



# The Voice of Truth



August 30, 2009

## "Can 'Faith Alone' Save Him?"

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Yes, we are well aware of the fact that many believe and teach that, "man is saved by faith alone is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort." "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" (**Jas. 2:14**). Of course, a man is saved by faith! Without it, it would be impossible to please God (**Heb. 11:6**). We are saved by faith (**Jno. 3:16**). Faith is necessary to get one to God's power (**Rom. 1:16**). Faith is a must to live the Christian life (**Gal. 2:20**). Faith is not a leap into a religious darkness (**2 Cor. 5:7**). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (**Rom. 10:17**). So the New Testament teaches consistently we are saved by faith.

But, we also know that it is not faith alone. Take a moment to look at what James is saying in (**Jas. 2:14**). He was asking if a do nothing, inactive, all talk and no work faith could save. Can that faith save him? NO, it cannot! "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (**Jas. 2:24**). Could we find a passage that would state this more clearly? This is as clear as it can be. There are other passages that will prove beyond a doubt that one is not saved by faith alone. "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess (it), lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the glory (that is) of men more than the glory (that is) of God" (**Jno. 12:42-43**). Now this passage says they believed. John said they believed; but that is all they did. Would they be saved? Was it enough? If one is saved by faith alone, these would surely be saved. Faith only, in their case stopped short of confessing Christ. The enormity of that situation is seen in the following teaching of Jesus: "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven.

But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven (**Matt. 10:32-33**). No, according to Jesus, faith alone is not enough. Thus, their belief did not avail because it did not lead them on to confess Jesus. Here in John 12 is an example of some who only believe, and they are lost.

There is another passage that will prove beyond a doubt that one is not saved by faith alone. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (**Gal. 5:6**). Salvation is not by faith alone. True faith expresses itself, it works. Faith working through love. "Love" (agape) occurs here for the first time in this letter. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (**Jno. 14:15**). The works included in salvation are the commandments of the Lord, obedience to which is absolutely essential to salvation. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (**1 Jno. 2:4**). Faith blesses only when it leads its possessor to obedience. Chapter 11 of Hebrews is Inspiration's Hall of Fame. Numerous examples of great faith are offered by the inspired penman and in each instance the mention of the faith of its immortal heroes is followed by a verb of action. "By faith Abel offered ...," "By faith Noah... prepared an ark ...," "By faith Abraham... obeyed ..." Faith will save us only when we allow it to lead us on to the full acceptance of the will of God as expressed through His commandments (**Matt. 7:21**). "Shew me thy faith without thy works" (**Jas. 2:18**). Such is impossible, faith cannot be seen; its existence is evidenced only through the works which it produces. "I will shew thee my faith by my works" (**Jas. 2:18**). "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" (**Jas. 2:21**). How was he justified? Not

CONTINUED INSIDE...

merely by a profession, but by works of his faith. "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect"? (**Jas. 2:22**). "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (**Jas. 2:24**). In other words, his faith itself was counted as an act of obedience.

Notice another passage. **John 1:12** says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, (even) to them that believe on his name." Can words be clearer? If you believe in Christ you have the right or power **TO BECOME** a child of God. You are not a child of God by faith alone; you have the **right to become one**.

The Bible says one must believe Jesus is the Christ to be saved (**Jno. 8:24**). But that is not all. It also says he must repent of his sins (**Lk. 13:3-5; Acts 3:19**). Repentance is a change of mind regarding sin with a view to amend one's life. But that is not all. The Bible teaches that one must confess his faith that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God (**Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Tim. 6:12**). Having done that, one more thing more follows. One must be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins to be saved (**Mk. 16:16; Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16**).

