**The Role of Faith in My Salvation**

In our last article, we learned that faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). This change in beliefs is the driving force behind the change in direction that is so critical to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus said that the person who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Lots of folks hang on every word of John 3:16 without truly understanding the full implications of the kind of belief that Jesus requires. Simply acknowledging the divinity of Jesus and His resurrection is not enough. “Many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God” (John 12:42-43). James said even the demons believe and shudder (James 2:1). There obviously is more to saving faith that simply accepting the facts of the gospel.

There is a comfortable and unbreakable connection between faith and obedience in the teachings of the New Testament. James said, “Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works” (James 2:18). Professed faith that is not demonstrated is a dead faith (v 26). Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 7:21 is perfectly consistent with this concept: “’Not everyone who says to Me “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.’”

What gives some people spiritual heartburn is Paul’s statement in Ephesians 2:8-9: “By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” They conclude, then, that salvation is by faith alone in spite of Scriptural declaration to the contrary (James 2:24). You see, the false teachers of Paul’s day were advocating a system in which a person stood justified because of all the good works they performed.

Jesus Himself clearly taught that obedience to God’s commands entitle a person to absolutely nothing. In Luke 17:10, He told His disciples, “’ When you do all the things which are commanded you, say, “We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.”’” And that is all Paul is saying in Ephesians chapter 2. Good works are not the source of a person’s justification, the grace of God is. But God, according to His sovereign will, is determined to extend His mercy to those who demonstrate their faith in His Son. A lifetime of good works will not blot out the guilt of a single past sin, so the salvation He freely gives is by His grace alone.

In this series of studies, we are considering several requirements that the Lord has defined as being necessary to receiving the grace He is offering. If anyone tells you that nothing but faith is required to be saved, they are inadvertently misleading you. The fact is that we are saved by grace through a demonstrated faith. A “faith” that is not demonstrated is dead.

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