

March 2015

Faith today does not need works to make it perfect (Pt 4 Faith)

Introduction.

This is our fourth study on the topic of faith in the Scriptures.

Previous points covered in Pt 3

1. Christians are sanctified by faith in Christ, and
2. Faith in signs and wonders does not heal a man of his sin, and
3. A man struggling in his faith is not equipped to war in this warfare.

Three points are established from the Scriptures for this study.

1. Believers today receive the Holy Spirit of God by faith.
2. The law of faith excludes boasting.
3. A man's faith is considered dead by his brethren if it is without works.

Our three points in more detail.

1. Believers today receive the Holy Spirit by faith.

Supporting Verse.

Gal.3: 2 "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? "

Context and meaning of our verse.

* There are three occurrences in chapter 3 where faith is linked with the Spirit of God, from which we see that it is only by faith that the Spirit is given. Verses 2 and 5 each use the phrase "by the hearing of faith", and verse 14 talks about the blessings of Abraham coming on the Gentiles through the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Other scriptural support.

Gal.3: 5 & 14.

Scriptural examples.

* There is no link between faith and the Spirit of God in the Old Testament. Hence there is only an example of Saul where, instead of having faith in God he disobeyed God and the Lord removed His Spirit (1Sam.16:14, 15), and in the preceding verse David had been given the Spirit of God, not because of his faith, but because of God's grace. Therefore in both OT examples God had "mercy on whom I will have mercy", and He choose to show mercy to David and anointed him with His Spirit.

Application of our verse today.

* Today a man in the world is no different to Saul when the Spirit departed from him and an evil spirit troubled him (verse 15). But when a man today believes God, then He is justified by faith, and God gives him His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of promise (Eph.1: 13).

Illustration.

* Some today say that the Spirit of God is only evidenced in a believer by the gifts of the Spirit, and specifically when he speaks in tongues, and by inference salvation is validated when a man speaks in tongues. I remember going to a Presbyterian church and doing the Alpha course which in the last stage there is a time of worship where people are "anointed by the Holy Spirit", which supposedly strikes down a man, following which he speaks in tongues. But in my experience, I was all but forced down by another believer, and then encouraged to repeatedly say "Honda" and "Yamaha" in an effort to, perhaps, encourage the Holy Spirit of God bring forth signs.

Learning from our Illustration.

* A Charismatic movement swept through the church of Rome in 1967, which, for the traditional Protestant churches confirmed that Roman Catholics (RCs) are filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and therefore, must be true brethren.

* Yet when a believer adopts a Biblical view of "tongues" they find that "tongues" identified in the book of Acts are other languages (Acts 2: 6), not current-day gibberish.

* Today, when a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, they receive the Holy Spirit of promise, which after a person believes they are “sealed with that holy Spirit (Eph.1: 13), “unto the day of redemption” (Eph.4: 30).

Challenge & or encouragement.

* For those that are ignorant of the Biblical doctrine of tongues (as I was) there is no need to be discouraged, as I was when I questioned whether I was saved. But rather the fruit that the Spirit of God (see Gal.5: 22, 23) produces in a saved man will prove to **you** whether or not you have believed in your heart unto righteousness. And when we share the gospel of Christ and someone believes, then teach them that believers receive the Holy Spirit by faith.

2. The law of faith excludes boasting.

Supporting Verse

Rom.3: 27 “Where [is] boasting then? It is excluded...By the law of faith.”

Context and meaning of our verse.

* Paul has been writing about the purpose of the law (verse 20 “for by the law is the knowledge of sin”, see also Gal.3: 19) and then in verse 21 he says “But **now** the righteousness of God without the law is manifested”. Verse 23 establishes that “all have sinned”, and verse 24 “Being justified freely by his grace”, and verse 25 establishes that God sent Jesus to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.

* Verse 26 “To declare his righteousness, that he (God) might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Then we have our verse: “Where is boasting then? It is excluded.” A statement of fact (confirmed in Eph.2: 9), then Paul asks another question: “By what law” of works?” Then he responds to his own question with “Nay: but by the law of faith.” So just as there are laws pertaining to “works” in the book of the law, there are laws for faith.

Application of our verse today.

* Our verse is part of the Pauline epistles to the Gentile church and is therefore sound doctrine for the church today. Faith in God excludes boasting. Yet how many Christians do you know that love singing their own praises? It is one thing to give your testimony as part of the gospel message you preach, but it is another to boast of your works.

