

What Kind of Faith Is Required For Salvation?

By: Herbert W. Armstrong

DO YOU KNOW? Do you have it? "By grace are ye saved through FAITH," Ephesians 2:8. The Bible, however tells of which will SAVE!

No SUBJECT pertaining to Christian salvation is more generally misunderstood than that of saving FAITH!

Just "BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is the popular teaching today. And that statement is absolutely true -- if you understand what kind of BELIEVING is required!

Unfortunately millions are being deceived -- led to trust in a faith that will never save one single soul by a very popular, and very false teaching.

It is customary to quote only a PART of the Scriptures on this subject, -- reading a false meaning into them -- and thus by subtle half-truths popular teachings shackle most of Christendom to spiritual blindness and deception.

Do These Scriptures Contradict?

God does not usually reveal all the truth respecting a particular subject in any one passage alone. "Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? . . . precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little," Isaiah 28:9-10. To understand any general subject in the Bible, it is necessary to view all the scriptural evidence touching that particular subject. And we cannot read our inherited or desired meaning into any particular passage; for "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation," II Peter 1:20, but each passage is interpreted by, and in the light of, other texts.

For example. It is quite popular to quote Romans 3:20: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight," and from this passage alone assume that salvation comes by faith in disobedience to the law! Those who thus interpret this passage never tell you that in Romans 2:13 the same Apostle Paul was inspired to write: "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the DOERS of the law shall be justified."

Is there contradiction here? If the one Scripture is intended to reveal that we do not have to make an effort to obey God's Law to be justified and then saved -- but that we are saved by faith without obedience to God's Law, then, indeed, God contradicts Himself in His Word! And if you wish to make Romans 3:20 say that, you must consistently acknowledge there is contradiction in the Scriptures; and if this be true, you have no basis for your faith!

Again, Ephesians 2:8-9, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." But those who quote this text so freely to teach the doctrine of "no works," never tell you that the same inspired Scriptures say also: "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 -- I will show thee my faith BY my works. Thou BELIEVEST that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, AND tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is DEAD," James 2:14-20.

It Takes A Living Faith!

There is no contradiction here!

Rather, by putting all the Scriptures on the subject of "Saving Faith" together, we learn that there are TWO KINDS of faith.

And the kind so blindly trusted in by the majority of this day is nothing but a DEAD faith -- and a DEAD faith never will save one soul!

James continues: "Was not Abraham our father JUSTIFIED by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how FAITH wrought with his works, and BY WORKS was faith made perfect? -- Ye see then how that BY WORKS A MAN IS JUSTIFIED, and not by faith only?" James 2:21-24.

The teaching here is plain. Not that we are saved by works instead of faith. No, NEVER! We are saved by FAITH! But faith wrought with our works -- and BY WORKS, our FAITH IS MADE PERFECT! That is LIVING FAITH!

Why do we even need salvation? Because we have SINNED, and the penalty of sin is DEATH!

But how have we sinned? What is sin, anyhow? "Sin is the transgression of THE LAW," is God's answer, I John 3:4.

"Yes," answers the victim of modern fables, "but we are not under the law today, but UNDER GRACE!" Why certainly! "What then?" asks the inspired Paul, "shall we SIN" -- transgress the LAW -- "because we are not under the law, but under grace?"

And Paul's answer is, "GOD FORBID!" Romans 6:15. And again, "Shall we continue in SIN" -- transgressing the law -- "that grace may abound? GOD FORBID! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Romans 6:1-2.

The law has a penalty -- DEATH. It is those who are sinning that are UNDER IT! And those who, through repentance, obedience and FAITH have turned from disobedience and are, through faith, KEEPING the law, are the only ones that are UNDER GRACE!

God's Spiritual Mirror

Let us understand it! "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." No, certainly not! That Scripture is 100% true, and there is no contradiction! You cannot be justified by the deeds of the law -- not at all!

WHY? The last half of this same verse gives the answer -- why do most preachers never quote it? "For by the law is the KNOWLEDGE of sin," Romans 3:20. THAT'S WHY!

The purpose of the law is not to forgive, to justify, to wash away, to cleanse. Only THE BLOOD OF CHRIST can do that!

Sin is the transgression of the law -- that's what sin is. The purpose of the law is to tell us what sin is -- to define it -- to REVEAL it, so we can quit it.

