

**Luke 5:1-6** *ESV* On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.

### The Nature and Source of True FAITH

As most pastors have, I've preached on the subject of faith any number of times and in various contexts. It's a topic of grave importance.

As [Hebrews 11:6](#) notes:

Or think of [Romans 3:21-28](#) [T]he righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith... [and] so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

We *must* be clear on this issue of faith because our eternal destiny depends upon it. There is no other way for us to be justified - declared righteous - before God - except by faith.

Now what originally occasioned me preaching on faith from this text, were two things which were "in the moment."

**2 popular movies that had just come out (2014): Noah** - with a cranky and blood thirsty Russell Crowe, complete with rock monsters, and, the movie **Heaven is for Real**.

I gave poor reviews to both.

Nobody seemed to care too much about my review of Noah. Everyone agreed it was crummy. But there was an unusual amount of activity in response to my review of the book: Heaven is For Real – no doubt generated by the opening of the movie version.

But what brings me back here today, is that there seems to be an ever increasing misunderstanding about the nature of faith, both in our society AND, shockingly and sadly - in the Church.

The truth is, we need to be exceedingly careful to use Bible words and Bible concepts, the way the Bible itself defines and uses them, or we usher in complete confusion.

The word **Faith** for example, has been co-opted anybody and everybody, and as a result has degenerated into some amorphous and undefined form of belief – and that having “faith” in this generic way, is then actually tied to salvation.

This is critical, as a Gospel issue, because as passages like [Eph. 2:8-9](#) say:

Let me illustrate this by going back to a comment posted on my blog in response to my critique of the book *Heaven Is For Real*.

If you are not familiar with it, the book is about the supposed experience of 4 year old Colton Burpo.

Colton, son of Todd Burpo, then a pastor in Imperial Nebraska, had a burst appendix which went undiagnosed for 5 days. As you might imagine, the little guy almost died. Several years after recovering, Colton began talking about something he claimed he experienced for about 3 minutes during the height of his illness. He claimed he went to Heaven. I won't go into the details about meeting Jesus, meeting Jesus' horse, the Virgin Mary and then lots other people with wings. It got pretty bizarre.

What was striking was how many commented that their “faith” in Heaven had been almost miraculously bolstered by Colton's account.

Why people might tie their faith to the recollections of a fevered 4 year old boy, rather than the Bible itself is a mystery to me.

You would think that if we needed information about dying and the afterlife, Lazarus would have been the ideal candidate to pass that on. But the Holy Spirit thought that nothing he may have experienced during his 4 days truly dead (not near death like Colton) - was of any value to us.

So let me quote from a comment posted on my blog by one who read my review of “Heaven is Real”.

***“I am a believer and we just saw the movie and loved it. We are so sick of all the analyzing with all the books written and sitting here reading all the comments regarding this boys [sic] experience. I was a nurse for many years and have heard many wonderful spiritual stories of near death experiences and have had one even in my own family. A four year old child to have such an imagination....Come on. You people are just like the ones who were skeptics and non-believers of Christ. Why do we make religion so difficult???? and with all the books so confusing. How did God communicate in the scriptures.... with many dreams if I remember. Explain to me how he was on the operating table and he saw his dad in the church showing much anger to God by kicking the chair...you make the comment Colton's account simply holds no authority. You using the words Authoritative...makes no sense to me... I just wish that people like you could once just say hey God is out there and there are many things we cannot explain. Lets just wait and see. This is the reason why people are pulling away from churches they are so confused. I tell people who question me about faith, keep it simple, Pray, Praise, follow the Ten and Love.....”***

I'll get back to these comments later – especially the last sentence. But what got my mind working on all of this then is what it is people call faith, put that faith in, and why.

A subject – that impacts the eternal destiny of every human being.

FAITH is a word that is used widely in our culture, and even in the Church in ways that the Bible simply never employs.

We hear of:

FAITH traditions.

People of FAITH.

FAITH-based organizations or initiatives.

We hear people say they “have faith” or as Darren Aronofsky (co-writer and director of NOAH) said in an interview “I think I definitely believe.”

And so we have this very generic idea of faith or belief, that is in fact completely foreign to the Bible.

In surveying the Scriptures, the Bible uses the concept of FAITH, in only 3 ways.

