



Without Faith, I Cannot Pass the Test

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

The Bible is a book of many themes. One of the themes is the stories of people who can be called men and women of faith. According to the text above, faith is absolutely necessary if a person is to please God. As a matter of fact, verse two teaches that it was by faith that the people of old gained a good report (approval).

Please spend a few minutes thinking about the four questions that I want to bring to your mind in this article.

HOW CAN WE TELL IF A PERSON IS A PERSON OF FAITH?

One simple principle is all we need in order to answer this question. In James 2:14-26, this theme is discussed. The whole issue as to whether or not a person is a person of faith is seen in these words: “shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18b). The writer makes it clear that a person of faith is a person who **does something because of what he or she believes!** People who do not act in harmony with their faith are not people of faith! In all seven of the letters to the churches of Asia, Jesus said He knew the works of the people and they would be judged by those works (Revelation 2, 3). A study of the whole Bible would make it clearer and clearer that Bible faith **always** includes the actions (obedience) that faith requires. And Bible faith **always** requires action.

WHO WERE PEOPLE OF FAITH IN THE BIBLE?

Let us return to Hebrews 11 to give a few answers to this question. The entire chapter is filled with the stories of people who were men and women of faith. In every case, the fact that they can be called people of faith is due to the fact that their faith did the things that their faith required.

Here are some samples: Abel was a man of faith because he offered God the worship that He commanded (verse 4). Enoch was a man of faith because he walked with God (verse 5; see also Ephesians 4:1-3; 5:1-2). Noah was a man of faith because he prepared the ark (verse 7). Abraham was a man of faith because he went where God told him to go (verse 8). Sarah was a woman of faith because she believed in the faithfulness of God and received strength to conceive (verse 11). Unnamed people were men and women of faith because they did the will of God in all kinds of circumstances (verses 33-39).

WHO WERE NOT PEOPLE OF FAITH IN THE BIBLE?

In many of the very same stories that are mentioned in Hebrews

11, there were other people to whom no reference is made because they were not people of faith! And how do we know they were not people of faith? Is it because they were atheists? Absolutely not — as a matter of fact, some of them even talked with God! The reason they were not people of faith is because they did not act in harmony with the things that they were supposed to believe.

Here are some samples: Cain was not a man of faith because he did not offer God the worship that He commanded. The people of Noah’s day were not people of faith because they did not obey the commands they received (1 Peter 3:20). The people of Abraham’s day were not people of faith because they refused to honor God’s standards of sexual morality (Genesis 18, 19).

AM I A PERSON OF FAITH ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE?

The question here includes the question about believing that which God requires me to believe (because believing is an act of obedience [John 8:24]). But it also includes **doing the things that faith requires**. This takes us back to James 2. Here, two examples are given of this very thing: Abraham and Rahab. They are both correctly thought of as people of faith because of this. So, the writer makes the application. He says if I am claiming to be a benevolent person by merely wishing the needy to be better off, I stand condemned!

There are also examples of this with regard to becoming a child of God. In Acts of the Apostles, Luke gives several accounts of people who were not counted as being pleasing to God until their faith acted in obedience to other requirements (repentance – Acts 2:38; confession – Acts 8:37; baptism – Acts 22:16).

I hope you will consider how important faith is since it is required for God’s approval. But do not be deceived into thinking it will suffice by itself — men and women of faith were people who obeyed God’s commands.

And it is still that way.

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Repentance

Early in the preaching ministry of Jesus, the inspired author Matthew writes, *“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matthew 4:17)*. After Jesus had completed his ministry and work upon this earth, having been crucified and raised from the dead, Jesus said, *“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations...” (Luke 24:47)*. It is evident that from the beginning to the end of Jesus’ work here on earth and after he left earth, that the theme of “repentance” was an important and essential message to be preached. What is repentance and its place regarding salvation?

A simple definition of repentance is a change of thinking and attitude that bring about a change of action. Repentance begins with one’s thinking and attitude of heart, as is suggested by the original Greek word used for repentance. Greek scholar, W. E. Vine, defines the word “repentance” (or as it is in the Greek, *“metanoeo”*) as literally meaning “to perceive afterwards (*meta*, after, implying change, *noeo*, to perceive, or *nous*, the mind).” Repentance is a change of mind and attitude that results in changed actions.

Since the mind and heart is where repentance begins, there must be teaching and preaching first (*Matthew 4:17, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47*). The process that takes place in the mind and heart of the individual is because one has heard and believed the word of God, as Paul wrote, *“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness . . . So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:10,17)*.

Belief or faith must come before repentance because it is impossible to repent without first believing or having faith. *“Now when they heard this (the preaching of the gospel – WB), they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said, repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:27-38)*. Biblical repentance is not a changed action based upon having been forced to change against one’s will. Neither is it a change of action merely to please another person. Biblical repentance is the conviction of mind and heart that leads to a change of action brought about by hearing the truth or the gospel that leads to a changing of one’s life. As the Bible says, *“...they that gladly received his word were baptized...” (Acts 2:41)*.

