

The Foundation of Godly Faith

Rod Reynolds

According to Scripture faith is essential to salvation. Without faith it's impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Those who have genuinely repented and had their sins remitted are no longer under the death penalty brought about by their sins (Acts 2:38; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 5:10). So such are saved from the second death, but under the condition that they continue to walk in the true faith (Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 10:26-27). Once converted we must continue to overcome, or as Jesus warns we may have our names blotted out of the book of life (Revelation 3:5).

It's a matter of life and death then that we understand the proper foundation for saving faith. What is the foundation of your faith? Is your faith based on what you've always heard or been taught? Is your faith in your own powers of reasoning and rationalization? Is it based on popular opinion, or what others in your circle of influence believe? Is your faith in some personality? Is it in an organization?

Our faith must not be based on confidence in some human personality (other than Jesus Christ), nor a physical organization, nor any other false foundation (Jeremiah 17:5). There were among the Jews of Jesus day some even among the leaders who believed in Jesus. But they were not willing to act on their convictions, because they were more concerned about their status in their synagogue (church), than they were about pleasing God (John 12:42-43). The only proper foundation for godly faith is the word of God (John 12:44-48). Note that Jesus equates belief in him with believing his words.

Jesus commands us to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15). "Believe" is from the Greek πιστεύω (*pisteuo*), a cognate of the word for faith or belief πίστις (*pistis*). And what we are to believe or have faith in, said Jesus, is the gospel, God's word.

Building your life on God's word, actually keeping it, is like building on a foundation of bedrock (Mt. 7:21-29; Luke 6:46-49). Jesus requires us to live by every word of God (Luke 4:4). Christ countered Satan's temptation by applying God's word (note Satan also quoted God's word – Luke 4:10-11 -- misusing it in an attempt to deceive).

The true Church of God consists of those whose names are registered in heaven, not in some Church membership roll on earth (Hebrews 12:23; 2 Timothy 2:19). The true Church of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22). That means it is built on the foundation of God's word, as preserved in the Old and New Testaments.

The true apostles and prophets taught the same word, the same gospel message of salvation -- the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Psalm 22:26-28; 96:2,

10-13; 98:2-9; 103:17-20; 145:1, 8-15, 18-20; 146:1, 7-10; Matthew 10:5-8; Acts 19:8). The message of God's Kingdom is the message of salvation because ultimate salvation depends on the fact of God's power to accomplish his will; on his power to govern his creation and accomplish his purpose, which is the salvation of mankind. Ultimate salvation also requires us to submit to the rule of God, and so to become a part of God's Kingdom (Matthew 7:21; 19:17; Romans 2:4-13; Revelation 21:7-8, 27; 22:14-15).

The word of God, which is the gospel, is centered around the commandments of God. That word and those commandments endure forever. "You are near, O Lord, And all Your commandments are truth. Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever" (Psalm 119:151-152). "Testimonies," (*`edah*) and its more frequent form (*`eduwth*) means that which testifies, or a precept. In the Bible it usually refers to (1) the law of God, especially the ten commandments, or (2) in a broader sense, the revealed word of God. Speaking of the word *`eduwth*, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* says, "This word refers to the Ten Commandments as a solemn divine charge or duty. In particular, it represents those commandments as written on the tablets and existing as a reminder and 'testimony' of Israel's relationship and responsibility to God...." So we see that the testimony of God, his commandments, his word, was founded forever (1 Peter 1:22-25). Note that 1 Peter 1:24-25 (to "and") is quoted from Isaiah 40:6-8. The same word was proclaimed by the prophets and the apostles, and it endures forever.

Those who are a part of God's true Church are sanctified by the word of God (John 17:17; Ephesians 5:25-27; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). God respects those who respect his word (Isaiah 66:2). Our faith is kindled and strengthened by hearing God's word (Romans 10:17). But we must hear God's word with an obedient heart. The Israelites in the wilderness heard the same gospel message as we, but were not willing to obey (Hebrews 3:18-4:2). In our modern age Bibles are more readily available than perhaps at any other time in history, but only a relative few take God's word seriously enough to actually obey it.

A common excuse for disobedience is the idea that God's commandments are obsolete; we don't need to heed them, we have Christ. But the truth is one cannot have a saving relationship with Christ apart from a willingness to keep God's commandments (John 14:23-24; 15:6-7; 6:63; 1 John 2:3-6; James 1:21-25; compare James 2:9-12; Psalm 119:45).

All too often ministers and other would be Bible teachers mishandle God's word (2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:2; 1 Peter 2:7-8; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 3-4, Isaiah 8:20). Ministers are instructed to preach God's word faithfully (Jeremiah 23:28; Titus 1:7-9; 2 Timothy 2:15; 4:2-5, 3:14-17). No prophecy (can apply to doctrine as well as foretelling of future) is of any private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20-21). Yet, it's quite common for self-appointed prophets, apostles, or others claiming to represent God, to put their own private, delusional interpretation on various

prophecies or other Scriptures. And many have been duped into believing such lies.

Another common source of deception is getting only part of the picture, basing a doctrine on a flawed, half-baked understanding of what the whole of Scripture teaches about a subject. The principle of letting the Bible interpret the Bible, alluded to in Isaiah 28:10, is widely acknowledged (if not always followed) among conservative Bible scholars. The *Angus-Green Bible Handbook*, for example, says, "Theology is the whole meaning of Scripture--the sense taught in the whole of Scripture, as that sense is modified, limited, and explained by Scripture itself" (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1952, p. 201). The same source further states, "Compare Scripture with Scripture. It is by the observance of this rule alone that we become sure of the true meaning of particular passages; and, above all, it is by this rule alone that we ascertain the general teaching of Scripture on questions of faith and practice" (p. 195). And, we are told, "...a passage in which an idea is expressed briefly or obscurely is explained by those in which it is fully or clearly revealed; and ... difficult and figurative expressions are explained by such as are proper and obvious" (p. 198). In the introduction to the 1985 Thomas Nelson edition of *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* we find the statement, "It has often been said that the best commentary on Scripture is Scripture itself."

To have a proper foundation for faith then requires careful Bible study, and being on guard against the deceptions of men. It requires us to question not only what we hear from others, but also our own assumptions. We must test both against the whole of Scripture. And it also requires praying for understanding, because God is the source of true wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 2:3-6).

We are warned against departing from God's word (Isaiah 59:12-15; Daniel 9:4-6, 10-14, Philippians 2:12-16; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; James 5:19-20).

Christ commends the Philadelphia Church for keeping God's word (Revelation 3:8). Down through the ages many martyrs have been slain for their faithfulness to the word of God – and this will continue in the years to come (Revelation 6:9; 20:4). Yet, in facing death these triumph, because their faith is built on God's word (Revelation 12:11-12, 17; 14:11-13). Build your faith on the solid foundation of hearing and obeying God's word, so that it will stand through whatever tempests you must endure.

Copyright © 2014 by Rod Reynolds

cogmessenger.org

Unless otherwise noted Scripture taken from the New King James Version™
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.