

HOW TO OBTAIN FAITH

ROMANS 10:17 • TV096B

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By

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Romans 10:17

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Every one of you are going to be interested in my topic today. I’m going to speak on this subject: **“HOW TO OBTAIN SAVING FAITH.”**

Now, don’t turn away your ear even if you claim to have faith, even if you believe that you do have faith, even if you are seeking faith, if you have no faith; listen carefully to the message.

I preach this message to myself. I’m talking to myself as I am speaking to you. I don’t want to miss Christ. I don’t want to be hiding in a refuge of religious ceremony or ritualism or as Isaiah said; *“A refuge of lies”* and miss Christ and miss eternal life.

I want to know Christ. Do you know the apostle Paul said that, he said: *“O that I may win Christ and be found in him, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection? Let a man examine himself whether he be in the faith.”* Peter wrote, *“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”*

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It won't do to take this most important part of your life for granted. You'd better examine your faith while I examine mine because our Lord said, *"Many will say unto me in that day; Lord have we not preached in your name and in your name cast out devils and in your name we've done many wonderful works?"*

The Lord said to them, *"And then will I profess unto them: Depart from me; I never knew you. You are workers of iniquity."* Wouldn't that be tragic? Well, listen to this message, **"HOW TO OBTAIN SAVING FAITH."**

Now, Paul wrote in **Romans 5:1**, *"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God."* By faith we are justified and because we are justified by faith we have peace with God.

And then, in Ephesians **2: 8 and 9** Paul wrote these words, *"For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it's the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast."*

And then, in **Acts 16:31** when the convicted, troubled and repentant Philippian jailor fell at the feet of Paul and Silas and cried, *"Sirs; what must I do to be saved?"* Paul replied to him, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."*

Four times in the Word of God and four times this statement is recorded, *"The just shall live by faith."* That was the Scripture that convicted Martin Luther and brought him out of a religion of works, a religion of deeds, a religion of do's and don'ts. That brought him to knowledge of salvation, that Scripture right there, *"The just shall live by faith."* Salvation is by faith!

And our Lord made this statement. He said: *"If you believe not that I am he; (that I am the Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer), you will die in your sins if you believe not that I am he."* I must have faith. Whatever else I miss; I don't want to miss faith. I've got to have saving faith.

Now, so here's the question for us in our message today; "How can I obtain saving faith?" Well, I want to begin where I am. I have to begin there. That's what you ought to do; begin with what you know. Begin with where you are.

First of all: I know this; I know there is God!

Now notice I didn't say: "There is a God." I hear people say: "Well I believe there is a God; I don't. God is not an idol. There is a god in Japan in Kamakura and his name is Buddha. He is a god in a location. There's a god over somewhere else, a god in a location, an idol.

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I believe there is God. God is not in anything; everything's in God. *"He created all things by the word of his power."* There is God. I hear folks say, "Well, I believe God is a God of love." Now wait a minute! "God is a God of love?" That means love is over here and God's over here and He fills the bill, He follows the way that love points out.

Oh no; *"God is love."* The Bible doesn't say, "God is a God of love." The Bible says, *"God is love."* There's no love apart from God. Love is in God and of God and from God. Without God there is no love.

God is life. God is not a God of life; He is life, life came from God. God doesn't come from something and God is not situated over here. Most people go down to church building to meet their God. You don't have to go down to a church building to meet God. Everything is in God. *"In God we live and move and have our being."* That's where we start.

I believe there is God. God is light, God is truth, God is life, and God is love. Do you see that? I believe there is God. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* Everything came from God.

These things just didn't exist and we sent God in here somewhere and we recognize God when we recognize this, that, and the other. Everything came from Him. It originated with Him and sprang from Him and it is sustained by Him and kept by Him. There is God!

Don't be guilty of talking like an idolater; "I believe there's a God. I believe God is a God of love." That's idolatry; God is love, God is life, and God is truth. There is God. That's where we start. That's where everything starts.

Secondly: I believe that God is Holy!

God is Holy, God is almighty, God is sovereign, God is powerful, God is love, God is wise but when Isaiah saw the Lord; there's one attribute that stood out above all attributes to Isaiah, he said: *"I saw the Lord high and lifted up. His train filled the temple and the cherubim's and seraphim's around the throne of God cried: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts."*

He's Holy; God is Holy. God is immaculately, infinitely, immutably, unchangeably holy, so holy that *"no man can look upon God and live."* That's what God said to Moses, *"Moses, you can't look upon God and live."*

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God is awesomely holy, spotless holiness. His love is in perfection, His greatness is in perfection, and His holiness is in perfection. That's where we are now. Then we'll go on.