- Having or exercising faith
- Being in or knowing THE faith
- Keeping faith

1. It speaks of our having faith: Which is demonstrated over and over to be - and please hear this carefully: Believing God in His self-revelation and what He has said so as to order one’s life accordingly. All of which is contained:

a. In the Bible.

b. In His Character

c. And His communications.

2. And the Bible speaks of THE faith – The sacred trust of the Gospel believed, lived and preached until Christ returns - with all of its implications. That’s how it is used in [Jude 3](#) “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for THE FAITH that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

3. In the OT you will read of one breaking or keeping faith - where the use is more like being faithful or not, and in regard to their promises or commitments. So Israel at times is said to break faith with God - going back on its covenant with Him.

The Bible **never** refers to those of other religions as having faith, or as being people of faith or being part of another faith tradition.

Faith is very narrowly restricted to believing in the God who created us, trusting His character as revealed in the Scriptures, and in what He has communicated to us.

This is vitally important.

Maybe you've heard the illustration that faith is like sitting in this chair. I believe it will hold me, and so I put my weight on it.

While I may believe that the chair can hold me, and I might have good reasons for doing so, that isn't actually faith.

Where belief differs from Biblical faith is that I don't have a promise from God that the chair will hold me, nor is there anything in His character that would lead me to believe that it will. Nothing in His Word leads me to believe it either. I believe it based upon logic, but that is not faith. It is a mere belief. That's not bad, it's just not Biblical faith.

Good and hopeful feelings about the future – or just feeling that “everything will turn out OK” - is not FAITH as the Bible defines it either.

Every Christian ought to have a genuine hope regarding the future, but only as respects what God has actually said about it in His Word, and not because of some subjective optimism.

So many times I have heard people say that they have faith that a certain situation will turn out a particular way.

In fact, they are not expressing faith at all – unless what they mean by it is that God - as having revealed Himself in His Word as good – can be depended upon for the wisest and best outcome as He sees fit.

And it is true that the Spirit may give us personal intimations of God's good will toward us in certain circumstances - but again, this is not faith. Faith, as we'll see, is in Him - not in those passing assurances.

My faith, your faith – must find its only resting place in the revealed word of God – else when things do not turn out as we had “faith” for, we actually undermine our own ability to trust God in the future.

Just **hoping** that one is saved or in right relationship with God with their sins forgiven is not faith. Salvation is not a matter of hoping, or feeling it is so – but believing the testimony of Scripture in regard to such things.

This is why the Bible speaks so categorically in [Romans 10:17](#) that:

Do I believe that God IS – that He exists, and that He is rewarder of those who diligently seek Him? – Hebrews 11:6.

Have I confessed that Jesus is MY Lord and God whom I serve, and have I believed in MY heart that God has raised Him from the dead? – Romans 10:9

And WHY do I believe these things?

Because God's Word says it is so?

Because I KNOW it to be true?

If these are not my realities – I am not saved from the wrath of God to come no matter what my profession of so-called “faith.”

Saving faith is not a feeling, but a settled conviction of the truth rooted in **believing the testimony of God** regarding all matters that He has revealed in His Word.

Anything less, anything else - is meaningless and deceptive human religion.

Let me try to unpack this in our text for today – and by looking at just one verse – [Luke 5:5](#)

In this easily passed over account, we get 3 elements of genuine Biblical faith which serve to open up the reality of Biblical and saving FAITH.

**1. Who it was that was believed.**

**2. What it was that was believed.**

**3. How what Jesus said was responded to.**

**1. Who it was that was believed.**

Peter is a professional fisherman.

[Luke 5:9–10](#) “For [Peter] and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, **who were partners with Simon.**”

Jesus, was NOT a fisherman, but rather a carpenter.

Peter might well have said: “Look, I know who you are but – this is what I know and do best. And your suggestion – quite frankly is uniformed and not too bright.”

Chronologically, Peter had already heard John the Baptizer announce Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

He had probably already accompanied Jesus to the wedding at Cana where He turned the water into wine, and had heard several of Jesus’ conversations with others, not the least of which were exchanges with both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman at the well.

Jesus is about to call Peter and Andrew along with James and John to “follow Him” – to officially accompany Him as His bonafide disciples.

So look carefully at Peter’s response.

And it isn’t – “OK, I believe in miracles!”

