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Salvation by Faith

By Harold Turner

"But 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)

The above Scripture stresses the importance of faith in our relationship to God. To expect one to be saved apart from faith is to expect the impossible. No person is going to just accidentally blunder into the right relationship with God. If one comes to God at all, it will be through faith.

Since faith plays such an important role in our relationship to God, we need to understand as much as possible about this subject. We need to know if we have the right kind of faith, and we need to know when faith will save and bless us.

It is possible for a person to have the wrong kind of faith. In 1 Cor. 2:5 the Bible warns, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." In 2 Thess. 2:12 the Bible teaches that men will be damned who believe not the truth. There is only one safe basis for our faith, and that is the word of God. Paul wrote in Rom 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." While we may appreciate the wisdom and learning of others, and while we may have faith in their honesty and sincerity, we must be sure that our spiritual faith is rooted in the word of God. A person may be sincere and honest in his convictions and at the same time be wrong. The People that Jesus describe in Matt. 7:22 had faith in God. They said, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? But Jesus answered them, saying, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." They had faith in the Lord, but they were lost; they had been misguided. In order for faith to be right it must have the right basis - the word of God.

Another important factor to consider about faith is when faith saves a person. Is one saved by faith at the moment he believes in God? We know the Bible teaches that one is saved by faith, but when does faith save him? In Rom. 5:1 the Bible states, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." But is a person

justified at the very moment he believes? James wrote, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2:14, 17, 24.) This makes it clear that one is not saved by faith alone. Faith will not save until it is coupled with works of obedience to God.

In Acts 15:9 the Bible states that God purifies the heart by faith. But when is the heart purified by faith. Is it at the moment one believes? In 1 Peter 1:22 the Bible states, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth. . ." So while the heart is purified by faith, it is not purified until one obeys the truth.

In Gal. 3:26 the Bible states, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." We are children of God by faith, but are we children of God at the very moment we believe in Christ? We are children of God when we are in Christ. As Paul continues this text, he writes, "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." (vr. 28) It is IN Christ that we are all one the children of God. But when does faith put us into Christ? In verse 27 Paul answers this, saying, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." When faith obeys it makes us children of God. By faith we are baptized into Christ, into the family of God.

In Acts 10:43 Peter said of Christ, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." But does one receive remission of sins at the very moment he believes? In Acts 2:38 this same apostles said to others, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. . ." We have remission of sins by faith, but not until faith obeys the command to repent, and be baptized.

Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him (Heb.5:9). He makes us free from sin when we obey from the heart that form of doctrine delivered us (Rom. 6:17,18). Our obedience is an ex-

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Blessed Are The Meek

By Terry Frizzell

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5.)

As we view the life of Christ we can see that He was a meek person even though He had the power of God, and by the very appearance of His teaching it is said, ". . . He taught as one having authority." (Matt. 7:29.) Christ said of Himself, ". . . the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." (Matt. 20:28.) This was His attitude; this was His life. He gave sight to the blind, made the lame to walk, and even gave life to the dead. However, the most important service Christ did for man was in His death on the cross and His victory over death. The King of kings humbled Himself and came to this world of sin, sickness, and sorrow. He left His home in heaven for us.

It seems that man's attitude toward meekness is that to be meek is to be weak, but this is certainly not the case with Christ. No time in His life did He ever become weak; He stood for what God wanted. Is it too much for Christ to ask that we become meek, rather than arrogant, and self-willed? and that we give our self in service to God and our fellow man? Meekness is opposed to arrogance. Christ, while in the garden of Gethsemane, prayed to God, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. 26:39.) Perhaps this is the thought Christ had in mind when He spoke of the meek in Matt. 5:5. He meant a person that is not self-willed, and who is willing to change his life to that which God wants.

In Luke 12:16-21 Jesus spoke a parable about a rich man whose ground had brought forth plentifully, in fact, so much that he had no room in his barns to store his crops. He decided to tear down and build greater barns, and then said to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." In his arrogance he

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What Glory Is It?

By W.L. Totty

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Salvation by Faith (Cont.)

pression of our faith in Christ to save us. Jesus never promised anyone salvation on the basis of faith only. In Mark 16:15-16 He gave a command that applies to all nations and for all time, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." There is no hope of salvation apart from faith. Faith is the basis for our salvation, but faith is trusting in Jesus to save us the way he promised. Jesus requires obedience (Heb. 5:9). So if my faith will not express itself in obeying the commands of Jesus, it is not the kind of faith that will save me.

