

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel,
for it is the power of God for salvation
to everyone who believes, to the
Jew first and also to the Greek."

Romans 1:16 ESV



Marietta church of Christ

8150 Driggers St.
Jacksonville, FL 32220

Times of Worship

Sunday:

9 am - Bible Classes / 10 am - Worship / 5 pm - Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm - Bible Study/Worship

Evangelist: Devin Barber

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The Continuity of the Faith

The religious world in general has elevated feelings to the place of prominence in religion. Their concept of salvation begins and ends with man's emotions. And while it would be foolish indeed to say that emotion has no relation at all to religion, it should be noted that emotion is a result, not the cause of salvation. Religion produces emotion; emotion does not produce religion. It is a fact that "in the present condition of christendom, men are more governed by prejudice and animal impulse, than be the clear conclusions of a well regulated mind" (*The Christian*, 1837, Vol. 1, No. 1).

The person who has given careful attention to the Bible realizes that God appeals to the mind. The plan of salvation, or the scheme of redemption, is not like joining a club, or being initiated into some fraternal order. It is the appeal of the Divine to His creatures through communication.

The plan of salvation is a process, a set of mental actions or changes which occur in special order. If you bake a cake and the recipe calls for flour, milk, sugar, and eggs, you don't mess up the order by cooking the eggs before you put them in, do you? Even so, salvation starts at the right place and ends up with the right effect. It is a logical, sequential mental action.

Hearing is the means for understanding. Jesus said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 11.15). In other words, put to work your inherent powers to understand. Just because some doctrine has a “religious ring” does not mean it is from God. We must give attention to the fidelity of the reproduction, “for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Corinthians 14.8).

Just as hearing is the means by which we come to understand, understanding is the means by which we believe. Belief is not a “church” word. It is a mental process we use all the time and with which we form constant connections with the world of unseen things. Belief is the ability to put together facts and the testimony given in support of them, and produce from the process a conviction. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11.1) is not just a definition of faith, but a statement of fact about what it does. “To whom shall we go, Lord? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6.68) not only praises Jesus, it states the necessity of God’s word for salvation. And when Paul says, “so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10.17), he states emphatically that where the word of God has not been heard, there can be no faith. You can readily see what that does to the “wee, small voice” notion regarding salvation.

But the belief of new information produces a result. When a person believes in Christ he has a feeling of guilt about his sin, what the Bible calls “godly sorrow” (2 Corinthians 7.10) or being “pricked” in the heart (Acts 2.36). This sorrow for sin brings about repentance, or the change of a man’s will with regard to sin. It is unthinkable that repentance could possibly precede faith, for how can there be the godly sorrow needed to produce it if the potential convert has not yet heard about Jesus? Notice that in Acts 2.36, the scripture says, “Now when they *heard* this, they were pricked in their hearts.”

Stricken of conscience, deliberate in heart, the man now understands that he is condemned, and is apt to ask the same question as was asked on Pentecost — “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2.37). Baptism is the command given by God. Peter’s statement shows how the process works. “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)” (1 Peter 3.21), or as the New American Standard properly translates, “but an appeal to God for a good conscience.” Acts 3.19 says much the same thing. “Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” See the process? Baptism occupies the same place in the order of 1 Peter 3.21 that “return” (“turn again,” ASV) occupies in Acts 3.19 and the “seasons of refreshing” in Acts 3.19 equals “the appeal to God for a clean conscience” in 1 Peter 3.21. There cannot be any clear conscience, or seasons of refreshing until a man is baptized for the remission of his sins. Compare the emotional outburst by the Ethiopian. When was it? When he believed? No, when he was baptized (Acts 8.39) — or after he had appealed to God for a clean conscience.

The religious world’s desultory suggestions regarding salvation only serve to confuse an already confused populace. No wonder people regard religion suspiciously, especially if they have not “had the feeling” or a “better-felt-than-told” experience. The fact is, salvation is produced in the only way it can be — by an appeal by God to man’s ability to understand and obey. The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1.16). Sure, it speaks of Jesus. It speaks of God’s grace, His mercy, His atonement. But without an appeal to the mind of man to believe on Him and obey His commands, there could be no practical application of God’s grace, no way to illustrate God’s mercy through His son, no process for salvation. Both the ground of salvation and the conditions which make it practical are products of the word of God. And one would be useless without the other.

Written by: Dee Bowman

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