



Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

Wednesday Nights at 6:30

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

Visit the website ~ www.myaletheia.com

Like us on Facebook (aletheiachristianfellowship) Listen on PodBean (Aletheia Christian Fellowship) Emails: pastor@myaletheia.com, stacey.sundt@myaletheia.com

I) No human can do anything to earn God's approval.

II) The Bible that Salvation is "by Grace alone, through Faith alone, in Christ alone!" To the eternal Glory of God alone.

III) For belief to be Salvifically effective, it must be sufficient, and its sufficiency is measured by demonstrable obedience (Matthew 7:18&20).

GALATIANS 5:13&14 ~ ¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. ¹⁴For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

God called us to freedom from our slavery to sin and here we are commanded by God to use our freedom to enslave ourselves to loving others (I Corinthians 9:19).

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate, or the prayer/suggestion box in the entryway, or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

If Salvation is by His Grace gifted to us, who are inherently unworthy, why command us to try to act worthy? (Romans 6:1&2).

Faith, πιστεύων (pīs-tū-ōn), that is sufficient for Salvation is transformative.

1) Individual.

2) Active.

3) Habitual.

4) Directed.

5) Important

6) Considered.

Repentance, μετανοέω (mě-tā-nō-ě-ō), means to rethink your position.

Full “U-turn” and the aviator’s 1 in 60 rule...

Repentance is Confession in action.

To actually live out the freedom you have in Christ you have to stop being a slave to sin.

Everyone who is a Christian by faith in Jesus has been reborn from above (John 3:3, II Corinthians 5:17, John 13:35, Titus 1:16, etc.).

James wasn’t saying that faith alone wasn’t sufficient to Save, he was saying that faith without evidence is not sufficient Salvific faith.

Works is ἔργον (ěř-gōn). James uses it 15 times in his letter. It is the fulfilment of the nature inherent in thing itself.

The greater our faith in Christ, the greater our conformity to Christ.

It is 100% faith and 0% works, but because its 100% faith we are changed and so, we work as an outworking of who we are in Christ.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

I'm going to say this as clearly and as correctly as I can because this is Biblical Christianity. If you want to know the difference between what God's Word teaches and what passes for Christianity among those who abuse God's Word, this is it...

I) First, there is no possible way that any human being can do anything to earn the slightest bit of God's approval.

You cannot add to His justification of you. You cannot, through your beliefs, words, actions, intrinsic value, or future potential, produce more redemption, more reconciliation, or more regeneration. You cannot make yourself more Saved, or more Loved, or more adopted as a son and heir of Almighty God.

II) Second, it is only by believing God that you can ever be counted righteous before God. Abraham, the father of faith, "believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God's friend." (James 2:23).

Believing God requires that you believe in God, that you recognize Him as God, and that you accept that

He has clearly spoken to you regarding your relationship with Him.

To believe God is to believe what your Heavenly Father has decreed through His prophets and His apostles and ultimately through His Son. It is to believe His Gospel Message where He tells you that all of your standing with Him is the result of His free gift of His Grace.

Further, it is to completely trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh. Trust that He was God made man and as such that He was perfectly righteous in Himself, but instead of taking back His throne in Heaven He allowed the Father to impute the sins of the world upon Him. Your sin in its entirety, as well as my sin in its entirety.

That He paid the cost of rebellion against God for you and for me. That the proof of that reality rests in His bodily Resurrection from the dead. More than five hundred eyewitnesses saw Him after He rose over a 40-day period and many of them died brutal, torturous deaths because they refused to deny that Truth.

It is full trust and entire confidence in the completed work of Jesus on your behalf. Trust that His sacrifice cleansed you from all sin and that His righteousness extends to cover you and make you perfectly righteous in Him.

It is only by faithfully crying out together with the deposit of the indwelling Holy Spirit, that you are God's beloved child. Faithfully agreeing with the Holy Spirit that you are, in fact, accepted as sinless, loved as righteous, and adopted as a son, making you God's very Own, for all eternity, no matter what.

The Bible teaches that it is Salvation "By Grace alone, through Faith alone, in Christ alone!" All to the eternal Glory of God alone.

