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Can That Faith Save Him?

By Charles E. Crouch

Christianity is a religion of faith (2 Cor. 5:7), and there is an infallible test of true faith. It is identified by its action. The measure of our strength is the degree of our faith. One who believes in Christ with all his heart will do his will with all his might. Jesus also gave an acid test of love. Genuine love for Christ generates fidelity to his teachings (John 14:23; 8:31-32).

Battles have been fought for centuries over the answer given in James 2:15-26 to the question in verse 14. But the emphasis of James 2 is upon the evidence and character of saving faith, not upon the ground or price of salvation. There is a difference between historical and saving faith. Those who array the book of Romans against James misunderstand both. And all who build a system of salvation by works of merit on James 2 misunderstand James. James gives an index to saving faith by speaking of the works which complete or perfect it. Let us notice some unprofitable kinds of faith which cannot save.

UNEMPLOYED FAITH. "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?" (James 2:14.) Faith apart from works is barren and dead. Easy chair, or rocking chair faith, which searches for a soft, easy life, and forgets to work, cannot save. Faith which reports for worship but not for work needs to be perfected. Saving faith does not trust and sit down; because it trusts, it gets up and follows. (Matt. 16:25; 2 Cor. 5:15.) "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love." (Gal. 5:6.)

HEARTLESS FAITH. This is faith without compassion, pity or mercy. It is unconcerned and unmoved at the sight of human need (James 2:15-17). Such faith overlooks or neglects the needs of others (Luke 10:25-37). Christian love is not mere sentiment, but an active, working principle which motivates action and is measured in deeds (John 14:15; 1 Cor. 13). Faith which leaves undone the weightier matters of God's law falls short of his promise of eternal salvation (Matt. 23:23; 25:41-46).

FEARFUL FAITH. Such faith is timid, trembling without courage. It is

little, or weak (Matt. 6:30; Rom. 4:19). Grasshopper faith says, "They are stronger than we." (Num. 13:31; 14.) Such faith hindered Israel, preventing God's blessings. Such faith today says, "We must be realistic; there are giants in the land," or, "an obstacle prevents our doing God's will." It sees obstacles and dangers clearly, but not opportunities. With courageous faith, one can do God's will, "always abounding in the work of the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58.)

INDECISIVE FAITH. Faith that is neutral, without decision, when dealing with right and wrong throws its weight to the wrong. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me." (Matt. 12:30.) Too often the sophisticated mind says, "There is some truth on both sides. I don't know which is right." This destructive mental attitude is found among God's people in dealing with every moral issue from strong drink and hedonism to sodomy and abortion. That type of mind keeps too many ears to the ground, listening for the voice of the majority. In Christ we must "Hear ye him." (Matt. 17:5.) Make up your mind with Christ (Rom. 12:9).

Let us now notice some things about the profitable kind of faith that can save us.

Saving faith is not showy, but its fruit shows (James 2:18). It is visible, roof-top faith (Mark 16:15). It is persistent, courageous, determined. It acknowledges Jesus as the Son of God and sanctifies him in the heart as Lord by gospel obedience (Mark 16:15, 16; 1 Peter 3:15). Then it answers the call of duty, and gets the job done even unto death (Rev. 2:10).

Saving faith is mustard seed faith. Proverbially small but destined for great growth (Matt. 17:20). The transforming power of the tiny mustard seed into a bush is incredible. It is alive, with power to increase, grow and reproduce massively. (cf. Heb. 4:12.) If one would increase in faith, there are some things he must do. (1) He must keep his heart open to God's word, study and meditate upon it daily (Col. 3:16; Psalm 1:2 Cor. 10:5). (2) He must admit the truth whenever

Christian Growth

By Ordell Heavin

In the last words of 2 Peter, the apostle wrote, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever." These words are an admonition for Christians to grow spiritually. In the beginning words of this letter Peter said that the Lord had given unto us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. He then continued to show how the Christian is to grow spiritually. Peter was not alone in placing an emphasis on spiritual growth. John wrote, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3 John 2). The soul prospers through spiritual growth.

Growth is important and one of the most recognized activities in the universe. Our children grow fast as long as they are healthy. Tiny tots develop into pre-schoolers. Then almost over night they are in school, high school and college. This growth is natural; otherwise we would know that something was wrong, and we would try to correct it.

When new born babes in Christ fail to grow we know that something is wrong with their spiritual health. They are not receiving the spiritual food of God's word, or not exercising their soul in godliness. Far too many times we may be neglecting our duty toward them by failing to provide the proper food for growth, and responding to their needs when they become weak and sick spiritually. We need to see that every babe in Christ feeds on the sincere milk of God's word. No growth is more important than the spiritual growth of one's soul. The physical man grows through proper food and exercise. So it is with the soul, we are to be both hearers and doers of the word (James 1:21-27).

