

# The Sum of Saving Knowledge - Evidences of True Faith

by David Dickson

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*True faith is evidenced by the daily employment of Christ for cleansing of the conscience and affections from sin, and for enabling obedience to the law in love.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:16, John 15:5, 1 Timothy 1:5, 2 Peter 1:5

**Topics:** "True Faith", "Christian Obedience"

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## Description

David Dickson preaches about the evidences of true faith, emphasizing the believer's obligation to keep the moral law, the importance of growing in godliness and righteousness, the necessity of obedience to the law through faith in Christ, and the significance of maintaining close communion with Jesus to bear good fruits.

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## Transcript

THE EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH.

So much for the laying the grounds of faith, and warrants to believe. Now, for evidencing of true faith by fruits, these four things are requisite: 1. That the believer be soundly convinced, in his judgment, of his obligation to keep the whole moral law, all the days of his life; and that not the less, but so much the more, as he is delivered by Christ from the covenant of works, and curse of the law. 2. That he endeavour to grow in the exercise and daily practice of godliness and righteousness. 3. That the course of his new obedience run in the right channel, that is through faith in Christ, and through a good conscience, to all the duties of love towards God and man. 4. That he keep strait communion with the fountain Christ Jesus, from whom grace must run along, for furnishing of good fruits.

For the first, viz. To convince the believer, in his judgment, of his obligation to keep the moral law, among many passages, take Matt. v. 16.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Verse 17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Verse 18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Verse 19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but

whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Verse 20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Wherein our Lord, 1. Giveth commandment to believers, justified by faith, to give evidence of the grace of God in them before men, by doing good works: Let your light so shine before men, (saith he,) that they may see your good works. 2. He induceth them so to do, by shewing, that albeit they be not justified by works, yet spectators of their good works may be converted or edified; and so glory may redound to God by their good works, when the witnesses thereof shall glorify your Father which is in heaven. 3.

He gives them no other rule for their new obedience than the moral law, set down and explicated by Moses and the prophets: Think not (saith he) that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. 4. He gives them to understand, that the doctrine of grace, and freedom from the curse of the law by faith in him, is readily mistaken by men's corrupt judgments, as if it did loose or slacken the obligation of believers to obey the commands, and to be subject to the authority of the law; and that this error is indeed a destroying of the law and of the prophets, which he will in no case ever endure in any of his disciples, it is so contrary to the end of his coming, which is first to sanctify, and then to save believers: Think not (saith he) that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. 5.

He teacheth, that the end of the gospel and covenant of grace is to procure men's obedience unto the moral law: I am come (saith he) to fulfil the law and the prophets. 6. That the obligation of the moral law, in all points, unto all holy duties, is perpetual, and shall stand to the world's end, that is, till heaven and earth pass away. 7. That as God hath had a care of the Scriptures from the beginning, so shall he have a care of them still to the world's end, that there shall not one jot or one tittle of the substance thereof be taken away; so saith the text, Ver. 18. 8.

That as the breaking of the moral law, and defending the transgressions thereof to be no sin, doth exclude men both from heaven, and justly also from the fellowship of the true kirk; so the obedience of the law, and teaching others to do the same, by example, counsel, and doctrine, according to every man's calling, proveth a man to be a true believer, and in great estimation with God, and worthy to be much esteemed of by the true church, Ver. 19. 9. That the righteousness of every true Christian must be more than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; for the scribes and Pharisees, albeit they took great pains to discharge sundry duties of the law, yet they cutted short the exposition thereof, that it might the less condemn their practice; they studied the outward part of the duty, but neglected the inward and spiritual part; they discharged some meaner duties carefully, but neglected judgment, mercy, and the love of God: in a word, they went about to establish their own righteousness, and rejected the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus.

But a true Christian must have more than all this; he must acknowledge the full extent of the spiritual meaning of the law, and have a respect to all the commandments, and labour to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and not lay weight upon what service he hath done, or shall do, but clothe himself with the imputed righteousness of Christ, which only can hide his nakedness, or else he cannot be saved; so saith the text, Except your righteousness, etc.

