

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

by Danny Tunnell

“Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6.)

Faith is defined as the substance (assurance) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1.) “Faith means that we are . . . convinced of what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1, Moffatt.)

Faith comes from hearing the anointed word. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17.) The word “God” is actually “Christos” which refers to Christ. The word “Christos” means the anointed one. Faith comes from hearing the anointed Word. Everything Jesus taught or preached are anointed words.

To have faith in God is to have faith in His word. God can’t be separated from His word. (John 1:1.)

Faith is treating God as an honest Being. It’s interesting that people will often take other people at their

word, but not always God. And yet God cannot lie. People certainly can. (Hebrews 6:18; Romans 3:4.)

Faith is believing God’s word. Faith is expecting God to keep His promises. Faith is simply believing that God will do what he promised in His word. When you act in faith on God’s word, you take Him as His word.

Faith is agreeing with God. It’s having absolute trust and confidence in God’s power, wisdom, and goodness.

Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Christ). Did you know that joy comes the same way? Jesus said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (John 15:11.) Joy comes by hearing what Jesus says.

Joy and faith are a winning combination. People who are full of the word are full of faith and usually full of joy!

Just how important is faith? You can’t be saved without faith. (Ephesians 2:8.) You can’t live the

Christian life without faith. (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38; Habakkuk 2:4.) You can’t walk the Christian walk without faith. (2 Corinthians 5:6,7.) You can’t fight the Christian fight without faith. (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7.) You can’t overcome the world without faith. (1 John 5:4.) You can’t stand without faith. (2 Corinthians 1:24.) You can’t quench the fiery darts of the enemy without faith. (Ephesians 6:16.) You can’t be blessed without faith. (Galatians 3:13,14.) You can’t please God without faith. (Hebrews 11:6; 10:38.)

Hearing God’s word without mixing faith with it won’t profit anyone. (Hebrews 4:2.) On the other hand, if we’ll treat God as an honest Being as we listen to His word, and are doers of His word, having absolute trust and confidence that His word is true, that’s what enables our faith to grow exceedingly. (2 Thessalonians 1:3.)

— Miami, OK

DOES BAPTISM SAVE US OR NOT?

By Mark Lindley

The title of this article may seem startling to some. It may cause some to shake their heads in unbelief. The question is, does the Bible teach that “baptism saves us?”

I know that many preachers preach that baptism is the “first act of obedience” after one has been saved, but that “baptism has nothing to do with your salvation.” However, according to the Bible, baptism comes “before” salvation. It is something that one does to be saved, not something one does because he is saved already.

It is clearly a contradiction to say that “baptism saves us,” and to affirm that “baptism does not save us.” Either both statements are false, or perhaps one of he statements is false and the other is true. But both cannot be true. The statements clearly contradict one another.

Suppose I could produce a verse from the Bible that teaches that “baptism saves us.” Would you believe it? I would like to think that

those reading this article would trust the teachings of the Bible. Consider the following statement made by the Lord’s apostle, Peter: “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 3:20,21, KJV.) Did you notice those six words from verse 21? “Baptism doth also now save us!”

The analogy Peter gives is this: In Noah’s day, eight souls were “saved by water,” just as water baptism also now saves us. Answer the following question please: according to Peter, an inspired man of God, what does baptism “do?” It does something. What is it? It “saves” us! That means that baptism comes before one is saved

from sin. This fits perfectly with the rest of what the Bible teaches about baptism: baptism is “for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38); baptism is the point when one’s sins are washed away (Acts 22:16), et al.

Please do not allow someone to prejudice your mind against this clear teaching of Scripture by “twisting” it. Also, be aware that some would charge that people who believe such teaching about baptism believe in “water salvation.” That is just an attempt to prevent you from accepting what the Bible actually says about baptism.

I have been a member of the church of Christ for thirty-six years and have never heard anyone preach that the power to save is in water. The power is in the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 1:7.) But it is in baptism that a sinner receives the benefits of that blood and is saved. (Romans 6:3,4.) Please consider these matters with an open mind and an open Bible.

— Ripley, MS

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

Attitude and Reaction

By Bruce Ligon

As Christians, we view life from a unique perspective. We are citizens of our nation, yet we recognize our real citizenship is in heaven. (Philippians 3:20.) We are concerned about the present attitudes and trends in our nation.

