

Salvation By Faith

by Hendrik Joubert

Salvation by faith is often associated with the New Testament only, however one of the clearest illustrations of what it means to believe in God so that this faith may result in His approval, is found in the Old Testament. It is from the Old Testament (**Habakkuk 2:4**) God inspires Paul to quote when he writes: ***For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."*** (Romans 1:17) In Hebrews 11 we are supplied with several examples of people who lived before, as well as under the Old Covenant who were justified *by faith*, helping us understand what it means to believe *in* God and in His Son.

The illustration starts in **Exodus 17:6** where Moses receives the instruction to strike the rock at Horeb so that ***water will come out of it, that the people may drink.*** ***And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.*** Moses did as the Lord commanded and the people received water from the most unlikely source, a rock. In **1 Corinthians 10:4** we learn the Messianic significance: ***...all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.***

Later the people found themselves in a similar situation. They did not learn from the previous gracious sign, or from any of the other signs God performed in their midst. (**Numbers 14:11**) Once again they complain to Moses (among other things) about a lack of water. Once again Moses is instructed to get water from a rock, with slightly different instructions. Although he is to ***"Take the rod,"*** this time he is instructed to ***speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water.*** (**Numbers 20:8**)

Consider Moses' emotional state by this time. Although they are against God, it is Moses who time and again has bear the brunt of these complaints. He has *just about had enough*. He is human as they are, what do they expect him to do, get water from a rock? That is exactly what he (sarcastically?) asks them after he and Aaron ***gathered the assembly before the rock.*** (**Numbers 20:10**) I believe it to be sarcasm rather than arrogance as we learn: ***Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.*** (**Numbers 12:3**)

Because of his zeal for God he *looses it* and strikes the rock, as he did the previous time, and he does it twice. He not only violates what God said in *word*, but he does it also in *deed*. His actions reflects his words – he was going to get the water in his way. Notice the judgment from the Lord, God: ***But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."*** (**Numbers 20:12**)

When Moses is accused of a lack of faith, we are obviously not speaking of him not believing that God is, or that God could bring forth water from a rock. He did not do exactly as God said for him to, showing a lack of faith in, as well as respect for the words of God. By saying what he said and doing what he did he leaves the impression that doing things as God says as optional. *Interpretation* becomes a convenient tool to make changes to the simple instructions God gives. However, what God says is not a matter of interpretation. (**2 Peter 1:20**) God spoke and we must do as He says to illustrate faith in Him. Doing as Moses did without saying what he said will not excuse us. Our actions demonstrate whether we believe in God or in men.

Notice the two part accusation ***have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel.*** When one person takes that awesomely arrogant responsibility of making changes, however minor it is considered, others follow. The end result is that men are encouraged to *worship with the church of your choice*, where different doctrines, based upon their interpretation of

God's words, is taught. Each year men will gather to make further adjustments to the words of God, and decide what is right or wrong. *After all, no church can take you to heaven, only the blood of Christ.*

The Bible teaches that God adds to the number of *called (church)* daily those who are saved by doing what He says in order for them to be saved. He determined the way one is to ask for the cleansing blood of Christ, (**1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; Hebrews 10:22**) and therefore says the church was bought with His own blood. (**Acts 20:28**) *But is that not referring to that invisible body in heaven?* God was speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus when He said this. The warning to them is that some from their own number will start making changes to the revelation from God, resulting in a corruption of the word by men – *shall we*. As in the case of Moses it will be subtle changes, sometimes incorporating commandments previously made to others. (**Acts 15:1-5; Galatians 1:6-9**)

Faith in God is demonstrated when one follows His instruction as they were given. Many change these because God has graciously offered us the opportunity to escape the consequences of sin. For them grace means *anything goes*, and not that ...***the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,...*** (Titus 2:11-14) In order to demonstrate faith in Christ one has to follow the principle: ***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 3:1)

The creeds of men says *shall we*... As a result Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land – what about us?