

Does Your Faith Work?

James 5:19-20

Pastor John Miller

In James 2:14, he says, “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says...”—catch that word “says”—“...he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”—or “Can that kind of faith save him?”

The book of James is about a faith that works, or a faith that is real or genuine. We hear the title of the epistle, quite often, as “Faith that works” or “The behavior of Belief.” That’s really what James is about: James is about Christianity 101. It’s Christianity in shoe leather. D. L. Moody used to say that “Every Christian’s Bible should be bound in shoe leather, so they are reminded that the Word of God is to be lived out in their daily lives.” I love that. (I pray that we are “doers of the Word and not hearers only.” That is the question that the book of James is asking: Is your faith real? Does your faith work?

If you just say that you have faith, but you don’t have works, that mere profession of saying you’re a Christian doesn’t make you a Christian. Just saying that you have faith doesn’t mean your faith is authentic or that it’s real or that it’s genuine.

What I want to do with the book of James is I want us to ask ourselves 10 questions, and then we’ll end with our text in determining whether our faith is real or genuine or whether or not we’re mature or we’re growing in our faith.

The first question asked in the book of James is, How do I respond to trials and testings? Do they make you better or bitter? Do they strengthen your faith, or do they destroy your faith in God? James 1:2-5 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

When you’re looking at the trials that come to us in life, the first thing we need to do is to count them as joy, verse 2: “Count it all joy.” You need to have a joyful attitude in trials. That’s an indication that your Christianity is real and authentic.

Then the key word in verse 3 is “knowing”; “knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” You need to understand something; you need to have a knowledge that trials come into the life of a believer, and they are for their good and for God’s glory. You need to know that.

The third thing is in verse 4: your need to yield to God and let Him work in your life. “But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect...”—or “mature”—“...and complete...”—or “entire”—“...lacking nothing.”

So first of all, we count it as joy, verse 2; secondly, we know that trials are working for our good

and God's glory, verse 3; then thirdly, verse 4, we have to yield, or let God work in our life.

Then fourthly, in verse 5, we need to pray. We need to ask God to give us wisdom. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all liberally and without reproach..."—and James promises that—"...and it will be given to him." I love that promise. If you ask God for wisdom—wisdom for what? Wisdom to know that God is working the trial for your good and for His glory. Wisdom that you won't waste your suffering or trial, but that you'll invest it so that you'll "grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

So here it is: A faith that works grows stronger through trials.

How many of you know somebody who said that they were a Christian, but the minute something went wrong in their life—maybe someone died or somebody got sick or maybe they lost their job or maybe their marriage fell apart—they turned their back on God? They said, "I don't believe in God anymore. I don't believe in the Bible anymore. I've given up my Christianity." They walk away. We're going to see how that ties in with our last verses in the book of James in our conclusion: "If anyone among you wanders from the truth..." or "walks away from the truth."

The test of a real, genuine faith is that when you're going through trials, it makes you stronger. Someone said, "The same sun that melts wax hardens the clay." I love that. It's not the trial; it's how we respond to the trial. Clay gets hardened, but wax melts. We're to have a yielding to the Lord. Let God work in our lives.

So question number one: How do I respond to trials?

Question number two: Do I resist temptation? This is a tough one. Every one of us faces temptation, but when you have a new nature and God is within you, you learn how to resist those temptations. It doesn't mean that you'll never fall or that you'll never sin, but you do resist temptation. You don't yield to it.

Look at it in James 1:13-18: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures."

So when you are facing temptation, remember its source: it's my sinful desire. It's not from God. Remember its course, verses 14-15: It starts with desire, it leads to disobedience and results in death. Then remember how it is conquered, verse 17: God is good, and good gifts come from God. Don't listen to the devil, who has only evil for you, but listen to God. Trust in Him. Then remember, in verse 18, that you've been born into God's family. You have a new nature. When you become a Christian, you have a new capacity, a new ability to resist

temptation, to walk in victory, to say “No” to sin.

So the second test is your test of temptation, solicitation to evil. Faith that works resists temptation.

Here is the third test of your faith that you need to ask yourself: Am I a doer of the Word? Do I do the Word? Do I practice the Word? Do I live out the Scriptures? We have to hear the Word. James 1:19 says, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” But we’re slow to hear, swift to speak, and swift to wrath. A sign of a true believer is they hear God’s Word.

Notice also they receive God’s Word, verse 21. “Lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls”—or “bless or save your life.”

So we hear the Word, verse 19; we receive the Word, verse 21; and we obey the Word, verse 22. “Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” In many ways, this summarizes the book of James. James is all about being a doer of the Word. So a real, genuine, authentic faith obeys the Word of God.

