

9/13/15

Acts 5:29-32

A Real and Saving Faith

29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

Prayer

This week a video was released by Buzzfeed entitled "I am a Christian...but..." and the video went viral on social media. In this video, a handful of so-called Christians make such statements as, "I am a Christian...but I'm not homophobic" or "I am a Christian...but I'm not close-minded" or "I'm a Christian...but I'm not conservative." The essence of the video is "we are Christian...but not like those *other* Christians who actually follow Christ."

This video is obviously a propaganda piece for a version of Christianity that's Christian in name only. It is a progressivist Christianity that is washed out biblically, hollowed out theologically and strung out culturally. It's a false religion propagated by false prophets.

You hear it in our day and see it in our very city, where false teachers preach Christ, not as a *Savior* to be *worshipped* but as a *servant* to be *used*, used to help you be "the best you." It's a false gospel that has taken the Lion *out* of the tribe of Judah, declawed and defanged him, and set him on their laps to be petted like a housecat. That might be a kind of a faith, but that's not a *saving* faith. A saving faith lives into God's will with reckless abandon.

We pick up the story as the apostles stand before the Sanhedrin and give an account of what saving faith is. As you listen, it might be good for personal reflection to ask yourself "Do I have saving faith?" The Bible says to examine yourself to see if you are in the faith. There's one thing I believe to be true:

A Saving Faith is a Sacred Faith

Let's consider some of the qualities of a saving faith as pictured in the text:

A Saving Faith is a God-Centered Faith

You can hear the God-centeredness in everything the Apostles are saying. In Verse 29 Peter says we must obey *God* rather than *men*. He is giving us the foundational principle and moral compass for every decision we make. Our ethics are not situational. They are God-centered. We believe we are saved by God's grace, filled with God's spirit and designed to pursue God's will. God is to be obeyed above all.

In Verse 30 we see He is sovereign over all. In Verse 31 God provides forgiveness and repentance to all who believe. In Verse 29 God is to be obeyed. In Verse 30 God raised Jesus from the dead. In Verse 31, God exalts Jesus at His right hand. In Verse 32, God gives us the Holy Spirit so we can obey.

This God-centeredness must inform *my* preaching. It must inform *our* worship services. It must inform *your* lifestyle. It gives us the truth: That you are drawn by God's goodness to turn from your sin and to say your faith is in Christ. A saving faith is a God-Centered faith. A saving faith is a seen faith.

A Saving Faith is a Christ-Driven Faith

I really think that what's wrong with modern Evangelistic Christianity is that, in so many ways, it's not Christian at all.

So often this pseudo-Christianity has become a coping mechanism, a sort of a spiritual Xanax for the difficulties of life instead of life itself.

Notice how the Apostles talk about Jesus. In Verse 30 we see: "The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on the tree." Now let's take a look at a few of the things said about Jesus.

In Verse 31 God exalted him at his right hand. Jesus Christ conquered death and sits in the Place of Honor (God's right hand) and He is worthy of your worship. Right before He was crucified, those who were responsible asked him, "Are you the Christ of the Blessed?"

In Mark 14:62 Jesus said "I am and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of Heaven."

In Acts 7:55 as Stephen was being killed for his faith, Luke tells us, "But he, full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed into Heaven and saw the Glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

Ours is a Christ-driven faith – not "purpose-driven" – not behavior-driven.

Hebrews 1:3 says of Christ "He upholds the universe by the word of his power. Verse 31 of our text says "He is leader, Prince, Originator, Foremost, the fountainhead and source of life. That's why I commend you to think of how you view the Lord Jesus.

In Verse 31 the Apostles call him Savior (the first time this term is used in the New Testament). He's not a physician who saves lives or a psychologist who solves problems. He's *Savior*. Remember what the Apostles said in Verse 30 when they talked about the death of Jesus: "The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree." The language is important describing the crucifixion as Jesus being hanged on a tree. The Old Testament law in Deuteronomy 21 says "Cursed is any man that's hanged on a tree. To be hanged on a tree – crucified – was to be cursed (separated from God). But in Galatians 3:13 Paul says, "Christ Redeemed us from the curse of the law by

becoming a curse for us. For it is written 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.' " There is a real and necessary focus on the cross in a saving faith. A saving faith is God - centered, a saving faith is Christ-driven...

A Saving Faith is a Cross-Focused Faith

We cannot live our lives outside the protective shadow of the cross. In Verse 30 we see the statement "You killed him by hanging him on a tree." Peter will later say in 1 Peter 2:24, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed." Isn't that what the Apostles are saying in v. 31? "God exalted him at his right hand" as *leader* and *Savior* to give *repentance* and *forgiveness*. Two words leap off the page - repentance and forgiveness. That is a hand-in-glove description of a saving faith.

The Bible says that your personal sense of guilt and act of repentance is a gift from God. We see this in Romans 2:4: "His kindness leads to repentance". The feeling of guilt guides you to the cross where you see that Christ took the punishment for sinners and you turn from your sin. The Holy Spirit gives you strength to turn *away* from your sin and turn *to* Christ. There is forgiveness played out in a life of obedience.

A saving faith is a seen faith: God-centered; Christ-driven; Cross-focused.

(Pastor Prays)