

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



THE LENEXA EDIFIER



John 8:32

“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”

June 2, 2019

THE OBVIOUS FLAW IN “FAITH ONLY” DOCTRINE

by Jim Stauffer

When Jesus asked His disciples who men thought he was and was given such answers as Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the other prophets, he followed by asking the same question of those men, His disciples who had followed Him closely. Peter’s reply that he believed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, brought this response from the Lord.*flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.* (Mat. 16:17)

There is value in the source of our information. It is easy for people to unwittingly play the role of authority by saying what they believe. We ask a fellow employee what the rules are for lunch hours at our new place of employment. He replies we can take our hour anytime we wish. Just let everyone in the office know when you leave. Yet, when you announce you are leaving at 1:30 P.M. for your lunch, the manager calls you over and explains why that will not work and what the actual policy is. You confront the other employee and he says that is what he was told by someone else. Guess what? Neither of those people had any authority at all and their information did not come from one who did. Misinformation happens in all walks of life and in the big picture, lunch hours are not that big of a deal.

But we can learn a valuable lesson by accepting the advice of one who does not have either the authority to give it or even accurate information from the one who does.

Such is the case with the flawed doctrine of “faith only”. Who authorized salvation by faith only? You can find many people who will tell you that is how one is saved. But how many of them can cite the authority of the One who grants salvation for that doctrine. Jesus is *the author of salvation to all those who obey Him*. Now Jesus is the same member of the Godhead Who sent His disciples into the world to preach to all men with the instruction, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved and he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.* (Mark 16:16) The Hebrew writer tells us we must obey

the Lord if we are to receive the salvation He grants. The Lord says we must be baptized to be saved. How then can we say baptism is not necessary for salvation?

Look with me at one of the many cases of conversion in the Book of Acts. And as a side note, all those cases culminated in the baptism of the believers. Look at the report of the salvation of the jailer in Philippi. Of course the story is this. Paul and Silas were imprisoned by some locals who had lost their source of profits when Paul cast a spirit of divination out of a slave girl of whom they were taking advantage. A great earthquake released the bonds of all the prisoners and assuming they would all escape and his life would be lost because of that, the jailer prepared to take his own life. Paul cried out to warn him they were all there. No one had left the jail. When he realized this, his response was as follows: *“and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*” He had asked the question so it was incumbent upon them to give him an answer. We know from Paul’s statement in **1 Cor. 2:10-13**, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. His answer would come from the proper source. As we would say in layman’s conversation. “straight from the horse’s mouth”. This is what Paul and Silas told the jailer.

“They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.” (Acts 16:31-34) Now notice the order of events expressed. He was to *believe in the Lord Jesus* in order to be saved. They did not say simply believe in Him, they said *believe in the Lord Jesus*. Now this is the Lord Jesus who said one must believe and be baptized to be saved. So after telling him that, they next *spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house*. He next

took them to wash their wounds and *immediately he was baptized, he and all his household*. Then he fed them and is now identified by Luke as *having believed in God with his whole household*.

The jailer was given the message of salvation. It came from the only reliable source that exists. The One who authorizes and grants salvation. The message was to believe in the Lord Jesus. The totality of believing in the Lord is doing what He commands and baptism was on His lips as a command to His disciples when He sent them to preach the gospel message.

The concept of "faith only" has come from men down through the ages. Its prevalence in American religions stems from men of the Reformation period such as Calvin and Luther. These men are flesh and blood. And it must be stated beyond refutation that those who believe in faith only salvation, have received their message from flesh and blood, not from the Father Who is in heaven.

"THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS"

Arguably, your conversion to Jesus Christ is the most important conversion that has ever taken place. From a personal standpoint this would certainly be true. Allow me though, to say that the conversion of Saul of Tarsus to his Lord and Savior is, likewise, one of the most significant conversions in all of human history. The man who would later be known as the Apostle Paul occupies such an important role in the early history of New Testament Christianity, that we can ill afford to overlook a study of his life. Too, since much of the New Testament was written by him, we must consider the many contributions he made to the faith of God's people.

References to Paul's early life can be found in **Acts 21:39, Acts 22:3, and Philippians 3:5**. Read these passages carefully. Paul was born in Tarsus, an important city in the province of Cilicia. Tarsus became the capital of the Roman province in 67 B.C. and was a free city, meaning it did not have to pay any import taxes. Tarsus could easily rival Athens and Alexandria in being the center for Greek culture. Its geographical location made it a city of great commerce and wealth. The linen industry was a major source of commercialism. The Cydnus River ran close by, providing a convenient waterway for transport. There was a statue honoring the goddess Aphrodite in Tarsus, marking it as a center for idolatry. The ancient historian Strabo said that Tarsus was a city of luxury, levity, and insolence.

Saul spent his early days in the city of Jerusalem, being schooled at the feet of Gamaliel. This is a probable indication that Saul's father was wealthy, since he was able to send his son away to school. Gamaliel was the

grandson of the famous Jewish teacher Hillel. Both of these men were Pharisees. It is said that Gamaliel was recognized as one of the seven greatest teachers in all of Judaism. When Paul tells us that he studied under Gamaliel, he is saying that he received a first-rate education. Was Paul a good student? Listen to his own words. *"And I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceeding zealous for the traditions of my fathers"* (**Gal. 1:14**). He learned his lessons well! Saul was not a Hellenist, i.e., a Jew that had adopted the Greek way of life. Saul was the name of Israel's first king. Rather than being just an Israelite, he was a *"Hebrew of Hebrews."* He was a descendant of father Abraham. Concerning the Law of Moses he was a Pharisee, the straightest of the straight. Saul of Tarsus had some early contact with the Lord's church in the city of Jerusalem. We first encounter him in **Acts chapter seven**, when Stephen was stoned by the bloodthirsty mob. Stephen was charged with teaching against the Law of Moses, and any respectable Jew would heartily agree that justice was served with Stephen's death (**Acts 8:1**). Saul increased his opposition against God's people, doing everything within his power to obliterate those of the *Way* from off the earth. With all of the zeal and energy he could muster, he was unquestionably dedicated to the persecution of Christians. He would later say: *"For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it"* (**Gal. 1:13**).

