

CHAPTER 3

MYTH 3: WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH ONLY

3.1 WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

There is no subject more important than our salvation. There is only one reality with God: either we are saved by faith only or we are not. If we are saved by faith only, then it ought to say it in the New Testament (i.e., the covenant under which we now live - see Chapter 2). On the other hand, if the word of God indicates that this is a false doctrine, but we decide to believe it anyway, we will be eternally lost.

That the denominations generally teach that a person is saved by faith only is a documented fact. It is a remnant of Calvinism which denominational leaders feared to challenge. In fact, at least since the 1950's the trend has been to make this a central tenet of the ecumenical movement.

The reason for this seems quite clear from an historical point of view. While denominational churches were relatively independent with each member practicing religion through the local congregation, each could teach its own variation of the conditions of salvation. Of course, some of these were much closer to the bible pattern than others. However, in the late 1940's and early 1950's large interdenominational revival meetings began to develop. Radio and TV evangelists began to emerge, the largest and most successful being Billy Graham.

The ecumenical plea -- to unify the denominations under some common denominator -- was embraced by the practitioner in the pew, and the clergy saw little reason to object. After all, these inter-denominational teachers never dealt with any controversial doctrinal issues, and they always encouraged their converts to return to their home church, or else to go to the "church of your choice." It seemed like an ideal marriage.

Unfortunately, the only common denominator was the lowest common denominator. The radio and TV preachers could hardly specify *any* real biblical condition without offending someone. Yet, they could not just return everyone to their home church without saying *something* about salvation. So they told people that if they "just believed" in Jesus Christ they would be saved. The exact definition of "just believing" was left to each person to interpret as s/he saw fit. This offended no one except those who were committed to the concept of a single reality, a single truth (Jn. 8:32). However, this was such a small minority that they could be ignored.

The terminology used often varied. Probably the way that it is most often stated now is "accept Jesus as your personal savior" and you will be saved. However, in all cases

there was (and still is) absolutely no outward action required. In fact, often even the suggestion of a scriptural condition of salvation was militantly taught to be sinful, becoming one of the very few points of doctrine which was contentiously defended by denominationalists. Most often new converts are urged to pray for forgiveness and acceptance, but rarely is this stated to be a condition of salvation.

This is not saying that salvation by faith only was of recent origin. Indeed, we can see its roots in many false teachings that are identified in the New Testament (and we plan to deal with these in this chapter). However, we are presenting what we believe to be the obvious reason that the mass-media preachers do not align themselves with clear biblical teachings as to the conditions of salvation. It would quickly diminish their large numbers, and it would put them at odds with the local congregations which teach a variety of rituals and doctrines as part of their religious practice.

Let us begin our study of this interesting topic by defining our terms. This subject is particularly fraught with potential semantical arguments, and if the differences here were purely semantic we would be extremely pleased. Our purpose in defining what we mean by *faith only* is to enable us to communicate effectively about the subject. Once these definitions are established we will deal with the scriptural reasons that one should never teach anyone to be saved by faith only. At that point we will proceed to consider exactly what the bible does state about the doctrine of faith only in Section 3.4. We will then present what the bible means when it teaches that we are saved "by faith." In Section 3.6 we will present what the bible teaches the conditions of salvation are -- how we get into a saved condition, and how we keep ourselves in that condition.

3.2 DEFINITIONS

It is of paramount importance that we define our terms because they often mean different things to different people. The proposition that we are evaluating is that *we are saved by faith only*.

"We" means those of us who are currently alive, and thus, as we saw in the Chapter 2, living under the New Testament, often called the gospel of Christ.

The word *saved* is referring to being rescued from the consequences of our sins. All have sinned (Rom. 3:23); therefore, all are in need of salvation. In addition, when people are saved, they enter into a different relationship with God. This is often referenced in the New Testament as being "written in the Lamb's book of life" (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 20:15; 21:27; 22:19). In question in this chapter is the definition of those conditions which must be satisfied for a person to be transformed from the condition of being lost to the condition of being in fellowship with God.