III) Now here's number 3, in this trinity of Biblical propositions... In order for that belief, trust, faith, to be Salvifically effective (for it to result in Salvation), it must be sufficient, and its sufficiency is measured by demonstrable obedience. By actions, behavior, deeds, and works. Jesus said that "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit... You will know them by their fruit" (Matthew 7:18&20).

That seems somewhat at odds with proposition number one just as many people see a contradiction between the Apostle Paul's Salvation by faith and what they perceive as Salvation by works in James.

For months we have had a steady diet of faith alone excluding any possibility that our actions, or works, has any effect on our righteous standing before God. But we are about to see a shift...

Galatians 5:13&14 ~ 13For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh but serve one another through love. 14For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Quite literally Paul wrote that, from the foundations of the world, God called us to freedom from our slavery to sin, and here, we are now commanded by God, to use our freedom to enslave ourselves to loving others. Take your freedom in Christ and use it to enslave yourself to love. That's what the word "serve" means as it is more easily seen in I Corinthians 9:19, where Paul says, that he is

completely free, but makes himself a slave to all people in order to win more of them to Christ. He enslaves himself to love for others allowing Christ to minister love through him to others. This is the Christian call.

To enslave yourself thusly is a command here. It is a command to obey Jesus' singular command that He left us. "Love one another" (John 13:34, etc.). Why a command to obey if we are already perfectly righteous in Christ? If Salvation is by His Grace gifted to us, who are inherently unworthy, why command us to try to act worthy?

In fact, if it is to God's eternal glory that He Saves those of us who do not merit His Salvation, wouldn't being even less worthy make His mercy even greater? Wouldn't it follow that the worse we sin the more He forgives making Him even more magnanimous? Why would I wash someone else's stinky feet if ignoring their need only made God's acceptance of me more incredible?

Paul answers this very concept in Romans 6:1&2, "Should we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? Far from it! (μὴ γένοιτο {mā gě-noy-tō}),

may it never be! Negative Ghost Rider! Are you insane?!) How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” It’s nonsensical to act contrary to who you are. It’s like a pig desperately trying to fly.

Let me explain... Faith that is sufficient for Salvation is transformative. If you have faith that I will eventually shut up today you will stay longer than you would if you had faith that I would not shut up... transforming your attitude and therefore your behavior. The word for belief, or faith, in the Bible is usually πιστεύων (pĭs-tü-ōn). It’s a verbal participle used repeatedly by God in His Holy Word to describe a person who Salvifically believes.

1) The very word itself means that your believing is individual – personal. No one can believe for you; you’ve got to do that for yourself.

2) It means that your believing is active, not passive. The activity of such believing will be observable externally. It will have an effect. 3) It means that your believing is continuous or habitual as an expression of who you are because of what you hold to be True.

4) It means that your believing is objective, not subjective. There is a firm foundation to your belief, and He is the focus of your belief. 5) It means that your believing is intense, important, serious, and non-negotiable. 6) It means that your believing is evidentiary. It is a well-considered choice to believe based upon the evidence that you find compelling.

It should be obvious that the “believing” that the Bible describes as sufficient for Salvation, so salvific believing, creates a fundamental shift or change within such a person. Again, their perspective is altered by the nature of their faith. It is personal enough, active enough, integrated enough, objective enough, strong enough, compelling enough, that their attitude is altogether different and from their attitude flows their behavior. No one can believe sufficiently in Christ as their Lord and Savior without that belief changing them.

To be clear, this faith is a work of God, it is wrought by Him from start to finish within each of us as the Holy Spirit encourages our belief. In other words, it is God Who calls to us first. It is God Who Loves us first. The external change reflecting the internal change comes not by manufacturing good deeds,

but by yielding to the work of God within us. More on that in a minute.

As a side note, to answer the question some of you may be asking right now, the exact nature of God's Sovereign work in calling us to Himself and our individual, personal, response in belief to His call is a mystery.

What I can tell you for sure, is that from God's perspective it was decided before He spoke the universe into existence. In fact, God is already enjoying the Great Wedding Feast in Heaven with all of His children right now... From His perspective. From our perspective, it is all about our free will choice that we make based upon the evidence that the Holy Spirit's enables us to see and accept.