Thirdly: I know that I'm unholy and I know that you are too!

I know that all flesh is unholy before God. The Scripture says: *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* *"God looked down from heaven and saw that every imagination of man's heart was only evil continually."*

Listen to the apostle; *"In my flesh dwelleth no good thing. In the flesh no man can please God."* We are not talking only about the outer man; we are talking about the inner man. Everything that God is, flesh is the opposite.

God is life; flesh is death. God is truth, flesh is false; all men are liars. That's what the Scripture says, *"Let God be true and every man be a liar."* God is light; flesh is darkness. God is love; flesh is hate. Which comes easiest to you, hatred or love, evil or good, prayer or frivolity, what you know and I know too; that's easy to answer.

God is life and we are death. God is good and we are evil. That's what the Scripture says; *"Every man at his best state is all together vanity."*

All right; where are we? There is God. God is Holy and we're unholy and *"two can't walk together except they be agreed."*

Fourthly: I know then that I cannot by my works and by my deeds justify myself in God's sight!

Job, one of the most righteous of all men said this: *"If I justify myself; my own mouth would condemn me. If I say that I'm clean, my mouth would prove me to be perverse."* That's right! *"By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight."*

That's what God's Word says. In the flesh, by the deeds of law and by the works of the flesh, no shall flesh be justified. *"Not by works of righteousness which we've done but according to his mercy he has saved us."*

So, we know this, that this enmity and wrath and judgment that separate me from my God like a great cloud; it cannot be removed by my works and by my deeds and by my efforts. Something else has got to be done.

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Fifthly: I know God is merciful!

Moses one day said, *“Lord; show me your glory.”* God said, *“All right; I’ll cause my goodness to pass before thee. I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.”* That’s God’s glory, God’s goodness, and God’s mercy.

The Lord’s going to have a people. He said to Abraham, *“Abraham; I’m going to have a seed through you as the stars of the sky.”* Do you know how many stars are in the sky? There are billions of them. They go on and on.

And He said: *“I am going to have a people.”* Heaven is going to be populated by a people as the sands of the seashore. Do you know how many sands, grains of sand, there are on the seashore? That’s what God said to Abraham.

God’s going to have a people and I want to be one of them don’t you? I don’t want to miss glory. I don’t want to miss that inheritance. *“God’s plenteous in mercy. He delights to show mercy.”*

All right; I know that. So far; these things I know: I know there’s God. I know God’s holy and I know I’m unholy. I know I cannot make myself holy. I know I cannot blot out my record or my sins or justify myself before God.

I could crawl on my hands and knees from here to Mecca. I could pray not five times a day but 25 times a day. I could go through every religious ritual known to man and know every sect or cult in this world and still I’d have a heart of sin, evil thoughts, blaspheme, and all of these things, jealousies, envies, pride, and all of these things that live within like wiggle tails live in a corrupted cistern.

Sixthly: I know that God almighty will redeem a people and give them faith; I know that!

When Christ left this earth He said to His disciples: *“You go preach the gospel to every creature, (black and white, rich and poor, old and young, learned and ignorant).”*

It doesn’t matter where they are; just preach the Gospel to every creature. *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved and he that believeth not shall be damned.”* That’s what He said.

Our Lord said to Nicodemus: *“As Moses lifted up that serpent in the wilderness.”* He was pointing Nicodemus to look back there in the days when Israel, the people of Israel were bitten

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by the fiery serpents and Moses lifted up a brazen serpent and they looked, they looked by faith and they lived by God's mercy.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Salvation is by faith, not by works, by faith. And Christ died for sinners; He says that over and over again in His Word; “The well don't need a doctor; sick people need doctors.” Then He said, *“I didn't come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. I didn't come to save good people; I came to save sinners.”*

Our Lord ministered to the publicans and harlots and He spoke to the old religious, pious, moral, Pharisees sitting up there in the uppermost seats of the temple and looked down their noses and said, “Well what does he want to associate with those people for? They are nobody; they are sinners. We're not sinners; He ought to associate with us. We're righteous, we're good but they're sinners.”

And our Lord looked at them and said: “The well don't need a doctor; sick people need doctors. I didn't come to call you righteous Pharisees; I came to call sinners. You'll perish clothed and wrapped in your own ragged, filthy, garments which God says are ‘filthy rags in his sight.’” God sees right through self-righteousness.

He said, *“You are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God (almighty).”* That's what most religion is; it's an abomination in the sight of God almighty and it is highly esteemed among men.

