

03 - A GENUINE FAITH

- ✓ For the past two weeks, we've been building a "structure" that can bear the weight of your assurance. (It'll consist of a foundation and four pillars.) The **Foundation** is, of course, the Word of God. Only the Word is strong enough to support your assurance – (1 Jn. 5:13).
- ✓ Then, we looked at the **First Pillar**, which was the finished work of Christ. We found out that pillar's solid! The Plan worked! God was satisfied with Christ's sacrifice! Everyone "in the plan" has been acquitted (Ro. 4:25). What we need to do, from here, is make sure you've entered into the plan.

Pillar 2 – What Did You Do? (You had to do 2 things: repent & believe)

- a. **Repent** – The word "repent" isn't used very often in modern preaching, but it's clearly a part of getting saved.
- ✓ **Jesus preached repentance** – "*The kingdom of God is at hand, Repent and believe the gospel.*" (Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3)
- ✓ **The early church preached repentance** – "*Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*" (Acts 3:19)

What *Is* Repentance?

- ✓ When we hear the word "repentance", we tend to think of feeling sorry for the things we've done. But that isn't really what repentance means.
- ✓ "Repentance" comes from the Greek word "metanoia", and it refers to changing your mind. Repentance is an **inward change of mind**, that results in an **outward change of direction.**"
- ✓ **Think About That:** Before anything else, repentance refers to changing your mind. (When people come to Christ, they change their mind about a lot of things!)

- ✓ Before salvation, they didn't believe in Christ. (He wasn't important to them at all!) But, in coming to Christ, they're **changing their mind** about that. Before salvation, they loved their sin. They're **changing their mind** about that, too.
- ✓ Repentance is an **inward change of mind**, that results in an **outward change of direction**. That's the first thing you had to do, in order to get saved. (I'm sure you did that.)
- b. **Believe** – There are two areas we should discuss while we consider your "believing". (i) First of all, **did you believe the right thing?** (That's important! It's possible to sincerely and passionately believe a lie. But that never turns out well.) (ii) **Is your faith genuine?** (Did you have genuine "heart faith"? Or did you have what James called "phony faith"?)

(i) Did You Believe the Right Thing?

Galatians 1:6-7 – "I'm astonished that you are turning away so quickly from the one who called you, and you're turning to a **false gospel**. You are being fooled by those who **twist and pervert the gospel of Christ.**"

2 Cor. 11:4 – "... if he who comes preaches a **different Jesus**, whom we have not preached ... or a **different gospel** ..."

- ✓ Paul said there would be "false gospels" in the last days. Notice some of the words he used to describe them – twisted, perverted, false, and different. (Here's the thing: A false gospel can't save you! Neither can a "different Jesus"! You need to make sure you're believing in the real Jesus & the true Gospel.

Essentials of the True Gospel: (This is What You Needed to Believe)

1.) Who Jesus Is

- ✓ According to the New Testament, Jesus is the Son of God (John 3:16). He's God manifest in the flesh (John 1:1,14, 1 Tim. 3:16). He's fully God and fully man. He was born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14) and sinless (Jn

8:46). A false gospel will *lessen* or *pervert* that in some way.

- ✓ So many aberrant groups try to lessen who Jesus is. The JW's don't believe that Jesus is part of the Godhead (Trinity). They believe He was originally created as "Michael the Archangel" before the physical world existed. Later, He came to earth as "Jesus". They will say He died and rose, but it wasn't a physical resurrection, it was a spiritual one. The Mormons believe that Jesus is the spirit child of Father-God and Mother-God, and the spirit brother of Lucifer. Several religions teach that Jesus was just a great moral teacher. To Buddhists, Jesus was an enlightened man. To Muslims, Jesus was a servant of Allah. A mere prophet, who never claimed to be God. To the New Agers, He's an "ascended master." But in the New Testament, He's the second member of the Godhead. God in human flesh.
- ✓ Getting it right about Jesus' identity, is essential to salvation! You need to believe the right thing about who He is! Ro. 10:9 (Amp.) – "If you confess with your mouth that **Jesus is Lord [recognizing His power, authority, and majesty as God]** ..." If you, in some way, lessen that, then you're not believing in the right Jesus.

