

Date: July 15, 2012

Subject: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ

We have just begun our study of the book of Galatians, and last time we read through the first five verses of chapter one.

Whereby Paul, asserted his apostleship and greeted the churches in Galatia. It was necessary for Paul to show himself an apostle because the churches of Galatia were not only being led astray, but others were seeking to discredit Paul and the Gospel he preached - even though Paul taught the true Gospel.

"What is the true Gospel?" Sadly, we live in a time where the message of the Gospel has been made obscure, confusing, & unimportant. God has elected, Christ has atoned, the Holy Spirit applies, and man... what? What does man do? What can he do?

"Sirs, What Must I Do to be Saved?"

This is the question that the prison guard asked Paul and Silas. This guard was commanded to keep the prisoners confined in their cells, but when God brought an earthquake and shook the foundations

of the prison, ~~and~~ "immediately all the doors were opened, and every ~~man's~~ one's bands were loosed" (Acts. 16:26), this guard feared for his life.

Back in the twelfth chapter of Acts, Peter was also freed from prison by God. We read there, (after Peter was freed):

"Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he ~~examined~~ ^{examined} the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death...". Acts 12:18-19

So if you were a guard back then and your prisoners escaped, you were going to get executed by the commandment of the King. No long, drawn out appeals, no second chances; you must die!

So we get an idea of the urgency of the guard who kept Paul and Silas, when he saw all of his prisoners freed, his life flashed before his eyes, and he really started thinking about his death.

Maybe at first he sought to escape the shame from the government and the cruel executions given by his fellow soldiers, and so he thought to just kill himself, but Paul stops him by crying out,

"Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." Acts. 16:28

The guard doesn't kill himself, but now he is seriously thinking about his life - well, actually, his death. Maybe for the first time in his life, he is truly concerned about what happens to him when he dies.

That sounds a lot like us today, doesn't it? Maybe even my reader, for the first time in your life, you are seriously considering, "What will happen to me when I die?" It seems like all of us live our life like we are invincible and that we won't ever die. People all around us become sick, diseased, cancerous, old, weak, etc... and we just shrug it off, "Not me, that won't happen to me..." Sure we are made so sad at the loss of our loved ones, and we mourn for awhile; but then we go on our way living as we did before.

This is what we read about in Ecclesiastes
7:2-3

"It is better to go to the house of mourning [i.e. what we would call a "funeral"], than to go to the house of feasting [i.e. what we would call a "party"]: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."

Why is it better to go to "the house of mourning", than to ~~the~~ ~~party~~ "house of feasting"? It certainly isn't because we enjoy seeing people dead, but it is in the house of mourning, that, "the living will lay it to his heart." Some of the most powerful sermons ever preached, beloved, come from those who are no longer living. And that casket, or that tomb, or that headstone, from all of these is a message to us all... death. Take it seriously because it can come at any time, What are you doing about it?

Yet even though all this is going on, we still ignore it; well, at least, some do. Some people

still just don't get it, life is a game to them. Well, it's a game with no winners; that is, there would be no winners... without Jesus Christ, the Gospel.

"Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:29-30

"I have offended a most Holy God, I have sinned and there is nothing I can do to save myself... what hope do I have? What can I do? What can I do to be saved? What must I do to be saved?" The answer,

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."

Verses 31-32

There was no hesitation, no theological ideologies, no works of any kind were added; simply, the Gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved".

This is the "simplicity" of the Gospel that is in our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3). Notice how Paul and Silas didn't say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but..." They added no contingencies, "...but, you must do this", "but, you must do that", "but, you must also believe this, or that." No, they said, just believe in Jesus Christ - bar none, no exceptions, no works; this is the Gospel, this is what was under attack to the churches of Galatia... the Gospel is ^{still} under attack today...

"The Wiles of the Devil"

In Ephesians 6 verse 11 we read,

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

"Wiles" is translated from the Greek word, "methodeia", and means: deceit, trickery, scheming, etc. It is compounded from two words meaning, "with" and "road or way" (like when Jesus said, "I am ~~the~~ ^{the} way, the truth, and the life." John 14:6).

Jesus is the way, but Satan attempts to work "with" the "way," and Satan does this by the errors new teach. "Methodeia" is used only one other time in the New Testament, and is translated, "lie in wait" in Ephesians 4:14

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait ["methodeia"] to deceive;

The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," these are God's words, "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16) - may we never add to them, or subtract from them. But what does Satan do? "Hath God said,...?" (Gen. 3:1) Just as he did in the beginning, the same he does today, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall only believe in Jesus Christ?"

Dead Faith

When the Bible speaks of faith or believing

in Jesus Christ, an insincere faith is never meant, because any faith in Jesus Christ which comes not from the heart, is a dead faith.

