

SALVATION BY FAITH ALONE

One of the most prevalent doctrines within Protestant denominations is the teaching of salvation by faith only. The Methodist Discipline stated it in this way: "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort," (**The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church**, 1972 edition, p. 55). Since this is such a popular teaching, we need to see if its source is in the Bible.

First, the doctrine of faith only denies the necessity of anything (other than faith) be done to obtain salvation. The Bible states without question, doubt, hesitancy, and unequivocally that belief in Christ saves (Acts 8:37; 16:31). Will saving faith ever be alone, without accompanied obedience?

James deals with this dilemma. He posed the question of whether faith can save if there are no works (James 2:14). His inspired conclusion was that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). A claim of faith in Jesus Christ with no works is a false claim (James 2:18, 19). Yet again, James' conclusion is that faith without works is dead (James 2:20). Abraham was justified by faith working obedience when Abraham offered Isaac on the altar (James 2:21-24). *"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,"* (James 2:24). Compare the inspired words of James to the statement made in the Methodist Discipline. They are in contradiction with each other. Rahab the harlot was saved and justified by her works of faith when she received and sent the Hebrew messengers (James 2:25). Physical death is the body without the spirit; spiritual death is faith without works. Thus, the opposite must be true. Spiritual life is through a working, active, and obedient faith (James 2:26). That is how faith is made perfect (James 2:22).

There are certainly self-righteous works that will not save (Ephesians 2:9; Titus 3:5). Our self-righteousness and sins condemn us. We must be saved by the grace of God through our faith (Ephesians 2:8). Yet that faith must be obedient. We must work the works of God's righteousness (Acts 10:35). Salvation is through repentance (Acts 11:18). Salvation is through confessing our faith (Romans 10:9, 10). Salvation is through faith and baptism (Mark 16:16).

ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED

Another popular teaching in many denominations today is the doctrine commonly called "once saved, always saved." Just as it sounds, this teaching affirms that once you are saved then there is absolutely nothing that you can do to be lost in hell. Some like to call this teaching the doctrine of eternal security.

Sam Morris, a Baptist preacher, wrote about this doctrine. He stated, "and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger... The way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul..." (**Do A Christian's Sins Damn His Soul?**). This dangerous doctrine will, I'm afraid, lead people to have a false sense of security. Good-hearted and sincere people will live their lives with a false confidence due to this doctrine.

The Hebrew writer warned "holy brethren," and those who had "tasted of the heavenly gift" of the dangers of falling away to be lost for eternity (Hebrews 3:1; 6:4, 5). Believers can become unbelievers (Hebrews 3:12). Some believers may come short of entering into the eternal rest that God has prepared (Hebrews 4:1, 7, 11). Those who have received the knowledge of truth and been partakers of God, and been sanctified by the blood of Christ may sin and be lost (Hebrews 10:26-31).

The Bible does not teach that a Christian must sin. The Bible gives comfort in regards to the matter of sin. Forgiveness is possible when we repent and obey God (Acts 8:22). If we sin then we cannot be confident or boast about salvation. When we sin, we must humbly confess our faults and repent of those wrongs (James 5:16; 1 John 1:9).

"Once Saved, Always Saved" will only encourage disobedience to God. Can you imagine heaven being filled with people who have committed every sin imaginable, from idolatry even to murder? Through the blood of Jesus Christ we have been cleansed from our sins (1 John 1:8). As Christians we are called to obey God and keep His commandments (1 John 2:3; 5:2, 3), not to continue in sin.

A FINAL WORD...

Do these two popular doctrines that we have studied have as their source the Scriptures? Or are these two doctrines from men? We must take God's word and consider all of the implications involved in these matters. If you realize that these doctrines are false and not in accordance with the word of God, then you should search for the truth. What else might you have heard that is wrong? Your soul is too important to just blindly accept these doctrines without considering what the Bible teaches. The Scripture admonishes us to test, or try the spirits. We ought to put these teachings "on trial" to see whether they fail or succeed. Do they pass the test?

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God..."
1 John 4:1

Bradley Church of Christ

Assembly Times:

Sunday Bible Study and Worship: 9 AM, 10 AM, & 5PM

Wednesday Bible Study: 7 PM

If you have any questions, or would like to study more, then please contact us, or visit one of our services!

Sean P. Cavender, Evangelist & Editor
spcavender@gmail.com

TRAINING UNTO GODLINESS

"...but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

1 Timothy 4:8

The Importance of Doctrine

Sean P. Cavender

When you begin to read in the New Testament, you cannot help but notice the warnings against false teachers and false doctrines. *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are from God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world,"* (1 John 4:1). By virtue of the fact that there are warnings of the dangerous influence of false teachers, we should appreciate the importance of sound doctrine. *"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine..."* (Titus 2:1). Remaining true and faithful to the teachings of God becomes extremely important to the church and for Christians.

So, does doctrine really matter? Of course it does! Differing doctrines is what distinguishes every religious group and denomination from one another. Clearly we should beware those who are not of the truth and those who teach what is false. False teaching will lead us away from the truth of God's word.

Even Jesus warned of those who teach the doctrine of men as the commandments of God (Matthew 15:9). When Jesus was questioned about His authority as a teacher, he gave the two sources of authority, either it was from heaven or from men (Matthew 21:25). This is the ultimate test pertaining to any doctrine. Is its source from heaven or from man?

Let's examine two popular doctrines in our study. Are these doctrines from God or are they from men?