But, it's just a bunch of people trying to work their way to heaven, trying to appear to be better than their neighbors and trying to appear to be holier than thou and trying to appear to be more pious than somebody else when they are dug out of the same pit.

They all came from the same daddy. They've got the same fallen, evil nature. They have the same wicked, filthy hearts, and they all need the same blood to make them white as snow.

Flesh is flesh; I don't care what you call it. You can call it Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, or Presbyterian. You can call it male or female. You can call it old flesh or young flesh, black flesh or white flesh or whatever it is. It's still flesh and *“in the flesh no man can please God.”*

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This thing of salvation is by faith and it's not inherited from our moms or dads either. My mother and dad can't give me faith; they can give me life of sin, a sinful life: *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh,"* but they can't give me faith.

And faith doesn't come by dreams and visions and faith doesn't come by the eloquence of a preacher. And faith doesn't come by sacraments and ordinances and rituals and ceremonies. And faith doesn't come by feeling and emotion.

How does faith come? Get your Bible and turn to **Romans 10:17** and you will find the answer to that question: "How can I obtain saving faith?" It's right there in front of you. God tells you how to obtain faith.

Salvation is by faith, not by works. You don't have enough works; you and all of the sons of Adam who have ever lived don't have enough works to justify one sinner before God. *"Even our works of righteousness are filthy rags in God's sight."*

My prayers are full of sin and yours are too. Nothing we do is totally and completely free from sin. Everything we do has some sin in it somewhere, a little selfishness, a little pride, a little haughtiness, a little arrogance, a little envy, and a little of this, that, and the other, no humility, no total love for God.

There's no man who loves God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength, and his neighbor as himself. That is the law; we need help don't we? We need mercy is what we need. We need a righteousness that somebody else worked out for us that God will be pleased to accept in our stead.

We need to be cleansed in something besides our own religious jargon, decisions and professions. We need a Saviour; oh how we need a Saviour. *"God be merciful to me a sinner."*

The old Pharisee stood there in the temple and he said: *"God; I sure thank you I'm not like other folks."* Why he said: *"I go to church and keep the Sabbath day and tithe and give alms and fast and pray. I do all these things. I'm not like that Publican over here."*

Christ said the old Publican, *"didn't so much as lift his eyes to heaven."* He was ashamed of his thoughts and his deeds and his nature. He smote upon his breast and cried: *"O God; be merciful to me a sinner."*

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Which one of them was saved? Do you care to venture again? You already know don't you? The old Pharisee went to hell; (that's what our Lord said) bragging on himself, and God justified the Publican.

He needed help and he found it. He cried for mercy and he received it. He sought the grace of God and he got it. And the same thing can be true of you and me if we can find faith, if we can obtain faith, if we can turn loose of our works and lay hold on Christ if we can turn loose of our doing and rest in what he's done.

That's right; that's the key. Look (l-o-o-k) and two of the letters are just alike. Simple isn't it, too simple for the profound mind, too simple for the intellectual, too simple for the fellow that wants to make it his own, only his own.

But that's the way it is and that's the way it is going to stay and that's the way it's always been. Abraham was justified by faith. Rahab was justified by faith. John was justified by faith.

Well, how can I obtain saving faith? Open your Bible to **Romans 10:17** and look at it; it says: *"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God."* That's where you obtain faith, not hearing what men say about the Word, not hearing the plans and patterns and propositions of zealous soul-winners. Faith comes by hearing the naked, bare, powerful, Word of God! *"Faith cometh by hearing the word of God."*

You better get acquainted with God's Word; you better get acquainted with God's Word: *"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."*

Don't trust your soul to some preacher. Don't trust your soul to what some preacher tells you to do. You know, those noble Bereans in the book of **Acts** it says, *"They heard Paul the apostle and then they went home and searched the scriptures to see if what Paul said was so."*

Boy, I admire that! You say, "Well if Paul told me anything I'd just believe it." I wouldn't. I'd search the Scriptures and see if it's so. That's what they did and God commended them. They searched the Scriptures: *"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God."*

Listen to **John 5:24**, our Lord said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you: He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life."*

"Preacher; what are you trying to get us to do?" Read God's Word! One man said one time; he took a Bible in his hand and he looked at the great preacher, Spurgeon and he said; "Mr.

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Spurgeon, salvation is to be found in this book and by God's grace I'm going to find it. I'm going to get into this book and stay there until God saves my soul."

That's what Christ said to the Pharisees: *"You search the scriptures; in them you think you have eternal life but they are they which testify of me."* While are you reading the Scriptures. Remember this, they reveal a person. Salvation is not in the Scriptures; it's in Christ but the Scriptures point to Christ.

