

“FAITH WORKING BY LOVE”

The story in Luke 7, of the sinner woman who entered Simon’s home while Jesus was there, contains many lessons for us. One such lesson concerns faith. Jesus pronounced her forgiveness (v. 48) yet stated that His forgiveness was because of her faith (v. 50). The context reveals crucial aspects concerning faith that apply to every occurrence of salvation.

We read in Gal. 5:6, that salvation is a result of “...faith working through love.” This means that faith is to be exercised in acts of love. Faith is to be exercised by an alien sinner and by a Christian (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3). James repeatedly spoke of works through which faith is perfected (James 2:18, 20, 22). As we look at this sinner woman, we will see what this means.

Her faith in Jesus’ power to forgive her was shown by her acts of love toward Him. The washing, weeping and anointing of His feet were works of love, not merit. Jesus acknowledged of her, “she loved much” (v. 47). Her love and her faith were both perfected by these works of humility and serving. These acts of love were evidence of two things: 1) her unworthiness because “her sins were many” (v. 47); and, 2) her belief that Jesus was the Son of God, as He claimed (John 5:36).

Jesus came to “call sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17). Her acts of love evidenced her repentance. Her acts of love validated her belief that Jesus would show mercy to sinners by granting forgiveness (Matt. 9:13).

In ‘coming’ to Jesus we will exercise our faith in Jesus’ promise of life abundantly (John 5:40; 10:10). Thereafter, adding to our faith validates our faith in Jesus’ promise that doing so ensures our entrance into the eternal kingdom (2 Peter 1:5-11). That is faith working by love. Pardon is our reward for this acceptance, but pardon does not precede acceptance. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7). * *

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"Transporting the "BIBLE" on a new cart"

Strange title? Perhaps, but consider the ‘usage’ habits of the bible with many a child of God. First, let us review a story from the Old Testament in the days of Samuel. The story comes from 1 Samuel 4:1-11.

“Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek. The Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield. When the people came into

the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies.” So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts who sits above the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. As the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded. When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, “What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?” Then they understood that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp. The Philistines were afraid, for they said, “God has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. Take courage and be men, O Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been slaves to you; therefore, be men and fight.” So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.”

The Israelites thought that the mere presence of the ark would ensure victory. That was NOT how the ark was to be used. The ark represented the presence of God in their midst. But God had told them that He would dwell in their midst and protect them IF THEY FOLLOWED HIS COMMANDS! They vowed repeatedly to do this (cf. Exodus 19:8; 24:3, 7; Deut. 5:27). Yet they did just the opposite (cf. Joshua 1). Disobedience incurred God’s wrath with or without the presence of the ark (cf. Numbers 14:41-45). The ark was not a ‘good luck charm’. In order for the ark’s presence to benefit, the people had to be obedient in their personal lives as well as in their worship.

What about us? How do we “use” our Bible? Do we regard the mere presence of our bible as they did the presence of the ark? Consider a small test in your life to determine if you view your bible as Israel did the ark.

This coming Sunday, after the morning service, leave your bible in the pew. During the evening service, you may use it, but leave it in the pew afterwards until the mid-week assembly. Then during the mid-week assembly, you may use it again. But afterward, leave it in the pew again until the following Sunday.

Now, on this second week (on Sunday), be sure to take your bible home with you after the morning service, but when you get home, either leave it in the car or lay it on the coffee table

until returning to the Sunday evening service. Use it during the evening service, then take it back home with you, but again, leave it in the car or lay it somewhere in the house until the mid-week service. Then take it back to the building with you and use it during the mid-week service, being sure to take it back home with you, but not using it again until the following Sunday.

Now...what is the difference in the first week's routine and the second week's routine? If you're not going to use the bible except when at the church building, why take it with you? Is it a good luck charm that will ward off demons? Will its presence apart from studying it, be of benefit? In truth, IS YOUR BIBLE JUST SOME SORT OF IDOL?

Is this not what the Israelites did with the Ark of the Covenant? The Bible is of no benefit when used in this way. In essence it is being "transported" the wrong way, much as the ark was done in David's day...upon a cart (2 Samuel 6). Such is a misuse, abuse and waste of God's wisdom.

Resolve today to "use" your Bible in the manner that God purposed it...as: "a lamp unto your feet; and a light unto your path." ~ Psalm 119:105 to: "search the scriptures daily..." ~ Acts 17:11 to: "study to show thyself approved unto God..." ~ 2 Tim. 2:15