Do you take joy in being obedient to God’s Word? When you come on Sunday, you hear the Word read, and do you say, “Lord, speak. I am listening and I’m ready to obey. Whatever You say, I will do”?

Here’s question number four: Do I show partiality? Do I show respect of persons? There are four reasons why the true Christian doesn’t show partiality. In chapter 2, verse 1, it is inconsistent with faith in Christ. “My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.” I would paraphrase that by saying, “Don’t say you’re a Christian and show respect of persons. It’s inconsistent with faith in Jesus Christ.”

In verse 5, it is inconsistent with God’s actions. “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” In other words, God has chosen poor people, and if He has chosen poor people, you ought not to despise poor people. That’s what they were doing in the church. You shouldn’t do that.

Thirdly, it is breaking God’s law, verses 8-9. “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” So it is against God’s law.

Fourthly, it brings the judgment of God upon you to show partiality or respect of persons, verses 12-13. “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” So not only is it the breaking of God’s law that brings judgment or the wrath of God on you. A faith that works does not show partiality but shows love to all.

When you come to church on Sunday, if you are a true Christian, you should love other people, no matter what color their skin, no matter what their rank is, their age is, what their nationality is. We should love all people, for "God loved the world," and we should too. We don't show favoritism. We don't show partiality. We don't cater to certain groups.

Here is question number five that we need to ask ourselves, in light of the book of James: Am I able to tame my tongue? Yes, the true Christian has tamed the tongue. Now I realize that James says, "The tongue can no man tame." That's the problem: We can't tame our tongue. Have you ever tried to literally hold your tongue? That's a slippery little thing. You just can't hold that thing.

But I noticed that when I got saved, my speech changed. The words that were coming out of my mouth changed, because my heart changed. Someone said, "If it's in the well, it comes up in the bucket." So God changed my heart, and that changed my speech.

Look at chapter 3, verse 2. "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect..."—or "mature"—"...man..."—or "woman"—"...able also to bridle the whole body." The mark of spiritual maturity is that you are able to control your tongue. In James 1:26, he mentioned the tongue earlier. He says, "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless."

I've met people before who don't know I'm a Christian. I might meet them somewhere, and they're saying bad words. Then they find out I'm a pastor and they say, "Ooh! Sorry, pastor. I don't know where that came from."

I said, "I know where that came from. It came from your heart. You need a new heart, and only Jesus can give you a new heart."

James says, "Can from the same fountain come both sweet water and bitter water?" It doesn't work that way. You don't have sweet-bitter water. It's either sweet or bitter. It comes from the fountain. So it's inconsistent to say, "I'm a Christian" and then profanity comes out of your mouth. God changes your heart, and God changes your words and you get control over your tongue. That includes gossip and backbiting and slander and saying cutting things or critical things about other people. God gives you control of your tongue. Don't say, "I'm a Christian," and then attack other people or gossip about other people; that's inconsistent.

You need to ask yourself, Is my faith real? Is it genuine? A faith that works has power over the tongue.

Here is question number six: Do I follow earthly wisdom or heavenly wisdom in my life? Am I conducting my life guided by heavenly wisdom or by earthly wisdom?

You say, "Well, where does that come from?" James 3:13-18 says, "Who is wise and understanding among you?" This is what you are to do: "Let him show by good conduct that

his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking...”—now here’s earthly wisdom, in verses 14-16—“...in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above...”—it’s not from God—“...but is earthy, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”

How apropos are these verses for the marriage relationship. In your marriage, in your husband-wife relationship, are you functioning in the realm of earthly wisdom? Is it strife filled? Is it contentious? Is it full of evil? Strife? Is it easy to be entreated? Is it full of confusion and evil work? Then it is not God’s wisdom.

But notice the contrast of heavenly wisdom in verses 17-18. “But the wisdom that is from above...”—it comes from God—“...is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” So a faith that works produces peace.

Now that’s not to say that if you’re in a Christian marriage, where both husband and wife are Christians, that you’ll never disagree. As a married person, you realize that two people living together have disagreements. But if you’re “walking in the Spirit, you’ll not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” If you’re following wisdom from above, it’ll be pure, peaceable, easy to receive instruction. You’ll learn to love one another, and you’ll get along in your relationship.

Question number seven is, Do I humbly submit to God’s will and plans and purpose for my life? Do I want to live out the will of God in my life? I want you to see it in James 4:15-16. “Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”

Basically it is saying, “You say that ‘Today or tomorrow, we’re going to go to such and such a city, we’re going to buy and sell—buy low and sell high—we’re going to make a profit, we’ve got our two-year plan, we’ve got our five-year plan and we’ve got our ten-year plan, then we’re going to retire, buy a motor home and drive around the country, we’re going to play golf at Pebble Beach, then we’re going to move here. In Jesus’ name. Hallelujah!’” Then you finally retire, you have a heart attack and you can’t do anything. (I just thought I’d encourage you.)