The second thing requisite to evidence true faith is, that the believer endeavour to put the rules of godliness and righteousness in practice, and to grow in the daily exercise thereof; holden forth, 2 Pet. i. 5.

And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; Verse 6. And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; Verse 7. And to godliness, brotherly-kindness ; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. Verse 8. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherein, 1. The apostle teacheth believers, for evidencing of precious faith in themselves, to endeavour to add to their faith seven other sister graces. The first is Virtue, or the active exercise and practice of all moral duties, that so faith may not be idle, but put forth itself in work. The second is Knowledge, which serves to furnish faith with information of the truth to be believed, and to furnish virtue with direction what duties are to be done, and how to go about them prudently. The third is Temperance, which serveth to moderate the use of all pleasant things, that a man be not clogged therewith, nor made unfit for any duty whereto he is called. The fourth is Patience, which serveth to moderate a man's affections, when he meeteth with any difficulty or unpleasant thing; that he neither weary for pains required in well-doing, nor faint when the Lord chastiseth him, nor murmur when he crosseth him. The fifth is Godliness, which may keep him up in all the exercises of religion, inward and outward; whereby he may be furnished from God for all other duties which he hath to do. The sixth is Brotherly-kindness, which keepeth estimation of, and affection to, all the household of faith, and to the image of God in every one wheresoever it is seen. The seventh is Love, which keepeth the heart in readiness to do good to all men, whatsoever they be, upon all occasions which God shall offer.

2. Albeit it be true, that there is much corruption and infirmity in the godly; yet the apostle will have men uprightly endeavouring, and doing their best, as they are able, to join all these graces one to another, and to grow in the measure of exercising them: Giving all diligence, (saith he,) add to your faith, etc.

3. He assureth all professed believers, that as they shall profit in the obedience of this direction, so they shall profitably prove the soundness of their own faith; and, if they want these graces, that they shall be found blind deceivers of themselves, Ver. 9.

The third thing requisite to evidence true faith is, that obedience to the law run in the right channel, that is, through faith in Christ, etc. holden forth, I Tim. i. 5.

Now, the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

Wherein the apostle teacheth these seven doctrines:

1. That the obedience of the law must flow from love, and love from a pure heart, and a pure heart from a good conscience, and a good conscience from faith unfeigned: this he makes the only right channel of good works: The end of the law is love, etc.

2. That the end of the law is not, that men may be justified by their obedience of it, for it is impossible that sinners can be justified by the law, who, for every transgression, are condemned by the law: For the end of the law is love, out of a pure heart, etc.

3. That the true end of the law, preached unto the people, is, that they, by the law, being made to see their deserved condemnation, should flee to Christ unfeignedly, to be justified by faith in him; so saith the text, while it maketh love to flow through faith in Christ.

4. That no man can set himself in love to obey the law, excepting as far as his conscience is quieted by faith, or is seeking to be quieted in Christ; for the end of the law is love, out of a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.

5. That feigned faith goeth to Christ without reckoning with the law, and so wants an errand; but unfeigned faith reckoneth with the law, and is forced to flee for refuge unto Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, so often as it finds itself guilty for breaking of the law: For the end of the law is faith unfeigned.

6. That the fruits of love may come forth in act particularly, it is necessary that the heart be brought to the hatred of all sin and uncleanness, and to a steadfast purpose to follow all holiness universally: For the end of the law is love, out of a pure heart.

7. That unfeigned faith is able to make the conscience good, and the heart pure, and the man lovingly obedient to the law; for when Christ's blood is seen by faith to quiet justice, then the conscience becometh quiet also, and will not suffer the heart to entertain the love of sin, but sets the man on work to fear God for his mercy, and to obey all his commandments, out of love to God, for his free gift of justification, by grace bestowed on him: For this is the end of the law indeed, whereby it obtaineth of a man more obedience than any other way.

The fourth thing requisite to evidence true faith is, the keeping strait communion with Christ, the fountain of all graces, and of all good works; holden forth, John xv. 5.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.

