

**1) Christ's Finished work – which is received via faith (which is non-meritorious);**

**2) Moreover, the nature of the faith that saves in Christ is the paper's emphasis.**

**In the Gospel of John: The Father gave a work for Christ to do/finish, summed up in the salvation of sinners, all that work entailed.**

1. Jn 4:34f – “I’ve come to...finish His (Father’s) work”
2. Jn 17:4 – “I’ve finished the work you gave me to do”
3. Jn 19:30 – “It is finished”
4. See also Jn 5:36; 19:28; “works which the Father gave me to finish”, “Jesus, knowing all things were now accomplished (greek: “finished”).

**Nature of Faith: 1) *Basics* Essence of Christian Faith – Part 1**

**1a.** The ESSENTIAL Gospel which is the object of faith is summarized in “Christ Crucified,” which is at its base the righteousness provided in Christ (Rom 1:16f), thru bearing the curse of sin from a Holy God (Gal 3:10-13, cf. Hab 1:13). And all this is summarized in the above 4 verses and the truths which follow. BUT, it must be made clear that saving faith is in the person and thus we have life, not via facts believed, but union with the Prince of Life (Acts 3:15), and only secondarily (but important), faith in His work accomplished.

BUT AGAIN, WE GLORY IN *CHRIST CRUCIFIED* – THE *PERSON* OF JESUS THE LORD OF GLORY (1 Cor 2:2; Ja 1:1).

**Essence of Christian Faith – Part 2**

**1b. 1 Jn 5:12** – Faith in Christ brings eternal life. He is the object of our trust and the ground of all stability, assurance, and completeness as related to righteousness and the justice/grace/love of God (Rom 3:24-26; Col 2:10). This is why Christ is our “All in All” (Col 3:11) – complete for all sinners needs. To lay hold of Christ is to trust Him, His work and words. But let us detail the nature of how this last statement is to be understood as revealed by God in His Word. Again, the foundation of ALL is the work of *substitution* on the cross – so beautifully expounded by the phrase in 1 Pet 3:18, “the just for the unjust,” and illustrated in the Gospels in that historically, Christ was crucified in the stead or place of the thief Barabbas, Jn 18:38-40 – the Great Giver in the place of a Great Sinner.

**NOTE:** *Barabbas had no authority, power, ability, or any such work to be substituted for. It was 100% in the hands of others. Grace is just that; unmerited favor bestowed upon an unworthy object. Barabbas was the*

*recipient of mercy bestowed beyond his powers to obtain – and so to is the truth of mercy to the ungodly (Rom 4:5).*

### **The “Work” God calls us to - FAITH**

**2. Jn 6:28f** – It is the “work” man is called to do by Christ. Although holiness always follows true faith (Heb 12:14), THE work of redemption is faith in the risen Savior.

### **The “Work” of faith is a gift of God, both initially and continually**

**3. Eph 2:8f; Phil 1:29; Col 2:12; 2 Pet 1:1...v1** “obtained”(Greek, “lagchano,”) that is, to obtain by lot! [the same word in 2 Pet 1:1 used again in Acts 1:17 where an apostle is chosen by a lot!] – It is a gift of God/grace; that is both its essence and out-working (i.e. righteous before God and subsequently, righteous living).

### **The Nature of this saving faith**

**4. Jn 3:36; 6:47** – All who have faith (believe) in Christ have eternal life. NOW – “HOW MUCH” FAITH IS SAVING FAITH? What is its nature, abundance, faults, errors, stumbles, growth...etc.?

### **The simplicity of faith that is far beyond just “redeeming”**

**5. Mt 17:20** – mustard seed (minute) faith *moves mountains* [ thus:less, to some degree of measure, saves]: the thief on the cross, Lk 23:39-43; the woman who only touched Christ’s garment as her expression of faith, Matt 9:20-22; the Syrophenician woman content with the scraps of Christ’s works/words, Mk 7:26-30; a man who was a Roman soldier, but understood Christ’s authority was far above Rome – Like Christ, only Christ is far beyond, the Soldier said, he/He spoke... and it was done (cf. creation!), Mt 8:5-13.

