

Faith and Works

Romans 4:1-7

There is considerable confusion today on the issue of faith and works. Brother Lipscomb in commenting on the extremes that people go to said, "they are like the pendulum of a clock." On one extreme there are those who say that we are saved by works. This is the position of many of the world religions where the emphasis is on man and what he does, and not what God does. These people are basically saying that you must do works that merit or earn your salvation.

On the other extreme, you have people who hold to a faith only belief which says that man is completely passive and that salvation has been fixed for him. There is considerable confusion today on the issue of faith and works. Brother Lipscomb in commenting on the extremes that people go to said, "they are like the pendulum of a clock." On one extreme there are those who say that we are saved by works. This is the position of many of the world religions where the emphasis are basically saying that no matter what you do or do not do, your salvation is a result of faith in God without any human interaction. This is the position of most Protestant Denominations. What we are going to try to establish is whether either of these ideas is correct or if there is another option that is correct. We will do this by answering from the scriptures these questions:

1. Is faith necessary?
2. What is the nature of faith?
3. What types of works are mentioned in the Bible.

1. Is faith necessary?

Some people in the world say that faith is not necessary. They believe that our souls' salvation was individually pre-set before time began. That God looked down through the ages and said Noah and family saved, all others on the earth at the time lost, Pharaoh lost, Moses saved, Ahab and Jezebel lost, Elijah saved, Herod lost, Peter saved, all people saved or lost with no hope of changing it through faith or obedience to God. If that view is correct, then the Bible would not mention faith as being necessary for salvation. Certainly, we would not expect God's word to contradict itself about something as significant as our souls eternal existence.

Faith is necessary for those who want to please God. The Hebrew writer said in chapter 11 verse 6 that without faith it is impossible to please Him. This being the case, one must ask; is it necessary to please God in order to be saved? Or is it possible to be saved and spend eternity with God when He is displeased with you? I think that the end of the verse we just read should answer that for us. "For he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Is it conceivable that God is going to

reward a faithless person with the glories of heaven?

Faith is necessary for those who want to be justified before God. Justification means the act of pronouncing righteous, an acquittal. Paul tells us that, having been justified by our faith; we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ Romans 5:1. So, we need to decide whether we think that we would like to stand before God acquitted or found guilty. Faith is only necessary for those who seek their souls salvation. Salvation means deliverance or preservation. Jesus said, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. If everlasting life is our ultimate goal, and it should be, then John 3:16 should put to rest any question about whether a person needs faith in God in order to reach that goal.

Faith is necessary for those who want to access the power of God. Paul told the Romans and us that He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. The gospel is God's power only to those who believe. To unbelievers it is nothing but a long book full of stories and fables. Myths made up by men too weak minded to know that there is no God. It is said that Kruschev, the Russian leader, had the entire New Testament memorized. But, even a photographic memory cannot turn mere words into Divine Power, it takes faith.

Faith is necessary for those who want to live a faithful Christian life. Paul, while defending the gospel and committing to the Galatian brethren how to put aside the old law and embrace Christ's law taught them, I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave His life for me. Paul is telling me that in order to live. I must have faith in the One who. died.

2. What is the nature of faith?

Some people think of faith as a blind leap into a religious darkness of emotionalism and subjectivism. I wonder if that idea comes from a predisposed mind that says that there is nothing that is spiritual in nature; or if perhaps religious people have brought it about with their inconsistencies and practices. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians and lets read from verse 18 to verse 25. Paul says that you and I are going to be thought of as fools because of our faith. That supposedly wise men, will think us to be deficient in our mental and reasoning abilities because we believe in God. That we are weak because we lean on something we cannot see. God be thanked that His foolishness is indeed wiser than men and His weakness stronger when mans strength.

The Hebrew writer says that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. Hebrews 11:1 in this verse, the word translated substance means confidence and assurance. The evidence spoken of here means a proof or test. So we could say that faith is the confident assurance of the things we hope for and the tested proof of things unseen. The Hebrew writer uses our belief that God created the universe by speaking into

existence as an example of an unseen thing that we have faith in. If faith is belief, and it is, then it is a human response and that is exactly what Romans 10:9-10 is saying when it says, that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

So a human response is necessary but that doesn't make it a work does it? Turn to John 6:29, listen and see what Jesus thinks. Jesus answered and said to them, This is the WORK of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent. You are doing the work God has given you to do when you believe in Jesus.

Let's look at some of the examples of faith mentioned in the Bible. Hebrews 11:7, By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to FAITH. Noah's faith was evidenced by his obedience to God's command to build an ark and by his heeding of God's divine warning.

Next verse, by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. Abraham's faith was evidenced by his obedience and by his going out even without knowing where he was being sent.

Look at verse 30, By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for 7 days. In Joshua 6:2-5, we learn that God had given the city to the Israelites. The battle was won before it began. All they had to do was believe and obey what he said to do. They took God at His word, they marched, and the walls fell flat.

Faith is not a blind leap, true faith is the proper response to the evidence that God has provided since the beginning of time. Paul says that those who can't or won't see the evidence are without excuse. Romans 1:20.

3. *In the New Testament the term works* is used in 3 senses in relation to man's salvation. It is used in reference to the works of the law of Moses in Romans 3:19-20 and Romans 4:1-11. Romans 3:20 tells us the purpose of the Mosaic law when it says, Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Abraham's faith was accounted as righteousness before he was given the sign of circumcision so it was not based upon obedience to the law.

In writing to Timothy, Paul makes it known that works alone do not save us or cause us to earn our salvation. In 2 Timothy 1:9, it reads "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us before time began." This verse is referring to works of human merit and teaches that we cannot earn our salvation, that means salvation is a gift given before God created time or anything in it.

Paul also wrote to Titus and said "but when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." God loved us before we were created, no amount of good deeds could ever have caused us to deserve Him Sending His Son to earth to die.

Paul, in his letter to Titus also instructed him to constantly teach a working belief in God. Titus 3:8 "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

The third way that works are referred to is works of obedience or of faith. Human works are commanded by God. In speaking to Cornelius and his household, Peter said, "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted of Him." All people who want to be accepted of God must do works. Now Paul very clearly rejected the idea of justification by works of the Mosaic law and by works of human merit and yet, he opened and closed the book of Romans chapter 1 verse 5 and chapter 16 verse 26 with an emphasis on the obedience of faith.

We know that the people that Paul was addressing in Romans were Christians. In chapter 5 verse 1 Paul said, Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. The question is when did their faith cause them to be justified? Chapter 6 verses 17 and 18 says "But God be thanked that though you were slaves to sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Saving faith is obedient faith.

Some people in the religious world do not like the book of James because it refutes the doctrine of faith only. As you might have noticed, I have not mentioned the book of James once in this sermon. Not because I do not have faith that James belongs in the Bible as some claim, but because the Bible clearly teaches that faithful obedient works in other places as well. I seriously doubt that the people who want to surgically remove the Book of James from their Bibles want to carry the procedure over to the Book of Romans as well. I'm afraid if they tried, their doctrine would die on the operating table from the loss of the blood of Christ.

God's grace, the gift of His Son, makes obedient faith possible. Titus 2:11-12 We are saved by grace through faith Ephesians 2:8 & 9 God will judge us on the basis of our works, by what we have done in this life Romans 2:5-11. Knowing these 3 things, don't you want to make your life right with God and show Him your faith by your works?

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