The term *faith only* must be defined collectively. It will be defined in detail later in the chapter. However, our intent now is to present the perception of the meaning of this term when faith is taught as the sole condition of salvation. Since the bible does not teach salvation by faith only, it has no scriptural definition when used in this way. Since its usage as a condition of salvation is not unique, it can (and does) have a very wide range of meanings. In fairness, its usage in James 2 is probably not the way that most denominational practitioners view the term, although this does provide the biblical definition of it. To be as accurate as possible, our observation of the current denominations, and our experience in a denomination for 18 years leads us to believe that the following is a reasonably acceptable definition of the term:

The concept of *faith only* carries with it the idea that when an alien sinner totally believes and puts his/her faith in Jesus Christ and accepts Him as his/her personal savior, it is at this point in time that the person's name is added to the Lamb's book of life, and absolutely no other actions are required in order for the believer to receive forgiveness of sins and to enter into a covenant relationship with God.

The word *only* means that absolutely no action other than faith is necessary to bring about salvation.

3.3 WHY NOT FAITH ONLY?

The bible clearly teaches that we are saved by faith. Indeed, we have already given many scriptural references that teach this, and we will deal with this further in the next section. The question is: Can we therefore conclude that we are saved by faith only? In reality, the bible teaches that there are many things by which we are saved. Consider the following:

1. We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8): "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God." Are we saved by grace *only*?
2. We are saved by hope (Romans 8:24-5): "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, [then] do we with patience wait for [it]." Are we saved by hope *only*?
3. We are saved by faith (John 3:16): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Are we saved by faith *only*?

4. We are saved by repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10): "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Or, note Luke 13:3 where Jesus put it in a negative light: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Are we saved by repentance *only*?
5. We are saved by calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21): And it shall come to pass, [that] whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (See also Romans 10:13.) Are we saved by calling on the name of the Lord *only*?
6. We are saved by faith and confession (Romans 10:9): "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Can we be saved by faith if we refuse to confess? Can we be saved by confession if we do not believe?
7. We are saved by faith and baptism (Mark 16:16): "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Can we be saved by faith if we refuse to be baptized? Can we be saved by baptism if we fail to believe?
8. We are saved by baptism (1 Peter 3:21): "The like figure whereunto [even] baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Are we saved by baptism *only*?
9. We are saved by acts of obedience (Philippians 2:12-13): "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure." And (Hebrews 5:9): "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Are we saved by acts of obedience *only*?
10. We are saved by enduring to the end (Matthew 24:13): "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Are we saved by enduring to the end *only*?

This is not an exhaustive list, but it enables us to demonstrate some things about the doctrine of faith only.

First, since the list above clearly shows that we are saved by a number of different things, we can confidently affirm that we are not saved by anything *only*. The doctrine of faith only (or anything else *only*) trivializes the word of God. "Man cannot live by bread alone, but by *every* word the proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). To write off the entire New Testament by condensing it into one verse has got to be wrong. [While we applaud the zeal of those who hold up large signs of bible verses at nationally broadcast football games, the bible should not be so trivialized. There is no single verse

that can adequately sum it up to the exclusion of the rest.]

The reason that it has been condensed is to make a palatable appeal to the masses. As we discussed above, radio and TV quick-salvation presentations just would not allow for a detailed discussion of the complete word of God. So the leaders present it in an easy, simple, understandable -- and wrong -- summary.

We have arranged the ten items above roughly in the amount of effort which is demanded of the believer. Please reread the scriptures from above again to assure that this is, in fact, the teaching of the New Testament. Then consider the following thoughts:

1. We are saved by grace. Grace is the unmerited favor of God. What God has done for us in sending His son to die on the cross for our sins it totally without merit on our part (Rom. 5:6-11). If we are to be saved by something only, why not make it grace only? This is the belief of the universalists who do not believe God will condemn anyone. It was also a major tenet of Calvinism that we are saved by the "irresistible grace of God" and that there is nothing that we have to do with it one way or the other. We will not discuss this further, for it makes our very being and existence meaningless. If there is anything that the bible teaches it is that each person has a free will and will be held accountable for *his* behavior, not the behavior of God. However, the same argumentation that extrapolates valid scripture to make faith into faith only, can also be applied to make grace into grace only, or mercy into mercy only, or any of the other conditions into that condition only.
2. We are saved by hope. While grace is totally independent of anything that man has done or will do, hope requires something of man. Hope is desire plus expectation. In this case it is the desire to be in a covenant relationship with God now and forever. The *now* part is totally within the control of a person to be grasped immediately by meeting the conditions of salvation. The *forever* part, however, is not yet a recognized reality (seen), and thus must be viewed with expectation. The desire for eternal life is within most normal people; the expectation is not. We are saved by hope in the sense that it is this hope for the realization of eternal life in the hereafter that motivates us to keep ourselves faithful to God.
3. We are saved by faith. This is absolutely not in question. The bible teaches in dozens of places that we are saved by faith. Recall how that faith is acquired (Rom. 10: 17): "So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." In the next section we will take up the question of what the bible means when it teaches that we are saved by faith.
4. We are saved by repentance. As the quoted reference indicates, repentance is brought about by Godly sorrow for sin. Those who repent of their sins do not repeat those

sins willfully. Repentance is the most difficult part of our part of salvation. It involves sorrow not only for the things done, but also for the things undone. It requires a complete change in life to be reoriented away from self and toward Christ. With this and the 2 Cor. 7:10 definition in mind, think about this question: could there be any chance that man could be saved by repentance *only*? Or, more importantly, is *repentance only* even conceivable? Are there any circumstances under which it could possibly exist? We will see that the same reasoning applies to a living faith.

5. We are saved by calling on the name of the Lord. This is not in dispute; but what does it mean to call on the name of the Lord? Read Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Thus, "calling on the name of the Lord" is more than asserting that what is being done is in His name. If, in fact, the actions so labeled are not by His authority, this assertion would bring reproach upon the name of the Lord. Much in religion today does just that. "Calling on the name of the Lord" means that the individual looks to Jesus for authority for all things. This is totally consistent with Mt. 7:23: "he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."
6. We are saved by faith and confession. (Note that "confession" here is not a confession of sins in the Roman Catholic sense; it is the truthful statement that the person making the confession believes that Jesus Christ is the son of God; see Mt. 16:16). Romans 10:9 gives two conditions for salvation. We need to ask two questions: (1) is it possible to have faith without confessing Christ? and (2) is it possible to confess Christ without having faith? We will show below that the faith upon which salvation is conditioned cannot exist without this confession. On the other hand, item 5 above indicates that one can make the statement of belief for self-serving purposes and not out of true faith in Christ. As for the necessity of confessing Christ, see also Mt. 10:32-33.
7. We are saved by faith and baptism. This multiple condition statement, given in Mark 16:16, can be evaluated in the same way as that given immediately above: (1) is it possible to have faith without being baptized into Christ? and (2) is it possible to be baptized into Christ without having faith? The answers are the same. However, we defer consideration on baptism to the next chapter.
8. We are saved by baptism. While we will see in the next chapter that the bible clearly teaches this in many passages in addition to 1 Peter 3:21, it never teaches that a person is saved by baptism *only*. Of all of the acts that are commanded of us,

baptism is the least demanding -- indeed, an argument can be made that it is something which is done to us, not something that we do. However, it is up to each of us to subject ourselves to it. Baptism is also the only command of God that we only obey once.

9. We are saved by acts of obedience. These are not works of our own creation. They must be the works of God. This premise is not arguable. We might argue over just what is required, but we cannot argue that some act or acts of obedience are required (even if it is only faith). It is necessary for us to become familiar with the New Testament to determine just what these works are.