Many people are uneasy regarding how far the pendulum of ungodliness and evil will swing in the next few years. Liberal leaders in our government have as their agenda to change the moral foundations of our nation. One of their priorities are less strict laws regarding abortions. Also, there is a continuing clamoring for equality for homosexuals. The advancement of their agenda is viewed as progress. The Bible refers to these matters as “an abomination.” (Proverbs 6:16-19; Romans 1:26,27.)

What should be our attitude and reaction as Christians to the current happenings in our nation?

1. We must be very concerned. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Proverbs 14:34.) Ungodliness and sordid behavior is becoming more acceptable to the citizens of our nation. We have lost opportunities in prior years due to our level of concern being tragically low. It is possible the time will come when it will be too late to make a difference in the moral climate of our nation.

2. Our concern needs to be balanced. It is possible to allow the current challenges our nation is facing to distract us from what is most important. We must remember our spiritual relationship with the Lord is to be our greatest priority. Jesus taught, “ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33.)

3. Look to the Lord with unwavering faith. God’s people have faced challenges and perils. But whatever is happening in the world must never blind us to the power of God. Please keep uppermost in your mind that we are never helpless or hopeless as Christians. (1 Peter 3:12; Hebrews 13:5,6; 1 Peter 5:7.) Bathe your heart in the following promises from the apostle John: “For he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4.) “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world – our faith.” (1 John 5:4.)

— Bellville, TX

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33.)

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God. that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world - our faith.” (1 John 5:2-4.)

OF PREACHERS AND PREACHING

By Bobby Key

As a boy, I remember a preacher coming to the little congregation where we worshipped. He lectured us for over an hour on the sins of standing while we prayed and using literature in Bible classes. After he had finished his talk, and invitation was given, and while still standing, he asked one of the deacons to lead us in a dismissal prayer. When the prayer was finished, he said, “I have some papers to hand out that will show the truth of what I have just preached.”

For the first time in my young life, I clearly saw inconsistency. The brother may have meant well, but his logic was faulty.

The more a person knows about the laws of correct reasoning, the easier it is to avoid such obvious fallacies. It is inconsistent to oppose one wrong thing and practice something similar.

“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.” (Romans 2:1.)

I once heard an elder announce, “Our minister has resigned, and our pulpit is vacant.”

In thinking about that statement, I couldn’t help but wonder whether several of our pulpits are vacant even though there is a full-time preacher involved!

Gospel preaching has fallen on hard times. In too many congregations these days, the saints listen for half an hour to a display of nothing more than babbling nothingness. If the truth were told as members filed out of the building, they would have to admit, “The pulpit was vacant today!”

Paul admonished young Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2.)

Never before in our lifetime have we heard so many church members complain that their preacher is failing to exalt the gospel of Christ. Worldly knowledge will never be enough.

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32.) The truth must be preached; otherwise, the pulpit is vacant.

— DECEASED

TRUTH, FROM FIRST TO LAST

By Dalton Key

The inspired writers of the New Testament presented a wonderfully consistent attitude toward truth.

To the Ephesian brethren Paul wrote, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:17.) He commended the early spiritual training of Timothy, his own son in the faith, by urging, "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:14,15.)

Peter's words line up well with Paul's. Peter allowed little sympathy for those "untaught and unstable people" who were twisting the inspired Scriptures "to their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:16.) Though Peter recognized there were in God's Word "some things hard to be understood," he nonetheless expected his readers to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:16,18.)

Inspired New Testament writers did not pen their letters as discussions of this interpretation compared with that interpretation. They wrote, and wrote about scriptural truth which could be learned, understood and agreed upon.

God's word is truth, from first to last. (Psalm 119:160.) Jesus is the truth. (John 14:6.)

The truth will make us free - truly free - from sin and sin's consequences. (John 8:32.)

While some, such as Pilate, seem to scoff at the very idea of truth (John 18:32), while others "who are self-seeking . . . do not obey the truth" (Romans 2:8), and while still others stay busy in working to "the truth of God into a lie" (Romans 1:25), believers see things differently. Believers, in ages past and from time immemorial have always cherished truth, defended truth, lived for truth, and have even been willing to give their very lives for truth.

What is your attitude towards the truth? Regardless your answer, regardless your response, the truth remains. In the words of Richard Wurmbrand, "Hammer away, ye hostile hands. Your hammers break; God's anvil stands."

"Pilate there said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.'" (John 18:37.)