"Opportunity is most often rejected because it is disguised as hard work."

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In teaching a lesson on subjection, the apostle Peter made this observation: "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." (1 Peter 2:19, 20.)

The two thieves on the cross at the time of Christ's crucifixion were suffering the same agonies as Christ; but there was a vast difference in they they were justly being punished for their crimes while Jesus was as pure and innocent of all wrong as a newborn babe. There was no glory nor credit to be accounted the two thieves, for they were getting what they deserved. But there was glory and honor bestowed upon Jesus in that He took upon Himself the sins of all humanity and patiently and without a word of protest endured the shame of an ignominious death on the cross. Jesus set the perfect example of patience and submission for us as Christians to follow.

In His sermon on the mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. 5:10-12.) This does not at all indicate that everyone who suffers at the hand of another will be blessed, but only those who are persecuted "for righteousness sake" and have evil things said about them "falsely" will be blessed. If what is said be true, though it be extremely painful, one might as well be prepared to "grin and bear it," for it will not result in a blessing for him.

The Bible tells us likewise that all who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12). If we are never persecuted, perhaps we'd better take inventory to see whether or not we are living as closely to God's commands as we need to be.

It is not always easy to patiently endure unjust criticism and persecution. It hurts when those whom we think are our friends seek to bite and devour us. One is tempted to retaliate; however, when one is tempted and tried by persecution, one cannot use his liberty in Christ Jesus as a "cloak of maliciousness". (I Peter 2:16.) But we are not alone in that our erst-while friends may turn against us. Jesus was betrayed by one of the twelve in fulfillment of prophecy, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." (John

13:18.) Christ Jesus, our example, "When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." (I Peter 2:23.)

The sweet singer of Israel, the man after God's own heart, cried unto God when his enemies spoke evil of him saying, "When shall he die, and his name perish?" (Psalm 41:5.) In other words, they wished him dead and out of their way. But David, when he had fled for his life from King Saul, and later came upon Saul while he was sleeping, did not take advantage of the opportunity to do him harm, though he did cut off a piece of Saul's garment to show the king that he had had a good opportunity to get even with him if he had so desired.

Someone wonders: Just how could one possibly understand that it is a blessing to be persecuted for doing that which is right? It tests our faith, and when we yield not to temptations it is glorifying God and is to our own glory. Patience is one of the Christian attributes that we are told by the apostle Paul to add to our faith (II Peter 1:6). Also, James tells us that we are to "count it all joy . . . knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience." (James 1:2, 3.)

A Christian's consolation is in knowing that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (I Peter 3:12, 13.) "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator." (I Peter 4:19.)

Blessed are the Meek (Cont.)

had forgotten the one who had made all this possible. God then said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be?" In his self-centered eagerness to gain earthly possessions he had lost that which is worth more than all the material possessions of this world - his soul. He had failed to see these as blessings of God, and had not thought of using anything he had gained in service to God.

If we are to be blessed of God, we must become meek. We must humble ourselves and do the will of God, rather than what we want to do for self. We must follow the example that Christ left of meekness. If we are to be counted with the saved, we must become meek. We must learn to set aside our own will, and give ourselves in service to God, and to our fellow man. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." (James 4:10.)

Back to the Old Paths

By Ordell Heavin

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.” (Jer. 6:16)

Jeremiah lived in one of the most crucial periods in the history of Israel. The Southern Kingdom was crumbling within and grasping for a final desperate breath as a nation. The nation had declined in moral values as well as in national power. Spiritual interest in God was at one of its lowest ebbs. It was at such a state that God instructed Jeremiah to make the above appeal to his people to return to the old paths. Their refusal was very clear, “We will not walk therein.” This refusal soon brought about their fall and enslavement to Babylon.

This lesson from Old Testament history can and should be placed in today’s modern framework. Since the days of the restoration movement gospel preachers have been pleading for a return to the old paths. They have asked that we accept the truth with nothing added or taken from it. And though many have gladly accepted this appeal, many others have made it clear, “We will not walk therein.”

