

Saved By Faith

Joe Slater

I'll say it clearly and without wavering: We are saved by faith! The familiar words of John 3:16 assure us that *"whoever believes in Him (Jesus) should not perish but have everlasting life."* When the Philippian jailer asked what to do, Paul and Silas replied: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved"* (Acts 16:31). And passages like Romans 5:1 are too clear to miss: *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

These things being true, why would anyone deny that we are saved by faith? No Christian should say that, and I'm not defending it. But why does saying we're saved by faith make us a little squeamish? At least part of the reason comes from the religious climate around us. Innumerable advocates of error have distorted the precious truth of salvation by faith by adding the modifier "alone" or "only." Speaking for myself, I'll defend salvation by faith with every fiber of my being; but I'll oppose the heresy of "salvation by faith only" with equal vigor!

Does the Bible ever use the expression "faith only" in connection with salvation? Indeed, it does! James, the Lord's brother, wrote in James 2:24, *"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."* So the single time that God's word mentions salvation by faith only, it declares such a doctrine to be false!

Who would deny that human beings must breathe to live? Yet no rational person thinks we live by breathing alone! That would exclude eating, drinking, sleeping, and who knows how many other things necessary to sustain life.

Shout it from the housetops: We are saved by faith! But no, it's not by faith alone.

Don't Bite Back!

When my brother and I were growing up, we had a little dog named Tip. Now Tip was a good old dog, but he was pretty irritable. In fact, he was known to snap at those who irritated him. On one occasion, however, Tip met his match. My brother apparently played too rough with him, and Tip nipped him. My brother's reaction was simple . . . he bit Tip back. Old Tip ran off yelping, with his tail between his legs.

That story illustrates the philosophy of a lot of people toward life. It's the old "eye for an eye" mentality. The world says, "Don't take anything off of anyone." The Bible, however, holds the Christian to a higher standard. We can achieve God's standard if we will.

Remember, it is God's prerogative to avenge wrong. He has told us, *"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay"* (Romans 12:9). Retaliation isn't an option for us; it is something God has reserved exclusively for Himself.

Refuse to harbor resentment in your heart! As long as it is there, it will fester, and you will never heal, and the urge to get even will be difficult to remove.

Realize that we cannot be forgiven unless we are willing to forgive. Jesus taught that principle in His prayer in Matthew 6 – *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"* (vv. 14-15).

Rest assured that one day every wrong will be set right (2 Corinthians 5:10). Those who mistreat us will not go unpunished. God deals with them in His own time. In Romans 12, Paul describes the only acceptable way for us to destroy our enemies. We are to treat them with kindness, thus making our enemies our friends.

--Ron Stough (Duncan, OK) via *Old Paths*

I Am Resolved

The word resolved occurs only once in the King James Version (Luke 16:4). It means to firmly determine to do something, and includes recognition of consequences and actions with a clear goal in mind. I think of this word every January 1 when I make New Year's Resolutions. I envision myself as slimmer, but do I work out, eat better, join a gym, have a plan and stick to it? I am not that committed, so you can't truly say that I have resolved to do that.

Our life is in phases. We are born and raised in a family and values are instilled. We go to school and our experiences there shape us. We graduate and go to work, and that affects us. We marry, and that changes us from self-centered to partnership thinking. We have a family of our own and not only does that shape us but we begin to shape our children's lives. When the kids are all gone and it is back to the original two, we again adjust. Eventually two becomes one and we are once again alone.

The people with whom we interact give us opportunities to share what we believe in, our experiences, our values, our joys, our sorrows, our defeats, and any wisdom that we have been given.

In my mind's eye sometimes I am still young and mentally in a different phase. I know that we grow old, but do we grow up? Some of us don't. We start as children and as we grow older we discard childish ways. We go from milk to meat, physically and mentally.

Luke 16:4 shows me a man with a plan was in place for a different phase of life, still with the goal of being useful, having a purpose. We can have a plan, but God also has a plan for our lives. So we must remember to put his plan first and everything will fall in place.

--Linda Gragg (Oceano, CA)