2.) Why Jesus Died

- ✓ Believe it or not, there are groups that get *this* wrong, too. The Emergent Church – (popular in the 90's and early 2000's) – believes that Jesus' death had nothing to do with paying the price for sin. They believe He died to show that He identifies with the human condition. But the Bible couldn't be clearer:

1 Cor. 15:3 – "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ **died for our sins** according to the scriptures ..."

Isa. 53:10b (NiRV) – "I made his life an offering **to pay for sin** ..." (CEV) – "... suffer(ed) as **a sacrifice to take away the sin and guilt of others.**"

3.) Jesus Made Salvation Available

- ✓ Salvation is available to everyone, but not everyone is saved!

- ✓ Another false gospel (known as *ultimate reconciliation*) says that Jesus' death automatically saved everyone – (no matter what they do or believe.) Even if people reject Jesus outright, mock Him their entire lives, and die cursing Him, they're still saved.

Mark 16:16 – "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. **He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**"

4.) Jesus Rose *Physically* From the Grave

1 Cor. 15:3-4 – "And now let me remind you, brethren, of the Gospel which I proclaimed unto you, and by which you are saved ... For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ **died for our sins** according to the scriptures; And that **he was buried**, and that **he rose again the third day** according to the scriptures." (AmpC, KJV)

Luke 24:39 – "Behold my hands and my feet ... handle me, and see, for a spirit does not have **flesh and bones**, as you see that I have."

- ✓ Jesus physically rose from the dead. (The body that rose was the same body that had died. There were puncture wounds in His hands, His feet, and His side (John 20:27). Believing in the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus is the other non-negotiable in Romans 10:9-10. You can't be saved without believing in the resurrection.

Romans 10:9 – "If you ... believe in your heart that God has **raised Him from the dead**, you shall be saved."

5.) Salvation is by Grace Alone, Thru Faith Alone, in Christ Alone

- ✓ You can't earn your salvation. You can't, in any way, contribute to it. It's not "Jesus **plus good works**". It's not "Jesus **plus water baptism**". It's not "Jesus **plus church membership**". It's by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone! He did it all, and you add nothing!!! Your part is to believe it and receive salvation as a free gift (Eph 2:8).

(ii) Is Your Faith Genuine?

- ✓ I used to ask myself if I believed *enough*. That's not the right question. (It's not a matter of believing *enough*.) The real question is: "Was my faith genuine?"

2 Cor. 13:5 – "Examine yourself **to see if your faith is genuine.**" (NLT)

- ✓ What's the opposite of Genuine Faith? Phony faith!

James 2:14,20 – "What good is it, my brethren, if a man professes to have faith, and yet his actions don't correspond? **Faith without corresponding actions is phony.**" (Not real.)

- ✓ How do you know if your faith is genuine? I'll illustrate it this way. In 1869, a man named Charles Blondin walked across Niagara Falls on a tightrope.
- ✓ After crossing the tightrope a few times, he pushed a wheelbarrow across while blindfolded. He asked the crowd, "How many believe that I could push a person across?" The crowd enthusiastically cheered, "Yes!". But his next question quickly silenced them. "All right, then", he asked. "Who wants to go first?" (Of course, there were no volunteers, until an elderly woman stepped out from the crowd and got into the wheelbarrow. That woman was Blondin's mother.)
- ✓ What a great illustration of faith! The entire crowd **said** they believed. Only his mother *truly* believed, for she was the only one who would get in the wheelbarrow. In salvation, you're "getting into the wheelbarrow". You're letting go of everything else that you think *might* earn God's favor. You renounce your own works, every other religion, etc. Your trust is completely in Jesus.
- ✓ Genuine Faith Acts – You can't really believe what the Bible says about *Jesus*, and what the Bible says about *you*, and do nothing. If you truly believe those things, it demands a response. It demands a full commitment of yourself to Him, trusting Him alone for salvation.