

WILL A DEAD FAITH SAVE YOU?

David Halbrook

Article IX of the Methodist Discipline says “Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.”

Chapter two of God’s word in the book of James says *You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only...faith without works is dead* (verse 24, 26).

Did Jesus teach salvation by faith alone? *He that believes and is baptized will be saved* (Mark 16:16). No. Did Peter teach salvation by faith alone? *Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins* (Acts 2:38). No. Did Paul teach salvation by faith alone? To the jailor who was told *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved*, Paul also taught baptism (Acts 16:31, 33; The purpose for that baptism is seen in the verses mentioned above). Faith—YES. Faith alone? No. Can you be saved by faith alone? No.

-- *Editor’s Note:* Our *Arkansas Weekly* article this week is primarily an announcement of our booth at the fair and upcoming Summer Bible Series. Clip it and use it to begin making people aware of these things.

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The Exhorter

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

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LIVING TOGETHER

Ken Sils (www.southsidechurchofchristindiana.com/Bible-Moment.html)

A headline recently blurted out, “Numbers of couples living together rising steadily,” followed by this statement: “The number of unmarried couples in America has topped 2.3 million, including more than 700,000 couples who are raising children.” Sadly, America has increasingly turned immorality into what is being called alternative lifestyles, as if no standard of right and wrong exists. Of course, if one refuses the God of heaven, and rejects His Divine revelation for man’s direction, then there is no standard of right and wrong between the sexes. People can live like animals if that is their preference.

Are you one who believes it is right for people to live together unmarried? I ask you to please give some serious thought to the Bible. When man and woman were created, they recognized the Divine purpose in what we call: marriage. When the woman was brought to Adam, the Bible says, “*For this cause a man shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh*, Genesis 2:24.” Jesus reaffirmed this Divine instruction to the human race, as recorded in Matthew 19:5. In this verse he said, “*Consequently they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.*” Marriage is THE institution God created for man and woman to live together. This is not what is thought of today about living together!!!

A man and woman living together without that commitment in marriage before God and man, is portrayed in the Bible as fornication and is always condemned by God as a form of sin and wickedness. And what about the eternal results? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*”

ABSTAIN FROM EVERY FORM OF EVIL

David Halbrook

Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil (1 Thess. 5:21-22). As Paul wraps up this epistle, he gives several brief reminders to the saints. This section of Scripture would provide good “memory work” because it provides concise reminders that can be used daily.

Sometimes the King James Version of this verse has caused some confusion. It reads “Abstain from every appearance of evil,” from which some have thought Paul was encouraging the Thessalonians to avoid anything that anyone might think is evil, even if it isn’t really evil. Of course, this is impossible. Just by preaching the gospel, it will “appear” to some people that we “hate” homosexuals, Muslims, or denominations. Because the Holy Spirit recorded Jesus’ miracle of turning water to wine, some people have mistakenly thought that Jesus created an intoxicating drink. To people who are determined to do evil “nothing is pure” (Titus 1:15).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:22, Paul is reminding Christians to avoid sin, regardless of how it is “packaged.” Sin can come in many forms, and we must avoid ALL of them.

1 John 2:16 gives three general forms of sin, “For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.” We must avoid each of these.

1. The lust of the flesh “Flesh” is often used to describe the physical desires we have which violate the teachings of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:5-6; Gal. 5:19). This does not mean that living in a physical body is sinful or that we inherit sin—if either of those were true, Jesus would have had sin!

God gave us certain desires and then gave teaching about how those desires should and should not be used. Though we have a body, we did not invent our body and thus are not the primary owners of our body. We cannot claim, “Its my body, I can do whatever I feel like doing.” “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). You may have a desire to eat food that does not belong to you—God will teach you to control that desire. You may desire a man or woman that does not belong to you—God will teach you to control that desire.

2. The lust of the eyes Sometimes, we mistakenly think that as long as we don’t “DO anything” wrong, then we have avoided sin. Wrong. We can sin with our eyes (and mind, which controls the eyes). “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:28).

Jesus condemns looking that has the intent, desire, or hope to commit sin. When seeing something stirs a sinful desire, we need to move our gaze elsewhere and get our mind back on things that are true, noble, just, and pure (Phili. 4:8).

How often do the teleVISION shows that you watch require you to look away? How many things do your children see that they do not even realize they should not see? Our brains are complicated camcorders (video recorders). Unlike your man-made camcorder, you cannot push a delete button on your head (or, on your children’s) and remove ungodly images from your mind (or their mind). Images might fade if they are ignored, but I do not know how long it takes for those images to be removed from the memory of our mind. Oh, be careful what you choose to see! We see some things, whether we want to or not. We see some things because we choose to keep looking—abstain from every form of evil.

3. The pride of life These might be among the more difficult sins to identify because many of them involve WHY we did something, and not always WHAT we did. Outward sins are more easily identified and can be seen by anyone who is around. Sins involving our motive, are often known only by ourselves and God—and if we aren’t paying attention to what is motivating us to speak or act, then our action alone may not help us to identify our sin. Only by reflecting on our heart and God’s word will we know of this form of evil.

Why are we, who together are the church of Christ in Quail Valley, not all present as a church on Wednesday evenings? Motive matters. Sometimes, we are not all able to be here. God knows that. If it is because we do not consider one another’s need to be stirred up to love and good works but mainly consider whether or not we feel the need to assemble—then our motive is the problem (Heb. 10:24). If I prefer not to submit to those who lead the church here (in our case, the men and someday, the elders), then the pride of life might be my problem. “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble’” (1 Pet. 5:5). Pride is not always the motive that keeps us from assembling together, but it can. Examine your heart and abstain from this form of evil.

Conclusion Satan, our adversary, has been fine tuning his craft of tempting us with sin, for thousands of years (Gen. 3:1; Job 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:8). We’ve only been learning to resist him and submit to God for a few decades at the most. We need God’s help!

Do not think that you are strong enough to participate in sin but avoid its consequences—no man can do that. The wages of sin is death, so abstain from every form of sin (Rom. 6:23; 1 Thess. 5:22).