
Words of Truth

Hebrews 11:6

By: Brian A. Yeager

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Earlier in this letter the point was made that unbelief comes from having an evil heart (Hebrews 3:12). From there, the saints addressed in this letter were reminded that a generation of Israelites failed to enter into the promised land because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:14-4:11; cf. Numbers 13:1-14:38). The importance of faith is obviously being emphasized in this epistle. Throughout the New Testament we see clearly that one cannot please God without faith (Mark 1:14-15, Mark 16:15-16, John 3:12-18, John 3:35-36, John 5:24, Acts 8:4-13, Acts 8:26-39, Romans 1:16-17, Galatians 3:26-29, Ephesians 3:8-12, Colossians 1:23, I Timothy 1:5, Hebrews 10:38, I Peter 1:9, I John 5:4, and I John 5:10). Shouldn't Christians know this? Why did it have to be taught?

When we carefully study through the New Testament we can see that many Jews that were converted to Christ struggled with letting go of the Law of Moses. We can see that they struggled in accepting salvation through faith in Christ opposed to salvation by works of the Law of Moses. Consider the following that was written to those already baptized into Christ (cf. Romans 6:1-6): *“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law”* (Romans 3:24-31). The fact is, the letter to the saints in Rome is full of teaching of faith in Christ over obedience to the Law of Moses (Romans 4:1-5:21 and Romans 7:1-10:21).

This subject matter wasn't just a struggle for the saints in Rome. Many in the churches of Galatia had fallen away by going back to certain points in the Law of Moses (Galatians 1:1-9, Galatians 3:1-5, Galatians 5:1-9, and Galatians 6:11-16). In the epistle to the saints in the area of Galatia we find this: *“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but*

by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified... And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 2:16 and Galatians 3:8-14).

We need to understand that it was not a problem of faith in regard to belief in God the Father. The problem was in the transition to faith in Christ. Thus, the wording “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.” The Jews believed in Jehovah. They struggled to accept the deity of Christ (i.e. John 10:30-33). Therefore, the “he” in Hebrews 11:6 is in reference to Christ. Consider the following: *“Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father” (John 8:22-27).* This is why this letter to the Hebrews starts off by covering the deity of Christ and His authority (Hebrews 1:1-3:6).

Furthermore, the “he” who is the rewarder is Jesus Christ our Lord (Matthew 25:31-46 and II Corinthians 5:7-10). When Peter was teaching Cornelius he said this: *“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead” (Acts 10:38-42).*

Rather than seeking Moses’ law, they needed to diligently seek Christ. Faith in Christ and His words is necessary for salvation. The record of Christ is given for that very reason (John 20:30-31). Therefore, be diligent in the right things (II Peter 1:3-10). Be diligent in living aright so that the reward will be granted unto you by Him in the end (II Peter 3:9-14).