10. We are saved by enduring to the end. Clearly there is no quick and easy salvation solution given in the New Testament. If we do not equip ourselves with the strength that God supplies we will not even know what it means to endure, much less know how to meet the snares of the devil which are strategically positioned to assure our failure. Thus, Peter said (1 Peter 5:8): "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle [you]. To him [be] glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

It should be clear that the doctrine of faith only is, at best, an oversimplification. In the next section we will show that faith only is defined by scripture. While we recognize that this is not the definition that is acceptable to denominational teachers, our question is this: why not use scriptural terms in scriptural ways? The answer, of course, has to do with deception.

3.4 WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT FAITH ONLY

The words *faith* and *only* come together only once in the bible. So that there will be absolutely no misunderstanding, we quote the entire context of that occurrence (James 2:14-26):

What [doth it] profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can that 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.

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent [them] out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Reread verse 24 in your bible again: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Can it be wrong for us to teach that a man is not saved by faith only when, in fact, the bible does?

Of course, it can be argued that this is not what is meant when denominational teachers use the term "faith only" today. However, *the burden of proof is upon them to prove their doctrines from the New Testament*. It is impossible for us to know for sure what they mean when they use this term, although we gave what we thought was their meaning above. Let us analyze James 2:14-26 first, in order to see that it is not contradictory of the other numerous bible teachings with regard to salvation by faith:

14 Apparently there were some who were saying that one could possess faith without demonstrating this faith by works. Either that, or they were, in fact, claiming to have faith while not demonstrating it with works. Is this not what those who teach salvation by faith only are not implying today? If not, why even use the term? Thus, the question is quite relevant: Can that faith save him?

15-17 The absurdity of this position is exposed by James. This is like telling a hungry person to be fed without feeding him. In verse 17 James does not deny that such a faith can exist. However, this is not a living faith. It is a dead and ineffectual faith, and thus does not have the capacity to save. It is *not* the faith upon which salvation is conditioned in John 3:16.

18 James shows that it is impossible to reveal faith without some outward manifestation, i.e., works. This outward appearance of righteousness is the confession of Christ which is commanded of every Christian. It is impossible for a Christian to only be one inwardly -- if the inward faith is there, the works of obedience and righteousness will be impossible to hide.

[Let us pause right here to state our belief that this *is* the position of most denominational teachers. They are not against the practice of good works. Our question is: why don't they come out and teach this. Why keep it camouflaged under the umbrella of faith only?]

19As an extreme example, James shows that the demons have a knowledge of God -- they believe, but this does not save them.

20-23"Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." This is also reviewed in Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19. Hebrews 11 is a clear definition of faith, which we will address in the next section. Notice, however, that every act of faith on Abraham's part was reflected in some outward work. Abraham never had faith only -- to him this would have been an absurd theological concept.

24These works are not works of man's own devising, which can never have any impact upon salvation. Further, they do not *merit* his salvation even if they are in complete compliance with God's word. They justify the man because they proceed out of a living faith in the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse his sin. Any other type of faith is totally useless for anything but to deceive others.

25James argues from the greatest (Abraham) to the least (Rahab). God is no respecter of persons -- the same type of faith is required of us all. Since James is talking to Christians under the New Testament, it most certainly applies to us.

26This very interesting verse not only defines what faith without works is, it defines what physical death is: the body apart from the spirit. Of what use is the body apart from the spirit. We quickly embalm it and bury it before it decays. Even so a dead faith needs to be put as far away from us as possible.

What are you saved by? a living faith, or a dead faith?

3.5 WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED BY FAITH

The bible clearly teaches that we are saved by faith. The passages that are usually used to prove the doctrine of *faith only* are those which prove that we are saved by faith. Since we saw above that we are not saved by faith only (or anything else *only*), the logical question follows: what does the New Testament mean when it says that we are saved by faith?