Or, “Yes! I KNEW following you would bring blessings and success!”

Or even “Yahoo! I’ve got a good feeling about this!”

It is, simply, irrespective of anything else – “But at YOUR word I will let down the nets.”

At YOUR word.

It was because it was Jesus that had said it.

It was Jesus who was trustworthy.

Peter hadn't plucked this out of thin air.

He wasn't about to act on a wishful hope he had conjured up on his own.

He was saying what Paul would say years later and what formed the confidence Paul had in enduring all of his sufferings:

[2 Timothy 1:12](#) "I am not ashamed, **for I know WHOM I have believed**, and I am convinced that HE is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me."

Consider Abraham and the nature of justifying faith: Note carefully how it is said 4 different times - in Genesis, Romans, Galatians and James: Abraham "believed GOD" and it was counted to him as righteousness.

It is NEVER said that Abraham just nebulously - believed. That would not have been counted to him as righteousness.

What WAS counted to him as righteousness was that he believed GOD.

It is so important that when we say we "believe" - we make sure God is the source, and not our wishful thinking, or some subjective feeling or a "word" from someone else, or a dream etc.

The question always is - Has GOD said?

Do I know it was God?

How do I know it was God?

Can I test it by His Word?

If not - it has nothing to do with faith - no matter how comforting, pleasant, or inviting it may be.

I once had a conversation with the elder of a Church who was meeting with someone who was making a decision that was probably not wise, and certainly opposed by his godly wife. His response? "Jesus told me to do this and I have to do what Jesus said." Said where? In His Word? No, just in this man's heart. Dangerous stuff!

So Jude when warning us about false teachers says: **Jude 8** - "Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones."

He doesn't deny these people might have dreams - but he categorically rejects relying on those dreams for truth claims.

And so should we.

Our faith first and foremost must rest in Jesus, in God, and what we can verify He has said. And for this we need to retreat to the Scriptures - nowhere else. No matter how attractive, rational or convincing it may seem.

If I had a dollar for every confused and broken heart I've met with because somewhere down the line "God told them" something - and then it didn't come to pass.

It was at this very point that Adam and Eve fell. They wavered in who this God was who had spoken to them.

Satan asked: "Did God actually say?" It is not just the data at this point that is the real problem. It is the trustworthiness of the one who had spoken. The implication was: "OK, so God said...but if God cannot be trusted, if He is hiding something or has nefarious intentions..." Then what He said can be called into question. It is why John emphasizes to his readers that we must be convinced [1 John 1:5](#)

If I cannot trust the character of God, then I won't trust what He says either.

Genuine faith must always begin here. It must be God who has spoken, the God revealed in the Bible, and it is that God whose Word must be trusted - above everyone and everything else. Or it is not faith as the Bible counts faith.

## **2. What it was that was believed.**

Jesus didn't tell Peter a whole raft of things here - just a few simple instructions. [Luke 5:4](#) "And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.""

Peter's faith - AND OURS - is limited to what God HAS said, and not, what He hasn't.

Faith depends on knowing both WHO is speaking, and WHAT they have actually said.

When we set our hopes on things God has never actually said or meant, we set ourselves up to undermine our own faith. This then requires that we read Scripture and interpret it carefully so that we do not set our hearts and minds on fabrications.

How many caught in the deceptions of Mormonism will pay large sums of money and go through meaningless rituals to be baptized in place of dead relatives because they never took the time to understand the Holy Spirit's words through Paul in 1 Cor. 15:29 and built a doctrine on a single obscure passage.

How many parents have felt deceived because they absolutized a verse like [Proverbs 22:6](#) - "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." - And treated it as an inviolable promise rather than an indication of general tendency as would be common in Wisdom literature - and when it didn't "work" were left at a horrible loss?

A while back I talked with a saint, a serious man of God who had walked with God for more than 60 years who was struggling in his faith because of [Psalm 37:25](#) "I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread."

This person had an adult child who had struggled and failed financially and so he felt conflicted over whether or not all of God's promises could be trusted. He felt as though he had been forsaken because his child needed to apply for food stamps.

It is true that the righteous will never be forsaken, and that the righteous offspring of the righteous will never be lacking for the bread of life in Christ. It is NOT true that the righteous will never endure financial hardship or even famine.