All women ought to understand this. In every woman's handbag is a little mirror. She knows what it is for. Every little while she takes out this mirror and steals a glance at her face. Sometimes it reveals a speck of dirt. And we might truthfully say, "by the use of these mirrors are no dirty faces washed clean." You women understand what we mean! But do you throw your mirrors away because by them your faces are not washed? Of course not -- what a silly question it seems, when applied to a MATERIAL case! And if we ask you WHY your faces are not washed clean by your mirrors, you answer: "Because by the mirror comes the KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIRT."

God's LAW is His spiritual mirror. We look into it, and see the dirt on our hearts! But by looking at the law, or keeping it, no dirt is WASHED from our hearts -- only Christ's BLOOD can do that. By the law comes the KNOWLEDGE OF SIN!

Listen to James explain it! "But be ye DOERS of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect LAW of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a DOER of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed," James 1:22-25.

Is It Possible To Keep The Law?

But, argues the "No Law" deceiver, "no man can keep the Commandments. It is not humanly possible! Since FAITH has come, we keep no law -- faith has made it VOID."

Thus even "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of LIGHT. Therefore it is no great thing if HIS MINISTERS also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness -- For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of CHRIST," II Corinthians 11:13-15.

"Do we then make void the law through faith?" comes the question, in inspired Scripture -- and the answer: "GOD FORBID: yea, we ESTABLISH THE LAW!" Romans 3:31.

Yes, faith establishes the Law! By keeping it is faith make PERFECT!

Yet, can we keep the Commandments? Is it possible? Satan's "No Law" deceivers say no! What is the PLAIN TRUTH?

A man came to Jesus and asked how to be saved. The Saviour Himself replied, "If thou wilt enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS," Matthew 19:17. "When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God, all things are possible,' verses 25-26.

There is Christ's own answer! With man it is impossible -- utterly impossible, to really KEEP His Commandments. But -- here's the blessed truth -- WITH GOD, it is possible, even to keep His Commandments. Do you begin to see it? IT TAKES FAITH! Faith in the power of GOD! And, just as your own diligent effort coupled with faith makes faith perfect, so faith coupled with your effort makes PERFECT OBEDIENCE! The two go hand in hand. And you cannot have the one, without the other!

A LIVING FAITH -- the only kind that will SAVE -- is an active faith -- one that TRUSTS GOD to make it possible to OBEY HIM -- to live the true Christian life -- to KEEP His blessed Commandments!

Think! Could a just God command men to do what it is IMPOSSIBLE to do? Or can we conceive of Jesus as a smart-aleck young man who knew more than His FATHER'S Commandments? How absurd! Yet this is the popular conception today!

The Law Is Eternal

God's Law is not a horrible monster! Just and right laws are a terror only to the criminal -- they are made to PROTECT the good! God's law is PERFECT, Psalm 19:7, it is a SPIRITUAL LAW, Romans 7:14, HOLY, and just, and good Romans 7:12. ALL His commandments are SURE, and stand fast FOREVER AND EVER, Psalm 111:7-8. Don't you believe it, when men tell you differently!

God's Law is, simply, LOVE! It is the perfect way of life. Every particle of human suffering, unhappiness, misery and death has come solely from its transgression! It was given to make man HAPPY, and is the only philosophy of life that can do so! It came from a God of LOVE, and LOVE is the fulfilling of the law!

But not YOUR own natural love! It requires "the love of GOD, shed abroad in our hearts BY THE HOLY GHOST," Romans 5:5. God has, and will give you the love that will fulfill His law! And so, praise His blessed Name -- it is possible, through FAITH, and the GIFT of God, for man to keep His commandments. And whoever claims differently, God calls a plain LIAR, I John 2:4.

The true Commandment-keeper is forced to trust God to make obedience possible. And thus faith does not void, but establishes the Law! And to keep the law requires FAITH!

A thrilling example of this eternal truth is recorded in the Book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, erected a great golden image.

"Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at the time ye hear the sound . . . , ye fall down and worship the golden image," Daniel 3:4-5. "And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace!" verse 6.

Set over the affairs of the province of Babylon were Daniel's three young Jewish friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

One of the Commandments of God's eternal spiritual law forbids such worship of images.

