

Rom. 14:19
So then let
us follow
after things
which make
for peace,
and things
whereby we
may edify
one another.



John 8:32
And ye shall
know the
truth and the
truth shall
make you
free.

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FAITH ONLY IS ILLOGICAL

by Jim Stauffer

Faith only is a prevailing belief among religious denominations in our country. I know many who lay claim to this belief and yet, amazingly so, those who are faithful to their religious denomination do not generally lead their lives according to this belief.

Let me give an example. I will avoid naming anyone, yet there are friends who are members of churches that insist salvation occurs at the point of faith. This belief is based on the premise that man would merit his salvation if it was based on acts of obedience in concert with his faith.

The flaw in this thinking just from a rational standpoint is that anyone who believes anything acts on that belief. For instance, special diets are common in the lives of people today. Some are vegetarians, some are vegans. Whatever choice one makes, he does so for the health benefit of that diet. He believes that diet will enhance his health, make him feel better, help him lose weight, give him additional energy, etc. This only works if he actually practices that diet. If he continues to eat meat and meat by products he will never feel the benefits of the diet.

The same is true of faith in Christ Jesus. If I believe in Him but reject those things He says I should do in obedience to His authority, how can I expect to benefit from my faith in Him.

You see, a change in conduct and a commitment to specific actions are part and parcel of faith.

I offer myself as the perfect example of my point. I am overweight. I would like to lose weight. I believe if I eat less quantity or change the quality of my diet, I will actually lose that weight. I have faith in all these things. My problem is I have not committed to do any of them and therefore have not lost the weight.

Now, surely no one will argue against such logic, even when we apply it to religion. If I believe in Christ and do not the things He has commanded me to do in order to be saved, I will remain lost.

One of the overlooked tendencies of today's religions is glossing over the fact that all men are lost in

sin (**Rom. 3:23**). My faith in Christ is necessary for me to receive forgiveness of that sin (**Acts 2:38**). But my faith in Christ must be accompanied by a willingness to follow His commands, that is obey Him (**Heb. 5:9**).

Jesus tells a story in **Matthew 19** that is a perfect illustration of this point. The story of the rich young ruler demonstrates how one can believe in Christ, yet be so attached to something on earth that he will not do what is necessary to follow, that is obey Him.

Martin Luther in his rejection of many practices of the Catholic Church rejected the idea of man being able to effect his own salvation by things he would do. One of those things was purchasing indulgences to avoid punishment for his sins. This and other tenets of that church led him somehow to the concept of salvation by "faith only."

While rejecting the false teaching of the Catholic Church was a noble thing, the overreaction on his part that one could be saved by faith only was just as wrong. It is sad when we see error and rebel against it and react emotionally rather than act objectively.

We are told clearly in the Scriptures that, *He who has believed and is baptized shall be saved but he who has disbelieved will be condemned.* (**Mark 16:15,16**)

Combine that with what James tells us. He advises us to show our faith by our works. He says we are foolish if we believe faith without works is a useful thing. He then offers Abraham as a man of faith. He demonstrated his faith by offering his son in compliance with God's command. He concludes this part of the chapter by telling us, *"For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."* (**James 2:18-26**)

Now back to the friends I mentioned. They believe they are saved by faith and yet they devote their lives to helping others. Doing good to their fellow man is a staple of their lives. And they believe this is their responsibility as a child of God. Why then do they reject complete obedience to the gospel as necessary to salvation just as these Scriptures have indicated?

Saul of Tarsus, who became known as the apostle Paul was told, *“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”* (Acts 22:16) Salvation cannot be achieved until sins are forgiven. Acts 2:38; 22:16 teach this clearly. They also teach us baptism is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, any logical conclusion is that baptism is necessary for salvation.

Finally, let me say that I agree a man cannot earn or merit his salvation. But ask yourself this. Is simply obeying a command of the Lord equal to earning my salvation? If so, then those who care for brethren in need as Jesus commands in Matthew 25:34-46 are, while obeying His command, earning their salvation. If not, why not?