The writer of Hebrews shows the seriousness of a failure to grow in Heb. 5:12-14, "For when the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is

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**FULTON COUNTY
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EDITORS: Erwin Cowen
and Harold Turner

A Model Church

By Clovis Ragsdale

In the eleventh chapter of Acts we are introduced to the church at Antioch. It was located in Biblical Syria, and was about three hundred miles north of Jerusalem. The members were mostly Grecians (Acts 11:20, 21). Barnabas was sent to Antioch by the church at Jerusalem to strengthen this congregation. Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Saul (Paul) and the two of them worked in Antioch for a whole year teaching in the church.

In Acts 11:28-29, when the great dearth swept throughout the world, the church at Antioch sent relief to the brethren in Judea by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. This good work is noteworthy because it is a case of Gentiles helping Jewish brethren.

In the thirteenth chapter of Acts we are told of the church at Antioch sending forth Barnabas and Saul to preach the gospel in distant cities where the good news of Jesus Christ was yet unknown.

Looking at the church at Antioch as a model church for all ages, we need to take note of three virtues which we believe should be a part of the work of every congregation. Possibly few congregations can reach the degree of accomplishment that this church did, however, to some degree we can emulate their work. First, the church at Antioch was a TAUGHT people. Having two Spirit guided preachers in their midst for a whole year made this possible. Second, they were an example in BENEVOLENCE. They send relief to people far from their locality. And third, they were interested in MISSION work, sending the gospel to seek and save the lost in foreign lands. When Christ was here in the flesh, he spent his time in teaching the people, in healing and helping the poor, and spoke of his mission as seeking to save the lost. No wonder the term CHRISTIAN was first used at Antioch to describe the followers of Jesus. The entire work of the church today can be found under these three classes of activity mentioned above.

Those who believe in restoring the church of the New Testament would do well to compare their efforts with the church at Antioch. As a TAUGHT people we should expect a high mark in the area of Biblical knowledge. In restoring the church of the New Testament we should be the church that teaches more truth, and is more in harmony with the ways Christians worshipped and worked in Apostolic times more than any other religious body in the world today.

In the field of benevolence the church at Antioch provides us a good example of people who cared about and responded to aid the needs of others. In the field of benevolence, the efforts of many churches have been modest at best. The care for homeless children probably heads the list in the area of benevolent works. The care of widows and the poor has largely been taken over by our government, which we support through our tax programs. With this being true, we are in a much better position to attend to an even greater need in our world, sending the gospel into all the world.

The church at Antioch sent evangelists time and again to preach the gospel to people who had never heard of Jesus Christ. This is by far man's greatest need. Food, clothing, and shelter are needful, but the saving of the soul is far more important than the needs of the body.

In Apostolic times the movement of Christianity spread quickly throughout the world. True, the population of the world was much less than today, however their methods of communication were much poorer. Four billion people will soon inhabit this earth. The gospel is for all. Our responsibility to take the gospel to the world is frightening, yet we have the radio, TV, the printed page, and other types of communications to help us carry out this mission. The church faces a tremendous responsibility to meet this need. We have world wide radio programs reaching into many areas of the world. We have hundreds of missionaries in foreign lands, but thousands are needed. If we follow the example of the church at Antioch, we must greatly increase our outreach to the lost. Every congregation should invest some of its efforts in mission work. It might mean spending more efforts in other states in our own home land where the gospel has not been preached, it may mean sending the gospel into foreign lands, and it may involve spending a few more dollars each month, but we must make an out-reach to the lost wherever they may be. A congregation which spends all its efforts in its own community needs to lift up their eyes to the fields of the world, rather than being blind, selfish, and ignorant.

Christ said to go to all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, to baptize and further teach all things he commanded. In the church at Antioch we have an example, a model of the church we should strive to become. Can we afford to do less today?

Christian Growth (Cont.)

unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." To teach others, to more fully understand God's word, and to be able to properly discern between good and evil demands growth. With the passing of the years we should desire to increase our knowledge of Christ and of his will for us. Rather than just drifting along indifferently, we should want to study and learn his will, and thereby gain greater assurance of our soul's eternal home. We are encouraged in 1 Cor. 15:58 to "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The spread of righteousness over this earth depends on the children of God. We must grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ to meet this challenge. One of the greatest needs of today is Christians who are committed heart and soul in consistent faithful service in the kingdom of God. We must work while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no man can work (John 9:4). Jesus once asked a question, which would be good for each one to consider, he said, "Why stand ye here all day idle?" Every one of us must give an account of himself to God (Rom. 14:12). Jesus said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10.)