**NOTE:** 2 Cor 4:5-6 actually uses creation as an illustration of faith/salvation! To sum up, in Matt 18:1ff, Jesus gives the summery illustration of faith – a childlike approach to Christ. What is saving faith...? It is a childlike dependence upon Christ for ALL. In every illustration, that’s what we see.

### **The foundation of gifts/use(this context:giving)...which includes faith**

**6. II Cor 8:12** – in the gift/grace of giving, it is accounted to what a man *has to give*, increased by what he *desired to give*, not what was actually given – proven by **Lk 21:1-4** and the widow’s mite...she gave more than all *because she gave of her want/lack. But offerings in faith in Christ HAVE NO “WANT”/NO “LACK”, because it is always “savored” by Christ. From our point of view our faith is as the widow’s mite – insignificant; but from God’s point of view, 1) since Christ is the object of our faith, and 2) we give all to*

*Him, God says we give as much or more than great men/measures of faith – and that means it surly **saves!***

Thus what is sure is that basic trust/faith in Christ saves. It is the exercised gift of trust in All of Christ; That faith being small, flawed, hypocritical at times...better at other times of trusting Him; but all accepted by God because of 1) the love and savior of the object of faith – Christ, whom God delights in, and 2) the nature of our trust being made sure and great, not by our abundant quality/quantity, but faith as a gift, but 3) is what makes all the above secure; it is Christ's will to have us forgiven, by expressing forgiveness of the greatest of sins, the crucifixion of one who was proven innocent: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,"(Lk 23:34).

**GOD "MEASURES" FAITH BASED NOT ON WHAT WE HAVE BUT... ON WHAT CHRIST HAS AND ON WHAT OUR WILLING TRUST IS ACCOUNTED FOR (e.g. widow's mite), all for HIS (Christ's) sake.**

### **Interaction of the merits of Calvary and our trust in Calvary's King**

**7. Is 42:21** and **Eph 5:2**...Calvary, and only the cross, *gives quality* to every grace in man's possession, and answers to every aspect of God's definition of life's demands of righteous expression – for only Christ was thoroughly pleasing in every regard in every action of life (Mt 3:17;12:18;17:5;2 Pet 1:17). Our offering in Christ has the savor of His work in every act – thus making it a "sacrifice well pleasing to God," Heb 13:16; or, "a sacrifice, acceptable, well-pleasing to God," Phil 4:18. This is why non-animal offerings in *OT types had additions* to them besides that which a man gave to the priest (e.g. meat [meal] offering was offered *with frankincense and oil*, reflective of the addition of Christ, Lv 2:1), whereas SIN offerings refused such additions – reflecting Christ and He alone and its sufficiency (Lv 5:11). This type-addition is essential in incorporating that extra which gives "sweet savor" [cf. Eph 5:2 again]. Thus all our offering (incl. faith) have the "frankincense" and "oil" of Christ in every act/offering.

### **The Acceptability of us/our lives via Calvary's merit in God's sight**

**8.** This is why not just WE "are acceptable in the Beloved" (Christ, Eph 1:6), but ALL that is from us, as it is in dependence on Christ (faith), is acceptable to God. That is also why God said multiple times, "whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed," (Rom 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet 2:6).

### **A Warning**

**Lk 13:24** – Before I continue in the simple, childlike nature of true faith; so that no-one gets the idea that faith is "as easy as falling off a log" to believe in Christ, my warning comes from Lk 13:24, where the first word our Lord uses regarding salvation is "Strive' to enter the straight gate." The word "strive" is agonidzo, from whence we get in English "agonize." He goes on to

say “many will desire to enter *and not be able*. So I do not want to minimize the difficulties of saving faith (which is why IT IS A GIFT OF GOD – MAN HAS NOT THE CAPACITY TO REPENT AND SAVINGLY BELIEVE!). But this paper is on the essence of saving faith, its nature and definition; in particular, for those to whom doubt almost comes *easy*. It is for their comfort and assurance this paper is written. So that being said...

### **“Ask,” “Come all ye,” and the Lk 11 illustration**

**9. Matt 7:7f**, Access to the throne of Christ and grace. **NOTE:** According to our Lord’s words, the 21<sup>st</sup> century believer, in some sense that only God knows, is more blessed than Peter, Paul, or Luke.