Please consider the totality of God’s teaching to be summed up in salvation by His grace offered to those who are of faith, that is a faith that leads to obedience. (Eph. 2:8,9)

“DADDY, CAN I HAVE A DRINK OF WATER?”

Let me tell you about little boys. They are like camels. They can play all day and never think about a drink of water. They can run around in the hot sun, and a drink of water never enters their little minds. But at night, as soon as their head hits the pillow, “Can I have a drink of water?”

One night my three-year-old and I went through our regular bedtime routine. I read him a story, listened to his prayers, gave him a good-night hug, answered a dozen questions, and finally after the fourth or fifth “good-night,” I slipped out of the room. Finally, after a long hard day, I could sit down and relax.

It was nice and quiet for all of five minutes, when suddenly, “Daddy, can I have a drink of water?” I knew he was not thirsty and said, “Son, get quiet and go to sleep!” It was silent for a couple of minutes, then just a little louder than before, “Daddy, can I have a drink of water?” “Son, hush up in there and go to sleep!” He was quiet again, but it did not last any longer than before, “Daddy, please can I have a drink of water?” I could see we were not getting anywhere. “Son, if I hear one more sound out of that room, I am going to spank you!” You could hear a pin drop. The silence was thick. But suddenly he called out, almost as sternly as I had, “Daddy, when you come in here to spank me, would you bring me a drink of water?” Now I knew he was thirsty.

How did I know? Because he was consistent and persistent. This is what Christ teaches us concerning our prayer life. In Luke 18:1-7, through a parable Christ tells us to be consistent and persistent when we pray. In this parable the judge refused to grant the woman’s petition, but she was consistent and

persistent, until finally the judge gave her what she wanted. Why? *“Lest by her continual coming she weary me!”* Some of the modern translations say, *“Lest she wear me out . . .”* She was consistent and persistent.

Jesus goes on to tell His disciples, God will grant the petitions of those who *“cry out day and night unto him.”* These are those who are persistent in their prayers.

Maybe you have a prayer in your heart, and you have petitioned the Lord time and again on this particular request, but you have not received your answer; *do not give up!* Christ tells us to be persistent. Why? Because like the little boy and the drink of water, He wants to make sure we are really “thirsty.” Not for His sake, but our own. God hears our prayers; He knows our needs. Do not give up! Be consistent and persistent.

*Jim Forrest, The Grapevine, Cove, Arkansas--
Taken from the Lincoln Bible Reader*

Where Is Love?

Adam Litmer

Our brethren in Ephesus were hard working, long enduring, claim testing, error detecting machines (Revelation 2:2-3). They did not grow weary and one had to wake up awfully early to sneak any false teaching past them. These brethren were the quintessential “book, chapter, and verse” sort. Jesus commended them for it. He recognized that these brethren were willing to suffer persecution for His name’s sake and were unwilling to put up with those who made false claims concerning their own positions or revealed truth. Paul had warned these brethren that men speaking twisted and perverted things would seek to infiltrate their number, some rising from among the elders themselves (Acts 20:28-31), and it is evident that at this point they were still very alert and carefully monitoring for even the slightest hint that Paul’s warning was becoming reality. It bears repeating that they were commended for these things showing Jesus approved of their vigilance. There’s a lesson there for us.

Alas, the uncomfortable, *“but I have this against you”*, immediately followed the commendation. Their great problem was that they had abandoned the love they had at first (Revelation 2:4). Earlier in this article I called these brethren “machines”, which was precisely their problem. Once programmed, a finely tuned machine will perform its operation at a very high level. That’s what these brethren were doing as it related to doctrine and patience through persecution. However, a machine, no matter how finely tuned, will perform its

task without passion, enthusiasm, or love because, at the end of the day, it is just a machine. Unfortunately, that's what our brethren in Ephesus had become. They could detect and refute error as well as anyone in the brotherhood (they may have been the best), yet they were doing it mechanically, with all the enthusiasm and passion of automatons. It was a significant problem that needed immediate correction (**Revelation 2:5**).