The one who claims to have faith, but will not do the work of the Lord, it is a dead faith! (**Jas. 2:17**). This is the way James would describe such a faith. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (**Jas. 2:20**). Look again, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (**Jas. 2:26**). James speaks of faith without works as faith alone. But of that faith he will say that it is a dead faith. Now, is man saved by a dead faith? Absolutely not! From this we can conclude that faith alone will not save. The notion that faith alone saved was spawned by the Protestant Reformation. It was an extreme reaction against the meritorious "work salvation" of the Catholic faith. It is a false doctrine!

## "Praying A 'Sinner's Prayer'"

By Jarrod Jacobs

A while back, I received a sample packet of tracts from "The Tract League" (a.k.a., "Faith, Prayer, & Tract League") out of Grand Rapids, MI. According to their form letter addressed to the "Pastor," they have over 300 tracts in stock "designed to point to Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation." While their intentions may be admirable, they are going about it in the wrong way. In nearly every tract, they encourage people to say a "sinner's prayer" and then join a church, be baptized, etc. I have printed some examples of their "prayers" below:

1) "Jesus, I believe and I need the salvation you have provided. Come into my heart, rule my life today, and show me how to live. Amen" **From the tract: "The Plain Gospel"**

2) "Jesus, I believe that you are the holy Son of God. I believe that you died on the cross for my sins and that you rose from the dead. You are my salvation. Please wash all my sins away and make me a child of God. I give my life to you today. Amen" **From the tract: "What Is Meant By Salvation?"**

3) "Jesus, I need your salvation. I open my heart to you. I confess that you are God's own son, and that you died on the cross to save me from my sin. Help me to turn from my ways and follow you. Make me ready for your return and show me how to live in the days ahead. Amen." **From the tract: "Jesus Is Coming Again"**

4) "Jesus, I am sorry for the things I do and say that are wrong. Make me your child, take care of me and help me from now on to follow you. Amen." **From the tract: "Here's A Treat For You And Some Good News."**

Probably all of our dear readers have seen similar tracts to these, and as well have seen these little "model" prayers at one point or another. Unfortunately, some, after reading such tracts as these may say a similar prayer, and go on their way thinking that they are saved. Perhaps you have heard a denominational preacher on the radio or on TV encourage people to say words to this effect. This is disturbing at best, and spiritually fatal at worst. Let us study and see what the Bible

has to say about such prayers.

### ***The Bible Never Mentions Such A Thing As A "Sinner's Prayer."***

Pray tell, which verse might one use to prove that one can pray a "sinner's prayer" in order to be saved? Some might look to **Luke 18:13** and think that this shows us an example of a sinner's prayer. There is just one problem with this, and that is that the men mentioned in this text (Pharisee and publican) were both Jews! They were already children of God and allowed to enter the Temple; but no *"stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor ... in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary"* (**Ezek. 44:9**). Therefore, the publican's prayer of *"God be merciful to me a sinner"* would not be applicable to one outside of Christ today.

Now, which New Testament passage teaches the necessity of saying a "sinner's prayer" where, at that moment, one is saved, before and without anything else, including baptism? Brethren, no Scripture teaches us to pray some kind of "sinner's prayer." In fact, *"we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth"* (**Jn. 9:31**).

### ***Each Of The Prayers Mentioned Are Different.***

Reread the "prayers" recorded on this page. Notice please that each one is different. Two prayers don't even mention Christ's death on the cross! Two prayers mention faith ("I believe") and two do not. (I wonder if our denominational friends would consider one saved if he tried to join them and said he had prayed one of the two prayers that doesn't even mention faith in Christ?) Further, three of the prayers mention something about the person following Christ after being "saved," while one doesn't mention it at all. One prayer mentions being washed from sins, and the other three do not.

Why bring this up? It is because in the New Testament, we find that everyone that God considered saved did the same thing in order to be saved. Each one heard God's word (**Rom. 10:17; Acts 8:5, 35, 16:13, 2:22**), they believed that Jesus Christ is the

Son of God (**Acts 2:36, 8:12, 16:31, Mk. 16:16**), repented of their sins (**Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38, 17:31**), confessed their faith in Christ (**Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37**), and were baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16; Acts 8:12-13, 16:15, 33, 22:16**). Notice also that in the Bible, the washing away of sins came after one had been baptized (**Acts 22:16**). Each case of conversion in the Bible is consistent with the other. We cannot say this about these so-called "prayers" men have suggested we say in order to be saved.