First and foremost, we saw that this was a living faith. Recognize that faith is an

abstract term. It is purely a motivator of action. We can imagine that we have faith. We might convince ourselves that we have faith. But, since it is intangible, there is no way for us or them to tell apart from the actions which it motivates. The argumentation presented above totally supports these concepts. Since living faith will always be accompanied by some outward manifestation of the action which it motivates, James reasons that this is the way that we determine if we have faith (James 2:18): "... show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

In those cases where we are commanded to determine the faith of others the same rule holds (Matthew 7:15-20): "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither [can] a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

The Hebrew writer added to this basic definition of faith in the eleventh chapter (Hebrews 11:1-2): "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report." While this is not the easiest of definitions, it can be understood in light of what we have already established from James 2. In particular, the things hoped for do not have substance, at least not for us at the current time (if they were seen they would not be hoped for -- recall Romans 8:24). The Hebrew writer states that faith is the substance of these things. It produces tangible accomplishments (substance) by which we can envision those things which do not yet exist for us (i.e., eternal life). This is "the evidence of things not seen."

Most people of the world think of faith as being a figment of the imagination of the religious -- pie in the sky, if you will -- that for which there is no evidence. *This is not the least bit true.* Recall the source of faith (Romans 10:17): "So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." As we saw in the previous chapter, the word of God was given first through the Lord and then through the apostles and prophets, and it was confirmed by miracles when it was delivered (Hebrews 2:3-4). Thus, it is not an invention of man, but a reliable communication from God. The only question is: do we allow it to generate faith in us? If we continue to hear and seek him, it will do just that. If we cut it off and do not diligently seek God, then it will not. Recall Hebrews 11:6: "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."

The source of faith is the proven and confirmed word of God. The effect of faith is to provide substance of the things hoped for. How is this accomplished? the Hebrew writer answers this question in the only way possible: by giving examples. We will not go

through all of the examples, but we urge the reader to read the entire 11th chapter of Hebrews. It defines living faith more effectively than any other explanation could. In absolutely no case can we find anything which could in any way be described as faith only. In every single case faith materialized as "the evidence of things not seen." In every single case it led to obedience to God.

The bible clearly teaches that we are saved by faith. But it is not faith defined by man, it is faith defined by God. Hebrews 11 defines the quality of faith which God expects of us today.

As we see the word *faith* appearing in God's word, it is important that we do not interpret it to be the dead faith, or faith only. In many places it is used to refer to the entire plan of salvation (such as in John 3:16). Here, and most other places, faith does not mean dead faith (faith only), it means a living faith. Thus, it carries with it the confidence and desire to obey *all* of God's laws that apply to us today.

3.6 WHAT THEN ARE WE SAVED BY?

We wish to close this chapter on a positive note. If we are not saved by faith only, then what are we saved by? Let's look at the positive side of Jesus' statement (Mt. 7:21): "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Can anyone deny that we are saved by doing God's will? Dare they? *If* it is God's will that we are saved by doing nothing, then so be it! *If* it is God's will that we be saved by faith only, then so be it! On the other hand, if we must walk on burning glass and nails, then so be it! Our job at this point is to determine just what this is.

It is essential that we understand the two aspects of salvation: (1) what we must do to get into a covenant relationship with God, and (2) what we must do to keep ourselves saved. Confusing these two aspects of salvation prevents us from dealing with the subject intelligently. We recognize that one of the basic tenets of Calvinism was the security of the believer (or, as it is often stated "once saved always saved"). We will not address this, since it is so obviously contrary to scripture. (We urge any who hold to this belief to read any three pages of the New Testament in a row -- it is difficult to find three pages in a row in which this doctrine is not clearly contradicted. Indeed, we have already presented many scriptures above that contradict this doctrine, and many more will be presented in the remainder of this book.)

Since all have sinned (Rom. 3:23), all are in need of salvation. Some people claim that they have no sin, but this is rare. Most people know that they have sinned and believe earnestly that they have met God's plan of salvation when, in fact, they have not. Let us take this one step at a time -- we will first address the subject of escaping the

consequences of our sins and entering into a covenant relationship with God. Then in the final section we will address the issue of keeping ourselves saved.

3.6.1 ENTERING INTO A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

We have established by the review of a number of scriptures that we are saved by faith -- but this is a qualified faith -- it must be a *living* faith. We have also seen how this type of faith is produced (Romans 10:17): "So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Hearing is the beginning of salvation, and it is the most critical step. If we are willing to hear and we continue to hear (listen to) God's word with a believing heart, we will be saved. If we refuse to hear, then no other acts on our part or on God's part can possibly save us.

