

The Faith That You Have

by Hendrik Joubert

God declares: ...***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*** (Romans 3:23) Sin is not to be considered as mere indiscretions, or mischief. The punishment for sin – ***eternal*** damnation (Matthew 25:41) – should convince us of how serious the loving God views sin. It is important to notice that we all are **lost** unless we are saved, and **not saved** unless we *really mess up badly*. Even those who consider themselves religious to the degree that they would reason with the Lord will learn that they are indeed lost. (Matthew 7:21-23)

Another important fact to consider is that there is absolutely nothing we can initiate from our side to make up for the sins we have committed. Salvation is a gift of God. This gift is by grace and accessed through faith. (Ephesians 2:8-9) In Romans 10:17 the Lord explains: ***So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*** Faith which results in salvation is the product of the word of Christ. *What* we are to believe is therefore also a gift from God, and not of our own doing. (We should not exercise our own will upon His Word to manipulate it.)

This saving faith has two dimensions. First of all it involves believing that God exists, but therefore also in *what* He says. In Hebrews 11:6 God teaches us: ***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.*** The first dimension is obvious in that we have to believe that *God is* – that He exists. The second involves believing that ***He rewards those who seek Him.*** How to seek His favor, resulting in salvation, is revealed through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

In Hebrews 1:1-2 God confirms the words of Jesus as recorded in John 14:6, that He is the only way by which God may be accessed – In these last days He is the only medium by which God communicates with us. The rest of the chapter is a detailed explanation of why He is the only source of communication. Jesus trained the twelve to be witnesses of His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22) He promises them that the Holy Spirit will come to remind them of all He said, and then guide them into *all truth*. (John 14:25-26; 16:12-13) What they preached was therefore ***the Word of Christ.*** (Romans 10:17)

The motivation to submit to, and ***abide in the teaching of Christ*** (2 John 9) comes from the conviction (Hebrews 11:1) that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. Jesus personally warns that if we were to depart from what is revealed in His teaching, our worship becomes vain. (Matthew 15:9) We noticed this when we read Matthew 7:21-23. Pleasing God, or seeking Him, involves more than calling Jesus Lord, Lord, (Luke 6:46) one has to **DO** the will of His Father in heaven – seek Him.

Salvation by faith therefore involves more than the mere mental exercise of accepting that God is. It involves more than accepting that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that He died for the sins of the world. The devils believe this and they even shudder (James 2:19), but they will not seek Him. There were those who believed Jesus to be the Christ, but who would not confess Him for fear of being thrown out of the Synagogue. (John 12:42-43) ***They loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.***

Faith is therefore spoken of in a *subjective* sense (my faith and your faith), but also in the objective sense *the faith* – what we are to believe. Through Jude (1:3-4) the Lord issues the following warning: ***Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*** ⁴ ***For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation...*** Once again, this faith is produced by the word of Christ, ***the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints***, as was promised in John 14:25-26 and John 16:12-13.

The true believer is someone who realizes the seriousness of sin, causing him or her to hunger and thirst after righteousness. (**Matthew 5:6**) To desire the pure milk of the word like a new born baby. (**1 Peter 2:2**) Everything done *in word of deed* should be established from the Word of Christ. (**Colossians 3:17**) It should be done with conviction (**Romans 14:22**), realizing that sincerely believing something which is not found in the word of God may yet condemn us. (**Romans 14:23**)

Salvation by faith is therefore a responsible act and not simply believing that Jesus is the Christ. Salvation is by a faith which motivates one to seek God in order to please Him, to do His will. (**Matthew 7**) This faith is demonstrated by doing the simple things which God asks through His Son, therefore not only believing in Him, but also in what He says. *He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.* (**Mark 16:16**)