Saul of Tarsus was an important, wealthy, powerful, influential man. Yet, he was lost and he needed to hear about Jesus. Would the good news of salvation effect change in this champion of Judaism? Would the simple, yet compelling story of a lowly carpenter from Nazareth wrest the shackles of prejudice from the heart of this man? Would the drawing power of the cross be enough to turn the persecutor into one who was persecuted? Such a story and such a change can only come from the Lord!

Randy Harshbarger

Choosing Which Verses to Memorize

We all want to hide God's word in our heart, but, unless you are one of those incredibly rare individuals who have an eidetic memory like Sheldon Cooper from The Big Bang Theory, then you're not going to memorize the whole thing. That leaves us with the chore of sorting out what we ought to memorize and what to leave on the page. What puts one verse in one category and a

different verse in the other category? Well, for me, there are several things to consider.

First I memorize those verses which teach me what I must do in order to go to heaven and avoid hell. This would include those verses which show the necessity of Faith in Christ (**John 3:36 and Acts 16:31**) Repentance (**Luke 13:3 and Acts 2:38**) Confession of Faith in Christ (**Matthew 10:32,33 and Acts 8:37**) and Baptism into Christ (**Mark 16:16 and Acts 22:16**). In addition to these I memorize verses which exhort me to remain faithful such as **Hebrews 2:1-4**.

Second I memorize verses which teach me fundamental things about the nature of God and Jesus Christ. His eternal nature, **Psalms 90:1, 2 and Exodus 3:14**. The Deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ, **John 1:1-3, 14 and Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:18**.

Third I memorize verses which teach me about the church of New Testament times and her worship; **Acts 2:42 and 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40**. The basis of Christian unity in **Ephesians 4:1-6 and 1:21ff**.

Fourth I memorize those verses which teach me my duties as a Christian man such as **Philippians 4:8**, control my thoughts. My civic duties covered in **1 Peter 2:17**, family duties in **Ephesians 5:25-28 & 1 Timothy 5:8**.

Many verses must be added to these but this is how I pick and choose which verses get memorized.

Cleveland R. Reddinger Jr.

Holding a Church Hostage

"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to do, putting them out of the church." (3 John 9,10)

The daily news tells us of numerous hostage situations - some at home, some abroad. A few zealots demanding that the world dance to their tune - or else.

Diotrephes was a spiritual terrorist who held the church where he was a member hostage. He loved preeminence. Somehow he gained the control of the church. The results are well known. He opposed the apostles. He refused to receive those sent by them. He used malicious words against them. He was not content with not receiving faithful brethren, he forbade others from doing so. If they did he put them out of the church. Can you imagine what it must have been like to have been a member of that church? Can you imagine the tension that must have existed? Brethren would almost be afraid to breathe for fear of crossing Diotrephes.

Not everyone who loves preeminence has the ability to gain control of the church like Diotrephes. One may not have enough power and support to put anyone out of the church. He is not qualified for real leadership or scriptural oversight. (If he were he would not love preeminence or be self-willed nor would he want the kind of power he now desires). He or she can still, to a great degree control the church by holding it hostage with an ungodly temperament. Other members live with the constant threat of trouble or embarrassment if his demands are not met. Often brethren will meet his demands to avoid the scene he can create.

In a business meeting several options (authorized under generic Scriptural authority) for doing the Lord's work may be discussed. Brethren try to decide which option is the most expedient for this time and place. It is obvious to all present that one method is likely the best choice for them. Obvious to all, that is, except Diotrephes, Jr. He must exercise his power of objection. If the method is not the one he suggested, no telling what he might do or say. He might threaten to go elsewhere. He knows no church likes losing a member. He might just sit back and take verbal pot shots at those who are working the option adopted by the brethren. He might just pout and dare anyone to try to involve him in the work.

A brother may unilaterally decide on a course of action for the church. He may be unable and/or unwilling to reasonably try to persuade the church of the validity of his judgment. He simply tells them what he thinks they ought to do or not do. He usually couples his demand with a threat - either stated or implied.

If something is his idea, then he will work his head off for it. If not, then he finds ways to hinder the work. If brethren want his cooperation and/or avoid trouble, then they had best follow his recommendations. All too often, brethren will give into his demands to avoid the hassle.

A favorite sport of a few brethren is nit-picking. Legitimate constructive criticism, properly discussed with those who can help and be helped, is good. This is not what I am talking about. Capable, but sensitive brethren are discouraged from preaching, teaching, leading singing or some other work that needs doing because of such nit pickers. They know the price they will have to pay. If one does accept a work, he is constantly aware that anything he says or does could be a target for the nitpicker. So, the work of the church is held hostage out a real fear of being picked apart by such characters.

Let us have more **"fellow workers for the truth" (v. 8)** and fewer like Diotrephes who seek attention and power - even if it means controlling the church by pettiness. The Bible does not teach that a congregation should be ruled by majority vote - nor, does it teach that it should be ruled the whims of some sorehead.

by Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

Let us be reminded to pray for those we support who are preaching in other areas of this country and also of the world. Remember to pray for Kyle Bennett in Boston Ma., Matt Hodge in Marshfield, Mo. and Cleveland Reddinger in El Dorado, Ks. Overseas we need to remember, Wilfredo Pelino and Jonathan Sapitula in the Philippines as well as Moses Tivane in Mozambique.

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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10