What you ought to say is, “If God wills....” Why? Because life is complex. “Buy, sell, get gain”; we don’t know if that will happen. Life is short. It’s like a vapor of smoke that appears for a time and then it vanishes away. Life is uncertain. We don’t know what a day may bring forth. This to me is one of the most important points.

You know what a real Christian does? A real Christian says, “Lord, I’ll go wherever you want me to go. And I’ll do whatever you want me to do. I’ll say whatever you want me to say. I’ll be whatever you want me to be.”

I remember when I first got saved, I prayed that prayer. My goal and ambition in life was just to live at the beach, be a surfer, make surfboards. I thought I was called by God to be a

professional surf bum. That was my ambition and my goal. Then I got saved, and I had to say, "Lord, I'll go wherever you want me to go." And I was praying, "But please, Lord, don't let it be Barstow. I'll kinda go wherever it is, Lord, as long as it's not Barstow. But Lord, if you're calling me to ministry, let it be to Tahiti. Let's start a church in Tahiti. We'll reach the natives on the island of Tahiti for Jesus. I'll go, Lord, where you want me to go."

I believe we need to ask ourselves if we are willing to actually go where God calls us to go. Are you willing to take all your goals and all your plans and all your ambitions and put them at the feet of Jesus and say, "Have your way"?

I love that song:

Have Thine own way, Lord.

Have Thine own way.

Thou art the potter. I am the clay.

Mold me and make me after Thy will.

While I am waiting, yielded and still.

That's the cry of a child of God. "Lord, I want you to be what You want me to be. I want to go where You want me to go and do what You want me to do." We ought to say, "If God wills..." So a faith that works submits to God's purpose, plan and will for their life.

Question number eight is a test of your faith. Do I patiently await the Lord's return? Look at James 5:7. It says, "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord." We are to be waiting and looking for the Lord to come again. Remember in the text he gave us three examples of patience: the farmer, verse 7, who is working and waiting; the prophets, verse 10, who witnessed and preached the good news; and then Job, verse 11, who was waiting. Job went through trials and hardships, but Job came through them better rather than bitter. So like the farmer, we're to be working. Like the prophet, we're to be witnessing and like Job, we're to be waiting. A faith that works is longsuffering, waiting for the Lord's return.

Question number nine is a little self-evaluation. Am I prayerful until the Lord returns? Am I patiently awaiting the Lord's return? Christians are looking for that "blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." But we're also to be praying. Look at James 5:13. We are to pray even when we are sad. "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him..."—or "her"—"...pray." If you are going through a time of suffering, sorrow, grief or hardship, you need to pray.

Also if you are glad, verse 13. "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms." So you pray when you are sad, and you pray when you are glad.

Then notice verse 14; you pray when you are sick. “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” “And the prayer of faith will save the sick,” and if he has committed any sins, God will raise him up. So you also pray when you are sick. The Bible says, “The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

A faith that works is prayerful until Jesus comes. If you are a genuine Christian, you pray, you talk to God, you pour out your heart to God.

Question number ten comes from our text, James 5:19-20. “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth...”—or “turns away from the truth of the Gospel” or “the truth of God’s Word” or “the truth of Scripture” or “the truth of Christian doctrine”—“...and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” Do I seek to win or reclaim those who have gone astray, or do I just write them off? Someone who has walked with God and turned away—do I go after them? Do I pray for them? Do I seek to win them back to Christ?

I have studied these two verses for many years and also diligently the last three weeks in expectation that I would be preaching from them. I must confess that I do so with fear and trepidation, because they are challenging. They are difficult to understand. I believe there are two basic ways to interpret these verses, and I am confessing to you that I am not sure which of the two is correct. I do believe that all Scripture has only one interpretation. God said what He meant and meant what He said. So one is right and the other one is not.

But both of them are Biblical, so I want to share both. Although I am not sure about the text and all that it implies, I want to share with you what I do believe is true, and you can sort it out and study it on your own.

First of all, I believe James is giving a hypothetical case in verse 19. “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back....” He is giving a hypothetical case. That comes from the Greek grammar in the text itself. It isn’t something that is actually happening. He is saying, “if anyone among you wanders from the truth....” Here is where the rub comes in; here are the two interpretations.