Let us explore a logical arrangement of conditions which Jesus himself placed on salvation. The first condition would logically be to hear the word. Indeed, Jesus made hearing and learning the word of God a condition of coming to Him (John 6:44-45): "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Note first that this is a condition: "No man can come to me, except ..." This fits logically into all that we learned about the value of God's word in bringing about our salvation.

Obviously we are not saved by hearing only (Romans 2:13; James 1:22). Those who have never heard would be in a better position than those who hear and refuse to act upon what they hear. Hearing produces faith, and faith is the next logical condition of salvation (John 3:16): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Few people have any problem in accepting faith as a condition of salvation.

What does faith motivate us to do? What do we learn from hearing God's word? One of the first things is the recognition of our own sin. It would seem reasonable that this recognition of sin would bring about sorrow -- a sorrow that would further motivate us to turn from our sin. Repentance is a requirement, however, not because it is reasonable, but because Jesus made it a condition of salvation. In Luke 13:3 Jesus stated: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Let's examine the context of this passage to be sure that this concise condition applies to us spiritually (and not just to them, possibly physically). The recorded incident begins in Luke 13:1: "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all

likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

It seems clear that the people who came to Jesus at this time were ordinary people, just like you and me. They were not murderers, rapists, or obviously immoral. Like us, they brought up incidents which would show them in the best possible light. The implication was that these were pointing their fingers at obvious sinners, and saying "we are not like them." Jesus reaction reflects the truth taught in Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Thus, we can never take refuge in the sin of others, no matter how bad we might imagine them being. Think of the worst possible sinner that you can imagine -- a child abuser of the most perverted kind. Then listen to Jesus: "...except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." Being under the influence of the devil is not a matter of degree. If Jesus is not Lord of your life, then Satan has control of you, and repentance is essential to change this state.

Repentance leads to a cessation of sin, or, at least the attempt on our part to get it out of our lives. The word itself means a turning around. To turn away from sin is not sufficient -- we must also turn toward something. Jesus talked about this in Matthew 12:43-45: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth [it] empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last [state] of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

Jesus did not leave us void. We are not saved by repentance *only*. The positive aspect of the Christian life is summed up in a word: confession. Jesus made this a condition of salvation when he stated (Matthew 10:32): "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

To this point we have established four conditions of salvation which prepare the alien sinner for the final step. The bible teaches these steps in a number of ways. We will see in the next chapter that one of the most informative ways is through the examples of conversion given in the book of Acts. We will consider all of these in the next chapter, but in order to get things into perspective, let us consider one of the most detailed cases of conversion (Acts 8:26-40):

"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch

of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to [him], and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on [their] way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, [here is] water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

Note that the sequence of events which occurred follows exactly the conditions set by Jesus:

- 1.The eunuch *heard* the word both by reading the Old Testament and by further hearing from an inspired teacher. This was necessary as the New Testament was still being revealed.
- 2.The eunuch obviously *believed* the truth of the word of God. His faith came by hearing the word of God, both in written and spoken form.
- 3.While *repentance* is not explicitly mentioned in this example, we will see that it is in several others. The fact that it is not mentioned does not at all mean that it did not take place; and it is obvious from his actions that he was willing to make a major change in direction in his life.
- 4.The eunuch *confesses* that Jesus is the Son of God, which Philip states to be a condition of

baptism.

This summarizes the first four steps given by Philip to the eunuch.

It is clear, however, that we have left something out. Surely, from the example we can see that baptism was an integral part of preaching Christ. Jesus made baptism a condition of salvation in John 3:3-5: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

If this is not baptism that Jesus is talking about, then what is it? We read in Romans 6:3-4: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." This tells us that the apostle Paul assumed that the Christians at Rome thoroughly understood that baptism put them into Jesus Christ. Further baptism is "into death" and we arise from it to "walk in newness of life." If that is not the rebirth of John 3:3-5, then what is?

