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The Obedience of Faith

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The Obedience of Faith

Man's greatest need is redemption from sin. Some deny this, and doubt God's wisdom. Some spurn His love and mercy. And many are rebelling against his infallible authority! Man needs redemption because he has broken God's laws (I John 3:4); he has fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Sin brings condemnation, "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), and all are alike under judgment, unless forgiven, and ALL would be LOST, were it not for the glorious fact that "Christ died for our sins," that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Paul once wrote: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works that no man should glory" (Ephesians 2:8,9). The salvation offered to man through the grace of God is received "by faith." But, the questions arise: "What is included in the expression 'by faith'?" And, "When is one saved 'by faith'?"

Now, some very fine people have been taught that "by faith" means "FAITH ONLY," to the exclusion of some outward acts, or expressions of faith. We need to learn that where God calls for acts of obedience, A PERSON WHO HAS FAITH ALWAYS OBEYS! Faith thus expressed remains faith; it is not thereby changed to meritorious works. Also, expressions of faith do not weaken or destroy faith. This truth brings us to the statement in the word of God that the gospel of Christ, which formerly had been a mystery, "now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:25,26). Indeed, the gospel of Christ has been preached in order to save men and women through the obedience of faith!

John promised eternal life to the believer (John 3:16; 20:30,31); Paul likewise wrote (Romans 1:16), and further testified that he, with the Christians in Rome, had been justified "by faith," and were thus enjoying peace with God (Romans 5:1).

But there is another group of verses which should be quoted. Jesus once said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Or, again in the same thought, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Paul commended the obedience of the Roman Christians (Romans 6:17), and, when Peter raised the question "what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?", it is Paul who replies that they "shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints" (2 Thess. 1:7-9). The Book of Hebrews also tells us that the Son of God is "unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (5:9).

We are fully convinced that it is necessary to take all of the Scriptures: we are saved "by faith"; we are saved by obedience. Indeed, we are saved through "the obedience of faith!" In Galatians 5:6 we read: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love." Truly, saving faith is obeying faith!

Once, during His ministry, Jesus was speaking in a house in Capernaum. Some men brought a sick friend to Jesus for healing. Finding they could not press through the throng, they finally succeeded in letting down through a hole in the roof the bed whereon lay the one sick of the palsy. Jesus **SEEING THEIR FAITH** said to the sick man, "Son, thy sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:1-5). Jesus **SAW** their faith! "Why," says one, "I didn't know that you could see faith." Oh, yes, when it is expressed, it can be

seen! And the faith which will not express itself in open obedience to the plain commandments of God is NOT SAVING FAITH!

Paul includes himself in the number "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1) and says that he then had peace with God. If we can learn when Paul, the persecutor, had peace with God, then we shall know just WHEN he was justified by faith. He believed in Christ while on the Damascus road, but if he then had peace, he didn't know it, for he cried out in penitence: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Jesus' answer indicates he did not have peace: "Rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Saul went into the city, fasted, and prayed for three days. Then, a disciple, Ananias, under the immediate direction of Christ, came to Saul and said, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16; 9:1-20). Before Saul's baptism, he fasted, was blind, and continued to pray. When he had been baptized, thus expressing his faith in the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:2-5), and full obedience to His will, he received food and "was strengthened," and immediately began to preach Christ. Paul THEN had peace with God, and his attitude is clearly evident of the fact.

The Bible gives a series of illustrations of what it means to do things "by faith."

"By faith" Abel obtained witness that he was righteous. Was Abel active or inactive? He made an acceptable offering to God (Hebrews 11:4).

Enoch was translated "that he should not see death," and this was "by faith" (Heb. 11:5). But he "walked with God" three hundred years! (Gen. 5:24).

"By faith" Noah saved his house and "became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." But his faith caused him to move with "godly fear" and prepare an ark! (Heb. 11:7).

It was "by faith" that Abraham became the "father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11; Heb. 11:8-10). But "by faith" included obeying God in many ways!

Therefore, we see that the faith that is blessed in God's sight is the faith that is expressed! So when Jesus had died for the sins of the world, and had been raised up from the dead by the power of the Father, he said to His disciples: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Or, in the words of Mark: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). About ten days later, an inspired apostle commanded believers: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). Paul wrote of being "baptized into Christ," of being "buried therefore with him through baptism into death," and raised to new life in Christ (Romans 6:2-5). Therefore, to be saved by faith, Christ did not command believers to "raise your hands," or "write your name on a card," nor to "just kneel by your radio and receive me." Instead, He commanded believers to repent and be buried (immersed) in water unto the remission—forgiveness—of their sins. Paul declared: "For ye are all sons of God, through faith in Christ. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26,27).

Kind reader, this is the way of salvation "by faith"—by the "obedience of faith"!

Prayerfully Presented by
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