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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)

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“FAITH ONLY” TEXTS IN CONTEXT - PART 3

James speaks emphatically on the matter of faith, *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble”* (Jas. 2:19). Hence, if a person “merely believes” he does no more than the devils do. He cannot be saved. But since the Bible teaches that some believers (a) are saved; (b) have eternal life; and (c) will not come into condemnation, and since the same Bible teaches that there are some believers who are unsaved, we must recognize that there is a faith which saves and at the same time a faith which does not save.

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James Explanation

This problem is solved for us in the plainest and clearest kinds of terms in James 2. He says, "*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*" (Jas. 2:14-17). This is truly an apt illustration. Those who claim to be saved by "faith only" and teach the doctrine of salvation by "faith only" could just as easily feed the hungry and clothe the naked without giving them the things needful as they could be saved without doing the things required.

When some denominational preacher insists on teaching the doctrine of salvation by faith only, he should be required to read the exact wording of James statement on "faith only."

But wilt thou know, o vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?. . . Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (Jas. 2:20-26)

What a clear contrast here between the words of scripture and the false teaching of the Methodist Discipline (Article IX) the Baptist Manual (Section 5), and all other creeds of men which teach salvation by "faith only."

The Obedient Faith

Paul is in perfect agreement with this statement of James when he says, "*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh through love*" (Gal 5:6). The only kind of faith which will

avail anything at all is a *“faith which worketh by love.”* John describes for us precisely what that “love” is when he says, *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments”* (1 John 5:3). It was Christ himself who said, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). All of which simply adds up to the fact that no man can claim that he truly loves the Lord until he obeys the commandments of the Lord. The “faith only” advocate may shout and sing till he is blue in the face, “o, how I love Jesus,” but, as a matter of absolute fact, he does not love him at all unless he is willing to do what Jesus said! No person who is disobedient can lay claim to loving the Lord. Only the believer (the obedient believer) has the promise of salvation.

What About Ephesians 2:8?

A favorite passage of the “faith only” advocates is Ephesians 2:8, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”* The argument usually runs like this: (1) The believer is saved through faith, (2) but he has that faith before baptism; therefore, (3) he is saved before baptism. This makes baptism non-essential to a man's salvation. But consider those Ephesians! They were not unbaptized people; the Bible expressly states the contrary. Some of them had even been baptized twice. It is certainly clear that the Ephesians to whom Paul wrote had (1) heard the word of truth (Eph. 1:13), had (2) believed (Eph. 1:13), had (3) repented (Acts 20:21), and had (4) been baptized (Acts 19:5). Thus, the people who had been “saved by grace through faith” were people who had obeyed the gospel. We have already seen that Paul included himself in the remarks directed toward the Ephesians. He, too, had heard, believed, repented, and been baptized, He was justified by faith just like they were; it was a faith that “worked” through love.

1 John 5:1

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,” are the words John uses here. Faith only advocates make this argument on John's statement: (1) We believe before we are

baptized; but (2) the believer is born of God; therefore, (3) we are born of God before we are baptized. But this same epistle of John mentions some other things of which we are “born”, For example, “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 John 4:7). Again, “He that doeth righteousness is born of God” [1 John 2:29]. Now, are there three births? Or four? Or a dozen? Is it not evident that all of these refer to the same birth, that birth of “water and the spirit” by which we are brought into the kingdom of God. One must believe, he must love God, he must do righteousness; all of these are a part of that being “born of God” of which John speaks. But the “righteousness” of God is revealed through the gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17); hence the man “born of God” is one who has obeyed the gospel of God.

Sometimes men in denying the essentiality of obedience to the command to be baptized will say that such a requirement would make God dishonest. God has promised salvation, they say, to the believer; if now he goes up on the price, and adds another requirement, then he has not been fair with the believer! But consider the Philippian jailer. When he inquired concerning the requirements for salvation, he was told, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*” (Acts 16:31). But it was required of this jailor that he also hear the word of the Lord. Now was God being unfair to the jailor in requiring him to “hear” when Paul had told him simply to believe until he did hear? So Paul and Silas “*spake the word of the Lord*” to him and all his house. The jailor showed his penitence by taking them that same hour and washing their stripes, Then immediately he and all his house-

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hold were baptized. Their faith now expressed itself in obedience. This is the only faith that will ever save anybody. Advocates of the “faith only theory have failed to understand the nature either of faith, or of obedience, or of salvation. The theory, given world-wide prominence by Martin Luther at the beginning of the Protestant Reformation will not stand the test of Bible truth. It is one of the doctrines of men, and must be rejected.