We will leave these questions open for right now. The next chapter is totally dedicated to the subject of baptism, and there is no clearer doctrine taught in the New Testament than that of the purpose and practice of baptism. The two paragraphs above are merely to introduce this topic at this point for completeness.

In summary, we have determined that Jesus' own words as recorded in the New Testament have established five conditions which must be satisfied if we are to do the will of our Father who is in Heaven:

- 1.Hear the truth (i.e., God's word)
- 2.Believe the truth
- 3.Repent of one's sins
- 4.Confess a belief in Christ, and
- 5.Be baptized into Christ.

It should be noted that baptism is the *only* one of these conditions that is performed once and only once. We should never stop hearing and studying the truth -- we never totally master it and we always need it to continue improving. Obviously, we should never stop believing. To stop repenting would mean that we would turn back and repeat the sins that we turned from when we first owned Christ as Lord. And finally, our confession of Christ is exactly what the great commission commands (Mt. 28:18-20), and this charge

applies to us for life.

While these are ongoing commitments of faithful Christians and not just one-time obligations, baptism is different. *Legitimate* baptism is only to be performed once. By *legitimate*, we mean that which is authorized by Jesus Christ, which would mean that it is performed as He prescribed and for the reason which He specified (either directly or through writers inspired by the Holy Spirit). Baptism is the only command of God that we are under today that is only performed once in satisfying our reasonable and spiritual service to their Lord (Rom. 12:1).

3.6.2 KEEPING OURSELVES SAVED

While it is fairly simple to summarize that part of God's plan of salvation which puts a person into a saved condition, the entire New Testament is necessary to describe the standards set for people once they become Christians. Any attempt which we might make to summarize or reduce this would be futile and akin to establishing a creed.

Is the New Testament a law like the Old Testament was? Yes and no. In the sense that it is the truth by which we regulate our lives, the answer is yes. In 1 Corinthians 9:21 the apostle Paul was discussing how he would not practice the Old Testament traditions when we was trying to convert gentiles so that he would not offend them. He stated: "To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law." Those "without law" were without the law of Moses, or the Old Testament law. Even though Paul was not under the Old Testament law, he was still under law to God, because he was under the law to Christ.

The New Testament provides the truth -- the reality -- by which we can make Godly decisions within our lives today. It provides all moral truths with regard to all of the relationships of life. It also provides the truth by which our worship is pleasing to God. Finally, it provides the truth by which the church can be organized to best satisfy its great commission. In these regards, we are under law to Christ.

In the sense that it is minimal set of specifications which when obeyed will merit our salvation, it is unlike the Old Testament, and is not a law in this respect. Unfortunately, many Christians want to view it this way. They want to determine the minimal requirements, satisfy them, and then get on with life. If this is the way you approach the New Testament, there is not the slightest chance that you will ever be able to understand it.

What does God want? Everything. Listen to the apostle Paul pleading with some of the same people who were proposing that "we continue in sin that grace may abound

(Rom 6:1). In Romans 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service." The New Testament is not a set of rules, it is a set of principles. This set of principles will enable us to understand what it means to render our bodies a total sacrifice to Him. When this occurs you will no longer be "conformed to this world: but [will be] be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Can we ever hope to master and meet all of the principles of the New Testament? This would be sinless perfection, and we are never to feel that we have attained this (1 John 1:8): "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." We are going to stumble and fall as weak babes in Christ, just as a baby has many falls while learning to walk. But this is a far cry from salvation by grace or faith only, which excuses virtually all disobedience to God's law. Christians cannot grow closer to God if their attitude is one of excusing their own sins. It is essential that we whole-heartedly repent, turn and despise their sin, and pray to God for forgiveness in our quest for perfection (1 John 1:9-2:6):

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Christians make every attempt to be faithful, and ultimately, in the vast majority of cases with the help of God, they are.

With this understanding of what scriptural faith is, we are ready to see the reason that several other myths of denominationalism go unchallenged.