### ***These Prayers Offer Another Way To Salvation.***

While the "The Tract League" of Grand Rapids, MI claims they are pointing people to Christ, the truth is that they are not. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (**Jn. 14:6**). People such as Philip (**Acts 8:5, 12, 35-39**), Paul (**Acts 17:3, 18:8**), and Peter (**Acts 2:22, 36-38, 3:19**) pointed people to Christ. They did this by telling people what Christ had taught (**Acts 4:20, 9:22**). Where in the Scriptures does Christ teach men to pray a "sinner's prayer" in order to be saved? In truth, the "sinner's prayer" is the old denominational doctrine of "praying through" to God. The only difference is that in the past, "praying through" meant one might pray one prayer after another, with the person not "getting through" on the first try. This version of "praying through," as portrayed in the tracts and by modern denominational preachers, promises you'll "get through" on the first try! Promises; promises; promises! How convenient!

Once we know what is necessary to be saved, we learn that the "sinner's prayer" is nothing more than a veiled attempt by man at circumventing God's law through providing an alternate way to be saved. Remember what Christ said? *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber"* (**Jn. 10:1**). Who is the door? *"I am the door"* (**Jn. 10:7, 9**). Christ is the way, and He is the door!

Therefore, our responsibility is to follow Christ's word "as is," and not be caught up in the feel-good, free, no cost, nothing to do, and nothing to lose salvation that the world is promising. The "sinner's prayer" promises something it cannot provide (i.e., salvation). Let us be found doing the will of God, and following His word all the days of our lives (**Acts 2:36-38; Acts 22:16; II Pet. 1:5-11; Rev. 2:10; I Cor. 15:58**).

### Conclusion

Friend, instead of trusting in man's words, why not go to God's word and learn what is necessary to be saved. Nothing can compare to knowing exactly what God expects of you. The salvation of a man's soul is a serious matter; for no greater injustice can be done to any person than to give them the impression they are saved, when, in fact, they are not. The "sinner's prayer" leaves people in their sin. *Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com*

### Fearful or Faithful?

By Jonathan L. Perz

Just as faith has the power to overcome fear, one of the most powerful suppressors of faith is fear. Fear as a reverential awe for God is not the antithesis for faith, but fearful thoughts that terrify and scare us. One fear is healthy and commanded (**Matthew 10:28**), the other is cowardly and condemnable (**Revelation 21:8**). One motivates us toward great and noble feats while the other cripples us in base and selfish acts.

There are several instances where the Bible demonstrates these critical differences. Before Jesus stilled the storm-tossed sea, the disciples were terrified thinking they were perishing. Jesus, in response to their fear, asked, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" (**Matthew 8:25-26**). Fear paralyzed them, where faith would have com-

ported and encouraged them.

The Hebrew writer tells us of the faith of Noah. "By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (**Hebrews 11:7**). Noah chose to let faith govern his actions, moving with a reverential awe for God, ultimately saving his house and mankind.

In like fashion, the same context tells us of Moses and how "by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (**Hebrews 11:27**). Because Moses chose to act by faith, rather than fear, he endured and delivered Israel.

As in these instances, the question remains for us, will we choose to live our lives in the flesh by fear or will we let faith govern our actions despite the possible imagined outcomes? Fearful or faithful—the choice is ours! *Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com*

### What Must I Do To Be Saved?

**Hear and Learn** - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

**Believe** - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

**Repent** - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

**Confess the Lord** - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

**Be Baptized** - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

**Continue in the Apostles' Teaching** - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

### About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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#### Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am  
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am  
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm\*

\*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

[www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com](http://www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com)