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

A BETTER WORLD

by Dalton Key

The following words seem especially fitting to our time and to the craziness lately gripping our country: "My favorite poet was Aeschylus. And he once wrote, 'Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.' What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness, but love, and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or whether they be black."

I am a registered Republican. The quotation above comes from the mind and mouth of a well-known Democrat. Regardless of political party, the words are both true and ever relevant.

A few years had passed since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Only a few hours had passed since the assassination of Martin Luther King. The year, 1968. The quotation is that of Senator Robert Kennedy, who spoke to soothe and salve a nation spinning out of control. The words speak for themselves and ring with a haunting relevance to our current state of affairs. His words are refreshingly nonpolitical and brim with something sadly lacking in these more modern times - statesmanship.

Robert Kennedy would himself be assassinated just two months later.

Kennedy referenced the greek poet, Aeschylus, who had also once opined, "In war, the first casualty is truth."

We are, as a nation, as a people, presently at war with ourselves, and true to form, truth is nowhere to be found. We have killed it. We have buried the body. And we have left it to rot in an unmarked grave, while we waste precious time and energy arguing over the corpse.

Words are plentiful but have come to mean next to nothing, with definitions constantly changing and follow-through seldom seen. Too many of us seem more interested in shifting and assigning blame than in actually dealing with our most pressing problems.

The time for bickering, finger-pointing, posturing and prevaricating has long-since passed. What we need now - desperately - is what our country needed then, in the dark spring and summer of 1968; we need "love, wisdom, and compassion towards one another." In short, we need a good dose of God's word.

"Love one another." (1 John 4:7.) "Be kind to one another." (Ephesians 4:32.) "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good." (Romans 15:2.) "Let each one of you speak truth to his neighbor." (Ephesians 4:25.) Can you imagine how many of our world's problems would be solved - in an instant - should such biblical admonitions be universally applied?

A better world begins with a better you and me.



PURCHASED BY GOD

By Milton Smith

In Ephesians 1:14 in reference to each and every child of God.

Jesus feels so close to those of His church that the Holy Spirit refers to individual members as being Jesus' brothers and sisters. (Hebrews 2:11; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 7:15.) This is an obvious reference to our subsequent adoption into His spiritual body following the new birth. (Romans 8:15.) Nearly 2000 years ago - after offering a prayer for His chosen apostles - Jesus added these words, "I do not pray for these alone, but for those also who shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me." (John 17:20-21.) While Jesus was on earth, He prayed for each and every soul who would make the personal choice to become a member of His family.

There exists no greater blessing than to belong to the family of God and have Jesus as our spiritual brother. In a special way, He is lovingly there for us when we go to the Father in prayer. (Hebrews 4:15-16.) Never forget that if you are a faithful child of God, Jesus views you as His personal possession. You belong to Him in a unique relationship that the world neither comprehends nor possesses. Because of this, He has a genuine concern for you on a daily basis. As a member of His fold, your loving Shepherd will never forsake you. (John 10:27-28.)

A simple word of advice: never allow the deceitfulness of this world to rob you of these unparalleled blessings that reach from here to eternity!

— Tulsa, OK

GOD CARES FOR SPARROWS

By Joe Slater

"Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God." (Luke 12:6, NASB.)

I'm not an avid bird watcher. I do enjoy seeing the robins return in the spring along with the gorgeous red cardinals. And we keep a hummingbird feeder in the back yard and laugh at the antics of the few who drink there as they dive bomb one another. But I don't even notice the sparrows. They're drab; they're dirty; they don't sing. I can't imagine they'd be any good to eat, though I suppose that's what Jesus had in mind when He mentioned people paying a pittance to purchase them.

I simply don't care about sparrows. But God does! They are a part of His creation, day five. (Genesis 1:20.) He notices if even one of them falls to the ground. (Matthew 10:29.) That being the case, Jesus assures us that God is also keenly aware of us. "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7), animal rights extremists to the contrary notwithstanding.

I'm glad God cares for sparrows. I'm even more glad that He cares for me even though I'm not much to look at and there is plenty about me that is undesirable. Can you relate?

I need to check my attitude toward other people, especially those whose behavior I find obnoxious. God cares about them even as he does about you and me. They need Jesus just like we do. Our Lord "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9.) My job is not to despise them, but to lovingly share the gospel with them.

— Justin, TX

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