

Faith in God I

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Much has been said and written on the subject of faith, so much so that one finds it difficult to convince many to consider the subject objectively anymore. What can anyone add to all that has been said? The challenge is not to add, but to remove the misconceptions which accumulated over the years. It is not about new light, or an exclusive ability to understand what others cannot understand. The challenge is to expose the simplicity revealed through the Scriptures, to peel through the layers of human tradition so that faith is in God and not in man. This challenge is not only for those *out there*, it is a challenge for *us* to remain *faithful* to God.

The fact that faith is necessary for salvation is not the point of contention. How faith leads us to salvation is where the difference of opinion lies. The principle ***let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written,...*** (Romans 3:4) should be supreme in every matter relating to establishing God's will. The challenge is to notice what **God** said, and not what man *wants*. (2 Timothy 4:3) In the Scriptures faith is used in a *subjective* (to believe) as well as an *objective* (what to believe) sense. The answer to what constitutes a saving faith lies in a proper relationship between these.

The necessity of believing that Jesus is the Christ could not be more clearly stated than by the Lord Himself: ***"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."*** (John 8:24) Faith in Jesus is absolutely necessary. When God through James declares that the demons also believe, and that their faith causes them to shudder (James 2:19), it is immediately obvious that we are not talking about the mere mental exercise of believing that Jesus is the Christ that saves.

Through Jude God appeals to believers to ***contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*** (Jude 3) This is one of several places where faith is spoken of in an *objective* sense, indicating that it is important that we not only believe, but that we believe correctly. *The faith* was delivered through ***His holy apostles and prophets*** by means of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. (Ephesians 3:1-7; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Hebrews 2:1-4) We have the complete (*perfect*) revelation, written down for us. It is for this *faith revealed* believers are to contend for earnestly. This written record is the only *objective* standard by which we may determine who is a false teacher and who is not. (2 Timothy 3:16-4:5; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9; Matthew 15:9; Jude 3) We are not to ***not to judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*** John 7:24

In Ephesians 4:5 we learn that, just as there is ***one Lord***, there is but ***one faith***. Ponder the sense in which *faith* is here used. Currently there are many *faiths*, and it is considered a blessing. We are encouraged to worship with the church (faith) of *our choice*, where the gospel is preached to our liking. Notice again 2 Timothy 4:3: ***For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,...***

Herein lies the answer to the question we are considering, salvation by faith *in* Christ. In each of these *faiths* one learns what is expected of you to believe, and subsequently practice in order to remain in good standing with your *brethren*. When one contends for the simple truths revealed through the Scriptures you are labeled *narrow minded* and *judgmental*. *Freedom of interpretation* of the faith revealed through God's servants (Ephesians 3:5; Jude 3) is demanded, while one would not have the same freedom of interpretation with regard to the creeds of the different denominations. One has to leave that faith if you no longer believe as they do.

This is how faith saves, or not save. Each believer expresses his or her faith as directed by each of these *faiths* – your actions demonstrate not only *what* you believe, but also *who* you *believe*.

Believing in Jesus is demonstrated in the same way. When your actions do not correspond to what He says the question is: "**Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?**" (Luke 6:46) In order to be saved one has to believe as God directs through His word.

Many call Jesus "Lord, Lord," but their actions do not demonstrate that, they follow the teachings of men – their faith is in what men say. Matthew records the conversation in more detail, and it amounts to the most restrictive and harsh statement ever made by none other than the loving Savior Himself. It is made in the context of the *broad* and the *narrow* ways: "**Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.**"²² "**Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'**"²³ "**And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'**" (Matthew 7:21-22)

In spite of the fact that salvation is by grace through faith, Jesus Christ the Son of God says that many who are convinced, to the extent that they will reason with Him in person, will hear: "**I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'**" Believing and doing what man says is lawlessness. Believing and doing what God says results in salvation. **Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.** (Colossians 3:17)