I haven't gone anywhere. I'm standing perfectly still.

But I am moved. Where am I moved? How am I moved? I am moved internally. I am moved in my spirit. And how does that movement internally express itself?

[30 : 30] how does it do that? It does it outwardly. Oh, you feel something inside and it may be a tingle in the spine.

It may be something in the pit of your stomach. It may be palpitations of the heart. All of these things you may feel. But when we express it outwardly, people can read it on our face.

They call this body language. And you can just take a look at a person and you can say, now there is a happy person. They're grinning ear to ear. Or they are depressed and sad.

And they look like they've just lost their best friend and they're really down. It's because of what's going on inside of them. So we can be moved for all kinds of reasons, good and bad and painful and exuberant and joyous and depression and all the rest of it.

It all depends on what is happening in our emotions. Now let me ask you a really, really important question. Is it possible to be saved without having been touched in your emotions?

[31 : 46] feelings? We know that information needs to be heard and needs to be believed, but if that belief is devoid of feeling, is it a genuine belief?

Now what I'm getting at is this. does believing in the heart require an emotional response in order to be full and complete?

Or is it possible to be saved without any feeling, without any emotion, or any emotional response, and it is purely an intellectual thing?

Is that possible? what does the heart include? My suspicion is that it really doesn't include anything physical.

It is all spiritual. It may have a physical expression through a feeling of relief, or euphoria, or exuberance.

[33 : 08] that may accompany it, but what if there is none of that? Do our emotions have to come into play?

And if they do not, were we genuinely saved? Did we believe with a salvation belief? Or, as some say, it's just head knowledge.

That's all. no heart knowledge. And the reason I'm bringing this up is because attitudes and actions flow out of internal beliefs and feelings and emotions.

They are the things that prompt us to do something. whatever it may be. We do something because of what we feel, or because of what we know.

We are moved to action on the basis of what we know. And if we are not moved to action, that's the fiducia.

[34 : 28] does the whole process get short circuited and stop right there? I wonder if throughout a whole lot of our churches throughout the land, we don't have a lot of second tier believers.

They've joined the church, they sing the hymns, they fit right in and they seem to walk the walk with everybody else.

They show up at the fellowship functions and all the rest, but they've never truly been regenerated. They're in the church and everybody thinks they are, but they aren't.

And you know what? They may not even know they aren't, because they just seem to fit in so well and they enjoy being there. They're happy with the people.

They like to be with the people. They know the language of Canaan. They sing the hymns and all the rest. They may even have official jobs in the church. But there's no real regeneration that's taken place in the soul.

[35 : 41] The mind and the intellect are absolutely essential for belief because we exercise volition. We exercise our will.

We choose to believe something and it is a mental thing. But there are emotions that are involved, and I say this, and this is very, very important because emotions are a very integral part of what makes your humanity.

We are emotional beings. That's a capacity to feel a whole range of things. do you get converted in your emotions as well as in your intellect?

And if you don't, have you genuinely been converted at all? We're talking about the difference between objective and subjective. Let me explain something about this.

Objective speaks of the object, the object that impels one toward belief. It is regarded as objective truth. objective truth deals with factual content that is unalterable regardless of who believes it or who doesn't.

[36 : 58] Objective truth is factual content that is true no matter who believes it or who doesn't. Subjective belief invokes the personal or individual reception of the object of belief, thus embracing objectivity with subjectivity.

In other words, objectivity is objective. subjective. Subjectivity is personal.

You personalize objectivity when you embrace it subjectively. Then the objectivity becomes yours personally.

you have appropriated it. You are embracing that which is objective true and making it yours.

Because subjectivity has to do with personality, has to do with personal preference, personal viewpoint, it's got personhood written all over it. Objectivity is removed from personality.

[38 : 14] Objectivity deals with just cold, hard facts that are not altered by anyone believing it or not believing it. It is just what's true. It's reality. Subjectivity is your embracing of that.

And you do that as an individual and you do it personally. Or you don't. The objective fact or truth is there.

And when you embrace that and take it to yourself with belief, you subjectivize the objective by claiming it for yourself personally. And I think this is what that passage in 2 Corinthians 5 is all about.

