

In the Scriptures there is practically no effort made to define faith. Outside of a brief fourteen-word definition in Hebrews 11:1, I know of no Biblical definition, and even there faith is defined functionally, not philosophically; that is, it is a statement of what faith is in operation, not what it is in essence. It assumes the presence of faith and shows what it results in, rather than what it is. We will be wise to go just that far and attempt to go no further. We are told from whence it comes and by what means: "Faith is a gift of God," and "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." This much is clear, and, to paraphrase Thomas à Kempis, "I had rather exercise faith than know the definition thereof." A. W. Tozer – *The Pursuit of God*

GADSBY'S CATECHISM – William Gadsby about 1800

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Question XLIX. What law was Christ made under in His estate of humiliation?

Answer. The law of works.

Matt. 5.17-18; Rom. 5.19; Gal. 4.4-5.

Question L. What is meant by the law of works?

Answer. The law of God, commonly called the moral law, chiefly contained in the ten commandments.

Ex. 20.1-17; Deut. 5.6-21.

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THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

Volume 6, No. 28

July 14, 2013

THE WORK AND EFFECT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. Isaiah 32:17

We would note at the outset that the passage does not reference the works of righteousness done by men. It does not describe a condition for obtaining salvation. True works of righteousness are produced in the believer as a result of salvation. Most of what are claimed as works of righteousness are not that at all since they are of human design and origin.

The thought here is of the end result of the worker. It is the product of the design and efforts of one Who would bring about a desired result. In this case it is the peace that would be experienced and enjoyed by those for whom it is intended and the effect would be a calmness and assurance under the mighty hand of God. We are not the workers who produce this “work.” We and the relationship we enjoy with God are the work. The hymnist in paraphrasing a Psalm wrote “Without our aid, He did us make.” We are not only His work in creation, but His work in the “New Creation” called salvation. We are reminded by the Apostle that we are “Saved by Grace through faith,” and specifically told in the same passage that it is “Not of works lest any man should boast.”

It is then the “work of righteousness.” Strong’s concordance” gives the sense of “rightness” to the word here. In this we would understand the thought as “making it right.” We have often heard the well-meaning, howbeit powerless, admonition, “you need to get right with God.” The necessity of being “right” with God is not lost on us. The problem is that men

have neither the inclination nor the ability to make themselves into something that is “right” with God. With many today it seems their efforts are to make God right with them! Obviously God’s thoughts about that, or anything else, are not men’s thoughts. And, the incessant lack of peace is evidence that their goal has not been attained. Therefore we are fully dependent on God to make one right with Him.

The scripture then gives to us some insight as to the craftsman at work creating the work that he has envisioned. Throughout the Word of God “peace” or the lack of it is an essential topic. In hearing of the aim of God with regard to men we understand that He will have a people with whom He will dwell in peace and harmony throughout eternity. That requires conformity to the design and we realize that God does not change. How then to bring about peace with one who is by nature at enmity with God is the challenge God faced. But, eternal love drove an eternal plan than provided for their redemption and conformity to the design. To show the only acceptable form, He sent His Son into the world and declared Himself pleased exclusively with Him. Two problems were met in Christ. The first was that the objects of redemption have sinned and were incapable of rehabilitation. The sentence passed without recourse was death and eternal banishment from God in eternal torment. Jesus assumed their condemnation and as the substitutionary

Lamb of God's providing died and suffered all that was coming to them and provision for their justification was made.

The debt was paid. The next thing is that they must be made conformable in nature to the Son. God would accept nothing less. (We note that the question is not whether we will accept God but whether He will accept us.) So the Holy Spirit is free to regenerate and impart the essential life and character of Christ to them. "Ye must be born again." *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Galatians 4:6.* As such then the wrath of God towards them is found to be burned out in Christ and God has no further charge to make. And, they are found desiring the very fellowship with God that He would have with them.

In true peace there is the absence of conflict in fact and in the minds of both parties. This is the work then of righteousness or "rightness." God has made His people "right with Him." This is no static peace. When a great philosopher of the past was asked on his death-bed if he were at peace with God he answered "we never fought." It sounds good on the surface, but such a man had never been brought through the essentials of repentance and faith. The peace that we know in Christ is one that does not bring mutual toleration, but brings mutual life and

identity. There is the desire to know God and to be with God and to be fully functional as coheirs with Christ. It is a life of identity, love and worship of our Redeemer. It is a life that we desire to be fully expressed in the presence of God. It is this life that is well-pleasing to God in that it honors His Son.