One interpretation is that the person who errs from the faith and needs to be turned back is a Christian, or a brother or sister in Christ. They have been born again or been regenerated. They have turned away or backslidden. We used to use that word “backslidden.” Christians can backslide. In the Christian life, you’re either front sliding or backsliding; there is no neutral ground. You’re either growing, or you’re falling away.

So it’s possible he is saying that in the church if there is someone who is a Christian falls away—and we know people who have fallen away. They no longer serve the Lord—it says that we should actually seek to convert them. If it’s a believer, the situation now is that they turn back. They’re not born again, again.

I don't believe that a Christian, a true, born-again child of God, can ever lose their salvation. Good Christians disagree on this subject. But I believe that if you have been regenerated, you cannot unregenerate yourself. When you get saved you are taken out of Adam, and by the work of the Holy Spirit you are placed into Christ positionally. The Holy Spirit takes you out of Adam and places you in Christ. This is why Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." So now that you have been taken out of Adam and placed into Christ, there is no separation; you cannot be lost. You've been placed in the Father's hands, and you cannot jump out of the Father's hands. You can try, but you can't. Now you can lose your fellowship with God because of sin and disobedience, but you cannot lose your sonship.

But this is not a license to sin. This is not a license to say, "Well, I'm just going to live however I want." If you want to live a sinful life, then I question whether or not you're really a Christian. Nature determines appetite; if you're really a child of God, you're going to want God, you're going to want God's Word, you're going to love God and serve God.

Having been given the Holy Spirit, you may grieve Him, but you can't grieve Him away. You may quench Him, but you can't get Him to leave you. Ephesians 4:30 says, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." That's permanence. I believe that.

So to interpret this passage as saying that this is a Christian who falls away and is reconverted or resaved or born again, again is not what James is saying here. He is saying that a Christian can fall away, and they need to be turned back. The word "converted" can be used for "turned around" or "turned back."

Remember when Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Peter, Satan desires to have you, and he wants to sift you like wheat." Can you imagine Jesus turning to Peter and saying, "Satan called me last night. He asked for you by name. Satan wants you."

"What did you tell him, Lord?! You didn't say, 'Go ahead and take him,' did You?"

Jesus was referring to Peter's denial, Peter's fall. Jesus said to Peter, "When you are converted..."—or "when you are turned back"—"...strengthen your brother. But Peter, I have prayed for you." That is one of the things we need to do in order to bring a fallen person back. Don't gossip about someone who falls into sin. Don't criticize them. Don't put them down. Get on your knees and begin to pray for them. They may not allow you to talk to them about God, but they can't stop you from talking to God about them.

Have you ever had someone say, "I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to hear about Jesus. I don't want you to talk to me about Christianity. I've given that up." It's funny; I've met people who say, "I used to be a Christian." There's no such thing. You didn't "used to be a Christian." If you were a Christian, you're still a Christian. You may not be living like a Christian. You may not want to be a Christian. But you're still a Christian. That's like saying, "I

used to be an elephant.” An elephant is always going to be an elephant. It’s not going to morph into something else. If you’re really a Christian, you’ll always be a Christian. You may be dishonoring God. You may be rebellious toward God, but you’re still a Christian.

When James says, “Brethren,” by the way, he’s not saying that this is just a pastor’s job. It’s everyone’s job. Do you know someone who has turned away from Jesus? Who used to walk with Jesus? Did you ever call them? Or go to them? Have you ever prayed for them? Have you ever tried to reach out to them? To bring them back to church? Or bring them back to Christ? Or bring them back to the faith? That is what James is enjoining us to do. James says, “Brethren...”—or “all Christians”—“...if anyone among you wanders from the truth....”

The other interpretation of this text is that those who “wander from the truth” are professing Christians. They are apostatizing. They weren’t really born again. This is another Biblical, true and possible scenario. Everyone who goes to any church is not necessarily born again. Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian. You can say you believe in God, but eventually you fall away from the truth. Even though you know you’ve heard it, you reject the truth. This is what the Bible calls “apostasy”; it’s falling away from the truth. You were never born again.

The problem is that we don’t know people’s hearts. Only God knows. And people get confused: “I know this Christian. He was really a Christian, but now he’s denied Jesus and he’s walked away. How can he still be a Christian? How can he go to heaven?” Or “I know this person. They never really believed in God, and they fell away. Where were they?” Only God knows their heart.

But there is wheat and there are tares. They grow together, and only God knows the difference. This is why the book of James is so important. All these tests serve to ask, “Is my faith real? Is my faith genuine? Is my faith authentic? Have I really been born again? How do I respond to trials? How do I respond to temptation? What about my tongue? What about my attitude toward people? How do I live my life? Am I really a child of God?”