The Christians in the city of Corinth are an example of biblical repentance in that they received the word of God into their minds and hearts and changed. Paul wrote, *“For though I made you sorry with a letter . . . Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance, for ye were made sorry after a godly manner...” (2 Corinthians 7:8-9)*.

God’s plan of repentance for one who is not a Christian comes after hearing and believing his word but before being baptized (*Acts 2:37-38,41*). The blessing of God’s plan is forgiveness of sins, rejoicing in salvation (*Acts 8:39*), being added to the Lord’s church (*Acts 2:47*) and enjoying the continued cleansing power of Christ’s blood as one walks in the light of his word (*1 John 1:7*).

Wayne Brewer, Mabelvale, AR

Which Church?

It is easy to understand that there are many different churches. When we investigate what they teach, it is easy to understand they do not teach the same things. In fact, they often directly contradict each other in their basic doctrines. All the different doctrines create confusion for the person who is honestly searching for God’s truth. One thing the Bible is plain in its teaching is that God is not the one at fault for all of the confusion in the religious world. “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33). All of these differences in doctrine did not come from the inspired men who wrote the Bible. These inspired men wanted complete unity concerning doctrine. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). If God and the inspired writers of the Bible desire and demand us to speak the same thing, why is the religious world so divided?

The Bible also teaches that God’s word is truth as our Lord prayed. “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). We all know that truth will never contradict itself! If I am telling the truth on any subject, and you are telling the truth on the same subject, we will not be contradicting each other. God’s word is the standard for truth! “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

A very important question is, “How many churches does the Bible

authorize?” Most people are surprised to learn that the Bible is very clear with regard to how many churches are authorized. There is but one body. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4). It is also plain what that one body is. “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). Notice the Bible states that the church (not churches) is the body. The concept of divided denominations does not fit this description because it contradicts another verse in the Bible! “Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing” (Philippians 3:16).

If God has authorized only one church, how do we locate that one church? It is simple. The New Testament also describes the church. All we have to do is find the church that fits all of the descriptions contained within the New Testament. We ask that you come and check out the church of Christ at the location on this publication. If you disagree with us, you have lost nothing; but if you find the truth, you have gained your soul.

Jerry Dickison, Newton, KS

**“So we,
being
many, are
one body
in Christ,
and
every one
members
one of
another.”**

— Romans 12:5

The Standard of Morality

Each of us make decisions everyday with moral and ethical consequences. A young person faces decisions concerning cheating on a school examine, lying to a friend, or whether or not to engage in sex. As we mature, similar decisions must be made such as cheating our employer, lying to an associate, or cheating on a spouse. All decisions have consequences. A poor decision concerning cheating may cause us to loose a job, and an improper decision regarding sex may cause irreparable harm to those we love. Thus, our moral and ethical decisions are most important and should be considered carefully.

With this in mind and when considering morality and ethics, there are two basic standards. First, some believe ethics and morality are founded within a person's own heart or conscience. This is clearly being advanced by much of society today. The scenario is presented of a young lady who is faced with the decision to have sex with her boyfriend. The person who advises her says she will just know when it is the right time. Such decisions are based upon subjectivism and human emotions. Second, others believe there is a standard of ethics and morality, and that standard is the Bible. This is objectivism, and the Bible is the objective standard. In the scenario above, the young lady's decision is based upon the standard. She must ask herself, "What does the standard, the Bible, say about sexual behavior outside of marriage?" Then, she must adjust her life accordingly.

Amazingly, the Bible says much about both of these basic standards. Concerning the first, the Bible says,

- "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).
- "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).
- "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26).

These verses should be sufficient to expose the foolishness of subjectivism. Concerning the objective standard of morality, the Bible says,

- "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).
- "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).
- "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

Not only are there consequences of our decisions and actions in this life, there are consequences in the life to come. After this life is completed, every person will ultimately stand before God in judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Paul wrote, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). If the standard of judgment is subjective, then there is really no standard at all because what may be right to one person could be wrong to another or visa versa. Also, unless there is ultimate human accountability, there is no basis for ethics and morality, and for there to be fair human accountability, there must be an objective standard.

Thus instead of looking to yourself for moral and ethical decisions, turn to God's word for the answers. If you apply the principles set forth, the consequences of your decisions will be favorable for you now and in the life to come.

Chuck Northrop, Conway, AR

What's Wrong With Living Together Before Marriage?

As common as a practice might be, participation in it still must be authorized for it to be legitimate. "Everybody's doing it!" is a common plea made by young people who want to follow the crowd in an activity of which their parents do not approve. An interesting statement is made in the Old Testament book of Exodus chapter 23 which fits just here. Moses said: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." Perhaps you remember your parents saying to you, or maybe you have said to your children, "Would you go along with everybody else if they were jumping off a cliff?" (or something like this??)