The object of faith is Christ; the foundation of faith is the Scriptures. The reason for faith is the Scriptures. The source of faith is the Scriptures but Christ is the object of faith. He's the one who saves.

Listen to **John 6:63**: *"It's the spirit that quickens; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you are spirit; they are life."*

Listen to **1 Corinthians 15:1-3**; Paul said; *"Brethren; I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which you also received, and wherein you stand, and by which you are saved if you keep in memory what I preached unto you unless you have believed in vain for I delivered unto you how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and then he was buried and he rose again according to the scriptures."*

The Bible, the Word of God, is the seed which the Holy Spirit plants to bring forth life, the Word of God. Our Lord gave this illustration; he said: *"A sower went forth to sow."* The sower is the Son of God; the seed is what, the Word of God.

Now listen to this in **1 Peter 1:23**: *"Being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible seed."* Now, when we were born the first time of the flesh from our mother and father it was from a corruptible seed, a fleshly seed.

But the second birth *"is incorruptible seed by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever."* Listen to **James 1:18**: *"Of his own will begat he us."* What does the word "begat" mean? It means conceive, or give life. Of God's own will He gave us life. How, by the word of truth?

Christ is our life but you can't separate Christ from His Word; His Word reveals Him. Now listen to this: *"He created all things by the word of his power,"* that which we see about us, the stars, the universe, the earth, the sea, and the land, everything, the mountains and valleys and deserts, and plains; God created by the Word.

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He spake; and said: *“Let there be light; there was light.”* In the same way He creates spiritual life from nothing, by speaking. He said: *“Lazareth; come forth.”* Lazareth came forth and he received life.

It was the Word of God that brought him forth. It was the Word of God that caused creation to come into being and it's the Word of God that gives life to a dead sinner and you remember that. It's the Word of God.

It's the Word that reveals who God is, it's the Word that reveals what I am, it's the Word that reveals God's mercy in Christ, it's the Word that reveals the Gospel, and it's the Word that reveals our Mediator.

If you neglect the Word of God, if you neglect the source of life; (that's just being honest with you) if you neglect the Word of God you neglect the very source of conversion. That's what troubles me when preachers do not use the Word of God. Every message ought to contain a few of our words and a whole lot of God's Words.

God hasn't promised to bless my word. He didn't say; *“You're words will not return unto you void.”* He says, *“My word will not return unto me void. It shall accomplish that whereunto I send it.”*

Neglect the Word of God and you neglect the source of assurance. Neglect the Word of God and you neglect the source of hope, the source of comfort, peace and growth. He said: *“Desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.”* God's Word; that's the seed of life and He uses it to bring forth life.

Now, somebody might say to me, *“Now preacher; I read God's Word, I've heard God's Word preached and I have a Bible that I study but I don't have faith. I've been reading the Word, I've been listening to the Word and I've been studying the Word but I don't have faith.”*

Let me tell you this, there's nothing wrong with the Word; there must be something wrong with you. There's certainly nothing wrong with God's Word.

Maybe I could suggest some things that are between you and faith that are causing you to stumble, some obstructions. Let me ask you this, maybe it is lack of intention; just how serious are you about your relationship with Christ? Just how serious are you about your sins and your guilt and your danger? How troubled are you about death and judgment and eternity?"

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Our Lord said: *“Ye shall seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.”* You don’t play at this and that’s what some of you are doing. About one day a week you run down to the church and you open your Bible and dust it off you know and listen to a preacher a few minutes, close it up and go home and forget it the rest of the time. You are not serious about this thing. You are playing with your soul.

You are not like Bartimaeus who cried: *“Jesus thou Son of David; have mercy.”* You’re not like Jacob who took hold of the angel and said *“I won’t let you go until you bless me; (I’m hanging on).”* When you get to that place you will find faith.

And then maybe it’s a lack of attention and meditation. Some of you couldn’t tell an hour from now what I preached on. You are not listening. Now, you listen to the voices of this world but not to God’s Word. You get serious and pay attention and meditate upon these things.

And then it’s lack of honesty. Maybe your heart’s closed. You say: *“Well, he’s a Baptist and I’m a Methodist; I’m not going to listen to him.”* You can’t hear the Word if you’ve got a closed mind, if you feel with custom and prejudice and tradition. *“Lord speak; I’m listening; I’ll hear.”*

Lack of courage, lack of dedication; let me read you a Scripture over here in **Hebrews** and I will close, **Hebrews 2:1-3**: *“Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we’ve heard lest at any time we let them slip for if the words spoken by angels were steadfast and every transgression received the just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”*

Don’t neglect it; buy you a Bible. Find out what God says!