When a Christian falls away from the truth, verse 19, that involves their belief and their behavior, but they can be turned back. If it involves an unsaved, professing Christian, they need to be born again.

But notice the results in verse 20: “Let him know that he who turns a sinner...”—whether it be a backslidden Christian or an unregenerated, professor of the faith—“...from the error of his way...”—these two things happen—“...will save a soul from death...”—If it’s a Christian, you’re saving them from physical death, because their sin can lead to a premature or early death. If it’s a non-Christian, you’re saving them from eternal death—“...and cover a multitude of sins.” These are the sins they would have committed, or if they are born again, it would be the sins that God forgives.

We all have a multitude of sins, and God forgives them, covers them and He washes them. If you have sins, God can forgive all of your sins. He can cleanse all of your sins. They can be

washed and forgiven.

So this stands as a motivation for soul winning and a motivation to reach out to those Christians who have stumbled and fallen, and we want to bring them back and win them back.

The method used is not mentioned in our text. But it doesn't say that we should gossip, it doesn't say that we should back bite, but let me give you three simple steps. This is how you win a brother or sister who has fallen into sin: Number one, you love them and you care for them. You continue to love the lost. You care for those who have wandered off God's path.

Secondly, you pray for them. Jesus prayed for Peter, that his faith fail not, and Peter was converted and brought back. Have you been on your knees for those people who you know don't come to church anymore? Who don't believe in Jesus anymore? Who have fallen away from Christ? Or have you just written them off?

This makes us most like Jesus when we seek the lost. Jesus said, "I have come to seek and to save that which is lost." You want to be like Jesus? Then go seeking those who are lost. Jesus said, "If a man owns 100 sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the 99 on the hills and go to look for the one sheep that wandered off?" I would have said, "Aw, just one out of 100? Good riddance. That stupid sheep should know better anyway. That's that really dumb sheep. We're better off without him. We've got 99 elite sheep left. Let's let the flaky sheep go." No; the shepherd goes looking for that one lost sheep. He hears the sheep crying, "Baa!" When he finds the sheep, he puts it on his shoulders, and he comes back rejoicing. That's our job. Our job is to go to them and love them and pray for them and get down on our knees and intercede for them.

Then we do it how? This is the third step. Galatians 6:1 says, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" or "there but for the grace of God, go I." You do it in humility and love. You don't go to them in haughtiness or pride. You don't say, "I suspected you would fall. You looked kind of shady. I always knew you have a very small Bible. You were suspect from the day I met you. You weren't part of the deeper-life club. What's wrong with you?!" If it weren't for God's grace, you'd be the fallen brother. You go to them in humility and brokenness. "Weep with those who weep," and adjure them and call them to come back to Christ. If you do that, you'll save a soul from death and destruction. And you'll hide a multitude of sins. You would be most like Jesus Christ.

This is one of the great needs of the church today. We shoot our fallen wounded. We're all in a battle, and when somebody gets wounded, we shoot them. We kick them out. No. Jesus said to go to them. Reach out to them.

Maybe you have drifted from Christ. Maybe you come every Sunday and sit there in the pew, but your heart is far from God. Maybe you're going through the motions, but you've drifted so far away from God. Maybe today this is God's call to you to come back.

You may say, "Pastor Miller, I'm a Christian, but I'm not walking with Jesus. I've fallen away from Jesus. I don't read my Bible anymore. I don't pray anymore. I don't have His joy anymore. I don't have His peace anymore. I don't have His love in my heart. I'm functioning with earthly wisdom; there is strife in my home and in my marriage." Then come back. Turn back to Jesus today. "If today you hear His voice, harden not your heart." Today come back to Jesus, and He, with open arms, will receive you and forgive you and restore you. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Maybe you're in that second category. Maybe you profess to be a Christian, but you know in your heart that you're not born again. If you were to die right now, you know you wouldn't go to heaven. You're going through the motions; maybe you believe in God, but you haven't really trusted Him as Savior. It's possible to believe intellectually, but you haven't actually trusted in Him. You haven't put your faith in Him.

So to people in both those categories, I'm going to give you an opportunity right now. If you've backslidden, come back to Jesus Christ. If you're not a Christian and haven't been born again, get saved. Get the life of God in your soul. Make sure that you're a Christian. Don't leave today without knowing that if you died that you would go to heaven.

Jesus died on the Cross for your sins. He was buried and He rose from the dead. If you turn from your sins and trust Him, He'll forgive you, and you'll have the hope of heaven. You'll be His child.

And I want to ask you: Have you fallen away from Jesus Christ? Are you backslidden?

So every head bowed, every eye closed and Christians praying.