

“But Faith Working Through Love”

These words are part of a fuller verse which affirms that in Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision. It was preceded by these words: *“For we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness”* (Gal. 5:5-6).

There is a hope which being made righteous through the faith of Christ brings. This righteousness is not of or through the law (as the apostle has abundantly shown) but it is through the gospel (Rom. 1:16f). It was that righteousness Paul desired that he might be found in Christ and ultimately attain unto the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 2:9-11). The resurrection from the dead and its equivalent, eternal life, is the hope which being made righteous brings.

The righteousness from God by faith is; as the phrase declares, from God, not of ourselves. However, it is conditional: faith on man’s part. Nor is this an inactive faith. It works, acts, just as stated in the text. Faith, working through love. With the words Paul qualifies a familiar passage elsewhere from his writings: *“By grace have ye been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast”* (Eph. 2:8ff).

It is interesting to observe that the scriptures reveal faith to be both a work and works! When Jews questioned Jesus, *“What must we do that we may work the works of God?”* he responded, *“This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he had sent”* (Jn. 6:28f). Those who teach that no works save find themselves embarrassed by God’s word to the contrary. We are not saved by the works of the law nor can we do enough righteous deeds to justify ourselves, but it is a grievous error to assume and teach that one can be saved without any act of obedience. Faith is a work.

And faith must work. Paul remembered *“the work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope”* of the Thessalonians (1 Thes. 1:3). James warns that a faith which does not work is profitless. It cannot save him, nor can it render benefit to those who need his assistance (James 2:14-24). What is a *“work of faith”*? Moses’ return to Egypt from the wilderness was a *“work of faith”*. When he stood before Pharaoh and demonstrated that God had sent him to deliver Israel from bondage, such was a work of faith. When he, along with every other believing Israelite, killed the lamb and puts its blood on the lintels and door posts of their homes, that was a work of faith. When threatened by Pharaoh’s host and commanded by God to lift up his rod to divide the sea, that was the work of faith. When Joshua and Israel marched

around the Jericho's walls, that was a work of faith. When we are buried with Christ in baptism, that is an act of faith. All these items, including baptism, were acts of faith because they were done upon God's instructions to do them.

God's conditions are a test of a faith. But while we may actually execute the instructions, if there is no faith attached, the act is worthless. We may pray but, what is the benefit of such a prayer if it is offered by the doubtful petitioner? *"But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord ..."* (James. 1:5-7). And, we may be baptized but baptism without faith is also worthless. We are buried with Christ *"in baptism wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God"* (Col. 2:12). If a man does not believe Christ to be God's son; baptism is worthless. And if a man does not believe that he is saved after baptism, not before, his baptism is worthless. When a man hears the gospel of Christ and hears him say, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,"* he must believe what Jesus said for his faith to work by love!

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