



SAVED BY FAITH, BUT NOT BY FAITH ONLY

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One must believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, in order to be saved from his sins. The Bible says: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, but unless we believe in Him, we cannot be saved. Jesus told the Jews "*...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins*" (John 8:24). When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He commanded: "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:15,16).

How can one believe? Some teach that faith is a gift of God, which is put in the sinner's heart by a miracle. But the Bible teaches: "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). Paul shows how faith comes when he says: "*For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*" (Romans 10:13,14). It is necessary for the gospel of Christ to be preached so that sinners can believe and be saved. Where the gospel has not gone, people have not heard, and no one has been saved. This is the reason we must preach the gospel to every person, in every nation, in the whole world (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46, 47).

What does it mean to believe? Some teach that one is saved by faith alone without any further acts of obedience. Is this true according to the teaching of the Bible? Mark tells of Jesus preaching in a house in Capernaum when so many gathered around that there was no room for any more. Four men had a friend who was paralyzed. They wanted Jesus to heal him, but they could not get through the crowd. They went up on the roof of the house. They made a hole and let down the bed on which their friend lay. The Bible says, "*Jesus saw their faith*" (Mark 2:1-5). How did He see their faith? It was by their actions. True faith can be seen by the works it produces.

James discusses the kind of faith which saves. He says, "*...faith without works is dead*" (James 2:20). He also says that "*a man is justified by works, and not by faith only*" (James 2:24). He concludes his discussion by writing: "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*" (James 2:26).

Those who teach sinners are saved by faith only often use the conversion of the Philippian jailer to prove their doctrine (Acts 16:16-40). Paul and Silas were preaching in Philippi. They cast an evil spirit out of a slave girl. Her masters had used the demon possessed girl to make money by telling people's fortunes. When they saw their way of making money was gone, they falsely accused Paul and Silas. The two preachers were beaten and thrown into prison. That night, God sent an earthquake which freed the prisoners. The keeper of the prison thought they had escaped. He was going to kill himself, but Paul said: "***Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.***" The man fell down before Paul and Silas and said: "***Sirs, what must I do to be saved?***" Paul replied, "***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.***" Those who teach sinners are saved by belief only stop at this point. But the inspired Word tells more. The jailer was told to believe, but we have already learned that "***Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.***" Paul and Silas "***spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.***" He could not believe until he had been taught. The preachers not only taught the jailer, but "***all who were in his house.***" This means all his family were old enough to hear the gospel and understand it. There were no babies or small children who were too young to understand. Please notice verse 33: "***And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.***" What hour of the night was it? It was at midnight when the earthquake came (v. 25).

Let us sum up how the Philippian jailer and his family were saved:

- (1) He asked, "***What must I do?***"
- (2) He was told to "***believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;***"
- (3) Paul and Silas preached the Word to him and his family so that they could believe,
- (4) He washed the stripes he had inflicted on Paul and Silas the previous day. This shows he had repented;
- (5) He and his family were all baptized.

Did the Philippian jailer think it was important that he be baptized? Obviously he did, for he did not even wait until the next morning. As soon as he knew he was lost and learned about the Saviour, he believed, repented, and was baptized. That is the way sinners are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. It is not by belief alone! Sinners are saved by faith which obeys. Paul described to the Galatian Christians the kind of faith we must have in order to please God: "***For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love***" (Galatians 5:6).

Have you been saved from your sins? If not, you can be saved today. Believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son who died to save you. Repent of your sins. Confess your faith in Christ. Be buried with Christ in baptism so that your sins will be washed away. Then serve Christ faithfully all the days of your life. You can die with a sure hope of going to Heaven (Acts 16:31; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:37; Romans 6:3-5; Revelation 2:10).