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“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

November 2017

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“FAITH ONLY” TEXTS IN CONTEXT - Part 1

Martin Luther was a Catholic monk in Germany at the beginning of the 16th century. When John Tetzel came into Germany selling indulgences, Luther raised his voice in protest. The controversy gained heat as the days went by, and Luther finally nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Catholic church in Wittenberg, and challenged any Catholic anywhere to meet him in an open discussion of the same. Naturally, this brought down on his head the wrath of the Roman hierarchy. He was called before the dignitaries of the church, both civil and religious, and given his choice of recanting or being excommunicated.

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Confronted with this choice, Luther made reply, "It is evident that the pope and the councils have frequently erred; and unless I can be persuaded by the text of the scripture, or by the clearest reasoning therefrom, I cannot, I will not, recant." He stood firmly by his convictions, and was ultimately excommunicated from the Roman Church.

"Faith Only" Doctrine Begun

So intense was Luther's hatred for Catholicism and everything connected with it that when he was excommunicated, he swung to the other extreme, and began to emphasize the doctrine of salvation "by faith alone." This was in rebellion against the Catholic doctrine, of salvation by works. Determined to oppose and overthrow this doctrine, Luther let his prejudice blind him to the actual teaching of the scripture. He even went so far as to insert the word "alone" in his translation of Rom. 3:28, making it read, "We know that a man is justified without the works of the law, by faith alone." That word "alone" is simply not in the original, Luther added it himself. Being unable to reconcile James' positive statements on the subject of faith with his own ideas of salvation by "faith only", Luther declared that James was uninspired! He rejected the book of James as being non-canonical. Luther's doctrine has come down to this day, and is taught in the creed of nearly every denomination. The Methodist Discipline has it in Article IX; the Baptist Manual maintains it in Section 5. Other creeds of nearly all major denominations have it in one way or another. Denominational preachers proclaim it constantly. It is simply impossible almost to listen to a denominational sermon on the radio without hearing the doctrine taught. The listeners are told to "only believe; kneel beside your radio; give your heart to Jesus, and you'll be saved this instant."

The Scriptures Used

Nearly all the preachers who contend for the "faith only" theory of salvation go back to the personal ministry of Jesus to find their proof texts. The healing of the centurion's

servant (Matt. 8) is a favorite. Concerning the faith of the centurion Jesus said, *“Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. . .Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.”* A careful reading of the whole story is necessary to see exactly what happened. The centurion had come to the Master because his servant was grievously ill. He had desired that his servant might be healed. And in response to his request, Jesus said, *“...so be it done unto thee.”* So be what done? Why, the thing he had requested—the healing of his servant. That is the thing he had asked, and that is what Jesus granted. There is not the slightest hint that conversion, or remission of sins, or eternal salvation, is even hinted at in the passage. He had wanted his servant healed of a physical illness. And on the basis of the centurion's faith (not the servant's!) the miracle was wrought. Hard pressed indeed must be the man who will try to find the doctrine of “salvation by faith only” in such a passage!

Another favorite text is that which tells of the healing of the woman who had had an issue of blood for 12 years. (Matt. 9) When the woman had pressed through the crowd, and had touched the hem of his garment, Jesus turned and said unto her, *“Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.”* Denominational preachers pounce upon this as a strong text in favor of the “faith only” idea, declaring emphatically that this woman was saved by faith, and by nothing else. But look at the text: this is a case of physical healing, not of salvation. Furthermore, even in this case the person was not healed by faith alone. She pressed through the crowd; she touched the hem of his garment. Her faith had expressed itself in an overt act. It was a faith that acted, that found an expression; hence, not “faith alone.”

The story of blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10) is often used in an effort to uphold the “faith only” theory. *“And when he had heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood*

still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him; Be of good comfort; rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.” Those who read into the story an example of “faith only” fail to read verses 49 and 50. These verses plainly declare that the man (1) cast away his garment, (2) rose, and (3) came to Jesus. The blessing he received was not on the basis of faith alone, but was on the basis of a faith that obeyed, then acted. And even then, it was physical healing that he received, not salvation from sin.