Wherein Christ, in a similitude from a vine-tree, teacheth us,

1. That by nature we are wild barren briars, till we be changed by coming unto Christ; and that Christ is that noble vine-tree, having all life and sap of grace in himself, and able to change the nature of every one that cometh to him, and to communicate spirit and life to as many as shall believe in him: I am the vine, (saith he,) and ye are the branches.

2. That Christ loveth to have believers so united unto him, as that they be not separated at any time by unbelief: and that there may be a mutual inhabitation of them in him, by faith and love; and of him in them, by his word and Spirit; for he joineth these together, If ye abide in me, and I in you, as things inseparable.

3. That except a man be ingrafted into Christ, and united to him by faith, he cannot do any the least good works of his own strength; yea, except in as far as a man doth draw spirit and life from Christ by faith, the work which he doth is naughty and null in point of goodness in God's estimation: For without me (saith he) ye can do nothing.

4. That this mutual inhabitation is the fountain and infallible cause of constant continuing and abounding in well-doing: For he that abideth in me, and I in him, (saith he,) the same beareth much fruit. Now, as our abiding in Christ presupposeth three things; 1. That we have heard the joyful sound of the gospel, making offer of Christ to us, who are lost sinners by the law; 2. That we have heartily embraced the gracious offer of Christ; 3. That by receiving of him we are become the sons of God, John i. 12. and are incorporated into his mystical body, that he may dwell in us, as his temple, and we dwell in him, as in the residence of righteousness and life: so our abiding in Christ importeth other three things, 1. An employing of Christ in all

our addresses to God, and in all our undertakings of whatsoever piece of service to him. 2. A contentedness with his sufficiency, without going out from him to seek righteousness, or life, or furniture in any case, in our own or any of the creature's worthiness. 3. A fixedness in our believing in him, a fixedness in our employing and making use of him, and a fixedness in our contentment in him, and adhering to him, so that no allurements, no temptation of Satan or the world, no terror nor trouble, may be able to drive our spirits from firm adherence to him, or from the constant avowing of his truth, and obeying his commands, who hath loved us, and given himself for us; and in whom not only our life is laid up, but also the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily, by reason of the substantial and personal union of the divine and human nature in him.

Hence let every watchful believer, for strengthening himself in faith and obedience, reason after this manner:

"Whosoever doth daily employ Christ Jesus for cleansing his conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the law, and for enabling him to give obedience to the law in love, he hath the evidence of true faith in himself:

"But I (may every watchful believer say) do daily employ Jesus Christ for cleansing my conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the law, and for enabling of me to give obedience to the law in love:

"Therefore I have the evidence of true faith in myself.

And hence also let the sleepy and sluggish believer reason, for his own upstirring, thus:

"Whatsoever is necessary for giving evidence of true faith, I study to do it, except I would deceive myself and perish:

"But to employ Christ Jesus daily for cleansing of my conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the law, and for enabling me to give obedience to the law in love, is necessary for evidencing of true faith in me:

"Therefore this I must study to do, except I would deceive myself and perish."

And, lastly, Seeing Christ himself hath pointed this forth, as an undoubted evidence of a man elected of God unto life, and given to Jesus Christ to be redeemed, if he come unto him, that is, close covenant, and keep communion with him, as he teacheth us, John vi. 37. saying, All that the Father hath given me shall come to me; and him that it cometh to me I will in no wise cast out; let every person, who doth not in earnest make use of Christ for remission of sin, and amendment of life, reason hence, and from the whole premises, after this manner, that his conscience may be awakened:

"Whosoever is neither by the law, nor by the gospel, so convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, as to make him come to Christ, and employ him daily for remission of sin, and amendment of life; he wanteth not only all evidence of saving faith, but also all appearance of his election, so long as he remaineth in this condition:

"But I (may every impenitent person say) am neither by the law nor gospel so convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, as to make me come to Christ, and employ him daily for remission of sin, and amendment of life:

"Therefore I want not only all evidence of saving faith, but also all appearance of my election, so long as I remain in this condition."

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