

Faith Must Obey

By Ron Boatwright

We are saved by the unmerited favor of God through our "obedience to the faith" (Romans 16:26). There is no way that anyone could ever be good enough to go to heaven, because "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). There is no way we could earn or merit heaven, because heaven will be a gift of God (Romans 6:23) for those who obey Him (Matthew 7:21). To have faith in God is to believe, trust, and do all He says.

Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness". Why? Why will those be told to depart into Hell? They had not done the will of the Father. Just professing that we believe in Jesus is not enough. Jesus says we must do "the will of My Father in heaven", if we expect to go to heaven. Our faith must be an obedient faith by doing the will of God if it is to be a saving faith; otherwise it is not a saving faith.

Faith without obedience is a dead and useless faith, which will cause one to be lost. "By faith Noah, being divinely warned...prepared an ark for the saving of his household" (Hebrews 11:7). Noah and his household were not saved by "faith only", but by an active obedient faith. If Noah had a "faith only" faith he would have perished.

"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). One is foolish and is fooling himself if he thinks he can please God with a dead faith. God has not promised to save anyone who has a dead faith. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). A dead faith will not do any good, but only cause one to be eternally lost.

Only an active living faith will save. "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). This is the only place in the Bible that mentions "faith only" and here it condemns it as a false doctrine. We are only justified, which results in our being saved, by an active faith which is demonstrated by our works and not by a dead faith of "faith only". Satan says we are justified and saved by "faith only", but God says we are not justified and saved by "faith only".

"Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18). When one really believes God, he will do anything and everything God says and thus has a living and saving faith. "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble" (James 2:19). One is no better than the demons with a "faith only" faith.

To those who claim to be "saved by faith only" the Lord says, "But why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Jesus is "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). He has only promised to save those who obey Him; not those who say they have faith and do not obey Him. The only way we can show our faith in Christ is if we are willing to accept and obey all of what He says. We are only saved through faith when our faith has produced our obedience. If we really have faith in Christ, then we will do anything and everything He tells us, and only then will our faith save us.

At the end of time the Lord will come "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Who are those who do not know God? "He who says 'I know Him', and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him" (1 John 2:4). One is only lying to himself and everyone else if he says he is saved and knows God, but does not keep God's commandments. The lie of Satan says that there is nothing that we must do to qualify for the salvation that God wants to give us, except to have a dead faith. Those who do not know God and end up being lost are those who do not obey God by keeping His commandments.

"But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18 KJV). It is only when we have obeyed God's instructions from the heart that we are made free from sin and become servants of righteousness; not before. God's word says, "you have purified your souls in obeying the truth" (1 Peter 1:22). We do not purify our souls with a dead faith of non-obedience. It is absolutely necessary that we obey God in order to be saved.

Paul asks the question, "Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?" (Galatians 3:1). Satan is the one who bewitches people into not obeying the truth of God's word so they can be saved. Those who think they can obtain God's blessing of salvation contrary to what God tells us in His word are only fooling themselves. We are saved only by an obedient faith. If one chooses not to obey all the Lord says, he has chosen not to be saved. If

one claims to have faith, but does not obey, really he has no faith at all. If one has faith in God and His word, he will do all that God says, the way God says, and for the reason God says; and only then will his faith save him. The only kind of faith that can save us is "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6).