We must not only know what a particular passage SAYS, we must know what the Bible TEACHES and how that passage fits into the whole teaching of the Bible.

It is true Isa. 5:20 says “call evil good and good evil”

But that’s not ALL the verse says: [Isa. 5:20](#) “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”

Or haven’t we seen people appropriate [Philippians 4:13](#) “I can do all things through him who strengthens me,” for almost anything?

The passage has absolutely NOTHING to do with sporting events, taking exams, having a difficult conversation with an estranged relative, losing weight, launching a new business or snagging the husband or wife you want. It has to do with being able to suffer times of both prosperity and poverty in the cause of Christ.

Examples could be multiplied endlessly.

Faith must always base its sole foundation on what God has said - in His Word. And that, responsibly interpreted.

So far we see that faith in Peter’s situation depended upon:

**1. Who it was that was believed.**

He believed Jesus.

**2. What it was that was believed.**

What Jesus actually said.

But faith, in order to fully be actual faith has a 3rd element –

**3. How what Jesus said was responded to.**

We need to note lastly that faith is never divorced from obedient action.

Genuine faith acts on who and what have been believed, or it remains in the category of wishful thinking.

There is no place where this is more true than in salvation.

Note the text again: **Luke 5:5–6** “And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.””

“It is YOU that has spoken;



I understand correctly WHAT you have said;

And now Lord – I let down my net for the catch.”

The fish wouldn't just jump in the boat because Peter believed. Peter had to act on it. So do we.

Salvation doesn't come ONLY from knowing what God has said about repenting from sin and trusting in Christ as my sin-bearer. Though I do need to know that data.

Nor does salvation come ONLY from believing that those propositions are true.

As we read in [James 2:19](#) “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!”

The demons can do the 1st 2.

Salvation comes when I actually trust Christ alone, and cast aside all other means of trying to be approved of by God. I must rest the full of my weight upon Him.

Faith must believe God, and understand what He has said, and then result in ordering one's life accordingly IN ORDER TO BE – FAITH.

The older theologians used to talk about faith this way:

- Noticia
- Assensus
- Fiducia

1. Noticia - We must understand the message, the data to be believed.

2. Assensus - We must assent to the truth of the message.

3. Fiducia - We must then act upon it as true, and trust ourselves wholly to Christ.

James Montgomery Boice uses this example.

A young man proposes to his girl. He asks: “Will you marry me?” And the young woman understands what he is asking.

The young woman then (hopefully) - Says “YES!” She assents. She agrees.

But they aren't married yet. Not until they walk the aisle and say “I do”. Not until they actually commit to one another with solemn vows. Until they wed.

And so it is with the Gospel.

Have we heard the message that Jesus died for our sins - bearing the just wrath of God against us that day on the Cross?

And do we believe that is true?

All that remains then is to obey the Gospel in actually trusting Christ as our sin-bearer, and giving up everything else we may have trusted in. Religion. Good works. God just being nice. We not being all that bad - everything.

Spurgeon put it this way: “What is faith? It is made up of three things—knowledge, belief, and trust. Knowledge comes first. “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” I want to be informed of a fact before I can possibly believe it... A measure of knowledge is essential to faith; hence the importance of getting knowledge...Know the gospel: know what the good news is, how it talks of free forgiveness, and of change of heart, of adoption into the family of God, and of countless other blessings...Endeavour especially to know the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ; for the point upon which saving faith mainly fixes itself is this—“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Know that Jesus was “made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Drink deep of the doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ; for therein lies the sweetest possible comfort to the guilty sons of men, since the Lord “made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Faith begins with knowledge.

The mind goes on to believe that these things are true... Then the heart believes that Jesus is verily and in truth our God and Saviour, the Redeemer of men, the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. All this is accepted as sure truth, not to be called in question.

Only one more ingredient is needed to complete it, which is trust. Commit yourself to the merciful God; rest your hope on the gracious gospel; trust your soul on the dying and living Saviour; [to] wash away your sins in the atoning blood; accept His perfect righteousness, and all is well. Trust is the lifeblood of faith; there is no saving faith without it... Lean with all your weight upon Christ...Cast yourself upon Jesus; rest in Him; commit yourself to Him. That done, you have exercised saving faith. Faith is not a blind thing; for faith begins with knowledge. It is not a speculative thing; for faith believes facts of which it is sure. It is not an unpractical, dreamy thing; for faith trusts, and stakes its destiny upon the truth of revelation.” Spurgeon, C. H. All of Grace: An Earnest Word with Those Who Are Seeking Salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. Logos Bible Software, 2009, pp. 44–47.

