

## ***DO YOU KNOW: FAITH'S ROLE IN SALVATION***

*David Halbrook*

Though faith *alone* is dead, faith is an essential part of God's plan for your salvation--*without faith it is impossible to please Him* (James 2:20; Hebrews 11:6).

Do not mistake "faith" with "blind faith." True faith is built upon undeniable evidence. The existence of God is KNOWN by the things that are made (Rom. 1:20). Seeing what He has done convinces us that God exists even though we have never seen Him. The Bible is also proof that God exists because of the fulfilled prophecies contained therein (Micah 5:2; Mt. 2:5-6).

With this faith, the teachings of God are useful to us (for if we do not accept them they will do us no good). This faith "drives" us to seek and serve God.

When a study of God's word convinces you that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son (John 20:30-31)—this faith is a significant step towards your salvation. It causes you to be confident that He will keep His promises of punishing the disobedient, forgiving the obedient, and rewarding the faithful (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Hebrews 5:9; Revelation 2:10). Do you believe?

-- *Editor's Note:* Here is part two in this series of articles on basic principles of conversion to Christ. Has everyone you know been converted to Christ? If not, then clip this article and hand it to someone. Keep teaching!

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# The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

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## ***COMMON RELIGIOUS MYTHS***

*Zach Lee*

There are so many things that are being said in the religious world today that go against what God has revealed to us in His word. Let's consider a few common myths that are said today:

1. *As long as you are religious you are acceptable to God.* We live in a country where we have the freedom of religion and the right to worship as we choose. "Attend the church of your choice" has become a popular slogan. "Be sure to worship in your church, synagogue, mosque or temple" says the public service announcement. The main idea behind these types of slogans is that it does not really matter who or what you worship as long as you are religious. The trouble is the Bible does not teach this.

On this very issue Jesus said, "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name' and then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me you workers of lawlessness'*" (Matthew 7:21-23). Did you notice that these are religious people whom Christ rejects? They even call Him "Lord." Yet, according to Jesus, they will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. What is the standard then? Jesus said, "he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." I fear for those who are unconcerned about their religious views and beliefs because they will be in for a sudden and terrible awakening on the Day of Judgment.

2. *God is just a prayer away.* This is a prominent idea in the world today. This is the idea that God is standing by, anxiously waiting to hear the prayers of anyone who comes to Him, regardless of their standing with Him. It does not matter what they believe, whether they have obeyed the gospel or not, or if they believe at all for that matter. According to this phrase, it does not matter how you live, or how you approach Him. God not only hears but answers all those who pray to Him -- as far as

this idea goes. Yet, when we look into God's word we see that prayer is a privilege of those who are right with Him. Proverbs 15:29 says, "*The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.*" From that verse it does not appear that "God is just a prayer away" from the wicked. Please do not misunderstand me. I am thankful for anyone who decides that they want to turn to God, and it is true that anyone can come to God. Peter said, "*Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to Him*" (Acts 10:34,35). But did you notice that there are conditions to this? It's found in the phrase, "anyone who fears Him and does what is right." I have known people who have absolutely no fear of God and no desire to do what is right. They live lives that dishonor God, yet have heard the phrase, "God is just a prayer away" and have come to believe it."

(you may this article in its entirety at <http://seffnercoc.org/oct1109>)

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## ***WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR GIVING?***

*Steve Klein*

How do you respond when someone asks you to give them money? Few people are willing to fork over hard earned cash without a reason. It's not that we expect something in return for charitable giving, it's just that we want to feel that our gift will accomplish some good purpose. When we don't feel that it will, the wallet will stay in the pocket. If we're pressured, we might take it out and give a little, but it won't be much.

Christians have a responsibility to give to support the work of the Lord's church. If our concept is merely that we have to give because it is expected, we will have a negative view of giving, and the amount that we give will not be what it should. But if we understand that there are good reasons for giving, our attitude will be positive and we will give abundantly.

God does not want us to give "grudgingly" or "of necessity" (just because we have to). He loves a "cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). But that doesn't mean that the Lord is unconcerned about the actual amount that we give. He wants us to give liberally. Our giving should be a reflection of the abundance that He has given to us. Through God's blessings, we have been "enriched in everything unto all liberality" (2 Corinthians 9:11). In other words, God has given a lot to us so that we may give a lot also.

That brings us back to our reasons for giving. God is asking us to give cheerfully and abundantly, but we will have problems doing that if we don't see any good reason for it. Perhaps, to see the good reasons that there are for church giving, it would be helpful to think of what would happen if no one gave at all. Here are some of the consequences:

1. No needy Christian could look to the church for help. If no one gave, there would be no funds available, no matter how dire the need or tragic the circumstances.
2. Preachers would be hampered in the work of evangelizing the lost both here and abroad. While most would continue to teach and preach to the extent that they could, much of their time and energy would have to be devoted to earning a living at a secular job.
3. There would be no church buildings for assembling to worship, no baptisteries for baptizing sinners, and no classrooms for teaching children.
4. The church could not purchase aids for teaching and edifying such as Bible class materials, song books and tracts.
5. The church could not provide sermon tapes, bulletins, web sites, or radio and television programs as means of getting the gospel message to the lost.

The Lord wants needy saints to receive help from churches (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). He expects churches to support preachers financially and has "ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). He desires that churches assemble for worship (Acts 20:7, Hebrews 10:25), support the truth (1 Timothy 3:15), and spread the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:8) and to do these things in a way that is expedient. In short, the Lord has given us a cause that is worth the best of our giving. We have reasons to give. Let us do so cheerfully and liberally.

{January 8, 2006, bulletin of the church of Christ at New Georgia}

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### Proverbs 30

v15 The leech has two daughters-Give and Give! There are three things that are never satisfied, Four never say, "Enough!":

v16 The grave, the barren womb, the earth that is not satisfied with water-and the fire never says, "Enough!"

v17 The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.