“Back to the old paths” is a plea for simple New Testament Christianity. It is a plea to accept the Bible, not as the “thought” of God, or the “idea” of God, but as the “Word” of God. It is a plea to accept the Scriptures as the inspired revelation of God to man (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). In 1 Cor. 2:13 Paul wrote, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual”. We must accept the word of God as being right and complete. God never intended for us to receive the Bible in a piece-meal fashion, but in whole. To reject it in one point is to reject it as the complete truth of God.

The Bible is God’s power to save the lost (Rom. 1:16). It is by His word that God begat us (James 1:18). His word is the means to spiritual growth (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). His word is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance of eternal life (Acts 20:32). It is by His word that we will be judged (John 12:48). His word is a source for comfort (1 Thess. 4:18). Everything necessary to becoming a child of God, living the Christian life, and entering the eternal home of the soul in the sweet by and by is written on its pages. How then can a mere man think that he can change or correct this perfect revelation of God? Paul’s plea to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:2) should be the plea for every preacher today, “Preach the word”. We should plea for the truth only, for it is the

only thing that can make us free (John 8:32).

The plea, “Back to the old paths”, is a plea for Christ to be restored to His rightful preeminence. He is the Son of God (Matt. 16:16). He was preexistent with God (John 1:1-2). He was instrumental in the creation of all things (John 1:3). To the church He is its builder (Matt. 16:18), its founder (1 Cor. 3:11), its head (Eph. 1:22), its purchaser (Acts 20:28), and its saviour (Eph. 5:23). He is the essence of Christianity, and in His name only is there salvation (Acts 4:12). He alone has the words of eternal life (John 6:68). He is the “blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords”. (1 Tim. 6:15).

The plea, “Back to the old paths”, is a plea for the restoration of the New Testament church. It must be the same now as in the beginning. Its members were just simply Christians. The apostles preached a uniform plan of salvation for all mankind. They preached that men must first hear the gospel (John 6:45), that men must, upon the evidences of the gospel, believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 8:24; Acts 8:37), that men must repent of their sins (Acts 17:30), that men must confess their faith in Christ before others (Rom. 10:9, 10), and that men must be baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38, Rom. 6:3). It is at the point of doing all of these that the Lord adds to the church (Acts 2:47).

To plea for the restoration of the New Testament church also involves a plea for the restoration of New Testament worship. The early church met for worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). They met to break bread (Acts 20:7), to give in support of the needs of the church (1 Cor. 16:1-2), to study God’s word (Acts 11:26; 20:7), to pray (Acts 2:42), and to praise God in song (Eph. 5:19; Col 3:16).

To restore the church also includes restoring the organization for governing the church. Christ is the sole head (Eph. 1:22), the Scriptures is the only rule of authority for faith and practice, and the elders (also called bishops, pastors, and shepherds) were appointed the oversight of each local congregation of which they themselves were members. The Scriptures provide no design for a superstructural organization to rule over all the churches. The only system of organization is within the individual local congregations.

To restore the church is also to restore the mission of the church. The primary function of the church is to save souls and to edify those who are saved. The church also provided the benevolent needs of its members and others (Gal. 6:10). The main

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Hold it fast - Lest it slip

By Ted Knight

One of the most alarming and heart-breaking problems facing elders, preachers, and other interested Christians today, is the number of our brethren who have left their first love and gone back into sin. In every congregation there is a host of our brothers and sisters who have left the church. Many have already died while in this state of apostasy and the Bible teachers that they will be lost eternally. How sad!

Why does this situation exist? I do not believe that brethren intend to back-slide. It seems to be a case of simply neglecting those things in life which are most important. Our spiritual welfare is shoved into the back of our concerns and we begin to slowly but surely fall away. After a time we find that we have drifted completely away from the Lord and our brethren.

There are several scriptures which tell us that we can avoid falling. The Hebrew writer warns us of the possibility of these things which we have heard “slipping away” from us (Heb. 2:1). He declares that we should “give the more earnest heed to those things which we have heard, lest they slip away from us.” These are things that are precious and should be guarded as we would guard our most valuable possessions. We are instructed to “Hold fast the profession of our faith.” (Heb. 4:14.) This implies our getting a firm grip on our faith and not letting go for anything. Why is this so important? Because of the danger of it “slipping away from us”. It is urgent that we grasp our faith and not allow anything, even for a moment to loosen that grip. Brethren, if we would do this we would see that ever increasing number of back-sliders begin to shrink.