FRANKLIN T. PUCKETT

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Submitted by J. D. McDonald

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How often was the year of the Lord’s release?
2. Who sang a song celebrating the downfall of Sisera?
3. Which river was Naaman told to wash in to rid himself of leprosy?
4. Which prisoners experienced an earthquake after their prayer?
5. In the New Jerusalem where are the names of the twelve tribes written?

...and remember last month’s questions?

1. Which baby was named after his mother’s laughter?
ISAAC (Gen. 21:6 / Strong’s H3327)
2. In which book of prophecy do we read about the valley of dry bones? EZEKIEL (Eze. 37:1)
3. What did Jonah do while he waited to see Nineveh’s fate?
HE SAT DOWN ON THE EAST OF THE CITY AND MADE
A SHELTER (Jon. 4:5)
4. How long had the infirm man lain at the pool of Bethesda?
THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS (John 5:5)
5. What relation was Annas to Caiaphas? FATHER-IN-
LAW (John 18:13)

EDIFY YOUR BROTHER

The assembly of the believers should be important to the believers. The first disciples after the day of Pentecost were so excited about their salvation that they met daily (Acts 2:46). While I am not suggesting that you meet every day, don't go to the other extreme and forsake the assembly, "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some*" (Heb. 10:25a). At the assembly, activities include singing and praying and one or more individuals speaking.

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. (1 Cor. 14:26)

What impresses me is that all things are to be done for edification. The things that you and I do at the assembly should build us up and make us stronger and encouraged to be faithful and true. When we leave the assembly, we return to a different environment that can chip away at our faith and righteousness and can work to discourage us. Your fellow Christian needs you at the assembly for his edification.

The church in Corinth was blessed with miraculous spiritual gifts. Here is Paul's instruction to them: "*Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church*" (1 Cor. 14:12).

While you may not have the miraculous spiritual gifts the Corinthians had, you should still seek to excel in the edification of the church. You don't have to be a leader in the church to find ways to edify your brother and sister in Christ.

When you come to the assembly, you interact with your fellow Christian. Paul told the Corinthians that love edifies (1 Cor. 8:1). Does your fellow Christian feel your genuine, deep love? Are you quick to overlook his mistakes and trespasses? Do you smile big when you first see him? Is your greet-

ing from the heart to include your kiss, your hug, and your handshake? Do you seek to better understand what is going on in his life? Do you listen and empathize with his trials that he shares with you? Do you offer a word of encouragement and exhortation? Do you tell him that you are praying for him? How can you excel in your love for your fellow Christian? He needs your love so that he can be stronger in the Lord. If you fail to attend the assembly or fail to show him your love, he will miss your edification.

Those who speak before the church have a special responsibility.

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. (1 Cor. 14:3-4)

If you are one who speaks, seek to excel in your edification of the church. The good speakers that I know spend hours in preparation – you can't excel in speaking with just a few moments of preparation. Most of us need study, research, prayer and practice to be good at edifying the church when we speak. Accept constructive criticism. I think we all have heard speakers whose presentations provide little edification – don't be one of those. Not everyone is going to speak before the church, but if you are one who does speak, seek to excel.

If you don't speak before the church, do you realize that you can still edify in this area? You can edify the speaker! He is a brother who needs edification also. While he is speaking, give him your full attention. Afterwards, give him good feedback; thank him for his words. Encourage him.

Singing should be an integral part of most Christian assemblies. *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”* (Eph. 5:19).

It is most important to sing and make melody in your heart to

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
February 16 - 18	Taylor's Cross Roads Roanoke, AL	Brandon Turner & David Burnham

the Lord. But you are also speaking to your fellow Christian. Can you excel in your singing to better edify others? Sing from your heart and mean what you sing; that will come through to those who hear you. Do you have trouble singing the music correctly? Practice and learn how to do it better. Are you too loud or too soft? Improve. Again, song leaders have a special responsibility. Don't just choose songs just because you like them. Choose songs that edify and are appropriate for the time in the assembly.

Prayer in the assembly can also edify; it can build up those who listen to the prayer. If you are the one leading the prayer, you again have the greater responsibility for edification. First, be sure you are speaking to God your Father. Speak from your heart. Don't preach in your prayers. Don't use a lot of repetition. You should already be a praying person and have lots of practice in your private prayers to God. Seek to excel in the prayer you lead in the assembly. If you are not the leader of the prayer, you can still pay close attention and give a hearty "amen", as appropriate.

I am not going to address everything done at the church assembly. But here is the picture I encourage you to have: Come to the assembly with a goal of edifying your brother and sister in Christ. Seek to excel in this goal. How can you help your brother so that he will be stronger in the Lord after the assembly because of your love and what you have done or said? "*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*" (Heb. 10:24).

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