Now if all of this seems too basic to you - forgive me. Do not be insulted. I am belaboring this on purpose.

My experience more and more is that this understanding of saving faith is all but disappearing in our day - and is being replaced by reliance on good feelings, or a trust in God just doing nice things for us - rather than real and saving faith. And that many who imagine themselves to be Christians, are not, - because they do not have saving faith.

I would not have anyone leave here today as a Christian in name only. As though Christianity is just your choice of religious expression. You're not a Jew or a Muslim or some other religion - so by default you're a Christian. Or you think you're a Christian simply because you walked an aisle once, signed a card, made some vague profession of belief or prayed some prayer which, when all is said and done has made no difference in your life at all.

In truth, you may have no living, vital, real relationship with God in Christ at all.

I am pleading with you to believe the Gospel and be saved today!

Now in closing, let me go back to the comment from my blog and point out just one more thing that illustrates the confusion on these points that is so common, and yet so deadly.

The Commentator wrote: *This is the reason why people are pulling away from churches they are so confused. I tell people who question me about faith, keep it simple, Pray, Praise, follow the Ten and Love.....”*

Do you see it? No wonder the writer disliked my review so much.

What is her “religion?” It is in the last sentence. “Pray, Praise, follow the Ten and Love.”

No cross. No substitutionary atonement. No Gospel.

Pray. Praise. Follow the 10, and love.

And I might add - if that’s all - end up in Hell.

This is not faith. It is a self-imagined religion of good works and niceness.

All good things, but not saving faith.

But when we are schooled in thinking of faith in un-Biblical ways – it is where we inevitably end up.

In religious, soul-damning unbelief.

Beloved – don’t fall for it.

Believe God – THE GOD OF THE BIBLE.

Believe WHAT God has said – IN THE BIBLE.

And TRUST HIM – and no one nor any thing – else.

**Luke 5:5** *ESV* And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.”

Jesus said we must be born again.

Jesus said that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him, should not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus said that He was the bread of life, indeed, that He was the way, the truth and the life - and that no one could come to the Father except through Him.

Jesus said all who come to Him would never be cast out.

The Word says: [Romans 3:21–25](#) (ESV)

...the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through **faith** in Jesus Christ for all who **believe**. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift,

through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by **faith**.

God's Word says: Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

If you are not yet a Christian here today - please hear me clearly on this: If you would be forgiven of your sins, justified before God and granted eternal life - then you must place the whole of your trust in what God has said in His Word regarding your sinful and lost condition, and regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ - and trust in Him alone as your sin-bearer, and the one whose righteousness imputed to you alone can make you fit to be a child of God.

[John 3:16](#) ““For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

And perhaps you are already a Believer today, but you have struggled with doubts about your salvation.

Maybe you've been exposed to teaching that leads you to trust in some activities, rituals or the like rather than setting the whole of your trust in Christ alone. Telling you you need to add something to Christ in order to be REALLY saved.

As in our analogy of marriage - once you've said "I do" you live in that "I do" for the rest of your life.

You don't leave the altar after getting married to date other people.

And so it is with saving faith: Once we've cast ourselves upon Christ alone - we do not go back and look to rites, rituals, practices, etc. - but remain in that perpetual "I do" - trusting Christ alone for our righteousness and reconciliation to the Father.

This is especially tempting when we've failed or sinned - and the flesh devises ways to get back into God's good graces instead of standing in the grace which is ours through faith in Christ only.

Maybe you've been influenced like those in Galatia where Paul had to write: "having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected in the flesh?" Go back to faith in Christ.

Or maybe your trust in God has been damaged, because you have had "faith" for things God never promised in His Word, which then failed to come to pass. Even though you felt ever so strongly it was really Him.

Come back to place all of your trust only in His revealed character, and the verifiable promises of His Word, and your heart will be restored.

This is the secure place. This is the place of blessedness and peace. This is the place of living in reality as God knows it. This is the place of rest and joy - in the certainty only He can give.