Cases of this kind might be multiplied. And they are multiplied by denominational preachers. There is the palsied man of Mark 2. In this case there was involved the forgiveness of sins—but it is of small comfort to the “faith only” advocates, for the man who was healed and blessed received his blessing on the faith of his friends—the four men who had carried him to Jesus, letting him down through the roof. For the record says, “*When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.*” Again, there is the ruler of the synagogue, whose story is told in Luke 8. His daughter was raised from the dead, but her resurrection was on the basis of her father's faith, not her own!

In all of these cases the pattern is much the same. Men and women received physical healing or blessings of one kind or another, sometimes on their own faith, sometimes on the faith of others. But in every instance, when faith was involved, the blessing came after faith had expressed itself.

That is exactly the plan of salvation by which alien sinners are saved. They are saved by faith when faith expresses itself in obedience.

FRANKLIN T. PUCKETT

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Submitted by J. D. McDonald

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. The Lord said that Jacob and Esau were two what in the womb?
 2. What was the name of Solomon's son who succeeded him as king?
 3. The king's wrath is as "the roaring" of what?
 4. To the beauty of which plant did Jesus compare to King Solomon?
 5. What did Paul ask Philemon to have ready for him?
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THE LORD GOD

God is known as our Father in heaven. Each of us had a father on earth. It is said that each of us initially views the nature of our heavenly Father as being like our earthly father. If your father was missing, distant or did not spend much time with you, then you might see your heavenly Father as distant from you. If your father was harsh, critical or often angry, you might see your heavenly Father as harsh or critical or angry with you. If your father was greatly involved in your life, then you might see your heavenly Father as close and involved in your life. If your father was very loving, you might see your heavenly Father as very loving. Our initial view of our heavenly Father can very well be based upon our relationship with our earthly father. But our earthly fathers were human and often had faults. We need to adjust our view of our heavenly Father based upon what is revealed to us in the Bible.

We have a scripture where God describes Himself. Moses was upon the mountain and the Lord revealed Himself to Moses.

(5) And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

(6) And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, (7) Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no

means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.
(Exo. 34:5-7)

Let us analyze God's description of Himself.

First, He describes Himself as the Lord God (verse 6). He is over all creation. He is all powerful. He is all knowing and all seeing. He is Lord over you and has the right to tell you what to do and to order your life.

Second, He describes Himself as "*merciful and gracious*" (verse 6). Later in this passage, He describes Himself as "*keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*" (verse 7). Even though you are a sinner and deserve nothing, He is merciful to you.

And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. (Joel 2:13)

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.
(Jas. 4:6)

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:16)

Third, He describes Himself as "*longsuffering*" (verse 6). God is longsuffering because He wants you to repent and change.

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbear-

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ance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:8-9)

Fourth, He describes Himself as “abundant in goodness and truth” (verse 6).

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. (Mat. 5:44-45)

God gives of His goodness even to those who don’t deserve it.

He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. (Psa. 33:5)

God is the source of goodness and truth in contrast to Satan who is evilness and falsehood.

Fifth, He describes Himself as,

...by no means clear[ing] the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. (verse 7)

Although God is full of goodness, He is also severe to those who reject Him and rebel against Him.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. (Rom. 11:22)

Praise your Father in heaven for being the wonderful God that

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
Nov. 9 - 12	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)

He is! I encourage you to form a correct view of your God. The Bible reveals many more attributes of God than those that are covered here. From His description of Himself in Exodus 34:5-7 we learn that He is Lord God; He is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth. There is goodness and severity with God.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. (1 Pet. 5:6-7)

ED ANDERSON
(Sierra Vista, AZ)

FROM THE SCRIPTURES: GOD'S POWER

-For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (Col. 1:16)

-Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. (1 Chr. 29:11)

-And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: (Eph. 1:19-21)