In Rev. 14:13 Jesus promises, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." This promise is to all who have grown up spiritually and served faithfully in the work of the Lord. This promise can be yours if you will obey the Lord and "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord."

That They All May Be One

By Harold Turner

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:20, 21.) "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1:10.)

Let's imagine that two hundred people board a ship to travel to some designated place. Each person aboard is a member of a different church. And let's suppose that as they make this journey the ship wrecks and they are all stranded on some desolate island for the rest of their life. Now since they are all devout religious people they decide to organize themselves into a church. Since there are so few of them, let's suppose that they agree to try to all unite into one body. Certainly they are faced with a task of working out the many things that divided them in the first place. No doubt there would be hundreds of ideas that would be presented for discussion and consideration. Could such unity be attained? Would it be possible for all these people with different religious training and backgrounds to be united into one church? And if so, how?

First of all they would have to agree upon one standard of authority for their rule of faith and practice. Each of these people has been educated to a distinctive set of church laws which were designed to govern their church. It would be doubtful that all could compose a new set of rules, or church laws, to which all would agree. Each of these people would probably try to set forth the rules of his own church, which, no doubt, the others would reject. With the rejection of these church laws, creeds, covenants, etc. could these people be united? Only one rule of faith could possibly be used as a standard of authority to which all might agree - the Bible. The Bible is the only hope for unity. As Paul stated in 1 Cor. 1:10, "That ye all speak the same thing." This is possible only when we follow the rule that Peter gave in 1 Peter 4:11, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." This rule demands that we set aside our personal opinions and private interpretations of the Scriptures, and speak only as the Scriptures speak. On this basis only can there be hope for unity. In Gal. 1:8, 9 Paul warns, "But though we, or an angel from heaven,

preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Now let's suppose that these stranded people are willing to throw away their denominational church laws and accept the Scriptures only as their guide and rule of faith and practice. They now discuss what to call the church they are about to organize. No doubt, again, their past would influence their thinking, and they might suggest the names by which they have been identified in the past. But they could never agree to all be called by these names that are not found in the Scriptures. They must search the Scriptures to see by what name the church in the Bible was identified. In Matt. 16:18 they would read where Jesus said, "I will build my church." The church belongs to Christ, he is its builder. Shouldn't it be identified with him? They would also read in Rom. 16:16 where Paul said, "The churches of Christ salute you." And in Acts 20:28 they would read about the "Church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." Since Christ is the owner, purchaser, and builder of the church, and since the church is referred to as the "church of Christ" and the "church of God" (referring to Christ who purchased it with his own blood), possibly they could find agreement here, and be identified with Christ rather than some name suggested by man. And, no doubt, they could agree to simply call themselves "Christians" as were the early followers of Christ (Acts 11:16; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). Why would they want to wear any name other than this?

Now that they have found agreement on their rule of faith, and the name for their identity, they would certainly have to work out an agreeable pattern for their expression of worship. Their practices of the past have been different, which is one of the reasons for them being divided in the first place. How could they solve this problem? No doubt some would suggest one thing and others another. Some might suggest something with the suggestion, "I like this." But there is only one standard to determine how we are to worship God - the Bible.

As they search through the gospel for the pattern of worship by the early church they learn that there are five distinctive things set forth. In the assembly of the early church the word of God was taught (Acts 11:26; 20:7), these

early Christians prayed together (Acts 2:42; Phil. 4:6), they assembled to break bread upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 2:42), they contributed financially as God had prospered them (1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 9:7), and they sang praises to God without the accompaniment of instrumental music (Eph. 5:19; Col 3:16). No other actions of worship are found in the New Testament. Since they have agreed to follow the pattern set forth in the gospel by the early church, they must abandon any practices not found in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9), and they must do all those things authorized in the New Testament. So they agree to meet together for worship upon the first day of the week as the early Christians did, and study together God's word, pray, partake of the communion, give of their means, and sing praises without the use of mechanical instruments.

Another thing about which they would be concerned is the governmental organization of the church. How was the early church organized? From numerous Scriptures (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18, etc.) they learn that Christ is the only head of the church, and that his authority is set forth in the gospel. Therefore, they will need no headquarters, no organization apart from the local congregation with Christ as its only head. However the early church did have overseers referred to as elders or bishops, who were the pastors or feeders of the church. In Acts 14:24 they learn that the apostles "ordained them elders in every church." In Acts 20:28 these elders are charged with the responsibility of overseeing and feeding the flock of God. No place could be found in the New Testament where only one elder was appointed to oversee the church, but rather there was always a plurality of men over each congregation. These men worked to guide their fellow Christians to live in harmony with God's word.