The text goes on to describe the experienced effect. It is quietness first of all. We have witnessed a child writhing in pain and refusing all offers of comfort. But, then the loving mother appears and even though the pain does not go away, the child becomes quiet. As we look into the face of our Lord we behold One who should be our enemy and our unconquerable foe. But, we behold the One who had accomplished the "work of righteousness" and we become quiet. No more writhing in the pain of condemnation. That One who true faith embraces assures us of forgiveness and eternal love. If, we are at peace with God, let the storm rage. Where we are, all is calm. Realizing that such a price has been paid and such a change has been brought about we are assured. We are the work of the Prince of Peace and: *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Philippians 1:6. bhs*

PAUL'S EXAMPLE AND TEACHING

"Unceasing prayer" is Paul's most frequent description of how he prayed and of how he wanted the church to pray. This was a real experience for Paul and not a formula. In the twelve times he mentions continuous praying, he seldom says it the same way twice (emphasis added). • Without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers. (Romans 1:9-10) • I give thanks to my God always for you. (1 Corinthians 1:4) • I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. (Ephesians 1:16) • Praying at all times in the Spirit. (Ephesians 6:18) • We have not ceased to pray for you. (Colossians 1:9) • Continue steadfastly in prayer. (Colossians 4:2) • Always struggling on your behalf in his prayers. (Colossians 4:12) • Constantly mentioning you in our prayers. (1 Thessalonians 1:2) • We also thank God constantly for this. (1 Thessalonians 2:13) • As we pray most earnestly night and day. (1 Thessalonians 3:10) • We always pray for you. (2 Thessalonians 1:11) • I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. (2 Timothy 1:3)

Paul Miller – A Praying Life

The Devil's Theology

*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.
James 2:19*

Has it ever occurred to you that demons are good theologians? Think about it:

- Demons don't debate who created the universe. They were there, singing praise to God with the rest of creation (Job 38; Colossians 1).

- Demons don't question the historicity of the Resurrection. They were there to witness the scene!

- Demons don't question if the Bible has recorded the truth. In fact, they evidently know biblical prophecy so well that they asked Christ in Mark 5, "Have you come to torment us before our time?"

- Demons don't debate that Christ is the Son of God. In Mark 3, we hear them affirm that, loud and clear.

So demons can check off all the theological boxes with perfect precision. They would beat our best theologians in a game of Bible Trivia. They know all the facts; but that's all it is to them—facts.

You see, demonic faith is recognition without relationship; it's acknowledgement without acceptance; it's reverence without repentance.

James is, effectively, asking his readers the probing question, "What distinguishes your faith from that of demons?"

There must have been a lot of fidgeting in the pews when these words were read.

Remember that James' audience is primarily made up of committed Jews—not half-hearted Gentiles. These Jews prayed a prayer every morning and evening known as the Shema: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

This affirmation of monotheism is what separated them from their polytheistic and pluralistic Gentile neighbors. It was their creed: they believed that only one true God existed, and that fact would guarantee them a place in Paradise.

But James only quotes half of the Shema. The second half included: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

So what James is revealing to his audience is that there is a difference between recognizing the facts about God's existence and actually loving Him. It's possible to affirm His existence without giving Him your existence.

It's time for us to come to grips with James' message and start practicing what we are preaching! Stop mentally checking off the boxes of basic truths regarding Christianity and pursue the person of Jesus Christ in a living, personal way.

There is a difference between carrying your cross as a Christian and wearing one around your neck.

What will your response to the Gospel be today?

Demons believe and shudder. They believe and have an emotional reaction! But they don't get past facts and feelings.

Will you believe and act? Don't heed the popular voices of culture and mainstream Christianity. Martin Luther, the Reformer, said in the sixteenth century, "The devil knows the truth, but he remains the devil."

Good theology isn't just believing facts; it's about following Jesus Christ personally . . . and then behaving accordingly.

Prayer Point: Is there a bit of "demonic" faith in your life? Is there some aspect of truth you believe but aren't practicing? Confess it to Christ today and then pray for courage and conviction to change.

Copied from: Daily Devotional: Wisdom for the Heart