When Paul says, well, let's go there for just a moment. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, I want you to have the text in front of you. We've talked a little bit about this in connection with the universal redemption.

And in chapter 5 and verse 18, Paul says, now all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

[39 : 24] Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. You know what that is? That's objective. That is an established fact and it doesn't make any difference who believes it or who doesn't.

That's not going to change it. God was in Christ reconciling the world and to himself. Period. Over and out. There it is. Take it or leave it. But you're not going to change it.

That's a fact. That's true. That's an objective reality. And where the subjectivity comes in is read on. Verse 20.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were entreating through us, we beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God.

This is not double talk. What Paul is saying is that God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ objectively. Now what are you going to do about it?

[40 : 31] Because what you do about it is subjective. That's your own personal volition. That's your own will. And when you, by faith, as an act of your will, with your volition, you mentally reach out and you embrace, you take to yourself the objective truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

You appropriate that. You personalize it. And I suspect there are a great many people who have not done that. And they are not saved.

They may be nice people. They may be religious people. They may be church people. They may be regular attenders. They may serve on committees, but they are not regenerated if they have not personally, subjectively embraced what God did in Christ.

And this, too, is an act of the will. And it involves the emotions. Now, this is very important about the emotions, and I want to move on about this before we are out of time completely.

Why does one subjectively embrace the objective? Why would you do that? Objective belief relates to the intellect or the mind.

[41 : 55] Subjective belief relates to the emotions and the feelings. In other words, it is your emotion and your feelings, not just your mind, that leads you to embrace the objective.

Objective belief is sterile and static and fixed. It goes nowhere. It merely mentally affirms or assents, but does not go beyond affirmation or ascension.

Something else is needed to create movement. And movement is required to get to that third level of fiducia.

If you don't feel something, you're not going to do anything. something. This is why our emotional makeup is such a terribly important part of our personhood.

You cannot divorce humanity from it and have anything left but an automaton. Motion or movement is provided by emotion or feelings.

[43 : 22] Must one feel something in order to be saved? If so, what? Does everyone have to feel the same thing?

What are the things, if any, that prompt one to feel something when confronted with the gospel? What did you feel when you first heard the gospel?

And maybe you rejected it, like I did, like probably most people do upon the initial hearing, but upon repeated exposure to the gospel, the truth starts getting through.

And very often, the thing that leads us to make a decision is prompted not only by the intellect, but by something else.

What is it that motivates you? And there's that word motivate. You know that word? We get motor from that. Motor means movement too. What is it that motivates?

[44 : 32] You know very often when you hear the gospel, the thing that motivates you to believe it is guilt. Guilt can be a powerful motivator, and it can be a good one.

Because if you feel guilty about something, you should if you are in fact guilty. You ought to feel guilty. So how do you resolve the guilt?

How do you get rid of the guilt? This may very well be involved in this hearing and understanding the gospel. people. So what are the things, if any, that prompt one to feel something when confronted with the gospel?

For me, the thing to me that would be the most powerful motivator, the thing that would make me, I think, feel the most deeply about this, hearing that Christ died for my sin?

Christ, this innocent, pure, spotless Lamb of God, died for my sin?

[45 : 55] That would make me feel terrible. And it should. Have you no heart? what else could it make you feel but terrible?

And maybe at the same time, this is a perfect example of mixed emotions, makes you feel terrible and rotten and guilty and ever so grateful and thankful and joyful because that kind of love was poured out on the likes of me?

me. So there's a whole range of emotions there that are just flooding the soul. But the point is you're feeling something. It grabs you.

And if it's never grabbed you, it's just never gotten to you. You've never picked up on it. You've never understood it. Maybe you've just heard it as an intellectual historical fact that everybody knows that Christ died on the cross, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

So what? So what? There's never really done anything for you because your emotions were never involved. We see how important emotions are in connection with just about everything from boy meets girl to your favorite football team and the playoffs and all the rest.

[47 : 20] We get all excited about it. You get really emotional about those things. What about this? repentance? And what about repentance?

I know some grace believers who are very, very adamant about denying repentance is not part of the gospel of the grace of God.