"What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ... Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:14, 17

Anybody can say they believe, but what this passage in James emphasizes is that if all we have is a profession of faith and no good works are brought forth, that faith is dead. It doesn't come from a changed, sincere heart; but is only an outward act,

"This people draws nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honours Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me."
Mat. 15:8

Many of us are familiar with the term, "easy-believism." Meaning people are encouraged to "just believe;" but the problem with this is that ~~it~~

although many people may become "believers" by such teaching; because such faith comes not from the heart (i.e. the root), they will fall away in time of temptation,

"They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away."

Luke 8:13

The target of the Gospel is always directed at the heart of mankind; Christ doesn't want people to draw near Him with only their lips, but with their heart.

The way we may be accustomed to meanings of words is sometimes different than to how the Bible uses these words. The word "hope" is a good example. When we hear the word ~~to~~ hope, we think, "hope-so."

For example, suppose a person takes a test in school and someone asks them, "Do you think you passed?" He might say, "Well, I hope-so..."

Meaning, maybe he passed, but maybe ^{he} didn't - there is no guarantee either way with this common usage of the word, "hope." But in the Bible, hope is never used this way, hope is a sure, guaranteed ~~expectation~~ expectation.

"Teaching us that, denying ~~ungodly~~ ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" Titus 2:12-13

There is no "hope-so" meaning in this verse (or any other). Here, Jesus ~~has~~ promised to Return for His people and ^{so} we continue ~~to~~ waiting for "that blessed hope"; that is, our sure, guaranteed expectation.

It is the same way with faith. What separates a believer from a true believer, other than that the latter... truly believes. When Paul and Silas responded to the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,..." they weren't preaching a false gospel, they were preaching the true Gospel. Some people think that is a works gospel to tell people to believe; but actually,

a works gospel is adding anything else to faith - faith from the heart - in the Lord Jesus Christ,

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Romans 3:28

"Work of Faith"

We find this phrase twice in the Bible (1 Thess. 1:3 and 2 Thess. 1:11), "work of faith" and if we compare this with Ephesians 2:8-9 where we read,

"For 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."

Therefore if we are saved, "not of works", and faith is a work, should we have faith, or not? Unfortunately, this is a problem in our day, many people think faith is a work and so avoid it... and remain in unbelief. This is the consequence of such a doctrine, but this isn't taught by the Bible, unbelief is a sin.

Because of the importance of clearing up this misunderstanding, let's read those two passages.

"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;" 1 Thess. 1:3

"Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power:" 2 Thess. 1:11

We can't just say, "There's 'work' and there's 'faith'; that's it, faith is a work, God doesn't save us because of our works, therefore I will not have faith..." Do you see how ridiculous this is? These passages aren't teaching that at all. These people ^{were} ~~are~~ not working for their salvation, their faith is simply the result of their becoming saved, and the effect of this is ~~seen~~ ^{seen} by how they are bearing fruit for our Lord Jesus Christ by sending forth the Gospel. Notice also that in 2 Thess. 1:11 how ~~that~~ God would... fulfill... the work of faith with power."

This ties in beautifully with what we read in Philippians 2:13,

"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Again,

"Then said they [i.e. the disciples] unto Him [i.e. Jesus], What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He has sent."

When faith comes solely from our lips, it is a work like anything else and cannot justify us; but when our faith comes from the heart - this faith is a gift from God and is the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22) - this is the faith God justifies us by; this is not a work,

"Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Romans 4:4-5

There is no mistaking this, this passage clearly shows faith is not a work. We must believe, it is our duty to believe; this command goes throughout the world and Christ's sheep hear His voice, they find their rest in Him, they repose in His works and not their own, and as many as are ordained to eternal life... believe.

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Acts 13:48

O precious soul, do you realize how fragile your life truly is? Do you understand that your sins have offended God and so you abide under His wrath? Have you ever wondered, What must I do to be saved? Believe, O beloved, believe on Him that justifies the ungodly. Believe on the One that can cleanse your filthy soul. Believe on the promises of God...

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16:31

Gratefully,

Your servant for Jesus' sake,
 Heidi D. Allen 

P.S. Please spend a few quiet moments alone with the Lord and verify what you have just read for yourself. 1 Cor. 2:5

Alas, And Did My Saviour Bleed by Isaac Watts

Alas, and did my Saviour bleed? And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred Head for such a worm as I?
Was it for crimes that I have done, He groined upon the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree!
Well might the sun in darkness hide, and shut ~~his~~^{his} glories in,
When Christ, the mighty Maker, died for man the creature's sin.
But drops of grief can never repay the debt of love I owe:
here, Lord, I give myself away, 'tis all that I can do!

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light,
and the burden of my heart rolled away (rolled away)
It was there by faith I received my sight,
and now I am happy all the day!