Had you been in their place, what would YOU have done? Would you not have said, "Well, I have to bow down to this image -- I have to do it or be killed!" And perhaps you would have excused yourself by reasoning thus: "I don't think God would be fair if He punished me for this, when He knows I am FORCED to do it. Anyway, He tells us to be subject to the power of the state!" Yes, it is easy to use reason to excuse disobedience to God. But God is not looking for chances to punish us -- but rather for opportunities to SAVE us through faith! To save us from the folly of SIN, and the sad consequences our own acts impose! Whatever we sow we shall reap. God's Law is intended to protect us from suffering. It is not GOD who punishes us when we do wrong -- it is merely our own acts rebounding like a boomerang!

But these three young Jews knew the truth -- that we should OBEY GOD, rather than men -- that through FAITH God makes it possible. When they firmly REFUSED to bow down to worship the king's image, Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded them brought before him, verse 13.

Listen to the quiet, trusting, unafraid answer of these lads: "O Nebuchadnezzar, -- our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace!" verses 16-18.

Sometimes God tries our faith. He tried theirs. You might think He should be expected to have fixed it all up at once on the spot, but He permitted their faith to be tested.

"Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed; . . . therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated . . . Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments," -- surely the God whom they trusted would have them released now? But no -- there was no physical evidence whatever that God so much as heard. -- "and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace!" verses 19-21.

The furnace was so hot the flames leaped out and slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And they fell down "bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace!"

God permitted them actually to be thrown in! Was He unmindful of those who trusted in Him to make possible the keeping of His Commandments? Not GOD!

The king looked into the furnace, and said "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of GOD!" verse 25. So Nebuchadnezzar came near the mouth of the furnace, and called to them.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither! Then Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire . . . these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and DELIVERED his servants that TRUSTED IN HIM!" verses 26-28.

THERE was an example of living FAITH! A faith that TRUSTED God to make it possible to live the way of His Law! Yes, WITH GOD, it is possible to keep all His Commandments -- and don't let any man deceive you to the contrary!

Can You Believe and Worship CHRIST IN VAIN?

When God's Word says, "BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," it does not mean the DEAD faith now popularly taught! The common teachings of this day distorts this to mean a mere belief in the FACTS of Christ's existence, His sacrifice, and His saving work. Just accept those FACTS, and accept HIM -- without any obedience to God's Laws! But the devils believe these things -- and they TREMBLE.

Christ was the Messenger of the New Covenant -- a Messenger sent from God. You cannot BELIEVE on such a divine Messenger, unless you believe, and obey the MESSAGE that He brought! "If thou wilt enter into LIFE," was His teaching "KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS!"

"REPENT," said the inspired Peter, and then believe and be baptized for the remission of sins, and "ye SHALL receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," Acts 2:38. God gives His Holy Spirit only to them that OBEY HIM, Acts 5:32. And His Holy Spirit is the LOVE which God gives us to fulfill and to keep His Commandments! And it all comes BY FAITH!

Christ came to save us FROM, not in, our sins! To FREE US from the enslavement of sin and the unhappiness and wretchedness it brings -- not to make us free to commit sin!

Is it possible to BELIEVE in Christ -- to worship Him -- in the customary manner of the day, and yet be lost? Christ Himself says, "YES!"

"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 which is in heaven," He said, Matthew 7:21.

Hear Him again! "Howbeit IN VAIN do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men!" Mark 7:7-8.

There it is! From Jesus' own lips! Such a dead faith -- such worship -- is IN VAIN! Those who trust in it, and in the men and denominations which teach it, ARE LOST! And the quicker we come to realize it, the better!

God's PURPOSE in salvation is to rescue men from SIN, and its resulting unhappiness, misery, and death! To REPENT of sin is the first step! Then the BLOOD OF CHRIST, upon acceptance and faith, cleanses of all past sins. And by faith we are kept from sin in the future. Thus the resulting righteousness is of FAITH -- the righteousness imparted from God. We are not justified BY THE LAW -- we are justified by the blood of Jesus Christ's! But this justification will be given only on condition that we REPENT of our transgressions of God's Law -- and so it is,

after all only the DOERS of the law that shall be JUSTIFIED, Romans 2:13. How plain, and how beautiful is God's TRUTH!