You can't tell people that they have to repent. You are adding to the gospel when you tell people they have to repent. But a passage that we won't take time to look at now, but we will next week, will tell us a different story, that repentance is very, very essential.

Very essential. And another thing, do you have to be sorry for your sins in order to be saved?

Oh, no, no, no, you don't have to be sorry for your sins, because that's adding to the gospel. It's just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you don't have to be sorry for your sins. Okay, then let me ask you this. Can you be proud of your sins and be saved?

[48 : 37] What? Proud? Proud of my sins? Yeah. If you don't have to feel anything, if you don't have to repent, if that's not required and that's adding to the gospel, then I suppose someone could come to God and exercise faith all the while being proud of their sins and saying, listen, what's more?

I don't want to change anything. And I don't want you to change me. I like me just like I am. But I do want your salvation.

salvation. So, I want you to save me so I'll go to heaven when I die, but in the meanwhile, take your mitts off and leave my life alone because I want to run it the way I want. Is God going to say, well, okay, I'll regenerate you and take you to heaven just the same?

does it work that way? You know very well it doesn't. So, all we're trying to do is sort this stuff out because I think the more thoroughly we understand it, the more we will appreciate what we have in Christ, and the more we will understand how it is that I'm going to close with this.

When I was a student at Cedarville, back before the earth crossed hard, I remember every year, and I think they still do this, every year when the school season gets underway, usually in September, October, they've got all of these incoming students, hundreds of students coming in, a bunch of freshmen, returning sophomores, juniors, and so on, and of all things, here in this Christian university, they bring in a speaker, who brings a week of evangelistic meetings, and he's preaching on salvation for a whole week to all of these Christian kids in this Christian university with all the Christian professors and the Christian background, and it's amazing how some of these kids who have professed salvation from the time they were knee-high to a grasshopper get saved, and I remember one year in particular, this kid, he was quite a character, and the

[51 : 12] Lord really got a hold of him in these evangelistic meetings, and lo and behold, he went forward to receive Christ as his Savior, and he was a PK, he was a preacher's kid, and this preacher pastored one of the prominent Baptist churches in the state of Ohio, and this kid called home, talked to his dad later that day, and said, Dad, just want you to know the most wonderful thing happened to me this morning in chapel, and Dad says, what was it? He said, I got saved, Dad. His dad says, you what? Yeah, I got saved. What do you mean you got saved?

You were saved when you were four years old. What are they teaching you there anyway? And you know, that happens every year.

Now, maybe, you know what, in all honesty, maybe the kid did get saved when he was four years old. But maybe he was just so woefully taught and inadequately prepared, and not understanding who he was in Christ.

He never had assurance and never had the grounding, and that's a possibility. But it's also a possibility that he never knew the Lord at all.

[52 : 37] Grew up in a Christian home. Of course, you see, it's been said that God has children, but he has no grandchildren. And you can't get to heaven on your parents' coattails.

This personal volition thing requires you to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I'm going to close with a word of prayer.

I'm not finished, but I'm quitting. And we're not going to sing the hymn. I had picked out a little town of Bethlehem. Put it on hold. We'll sing it next week. But I want to have a word of prayer with you as we close.

Father, we have looked at some of the intricacies involved here, and we certainly don't want to make this confusing or problematic for anybody.

But we just want to stress the importance of what it means to believe, and what it means to believe with a heart, as opposed to just a remote intellect that just logs what Jesus did as one more historical fact, and that's the end of it.

[53 : 48] We want people to really be genuinely, thoroughly, deeply, fully converted to Jesus Christ and have been regenerated and received new life and the assurance of heaven because their belief is valid and genuine.

Thank you for the simplicity of the gospel, and Lord, we trust we have made it complicated, but these ingredients are important, each of them, and we need to understand them.

So help us as we continue this next week and give these dear folk the insight and the wisdom they need in the coming days to confront this issue again next week with enthusiasm and open hearts and open minds.

And Father, if there's anyone here who's never really truly believed in Jesus Christ but is just counting on their connections with family or church or something else, reveal to them their folly and show them that only a warm, engaged, personal faith in Christ, who he is and what he did, will suffice.

We'll thank you in Christ's wonderful name. Amen.