**How Is A Person Justified By Faith?**

If there is one thing the Bible teaches, it is that we are saved or justified by faith. Rom 5:1 and many other passages say we are "justified by faith," but just how are we justified by faith? To answer that question, let's examine Acts 15:9 and Acts 2:38 together. In Acts 15:9 Peter comments that the Gentiles and the Jews on Pentecost were saved the same way – it reads God "put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." So the Jews on the day of Pentecost were justified by faith, but Acts 2:38 details that process as Peter commanded them "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, …." So the way a sinner's heart is purified by faith is by repenting and being baptized for the remission of sins.

You see, a person is saved by faith when he acts upon his faith to do what God said to do to be saved. Obedience to the faith is an essential part of the process. We can see that from texts like I Pet 1:22a which reads "ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth." Faith is certainly essential to the purification of our hearts/souls, but so is obedience to the truth.

The same thing can be seen by the simple illustration of the toppling of the walls of Jericho. Heb 11:30 says "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." Ask yourself this question: Did the walls of Jericho fall by faith? Of course this verse teaches they did. Next question: When did the walls of Jericho fall by faith, when the Israelites first believed God could knock the walls down, or after they walked around those walls thirteen times in seven days? This verse says it was after they obeyed. Even though the text says the walls fell by faith, they didn't fall until the Israelites' faith acted in obedience to God's command to walk.

In Luke 8:43-48 we find the story of the woman who had a issue of blood. When she touched the border of Jesus' garment, she was immediately healed. Jesus commented to her afterwards "thy faith hath made thee whole." So she was healed by faith, but the healing didn't happen right at the moment she had faith that Jesus could heal her, did it? No, she was not healed until her faith caused her to act, to touch Jesus.

It works the same in our salvation. Gal 3:26 reads "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." So there is no doubt we become children of God by faith. But the very next verse says "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." That verse begins with the little word "for" which means "to introduce the reason." So the reason we are children of God by faith is because we have been baptized into Christ. Our faith saved us, but not until our faith acted in obedience to God's command to be baptized.

You'll remember the story in II Kings 5 of Naaman being cleansed of his leprosy. But God didn't cleanse Naaman of his leprosy the moment he believed God had the power to do it. Instead Naaman wasn't cleansed until his faith in God's power led him to do what God said to do to be cleansed. Verse 14 says Naaman "went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Do you see how our faith in God only benefits us when we act upon our faith in obedience to God?

Remember the story in Num 21:5-9 of God sending down fiery snakes to bite the Israelites because of their constant complaining? When the Israelites expressed repentance for their grumbling, God instructed Moses to make a brass serpent, put it up on a pole, and those that would look upon the brass serpent would be healed of their snake bite. And that's exactly what happened. They were healed by faith of course, but not until their faith had acted by looking upon the brass serpent as God directed.

Most preachers say we are saved by faith only, but they don't realize the point we have been making here - that faith only saves when it acts in obedience to God. As James 2:24 says, "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." And that is what all Bible teachers should say.