Illustration.

* The modern-day Pharisees (Roman Catholics) appear to be no better than those in Jesus’ day (see the example of Lk.18: 11-14 where the Pharisee who boasted to God that he was “not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican”), who today love to talk about their works to others, and not just works that follow their salvation (Eph.2: 10), but works of charity that they believe will help offset their sin, according to their own Catechisms (1394).

Learning from our Illustration.

* In the Old Testament there are 613 laws, which the Jew was to keep, and amounted to work. Just as there are laws of the land, and laws of the Old Testament that were given that every man would know that he had sinned, there are also laws pertaining to faith, and one of those is: faith excludes boasting.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* Let us never forget that faith excludes boasting, and for some of us, that is tough. When we share our testimony we often include our before and after works, as Paul did, but when that is **all** we like to talk about then we may need to consider the Pharisee in Lk.18, and seek God’s help to be mindful of boasting about our works, because the law of faith excludes boasting.

3. A saved man’s faith is considered dead by his brethren if it is without works.

Supporting Verse

Jas.2:26 “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Context and meaning of our verse.

* In verse 21 James uses the example of Abraham (Gen.22: 10–18) and points out that he was justified by works when he “offered Isaac his son upon the altar”. Hence, God justified Abraham when he offered up his son on the altar in obedience to the Father, yet he had believed God earlier on in his life (Gen.15: 6). Hence there was 7 chapters between his believing and being justified, Verse 22 James establishes from the example in Gen.22 that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. Verse 23 Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, hence confirming that the context is having faith plus works to be justified before God. Verse 24 confirms again that it is by works that a man is justified by works and not faith only.

Other scriptural support.
Jas.2:17

Application of our verse today.

* For a man who is saved by believing the gospel of Christ there is no doctrinal application of this verse. Why? Because in James he is teaching that by works is faith made perfect, and faith without works is dead.

* You may agree with salvation for today being faith only, but say that a man's faith today is still established by his works. But Paul says, when we believe in our heart unto righteousness, and call on the name of the Lord, we **are** saved (Rom.10: 9–13). If we died the following day, we would be saved, whereas Abraham was justified (according to the Scriptures), not in Genesis 12, 13 or 15 (when God gave the covenant), but later in chapter 22, when he offered up his son.

* But we can make a spiritual application for today, and say that faith in God can be seen by others, including our brethren when we do works for the Lord, following our conversion.

Illustration.

* Have you looked at a young believer (that has not believed in vain) and said in your heart, “they don’t appear to do much for the Lord, are they really saved?” Well, there is an Evangelist that wrote a book on Evangelism, and a Pastor after reading his book asked him “I get the impression that you think that those who are not doing evangelism are not saved?” Although the following is not a direct response to the Pastor’s question, this was written (in Appendix 5: “if we say we are Christians, and live in on-going disobedience to His command to evangelise the world, there can only be one reason why. We are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and have not made Jesus Lord, and therefore we are not saved.”

Learning from our Illustration.

* The author, the Evangelist who wrote the book, I suggest also would believe that a man’s faith has to be proven by works otherwise it is dead, and hence he is not saved. Which is essentially salvation by works, salvation by obedience to Jesus’ commandments, rather than the commandments of the law. Today, God says, in his word that for those who believe the gospel of Christ crucified in their hearts, and call on the name of the Lord **shall** be saved, they **are** sealed unto the day of redemption. If they died 5 minutes later they would be in heaven, because their names would be written in the book of life, they do not need their faith to be proved by works (as Abraham did).

* So, if another man, whether a well intentioned evangelist or a pastor, tells you that you are not saved because you do not obey Jesus’ commandment to evangelise, then let them know that today God does not justify us **after** our faith is proven by works as he did with Abraham.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* Obey God and His word and those who teach accordingly, and do **not** obey an evangelist, nor pastor that teaches contrary to God’s word. If a man says that your faith is dead because you have no works, then they are not “rightly dividing the word of truth”. Today, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (Rom.3:28), and does **not** need to prove his faith to God for Him to put us in the body of Christ.

Summary of our three points.

1. Believers today receive the Holy Spirit of God by faith.
2. The law of faith excludes boasting.
3. A man’s faith is considered dead by his brethren if it is without works.