So, what about our title for this article? What is wrong with such a practice? Is it not evident and obvious that SO MANY are living together without, as it used to be said, the benefit of marriage? Are not our laws and government making it "beneficial" for people to live together without marriage? Are not businesses being "forced" at times to offer "family benefits" or "partner benefits" for those who are not married to one another? The real question that ought to be considered in such a discussion as this might be: DOES THE MAJORITY PRACTICE MAKE A THING RIGHT?

Remember your history lessons regarding the Nazis in pre-world war two Germany? Remember what was discovered at the close of WWII at the concentration camps, work camps, and death camps? Since a society went along with a practice, did that make it right? Why were "war criminals" put on trial for something an entire society (or at least that society's leadership) approved? You might answer: "Well, that was immoral!" Just so! Living together before marriage IS NOT a societal question, but rather a moral one.

So, what does the Bible teach regarding this practice? First, we must understand that marriage is the invention of God, not mankind. At the beginning of our world, God said, "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2.18). God made a woman for the man, and Moses wrote: "therefore shall a MAN leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his WIFE: and they shall be one flesh" (verse 24). In the New Testament, the writer of the book of Hebrews said: "Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (13.4). Fornication is having a sexual relationship with one who is not your spouse. There are all sorts of categories of fornication. Adultery is the sexual relationship one has with the spouse of another. Adultery is thus one form of fornication. It should be easy to see that God has contrasted marriage (honorable) with fornication (living together, etc. as something to be judge or condemned).

One final passage ought to show us that living together is sinful and wrong. Paul wrote to the Corinthians these words: "Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither **fornicators**, nor idolaters, nor **adulterers**, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God**" (1 Corinthians 6.9,10). God bless you as you study His word and strive to live morally! Thanks for reading.

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“What Is the Godhead?”

Who or what is the godhead? This is a frequently asked question when difficult Bible subjects are being discussed. The word godhead is found three times in the Bible (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9) and is defined as “godlike or divine.” The word refers to the three who are identified as God. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says in Acts 17:29,

it is used with the definite article to denote “the one true God.” 1 Timothy 2:5 tells us, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Do these verses contradict the fact that the “godhead” refers to three separate individuals who are one? Some have used the concept of the godhead as a means to dispute the reliability of God’s word. How can there be one yet three?

The godhead is made up of three distinct persons. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Bible is very clear as it identifies these three distinct persons. In Matthew 3:16-17, we see Christ coming to be baptized of John, the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, and the Father speaking from heaven. All three were present for this event.

First, we observe that God the Father is a part of the godhead. Notice Paul identified the Father as God, “And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11). And when Jesus was asked to teach the disciples to pray, He said; “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Matthew 6:9). When one speaks of or refers to another, we recognize there is another distinct person involved.

The second person in the godhead is Christ the Son. Thomas recognized Jesus as being deity. In John 20:28 he “said unto him, My Lord and my God.” Jesus also identified Himself as being part of the godhead; “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). Even the Father identified Jesus as His Son and possessor of authority (Matthew 3:17; 28:18-20; Luke 9:35). When John penned the book bearing his name, he began with, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1, 14). How could anything be clearer than to identify Jesus as the Word and as God? He, this part of the godhead, became “flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

The third person in the godhead is the Holy Spirit. His distinctness is seen in Christ’s statement in Matthew 28:19; “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Jesus designated the Holy Spirit as deity, in that he said that

baptism was to be done in the name of all three persons of the godhead. When Ananias and Sapphira tried to deceive the church in their giving, Peter said they had lied to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:3). He then states in verse 4, “why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” Notice they lied to the Holy Ghost, which is identified as being God, and thus making up one-third of the godhead.

As we have observed thus far, there are three distinct persons who make up the godhead. Although there are three persons making up the one God, each has a separate and distinct work. When we bow to pray, we are commanded to pray to the Father through Jesus Christ (John 16:23). The Holy Spirit was sent to guide the apostles and to inspire men to pen the Gospel (John 16:7). Notice how the Lord made a distinction in the three who make up the godhead. He said in John 14:26 “But the Comforter, *which is the Holy Ghost*, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” Surely we can see the clarity of all three. The **Father** will send the **Holy Ghost in my name** Jesus said. All three were involved in revealing inspiration.

There are real parallels with which we can compare the godhead. However, in some ways we can compare this subject to the home. Even though there is only one home, it is made up of a number of individuals who have a particular role to fill. The father, mother, and children each have separate and distinct responsibilities to fulfill. **One home with several members.** The godhead can also be understood to some degree when compared to the church. There is one body (Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18, 24), and yet it is made up of many members (1 Corinthians 12:14-20).

Man would do well to realize that he is unable to comprehend every aspect of God. We must conclude that there are things which are past our full understanding. Even though some skeptics scoff at the idea of three being one, the fact still remains that God has spoken and man’s ways are not His ways (Isaiah 55:9). Man must never attempt to lower God to our intellect. Who is wiser than God, or who can bring God into question? “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20).

Far too often men are found trying to walk by their own thoughts and by their own logic. Yet, “the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). The wise man “walks by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Even though some dismiss the possibility of the godhead, the Bible affirms the truth in this matter as well as truth in all spiritual matters.

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