We desperately need to heed the advice given by Peter in II Peter 1:10, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” Peter had just told them to add to their lives the Christian graces. If we will do that and “hold fast the profession of our faith,” we will not let it “slip away” from us. How sad it will be to meet God in the judgment and hear Him say, “Depart from me.” Let’s not let that happen to us!

“We never get all of God until God gets all of us.”

“If you were another person, would you like to have yourself for a friend?”

“We should not judge until we see clearly; and when we see clearly, we will not judge.”

Dead Unto Sin, Alive Unto God

By Joe Sponaugle

Death is defined in the Scriptures as a separation. James stated, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead." (James 2:26.) We know that a body has died when it ceases to function and act. When the spirit or soul of man leaves the body he is pronounced dead. One who has died physically is no longer affected by what goes on in this life.

In Romans 6:11 Paul tells the saints at Rome, "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." Spiritual death comes as a result of sin. Ezekiel wrote, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." (Ezek. 18:20.) Isaiah wrote, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear." (Isa. 59:2.) Sin separates us from God, thus the sinner is dead to God in his sins. In Eph. 2:1-2 Paul wrote, "And you did he make alive when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience."

Being dead in sin is one thing, and being dead to sin is another. As one who is dead in sin is separated from God, so the one who is dead to sin is no longer under the power or control of sin. When we obey the gospel of Christ we become dead to sin (Rom. 6:17, 18). As we repent of our sins we die to the love and practice of sin, and because we die to sin, sin no longer has the same attraction to us that it once did. Though we will continue to be tempted by Satan to sin, and will at times sin as long as we are living in this world, yet our desire is to live for Christ and to do His will. Our desire is to please God in all that we do and say.

After telling the Roman Christians that they had been saved by grace, he asked, "What shall we say then? shall we continue to sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein." (Rom. 6:1,2.) Those who die to sin cannot continue to do that which is sinful and contrary to God's will. There must be a reformation of life, and the bearing of fruits of repentance. Repentance brings about a turning from sin and disobedience to the obedience of God's will. Sinning can no longer be just a habit with us. In Rom. 6:12 Paul said, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof." Being dead to sin means that we have separated ourselves from sin. This does not mean that we live a sinless life, but it does mean that we do not make sinning a habit.

By God's grace and help we can overcome the power of sin in our life. It requires faith in Christ, a faith that will lead us to obey Him. Not only can we die to sin, but we must stay dead to sin. Those who turn from God back into sin are in a serious state. Peter wrote, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." (II Peter 2:20, 21.)

Being alive unto God is to be interested in that which pleases Him. The doing of good taught in the gospel becomes the interest of the one who is born again. As God is interested in caring for the fatherless and widows, so is the one who is alive unto God. As God is interested in destroying the works of the devil, so is the one who is alive unto God. Those alive unto God are seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

We are made alive unto God in Christ. "In Him was life and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4.) Those who reject Christ cannot live unto God. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6.) Jesus came that we might have life, and that more abundantly (John 10:10). We must die to sin, be buried into the death of Christ, and raised to walk in a new life. In Rom 6:3 Paul said, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" And in 2 Cor. 5:17 he said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." At this point one has become dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus. What about you? Are you dead to sin, or dead in sin? Are you alive unto God, or alive to the power of sin?

"A plastic surgeon can do almost anything with the nose, except to keep it out of other people's business."

"It is impossible to have a real hope of heaven and be deeply engrossed in the pleasures of earth."

"The tongue was intended for an organ of divine praise: but the devil often plays upon it, and then it sounds like the screech-owl."

Back to the Old Paths (Cont.)

objective was to unite all the redeemed in one Body. The church is not just a social institution, it is not in the political business, nor in the recreational business, but the business of seeking to save the lost.

In our efforts to please God we must ever apply Jeremiah's plea, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths". Paul appealed to the Ephesians, saying, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all". (Eph. 4:3-6). This is the way for the unity of all who wish to follow Christ. May we never become like Israel, who declared, "We will not walk therein". Let us take hope in the fact that since these are God's ways, He will be with us if we remain within His truths.

"He who is on the road to heaven will not be content to go there alone."

"Sitting and wishing takes just as much time as sitting and planning."

"Heaven's gates are wide enough to admit sinners saved by grace, but too narrow to admit any sin."