The Ephesian problem is not an uncommon one. Take a moment to read **Psalms 50:7-15** to find God rebuking His people of old for the same thing. Theirs was not a failure to perform the correct worship actions; indeed, they excelled at it (**v. 8**). Theirs was not a failure to sacrifice of their own goods in worship to God; indeed, God says that they were doing just that (**v. 9**). Their problem was that genuine thanksgiving had vanished from their worship (not outward actions that seem to indicate the presence of thanksgiving but the inward reality that gave meaning to the actions) and they were not performing their vows to the Most High (**v. 14**). The greatest vow they could give was that they would love the Lord their God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their mind (**Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:36-38**). This vow requires that one worship God with affection, enthusiasm and intelligence. It takes a tender heart, not a mechanical one, to perform this vow.

We, too, have vows we must perform to our Lord. We promised Him the throne of our hearts when we accepted His gracious invitation to be cleansed from our sins (**Romans 5-6**). Part of this is the willingness to learn His truth well enough to know what He requires doctrinally and to be willing to uphold and defend it (**Jude 3; 2 John 9-11**). This our Ephesian brethren did exceptionally well. Yet the foundation upon which our willingness to do these things must be built is love for our Savior. We certainly have a responsibility to do precisely what our Ephesian brethren were commended for in **Revelation 2:2-3**, yet it's a responsibility that must be fed from a spring running much deeper than just sense of duty.

I very much appreciate the way the NIV renders **1 Thessalonians 1:3**. "*We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.* Labor prompted by love. Love for God, His truth, His children, and the souls of all people. This is what our Ephesian brethren had lost somewhere along the way. This is not at all to say they had grown hostile to God and His truth. Far from it! They had simply forgotten why they were doing it all in the first place. They would find that love again if they returned their focus to the marvelous grace shown to them and remembered their helpless condition without God and the blood of Jesus Christ. I hope they remembered (**Revelation 2:5**).

Allow me to borrow some of the language of Paul from **1 Corinthians 13** to try and drive this point home. If I speak the truth on baptism and refute every argument with doctrinal soundness, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I can host a Bible study, answering every question with an appropriate passage, but have not love, I am nothing. If I attend every worship assembly and work day, even when I am not feeling well at the time, but have not love, I gain nothing. Do you get the point?

Beloved, may we strive for doctrinal soundness, for the ability to recognize and refute error in all its forms, for the willingness to patiently endure though trial and tribulation, and for the love that must inspire it all. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

via University Heights Messenger; Lexington, Kentucky. ∞

!sdrawkcaB

Isn't it amazing how turned around we can get things and still think, "Looks OK to me!!" For example in America today you can murder a human being at any time from conception (which, by the way is when you start BEING a human BEING!) till days after birth and you are not only not prosecuted but celebrated as being a courageous exerciser of your "Right to Choose"! But if that same person holds a feather from a Bald Eagle they can go to jail for harming the National Symbol. We Christians would NEVER be so blind!

Well.... Take The Lord's Supper and Christmas for example. Christmas is never mentioned or even hinted at in the Scriptures. The first century Christians never observed it and the Apostles never even mentioned the birth of Jesus in their preaching that is recorded for us. Yet those who do not observe the annual tradition of men celebrating the Birth of Jesus are called unspiritual by those who do. And yet we have three Gospels recording Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper, **Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20**. We have Jesus Himself telling us why to do this often, "*In remembrance of me*", **Luke 22:19 & 1 Corinthians 11:25**. We have Paul chastising the Corinthians for their abuse of the Lord's Supper, **1 Corinthians 11:17ff**. And we have Luke recording for us how often the first Century church observed the Lord's Supper, and when, "*on the first day of the week*", **Acts 20:7**. Since EVERY WEEK has a FIRST DAY they observed it weekly. Yet, in spite of this so many churches and Christians treat it as something optional or to be done at the whim of mere men by observing it monthly, quarterly, etc. Yes, believers can be !sdrawkcaB Too!

Cleveland Reddinger

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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TRUTH IS BITTERSWEET



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10