Another thing that would be of serious concern would be the conditions of membership. In their past training they are accustomed to a set of rules to which new members must comply to "join" their church. But in Acts 2:47 they learned that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. There was no joining. The very things required in order to be saved also made them members of the Lord's church. In the final words of Jesus (Matt. 28:18, 19; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:47) they learn

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That They All May Be One (Cont.)

that before one could be saved he must first be taught the gospel, he must believe in Jesus, repent of his sins, and be baptized. In Acts 2:1-47 they read about the beginning of the church and the requirements for membership. The gospel was preached to a large assembly of people. When they heard it some of them were convinced that it was true, that Jesus was truly the Lord and Christ, the Saviour of lost man. They then asked, "What shall we do?" "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost... And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Since Christ promised to build but one church, and since He added those who heard the gospel, believed on him, repented of their sins, and were baptized for the remission of their sins, they agreed that if they would do as these did they would be a member of the same church to which Christ added them.

There can be unity in Christ, but only when we go back to the authority of the Scriptures to determine all things. We can go back to the Bible and do as they did, and in turn, be just what they were, simply New Testament Christians, members of the church that Christ built. The prayer of Jesus, shortly before he was crucified, was that we might all be one (John 17:21). It is possible. Let's go back to the Bible, speak where it speaks, be silent where it is silent, let's call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things in Bible ways, that we might all walk by the same rule (Phil. 3:16).

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Churches of Christ

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Garfield	15.00
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The Christian's Ministry

By Lavern Stewart

Greatness in the sight of God is ministering to others, not being served by them. In Matt. 20:25-28 Jesus told his followers, "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even so the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

In the beginning of his work on earth, Jesus went about in all Galilee teaching, preaching, and healing all manner of diseases and sicknesses (Matt. 4:23). One of the expressions that describes Christ's attitude toward ministry is that He went about doing good (Acts 10:38).

Concerning his disciples, Jesus said that they are to let their light shine in such a way that unconverted men would "see" their good works and turn to God (Matt. 5:16). The word "see", in this text, means to see with a discerning mind - recognize that they were followers of Jesus to be the reason they performed acts of service to others. The world will pay more attention to what Christians DO than to what they SAY. If the world is expected to listen to our teaching, it must be impressed by our willingness to minister to others as Jesus did. Consider the proof that Jesus offered when John the Baptist asked for evidence of His being the Messiah. In Matt. 11:4, 5 Jesus said, "Go tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them."

If we are true followers of Jesus we will humbly serve others, not expect to be served.

"To many people want the front of the bus, the back of the church, and the middle of the road."

"The warmth of a home is not always judged by its heating system."

"If it seems things are going easier, maybe you are headed downhill."

"At death we leave behind all we have and take with us all that we are."

"One reason we ought to be more thankful for God's blessings is that we deserve so few of them."

Can That Faith Save Him? (Cont.)

found (Acts 2:41; 22:10). (3) He must practice promptly what he has learned (Heb. 5:14; Phil. 4:9). (4) And he must avoid doubt, indecision and neutrality by shunning destructive error and the causes of unbelief as he would any fatal disease or deadly serpent (1 Thess. 5:21, 22; Rom. 12:9).

The faith that saves is faith that works by love (Gal. 5:6; Rev. 2:4). This includes trust which drives out fear and perfects love by working as directed by the Lord. (1 John 2:5; 4:16-18). Such faith is self-denying-willing to sacrifice whatever is necessary to please God. It is the faith that walks "in the light" with God (1 John 1:7).

Saving faith is faith that finishes the course (2 Tim. 4:6-8; Luke 8:14, 15). It is courageous to stand for the right, and, "having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:10-13). It does not grow weary in well doing (Gal. 6:9). It is not content to merely enlist, and then pose as believer or teacher. It is determined to practice the precepts of God's word. Aware that one may so live as to hear the Lord say, "I know you not." Saving faith lives so as to hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of the Lord." (Matt. 25:12, 21).

Saving faith is demonstrated by obedience to Christ. God's promises are conditioned upon visible faith (Mark 16:15, 16; Rev. 2:10).

"How times change! There was a time when people prayed every day and bathed once a week, but now they bathe every day and pray once a week."

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 "The warmth of a home is not always judged by its heating system."
 Jerry Lancaster