

## THE FAITH THAT SAVES

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“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

Fifty years ago when I began preaching, cults propagated many strange doctrines especially denying the deity of Christ, the Trinity, Holy Spirit or other historical Christian truths. Today Satan is producing a new breed of error promoters.

They don't deny Christ, but they have changed His gospel. Evangelical leaders who once preached Christ are proclaiming easy-believism. Anyone who believes the historical facts about Christ and claims eternal life is saved. There is no repentance, no turning from sin or change in lifestyle. Repentance is works and we are not saved by works, but by grace. After believing the teachings about Jesus a sinner is eternally saved and someday they can make Him Lord, *if they want to*.

Many Christians have been conditioned to believe they are saved because they accepted the story about Jesus, responded to an invitation, raised their hand, repeated a prayer, signed a membership card and were baptized. There is no repentance. They do not know Jesus said, *“If you love me you will keep my commandments.”* They do not believe James wrote, “Faith without works is dead faith.”

The Biblical evidence of God's grace is the fruit of a transformed life (Gal. 5:22-25; Titus 2:12). Paul warned believers to examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). Peter also said, “Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you” (2 Pet 1:10). A verbal confession cannot take the place of trusting obedience, the fruit of true righteousness (1 Jn. 2:4).

Unfortunately, most of this “new” teaching comes from those who believe the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, but follow a system of Bible interpretation called “rightly dividing the Word of God.” From its beginning dispensationalism said healings and the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased with the end of the apostolic age and are not for today. Consequently they cannot say, as Paul told the Corinthians, that their preaching was not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power (1 Cor. 2:4).

We realize the Corinthians were a gift conscious congregation, but Paul told the Romans the same thing: “For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles (not the Jews) obedient- in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God...”(Rom. 15:14).

This anointed apostle to the Gentiles did not rely on mental gymnastics, doctrinal excellence or oratorical skills to present the gospel, but spiritual power. He did what Christ told His Church to do. He preached the good news of Christ’s victory over sin, sickness, demons and death and He demonstrated that message by healing the sick and casting out demons.

Many of those who “rightly divide the Word” place these words of Jesus in Matthew 24:14 for the Millennium. But the next age can’t begin until this present age ends. Jesus said the law and the prophets were until John, but since John the gospel of the Kingdom is preached. Matt. 24:14 says, the gospel *of the Kingdom* would be preached (first) and THEN the end will come. The timing of this command is clearly an end-time order before the Coming of Christ.

The Kingdom, as Jesus preached it, and the Jews who heard Him understood it, was the *reign or rule of God* and the people He ruled and not as we understand a kingdom today.

England has a Queen, but her role is little more than a figurehead. Britain is governed by an

elected prime minister and elected members of parliament. The King or Queen has little say in the day-to-day activities of the Kingdom, but in Jesus day kings had absolute authority over life and death. Their word was final and complete obedience was demanded and disobedience was punished by death.

*The Lord Jesus cannot be a Savior without being Lord.* He IS King of kings and Lord of Lords and He must be obeyed. Where there is no obedience there is no Lordship. Remember Jesus was born BOTH Savior and Lord (Luke 2:11).

After the death of Pope John Paul *Charisma* magazine published an article exalting him as a Christian example. The following month “The letters to the editor” were interesting. Some praised the magazine for recognizing the *Vicar of Christ* while others challenged the magazine. I have an article written by Pope John Paul and published in *Eternity* magazine in which he dogmatically said no one can know they are saved. We can’t have assurance now because we must pass through purgatory after death. The article said partaking of the Eucharist saves us and only Christ’s Church has Peter’s apostolic authority to perform the Mass when the bread and wine are physically changed into the literal flesh and blood of Jesus.

What I sensed in the “letters to the editor” was the liberal “live and let live” attitude prevalent in Christianity today. Each person freely chooses his or her own lifestyle. Nothing is absolute so who can be sure of anything?

For example: An ORU grad in Tulsa pastored a growing church with 2,000 attending when he began preaching a doctrine he calls “Inclusiveism.” Every person, regardless of who or what they believe, is already saved; they just don’t know it yet. So he enthusiastically preached Universalism while church attendance dropped. Their beautiful piece of church property is now

in foreclosure. However, the pastor of an Episcopal church came to his rescue and let him use their building so he could continue preaching his heresy. “Live and let live.”