In Jn 20:29, Jesus says to Thomas after he observed and touched the risen Lord, that, “Thomas, because you have seen; you believe: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Peter confirms this to his Jewish brethren scattered abroad at various synagogues as well as houses; “whom (e.g. Christ) having not seen, you love...,” 1 Peter 1:8, implying although apostles and some others learned from and saw the risen Lord, others did not hear the words and see the long promised Messiah. Yet, they trusted in Him for redemption. Child-like trust, that of Matt 18:1ff, is precious in God’s sight – for every child puts all trust and complete faith in the Father.

**ILLUSRATION#1:** Please note that God is truth, and therefore speaks absolute truth upon which we can trust. But God, to both show His tender mercies and encourage such as doubt, does not just declare the obvious truth that we, who are dust, should trust because of His glorious God-hood; but in His sweetness to aid us, He gives further, logical, down-to-earth illustrations of *why* we should trust (this action of God the puritans called God’s gracious “condescension”). In Luke’s recount of our “Lord’s Prayer,” Christ claims that God forgives, and continues by showing through a story why it cannot be otherwise.

First, Christ gives the example of “sinful” motives/actions; that is, the actions of a man who comes to his **friend** and requests some food. Yet because of just the inconvenience of the time and the inconvenience of this friend’s late night request, his friend’s first response is “**no!**” Yet, because of the fact that the friend at the door is bothering him, he grants the request and the requestor receives the food. Again, this is a neighbor, a friend, who needs food for a visitor and has not enough. But, Christ says in the story, for totally sinful, self-centered reasons the man who received the late-night request says to himself, “Ah, he’s going to bother my sleep and possibly ruin my night...I’ll get him out of here by giving him bread or whatever (one gets the impression he threw the food out the door!).”

Now, Christ says via further analogies etc., **God will never do such**. Ask, and you will receive...if you ask God for an loaf of bread, do you think He will give you a stone; or asking for an egg, will God come back with a scorpion?? And here is the seal on it all – illustration and parallels – “if you,

being EVIL, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit (the giver of boldness, assurance, peace, etc.) to them that ask Him? God, in His purity, could just give a factual command; but the Father of all graces adds a sure, understandable illustration to seal the truth to His own **that God Himself IS A TRUE, CHEERFUL GIVER!**

**ILLUSRATION#2:** All this subjective doubt about the payment for our sin is like us going to a \$7.50 movie with a \$500 bill in our possession, wondering if it will do the job because it's in our wallet, or crumpled, or in our back pocket, or ad nauseam. Yet this isn't even a good illustration, because we never handle the money so important to enter the theater (of grace) to begin (or end) with! Further, Christ not only was the one to pay, but at His disposal was not a \$500 bill, but Fort Knox plus change!

**CONCLUSION (10):** THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IN SALVATION/ASSURANCE: God's desire to save sinners:

- 1) "for God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved" (Jn 3:17);
- 2) "for the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10).

By far the most important issues in Scripture are those related to God's will in our outcome: 1) Does God desire man to know Him; and 2a) with respect to fallen man (the sinner), *God desires* to save him, 2b) *God desires* that man know that he is forgiven/saved, and 2c) *God desires* that man has all this by God's sure and purposeful work, accomplishing the whole via the work of His Son (cf. 4 part beginning statements in John's gospel); i.e. as J. C. Ryle rightly points out, since Paul was the "chief of sinners", 1 Tim 1:15, he would be the last to have any basis for assured love and redemption in God: and Paul's thoughts of his spiritual condition...? 2 Tim 1:12, "I know whom I have believed (Greek; "have believed and continue to believe"), and am persuaded (Greek; "stand persuaded") that He is able to keep *that which I've committed to Him* (e.g. my redemption) against (Greek; "until"/"unto") that day."

*The goal of this work is to strengthen our assurance that **God is for us**; so who or what (including our doubts etc.) can be against us (Rom 8:31)...surely the most rhetorical question in all the Bible...if God spared not His own Son (Rom 8:32). Our troubles always begin and end with our forgetfulness of Jesus Christ.*