

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Three Answers to One Question

Could one question be given three differing answers, and all answers be correct? Seems unlikely doesn't it? Yet this is the case in the N.T. book of Acts when the question, "What must I do?" (to be saved) is asked.

The expressed answer given to the Philippian jailer was "Believe!" (See Acts 16:25-34 for full account.) Some insist that this expressed reply is complete, and hence salvation is by faith only. However, a consideration of the expressed replies given this question on other occasions will show the fallacy of such reasoning.

When some of the Pentecost multitude asked, "What shall we do?" they were told, "Repent, and be baptized." (See Acts 2:36-41 for details.) And when Saul asked what to do he was directed to Ananias, who told him to "Arise, and be, baptized." (See Acts 9:1-18; 22:6-16 for the record.)

If only the expressed reply is to be considered we would have to conclude that the jailer was saved by faith alone, and that those on Pentecost were saved by repentance and baptism (i.e., without any faith) and that Saul was saved by baptism alone, without either faith or repentance. Of course none of these conclusions are valid.

A fair study of the context shows that the same elements, and all three of these elements, were present in each of the cases examined. One must have faith in Christ to be saved, but faith that is not strong enough to cause one to obey the Lord's commands is a "dead" faith (James 2:24-26).

Why Did The Answers Differ?

Because the questions were asked by people in different circumstances. A man in Burnet may ask how far is it to San Antonio?" and be told, "100 miles." In Marble Falls this question would get a different answer. And in Blanco, the same question would get a third, and different answer. Yet all would be part of one great truth.

There is no indication that the Philippian jailer had either knowledge or faith in the Christian system; so he was told to believe, and then "they spake unto him the word of the Lord." He repented, as indicated by washing their stripes, and he was baptized, as stated in Acts 16:38. Thus he truly believed (vs. 34).

But those on Pentecost heard the preaching of Christ before they asked their question. The preaching "pricked" their hearts; i.e., they believed. Then they were told "repent and be baptized."

And Saul (later called Paul) had already believed, and had spent three days penitently praying, when he was told, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."

Where Are You?

Your status or condition before God must be considered in answering your question, "What must I do?" The Lord will save "all who will obey;" (Hebrews 5:9) and has given one gospel to all (Galatians 1:8; Romans 2:11). Have you proven your faith by full and complete obedience to His will?

- Robert F. Turner, via Plain Talk, February, 1964

"Blessed Is The Man . . ."

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." (Psalms 1:1). Although this passage was obviously written during the Mosaic dispensation, the principle contained in it is still true today.

Many people are not happy although happiness has been provided for man. King Solomon sought happiness in worldly wisdom, earthly wealth and sensual pleasures, but he said: ". . . for all is vanity and vexation of spirit." (Ecclesiastes 2:17). After experiencing many things in his search for peace and happiness, he said: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Many fail to reach this conclusion until it is too late. Solomon tells us why we should fear God and keep his commandments. He says: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:14). This should convince all of us of the fact that it is certainly worthwhile to "fear God, and keep his commandments."

Happiness is not promised to those who heed ungodly counsel. If we heed ungodly advice, we will become ungodly. Ungodliness does not produce happiness. It results in sorrow and ruin. The wicked should be rebuked and their counsel disregarded. It certainly

does matter who you Listen to and follow. Jesus said: "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." (Matthew 15:14).

Happiness is not promised to those who stand together and cooperate with sinners. Solomon said: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men." (Proverbs 4:14). When we stand in the way of sinners, they will entice us to sin. The apostle Paul said: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Corinthians 15:33). One cannot take fire into his bosom and not be burned. Our intimate associates will influence us for either good or evil.

Happiness is not promised to those who "sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Those who mock and ridicule the things of God will not be happy. While Jesus was in the palace of the high priest, the apostle Peter "sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire." When one of the maids of the high priest saw Peter warming himself she told him that he also was with Jesus of Nazareth, but Peter denied knowing Jesus. In fact he denied three times that he knew Jesus. (See Mark 14:53-72.) Peter was in the wrong crowd. He was warming himself at the fire of the enemies of Jesus. He was influenced by them. He was sitting among the scornful. He was in the wrong place.

Since sin is progressive, consider the fact that one who heeds ungodly counsel may stand together and cooperate with sinners and may finally mock and scorn the things of God. This person will have no genuine peace and happiness.

Happiness is promised to those who fear and obey God. Remember the words of Solomon when he said: "Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13). In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said: "Not everyone who sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." He further said: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14). Please read the entire Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, and you will see that happiness is promised only to those who respect and obey God's word. Nine times in the first few verses of Matthew 5, Jesus stated that certain ones would be "blessed" or "happy".

Are you truly happy? Do you really have peace with God and hope of eternal life? "And being made perfect, he (Jesus) became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:9).

- Carrol R. Sutton (1932-2016), via *The Instructor*, April, 1970

Too Straight?

When people are determined to serve Jesus Christ in their lives, adhering in the strictest sense to the Scriptures, they will be criticized for being "too straight-laced," too exacting. But, that depends upon the way one looks at it. If one believes that Jesus meant what He said in His Testament, then it would be impossible to be too right. Is He not better pleased with those who seek to know His will and then strive to carry it out in their lives than He is with those who profess to love Him, but fall so inexcusably short?

Listen, would a teacher assign a class to draw a full page full of straight lines and then jump on that student who was doing such a good job and say to him, "You're making them too straight?" Or would a group that had hired a sculptor to make a statue criticize him as he worked, saying, "It looks too much like the man?"

Had we better not, then, disregard the talk of those who suppose that we need not adhere to the Bible so rigidly and strive even more to do all things that He has commanded?

- Unknown

Even Standing Alone, Faith is the Victory!

While the preacher of righteousness, Noah, was constructing the ark, he was certainly in a slim minority of folks (Genesis 6-7); but he and his family of few survived the cleansing of the entire earth at the hand of God!

Joseph was all alone when he was thrown into a pit and sold to a caravan of traders traveling to Egypt (Genesis 37); but he was set by Pharaoh over all the land of Egypt by the mighty hand of God!

Only two of the twelve spies, Joshua and Caleb, sent to spy out the Promised Land, returned with a favorable report because they followed God fully (Numbers 12-13). They endured the forty-year delay as they observed the deaths of the faithless in the wilderness!

The great warrior, Gideon, followed the word of the Lord in fighting against idolatry and making war against the superior forces of the Midianites (Judges 7); he followed the instructions of the Lord and routed the enemy with a mere 300 men!

The young shepherd, David, was ridiculed by his oldest brother for asking what would be done for the man who killed Goliath, the giant Philistine who taunted the armies of the living God (1 Samuel 17); with a sling and a stone he struck the Philistine and killed him, causing the Philistine armies to flee, as God was with him!

Elijah the prophet challenged 450 prophets of Baal to a contest on Mt. Carmel that would indicate the identity of the true God (1 Kings 18); by the word of the Lord fire came from heaven to burn the sacrificial ox, and all the prophets of Baal were slain!

What can just one person accomplish? Very much if he stands with God! Jehovah God will never be defeated, and His plans will never fail (cf. Isaiah 55:11)! God is victorious! Will you stand in faithfulness to Him, even if you must stand alone?

- Gary Smalley

* "Hem your day with prayer and it will be less apt to ravel at the edges!"

* "God's work, done in God's way, will never lack for God's supplies!"

* "If God seems far away - who moved?"

* "Jesus is a friend who knows your faults but loves you anyway!"

* "God's children never say good-bye for the last time (1 Thessalonians 4:17)!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)