When one carefully studies how Jesus preached the gospel they discover He healed the sick and delivered the demonized. Is there a connection between preaching the kingdom gospel and healing the sick?

God made mankind in His image and gave them dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26). Adam and Eve ruled together as co-regents with only one restriction, “Don’t eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” Obey this one command and you can enjoy the best God provided, and we know the rest of the sad story. They disobeyed and ate of the one tree God said, “Leave alone.” Before their rebellion they had authorized dominion over the earth, but when they rejected God’s Word they gave their delegated authority to Satan who became the ruler of this world.

That’s why Satan told Jesus during the wilderness temptation, “If you will worship me...all this authority I will give You... for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish” (Lk. 4:5-8). It was a legitimate offer. Satan deceived man into disobeying God’s Word and forfeiting his legal authority. Now Satan’s kingdom of darkness, disease and death controls mankind. After God judged man, and cursed the serpent, He promised the “Seed of the woman would come and crush the serpent’s head” (Gen. 3:15).

From that point in time the Bible is God’s historical record as He fulfilled that promise. Every covenant, every dispensation and every promise looked for the fullness of time when God sent forth His son made in the likeness of man to destroy the works of the devil and death (1 Jn. 3:8; Heb. 2:14). Israel’s long history waited for the coming Messiah. Finally Jesus appeared preaching, “I’m here! I’m the Seed. Life and light has invaded the realm of darkness and death.

Forgiveness of sin, healing of sickness and freedom from demonic oppression has come. Repent, change your thinking, and believe this good news.”

When one is born again they are instantly delivered out of the kingdom of darkness and death and translated into the Kingdom of the Son (Col. 1:13). All of the old becomes new (2 Cor. 5:17) as Christ not only saves us from our sins He becomes Lord of a New Creation. Until we make Him the Light of our life by obedience we continue living in darkness and death. Jesus said He came to conquer the power of darkness and demonstrated it by undoing what Satan had done. Satan made men sick, but Jesus healed them all. Demons held men in fear and bondage; Jesus loosed them and set the captives free. Men were locked in the fear of death; Jesus swept away the fear. We have (already) been delivered from the rule and reign of darkness and transferred into the (rule and reign) Kingdom of the Son (Col. 1:13). We can't be “in” the Kingdom if the King doesn't rule His subjects.

Sinners must be told that if they want Christ the Mighty Conqueror to save and heal them, they must willingly let Him be Lord of their lives. LORD doesn't mean today what it did when Jesus was here. The Greek word, *kurios*, was how slaves addressed their masters. It referred to Caesar, LORD of the whole Roman Empire who declared they were god and demanded public worship. A standard greeting was “Caesar is the Lord!” When Christians replied they said, “Jesus Christ is Lord” and many of them were persecuted and punished.

*Today's gospel without repentance is man centered.* “Believe in Jesus and you can have peace, joy, health and prosperity.” A need-centered gospel is not a Christ centered gospel. Unbelievers are exhorted to “Accept Jesus” when it is Jesus who wants to accept them.

They've taken obedience out of Christ's gospel. *If you love Me you WILL keep My commandments.* Let me make this clear: Obedience does not earn salvation by works nor does it

prove our righteousness. Obedience is the result of the New Covenant written and engraved in our hearts. Out of the abundance of the heart proceed the issues of life.”

Jesus was made flesh to restore man’s relationship with the Father. He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; *no one* comes to the Father, but through Me” (Jn. 14:6). He came to do the Father’s will (Jn. 5:30), and He only spoke what He heard the Father say (Jn 14:10) and He only did what He saw the Father do. His entire life and desire was controlled by the will of the Father. He also said, “As the Father has sent Me so send I you.”

*Preaching the gospel strongly declares He is the only way to God.* He is both Savior and Lord because He conquered the devil and death. He was tempted in all points as we are, but without sin. He is the Door and only through Him can we enter the Kingdom of God. We make Him Lord by repenting, changing our mind, and obeying His commandments. We are transferred out of the rule and reign of darkness, disease and death by giving Him total control of our entire life. You are saved by grace through believing and acting faith.