

"Faith Alone?"

God's grace saves us through faith, but does He save us through faith alone? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Is faith alone enough? What does the Bible say about this. Well stay with us, and we'll find out.

Welcome to I Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's will. The Lord's way is right and true. It never fails. The Lord's wisdom is far beyond our own. Proverbs 3:5 to 7 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil." Because we trust God, we turn to His Holy Word. We strive to please Him in all that we do, and His Word reveals the way that is good and acceptable and perfect. We're so delighted when you spend this time with us. We want to be a part of your life each week and we ask that you to tell a friend about this Bible study.

Today we're continuing to look at how man relates to God. Last week we learned from God's Word that man is not born totally corrupt but is capable of responding to the will of God. The Scriptures teach that people grow up in a sinful environment and are weak, but God made us capable of believing.

Faith comes not through some miracle but through hearing the word of God according to Romans 10 and verse 17. John 20 verses 30 to 31 says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

That faith is necessary for us to be saved is indisputable, but some say that we are saved by faith alone. Does God require more than faith for a person to respond to God's will? Well the answer lies in the scriptures, so let's go to the word of God.

Now we offer the information on this program free. And we want you to know about the place of faith. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from James 1:22 to 25, and we'll do a study about faith.

Our reading today comes from the letter of James, chapter 1, verses 22 to 25. "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he's looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does." That's a reading from God's holy word, about the need to prove ourselves doers of the word. Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful that You have given us Your Word, help us to be doers of Your Word. To follow You and to love You. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

There's no doubt that faith is necessary to forgiveness. The Lord Jesus said in John 3:16 to 18, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son (or "only begotten Son"), that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not

condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

The Lord Jesus said in Mark 16:16, that “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.” In John 8:24 the Lord said, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” Hebrews 11 and verse 6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” So, there can be no doubt that unless we believe in God our Father and Jesus as His Son, we will die in our sins.

The apostle Peter told Cornelius about Jesus Christ in Acts 10 verse 43, “Of Him (that is of Jesus) all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins” (Acts 10 and verse 43). The Bible says in Romans 5 verses 1 to 2, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”

Well the Scripture clearly declares that faith is absolutely necessary for us to be saved from sin. But the necessity of faith doesn't mean that other things are not also necessary. If I say I need oxygen to survive, well that doesn't mean I don't need water, food, and shelter. No one would say that they live by oxygen alone. Well in the same way, the Scriptures that teach faith is necessary but don't rule out the need for other things to have life in Christ.

I've talked with people who believe that they're saved by faith alone. Well this doctrine makes Christianity convenient for a lot of people, because they rely on the passages about faith, but often to the exclusion of other passages. Here's what I mean. People who hold to “faith alone” will start saying you don't have to do anything but believe, but the Scriptures do not limit what God requires of us to faith alone. It's true that we're saved by faith, but it is not the whole truth. The Scriptures, in fact, tell us that we're saved by many things.

When I've discussed this doctrine with others who are adamant about being saved by faith alone, I often find that they back off of their conviction when other matters come into the conversation. For instance, when I bring up being saved by grace through faith, according to Ephesians 2:8, they gladly admit this is true. Well, if we're saved by grace through faith, we're not saved by faith alone. Salvation also demands the grace of God, doesn't it?

I've asked people, “Do you have to love God in order to be saved?” And there are several passages that teach the necessity of love to be right with God. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 16:22, that “If anyone has no love for the Lord (speaking of Jesus), let him be accursed.” Well the word accursed here means someone is lost and condemned eternally. The Bible clearly teaches the necessity of love for the Lord.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10 verse 37, that “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” The Lord doesn't merely ask to be loved but to be loved more than family, more than anything.

Mark 12:28 to 30 says: “And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, ‘Which commandment is the most important of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’” Now God requires our wholehearted love and will settle for nothing less.

So if I ask a person who says he believes in faith alone whether love is necessary to be saved and please God, he must take it back. You see, faith without love won't please God.

When I've talked with people who believe in faith alone, I've asked the question, "Well do you believe it's necessary for a person to repent?" Well the Lord Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." So serious was the Lord about repentance, that He said in the Sermon the Mount, that "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it's better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it's better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell" (that's Matthew 5:29 to 30).

When the apostle Paul preached to Stoics and Athenians on Mars Hill, he concluded his sermon with these words, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17 verses 30 and 31).

Well now having studied what God said about repentance, the people who say they believe in faith alone have to admit that we must repent to be right with God. Well if repentance is also necessary to be saved, then we aren't saved by faith alone, are we.

I've asked some if it's necessary to obey God to be saved. The Bible clearly says in Hebrews 5 verses 8 and 9, "Although He (that is Jesus) was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation."

John the Baptist said in John 3 and verse 36, that "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Now I realize the King James Version translates this verse, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." But the words "believe" and "believeth not" are different in the original language. The first "believeth" is the common word for believing, but the second word for "believeth not" describes a person who will not be persuaded and so is disobedient. It is usually translated as disobey or to be disobedient.

