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LIVING IN FAITH

We begin by considering the inner man. There we will discover how a person is justified, liberated, and truly a Christian. Put another way: We'll understand how a Christian is truly a spiritual, new, and inner man.

First of all we must admit that absolutely no situation in life has any power to produce Christian righteousness or freedom. It also has no power to produce unrighteousness or bondage.

This fact can be demonstrated with a simple argument: What benefit is it to the soul if the body in which it resides is healthy, enjoys political freedom, and lives a

fulfilling life by eating and drinking whatever it likes, and doing whatever it wants? The most un-Christian person addicted to every kind of vice does the same thing.

On the other hand: How is the soul harmed by a body which is diseased, enslaved, and experiences hunger, thirst and every other type of external evil? Even the best Christian who enjoys a clear conscience is forced to deal with such things. It is obvious then that neither of these outward circumstances in life can have anything to do with either the freedom or the bondage of the soul.

If a human body would be clothed with an alb, live in a monastery, busy itself with good works, pray, fast, and

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avoid eating meats—in short, do whatever it can do as a body—such outward acts would not, ultimately, be of spiritual benefit to the soul. Since any non-Christian could do such bodily acts as well, the only result of a dedication to them would be hypocrisy.

The soul will not be injured if the body is clothed in ordinary clothing, lives in an ordinary house, eats an ordinary diet, prays silently, and does none of the things mentioned above. Such things could easily be done by hypocrites. *Something drastically different than such outward actions is needed to justify and free the soul.*

What about theological speculation? Meditation? Other exertions of the soul? Even these are of no spiritual benefit to the soul.

Only one thing is needed for life, justification and Christian freedom: The most holy Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ Himself says: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live” (John 11:25); “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36); “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

The soul can do without anything except the Word of God. Without the Word of God the soul receives absolutely nothing that it needs. With the Word of God the soul is rich and needs nothing else.

The Word of God is life, truth, light, peace, justification, salvation, joy, freedom, wisdom, virtue, grace, glory and everything good. For this reason the prophet, in Psalm 119 as well as in many other places, yearns for and calls upon the Word of God with many groans and sighs.

No expression of the wrath of God is more devastating than a famine of His Word (Amos 8:11).¹ No expression of the favor of God is greater than the sending forth of His Word, as it is written, “He sent out His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction” (Psalm 107:20).

Jesus Christ was sent for no other work than that of the Word. The office of apostle, bishop and the ministry in general was instituted and established for no other reason than the ministry of the Word of God.

Now you might ask at this point: “What is this Word? There are so many ‘Words of God’! What is the use of

this particular Word of God?”

The Word of God, the Apostle Paul explains in Romans 1, is the *Good News of God* about *His Son*, the *Christ*, who became man, suffered, rose, and was *glorified through the Holy Spirit*, the Sanctifier.² When Christ is preached the soul is fed, justified, set free, and saved (if the soul believes such preaching).

Salvation is through the effective use of the Word of God and faith alone. Paul states to the Romans: “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9); “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4); “The righteous shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).

The Word of God cannot be received and revered by any works, but solely by faith. The soul needs the Word of God alone for life and justification. The soul is justified by faith alone and not by works. If the soul could be justified in any other way, it would need neither the Word of God nor faith.

Faith cannot coexist with works. If you believe that you can be justified by the works that you do, faith is of no value to you. If you would do such a thing, it would be like “vacillating between two religions”³: Either worshipping Baal or relying completely upon yourself—a great iniquity according to Job.⁴

Consequently, having come to faith, you learn that everything within you is utterly guilty, sinful, and damnable, as it is written, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23); and also,

“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one” (Romans 3:10-12). When you have understood this, you will know that Christ is necessary for you.

It is Christ who suffered and rose again for you so that by believing in Him, you might by faith become a different person. Being justified by the work of another—namely Christ—all your sins have been forgiven.

Since Christian faith alone can reign in the inner man (as Paul writes in Romans “For with the heart one believes and is justified” (10:10)) and since faith alone justifies, no outward work or labor can justify the inner man. Neither can any outward work free or save the inner man. Works have no relation whatsoever to the inner man.

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Likewise it is only by impiety and unbelief in the heart that the inner man becomes guilty and a servant of sin deserving condemnation. No outer sin or work causes this.

The first concern of every Christian therefore should be to put aside all reliance upon such works. The Christian should strengthen his faith more and more and by it grow not in knowledge of works, but in knowledge of Jesus Christ who suffered and rose again for him. This is what Peter himself teaches (1 Peter 5:10) when he makes no other work than faith a Christian work.⁵

When the Jews asked Jesus what was necessary to do

the works of God, He rejected the works which He knew were the source of their arrogance, and demanded just one thing, saying: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent..." (John 6:29) "...for on Him God the Father has set his seal" (John 6:27).

Obviously, then, a genuine faith in Christ is a matchless treasure which results in universal salvation and preservation from evil, as it is written, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Considering the treasure of the Gospel, Isaiah prophesied "Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth" (Isaiah 10:22-23).

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This is just as if Isaiah had said, "Faith, which is the brief and complete fulfilling of the law, will fill those who believe with such righteousness that they will need nothing else for justification." The Apostle Paul says the same thing: "For with the heart one believes and is justified" (Romans 10:10).

But how can faith alone justify and give us such a fortune of marvelous things without works, when the Scriptures themselves demand a multitude of works, rituals and laws? The answer? First and foremost read what I have already asserted: Faith alone justifies, liberates and saves without works.

¹“Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the Lord God, ‘when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.’”

²Cf. Romans 1:1-4.

³1 Kings 18:21.

⁴“If I have looked at the sun when it shone, or the moon moving in splendor, and my heart has been secretly enticed and my mouth has kissed my hand, this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for I would have been false to God above” Job 31:26-28.

⁵“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”

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1. What warning does Jesus give in *Luke 12:22*?
 2. What is the Christian’s body (*I Corinthians 6:19*)?
 3. What ought the Christian be doing (*I Timothy 4:7,8*)?
 4. What role does food play in the life of the Christian (*I Corinthians 8:8* and *Romans 14:17*)?
 5. What if a non-Christian prepares himself bodily (*Matthew 9:13* and *Hosea 6:6*)?
 6. What two parts comprise the Christian (*II Corinthians 5:8*)?
 7. What does the Word of God do to the Christian (*Romans 10:9,10*, *I Peter 2:2*, and *Job 23:12*)?
 8. How does the psalmist speak of the Word in *Psalms 119:103,105,111,130*?

9. What will the salvation of the Word do (*II Chronicles 36:16*)?
10. Compare *II Chronicles 36:16* to *Romans 15:4*.
11. What does God think of our neglect of His Word (*II Chronicles 36:16*)?
12. What is the connection between Christ and His Word (*John 1:16*)?
13. What is the connection between the prophets and apostles and the Word of Christ (*Deuteronomy 4:10* and *II Corinthians 5:18*)?
14. What is the necessity of Christ (*Galatians 3:22–25* and *Romans 8:1-4, 12-14*)?
15. So how important is a simple Christian faith (*Romans 3:28*)?