

Salvation by faith
by Hendrik Joubert

John 3:16 must be one of, if it is not the most quoted verse in the Bible: *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.* It is through the Hebrew writer that God further explains the crucial role faith plays: *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.* Hebrews 11:6

From this passage the vital role faith plays in pleasing God is obvious. It is not merely believing that God exists, but believing that He **rewards** those who **seek** Him. Faith is crucial as it is the *motivating power* behind a seeking after God. It is quite possible to believe that God exists, without the desire to seek Him. God does not **reward** those who merely believe in Him, but he **rewards** those who **seek** Him.

When one embarks on a search for God and His grace, you learn that it is only through the Son that this may be obtained. Matthew records God's words concerning His Son in this way: *This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!* Matthew 17:5. After being raised from the dead the Son declares: *All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.* Matthew 28:18. It is John who records the Lord confirming that He is the only way to come to the Father: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.* John 14:6. *God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

In **John 12:42** we read of people who *believed* in Jesus, but who would not confess Him: *Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;...* It is the reason given in **verse 43** which indicates that they did not seek the favor of God, but rather that of men and therefore would not be **rewarded** by God: *...for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.*

Through James the Lord explains the difference between a saving faith and believing in vain. *You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.* James 2:19. The rulers mentioned by John, had the type of belief that even the demons have, but that faith did not motivate them to seek God. Notice what the Lord teaches through the apostle Paul to take care that we do not believe in vain: *Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.* 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

Consider carefully the statement above. It was not merely a case of believing that Jesus died for their sins, but to take a stand in the gospel, to hold fast to the word which Paul preached to them so that they may not have believed in vain, but be saved. Through the gospel sinners are called to repentance, to a changed life. Sin should not be committed willfully and willingly, as it would result in condemnation: *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.* Hebrews 10:26-27

Passages of Scripture are often quoted in isolation to suggest that one is saved by faith, without any works. The fact that one can not be saved by keeping the Law given through Moses, and therefore by the works of the law, may be found in many places. (**Romans 3:20, Romans 3:28, Galatians 2:16.**) In an attempt to refute this idea God asks through James: *But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?* James 2:20. A useless, or a dead faith, cannot save. That is what the rules in **John 12** had. They were not willing to

demonstrate their faith through their actions so that their faith may become alive, become evident so that they may be saved by it.

Consider the statement by the Lord personally: ***He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. Mark 16:16.*** Here we have faith and an action which makes it alive in one statement. One is not saved until the faith becomes alive. Many will reject the act and change the purpose for it, but claim to believe in God and His Son. By their words and their actions they fail to believe in what God says, preferring the honor of men. Faith in God is demonstrated by total submission to His will. Submitting to the doctrines and beliefs of men demonstrates faith in them and their abilities. Accepting His advice is to honor Him, as opposed to men.