Now the contrast here is not between whether one believes or not but whether one believes enough to be obedient. If he won't obey, he really doesn't believe. If he doesn't obey, he won't see eternal life; but the wrath of God will abide on him. The Bible never treats obedience as if it were optional. To say that we're saved by faith alone and have no need to obey clearly contradicts the teaching of Scripture.

When I've brought up the need for denying oneself and taking up the cross, the people who hold to "faith only" must admit the Lord requires that as well. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 9 verses 23 and 24, that "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." Now denying self and taking up a cross is not optional.

When I've brought up the need for obedience to the person who believes in faith alone, he begins to talk about a works salvation. And he begins to argue that we're saved by faith and not by works. I know Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 to 10 says, "For by grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Now we're not here suggesting that a person can earn his way to heaven by works. You can't earn salvation, no. Salvation is the gift of God's grace or favor. But let's not suppose that this gift is unconditional. God has every right to place conditions on His gift of grace. God distinguishes those who will receive His grace from those who will not by placing conditions.

Now suppose I were to bury a priceless treasure in my back yard and promise to give it to you. You're interested in getting this great gift, so you ask what you need to do to get it. I have the right to make conditions to my gift. I tell you that you must go to the exact location that you've got to dig it up. Do you honestly believe that the small effort you put into digging up the treasure earned that treasure for you or made it any less a gift?

Salvation is the same way. What God asks of us to receive to get His great mercy and grace are not meritorious works to earn salvation. No, meeting God's conditions doesn't mean salvation is not a gift. Faith is certainly a condition for receiving that gift. What we need to understand is that loving God, repenting of sin, and obeying the Lord are responses of faith that meet God's conditions. They don't obligate God to save you; they don't save you without the grace of God. No, they are merely conditions that God has required for you to receive His marvelous gift.

Hugo McCord, a Bible scholar and one of my teachers at Oklahoma Christian, described faith as a "package" word. He said believing includes far more than agreeing something is true. The word "faith" describes all that man does in response to God's grace. Faith is more than a mental act. Here's an example. Galatians 3 verses 26 to 27 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Now the concept of faith included being baptized and clothing ourselves with Christ. The Bible never, never, never contemplates the idea of a believing Christian who is not baptized.

Jesus said in Matthew 7 verse 21, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Having a relationship with the Lord, it takes more than just mere faith; the person who talks faith but fails to live out his faith with love is actually fooling himself. The Bible says in 1 John 2 verses 4 to 6, that "Whoever says 'I know him' (that is, I have a relationship with God) but does not keep his commandment, that person's a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word (that is obeys the commandments), in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him (that is that we have a relationship with Him, and we abide in Him): now whoever says he abides in Jesus in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." The doctrine of salvation by faith alone, although it is popular, does not come from God but from men. God wants more than faith; He wants everything that's in your heart and in your life. Let's pray together. Oh Father, help us not only to believe in Your Son Jesus Christ, help us to live out our faith, and to be faithful to the work that You have given us to do. Father we pray that our love for You may grow more and more every single day. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

The Bible says in John 12 verses 42 to 43, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." Now this secret faith that fails to confess Christ and fails to show love for God. Does this kind of faith please God? We must honestly answer no. And we've all met people who say they believe but they don't live their faith. Now if they believe that their faith alone will save them, they're deceiving themselves.

James 2 verses 18 to 20 says, "But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.' You believe that God is

one. Well you do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?"

My friend, put your faith into action by confessing Jesus as the Christ, turning away from every sin, and by being baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. When you are baptized, the Lord washes away your sins (Acts 22 and verse 16). Take up your cross daily and follow the Lord. Love the Lord and love others. Believing in the Lord Jesus also means being involved at church. When you place your faith in Christ and are baptized, the Lord adds you to His church and He expects you to get involved as one of His people in the church. The Father created you in Christ for good works, and as one of His people. Don't just talk your faith, live it. Serve the Lord with all your heart.

We hope that today's study about a living faith has challenged you to put your faith in action. So if you want a free printed copy or a CD of our message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now our programs appear on our website at www.searchtv.org. We offer Bible Correspondence courses, and we'd love to send you one, they'll help you learn more about God and His will for your life. If you'd like to have one, just let us know, they're free. And we also offer free study sheets that go along with our programs. Now you can download these study sheets free at our website, and they come out before each program or you can call and request them. Now we won't hassle you for money, we won't put you on a list, we won't be rude like that. Whatever we offer, we offer free.

So we ask that you please worship with a church of Christ in your area. You see, they're the reason we don't ask for money, they support us and help us. Now if you are looking for a church home, one that is sound and good, one that loves the Lord and serves others, we'll be happy to help you find one in your area. Now Churches of Christ love and they want guests, and if you go and worship with them you'll be glad you were there. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the Search program, let them know that you're watching. As always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.