

“For by grace are ye saved through faith”

Ephesians 2:8

There has always been a certain amount of confusion concerning the subject of salvation and faith. The above quotation from Ephesians is an example of the problem. Some prefer to view these few words as a complete exposition on the subject. In their view, it is faith alone that saves.

We know however, that “all scripture has been given by inspiration of God”, and that any interpretation of scripture must be consistent with the whole council of God. We must reconcile other testimony on the subject. Consider for example, the words spoken by James who said: “In the same way, **faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.**” (James 2:17 NIV)

How do we reconcile these statements that seem contradictory? We must first accept the principle that God is not the author of confusion, and that there is consistency in His Word. The confusion is ours.

Faith

Faith is defined as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Heb 11:1 NRSV) Faith is strong conviction that God will perform all that He has promised, even when we have no physical evidence of the fact.

Our faith today is based on the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. History has unfolded in the exact pattern predicted by the Words of God many years ago.

If our belief in these promises of God is powerful enough, **we will act** accordingly. Our lives will be motivated by our belief and **we will demonstrate our faith**

THE WORK OF FAITH

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac:”



through action.

Faith therefore, is more than belief. It is belief that has been made complete through action. It is this complete or mature faith that is the key to salvation.

When we read the words from Ephesians 2, we should read the entire context. The full quotation is: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**” (verses 8-10 NIV)

The Apostle does not say that works are not required. He is trying to tell us that we have no right to boast in our actions. We are still expected to “do good works”.

The Work of Faith

Our work in the Lord's service is therefore the work of faith. It is described in 1 Thess 1 as “Your **work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope** in our Lord Jesus

Things Concerning

The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ

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“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized,” (Acts 8:12)

There are certain fundamental stages in the process of conversion. First and foremost, is the introduction of the Word of God into our minds.

The gospel, (things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ) is the key message in the Bible. We must hear the gospel and understand it.

Believe

The most critical element is faith in the gospel. We must not only understand the words of the Kingdom and the savior, but we must believe them with our whole heart. “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

Repentance

Faith alone is not enough. Our belief in the hope of the gospel should be strong enough to lead us to repentance. When we understand the Word of God, we will recognize that we have failed to honor God in our lives, and that we have often sinned against His commandments. We will be overcome with a desire to change our ways, and to learn how to be pleasing unto our Heavenly Father. Eph. 4:22-24 tells us:

“Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after

God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Baptism

True repentance will lead us to obey the command to “repent and be baptized” for the forgiveness of our sins.

Baptism is a work of faith. It is also an essential ceremony that has been provided so that we can be buried with him in baptism and rise to newness of life to become a member of the family of God, and heirs according to the promises that were made to Abraham. (see Romans 6:3-6, Galatians 3:26-29)

Baptism places us into covenant relation “in Christ Jesus”. This is a favored position in which we are privileged to have Christ as our high priest and mediator, at the right hand of the throne of God.

Bearing Fruit

Baptism is only a beginning. There is responsibility associated with the covenant that we have entered into. The parable of the sower illustrates that the objective of the seed sown in an honest heart is to bring forth fruit. “He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” (Matt 13:23)

Faith is demonstrated and perfected in actions. (see James 2:18-26) The just must live by their faith. (Rom 1:17) If we truly believe God we will desire to please Him by doing His will even after the example

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Hope and Comfort from the Scriptures

Faith Cometh by Hearing

The "Things Concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus" is the gospel message. It is through an understanding of and a belief in this gospel that we have **hope**. The "name of Jesus" is the only name under heaven through which we can be saved.

None of the promised blessings of the gospel through Jesus would be available to us if we had never heard these things. We would never develop the necessary faith if we were not familiar with the Word of God.

It is for this reason that the Apostle Paul made these observations. He stated: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? **So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**" (Romans 10:13-17)

Man shall not live by Bread

Jesus told us that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt 4:4)

We feed on these words by reading and by listening to those who have been allowed to teach. Jesus intentionally placed the Words of God on a par with our daily bread. The natural bread sustains our natural body, and the Word of God strengthens our spirit.

Job rightly considered the Word of God to be more important than our daily food. He states: "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips;

I have esteemed the words of his mouth



more than my necessary food." (Job 23:11-12)

The example of Jesus

Jesus is our best example of a man who had made the Word of God his daily bread. We are told prophetically in the Psalms that he hid the word of God in his heart to help him overcome the temptation to sin. (see Psalm 119:11)

He learned from the patience and comfort of the scriptures to have hope. It was for the joy that he knew was ahead in the Kingdom that he was able to endure the cross and despise the shame. (see Hebrews 12: 2)

Jesus had faith that came from the hearing of the Word of God. His faith enabled him to rely on the written word when he was tried (see Matt 4: 1-11)

God's Word-The Key

If the Word of God sustained the faith of the son of God in his greatest trials, we can benefit by his example.

The Psalmist provides us with these beautiful expressions of the blessings available through faith by the word:

"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: - -How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:97-105)

" For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal 3:26

The Master taught his disciples that they must become as little children if they wanted to enter the Kingdom. Children demonstrate both humility and faith. They trust completely that their parents will care for them.

It is interesting that when the Apostle Paul was teaching the Galatians, he also mentioned becoming "children of God by faith"

Our faith in Christ Jesus, demonstrated when we are baptized into Christ, not only changes our family relationship so that we become the children of God, but it also establishes our right to an inheritance. The entire quotation from Galatians 3 reads: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. **And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**" (verses 26-29)

The faith of Abraham

Abraham was a very faithful man. He is considered to be the father of the faithful. He demonstrated his faith in God by first believing the promises, and then by acting according to his faith.

His example of faith is described in these words from Romans 4: "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.



And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, **if we believe on him** that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Without Faith it is impossible

Abraham was only one example of a faith that was strong enough to manifest itself in action that was pleasing to God. Hebrews 11 is called the faith chapter because it describes a great number of faithful servants of old who were able to please God by demonstrating that they believed.

We are reminded in that chapter that "**without faith it is impossible to please him:** for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (verse 6)

Faith as Little children

Let us learn to be as little children with complete faith and trust in God and His promises. We all want to be pleasing to our Heavenly Father. We are assured that we will please him, if we truly believe that he really does exist, and if we seek him diligently.