However you want to think about that, what I can also say with certainty, is that the more you focus on your part in the equation, the less you can focus on God's part. That seems like a bad plan to me, so personally, I choose to ignore my faith and concentrate on His faithfulness.

Whatever the particulars, a person even slightly open to the Holy Spirit, will eventually recognize that their course in life is deviating from a direct path to Christ by the exact degree that they are still acting as the god of their universe.

Obviously, an unsaved person functions entirely as their own god and so their path is in the opposite direction from God. They need to make a complete “U-turn” to be headed towards God.

It is called repentance, μετανοέω (mĕ-tă-nŏ-ĕ-ō), meaning to rethink your position. It is to have a change of thinking or perspective. It is realizing that a 180-degree reversal of course is required. After walking directly away from God, the person executes a “U-turn” and begins walking directly toward God.

Please realize that we Christians have turned around, but we then get distracted, and we fail to fly the heading directly to Jesus. The aviator’s 1 in 60 rule is that headings are broken into 360 degrees. If your heading is off by only 1 degree, in 60 miles you will be off course by 1 full mile laterally. Daily repentance is necessary for even the most mature

Christians. Hopefully, it's just a fine tuning of your heading.

Part and parcel to any legitimate repentance is a confession. Confession in action, is repentance. When you turn around on the road leading to sin, death, and the grave and travel towards the Lord, the Light, and the Life, you prove that you confess that the first direction was wrong and that the second direction is right.

When you seek God for Who He is, on His terms, you are actively confessing, negatively that you were wrong and positively that God is right.

To make repentance more intentional, and so, to better grasp it, and so, to more fully embrace it, your confession, both positive and negative, should be detailed, accurate, and public.

The more open you are about the negative aspects of your life the more able you are to embrace the positive work of God in you... Because the more open you are about the negative aspects of your life the less those negative aspects can hold you hostage. The more you hide your sin, past or

present, the more power you give it as your slave master, and therefore the less you are able to embrace God's forgiveness for those sins.

To actually live out the freedom you have in Christ you have to stop being a slave to sin. All sin that is secret is sin that is your slave master still.

Is that an issue for you? Well, according to the Bible, the less forgiving you are of others the less of God's forgiveness that you have embraced for yourself. The reason that you are still enslaved to your sin is that you have not come to terms with it. At least not in a detailed, accurate, and public way.

I'm going to leave this topic for today because you probably need to think about it a bit and I don't want to stray too far from the focus of our passage, but know this... It is impossible to blackmail someone who has absolutely no secrets. Satan cannot control you with your guilt-driven fear if everything is already in the Light.

God can handle it all, so always be completely honest with Him. That's not for His benefit, but yours. He already knows all the details, but

oftentimes you don't. Be entirely open and honest with God, keeping nothing back at all.

When it comes to other humans, I can tell you two things... First, the more transparent you are, the freer you are. And second, even those closest to you will struggle with your openness.

Most of them will be horrified, not because they are actually horrified by you, but because they are horrified to look that deeply into themselves.

Back to our conundrum of the first and third propositions of Grace and works... No person can be a Christian because of their Christlike lifestyle. At the same time though, no person can be a Christian apart from a Christlike lifestyle. What does it mean and how do we proceed?

Fundamentally, everyone who is a Christian by faith in Jesus, has been, according to Him, "Born Again," or "Born from Above" (John 3:3, etc.). As the Bible declares, "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (II Corinthians 5:17NLT).

We declare the Bible false and God a liar if we say that a person can be a Spirit-filled Child of Heaven without an inward transformation that will inevitably become apparent externally. You will know them by their fruits which is the same as Jesus' declaration that "the way all people will know that we are His disciples is by our love for each other" (John 13:35).

It is not possible that a person can be Saved and still entirely think like an unsaved person. It is a travesty, a sham, and a mockery – it is a travesty-sham-mockery – to claim Christ while denying His power to change you.

God tells us in Titus 1:16 that there are people who claim to know Him and yet, by their deeds, they deny Him... How exactly? They do not obey His command to love, which is His command to be like Christ, which is the command to actively yield to the Holy Spirit in renewing your mind.

Only God can change a human heart, only God can change your heart from stone to flesh and He does that by changing your mind. Everything begins with what you think... with what you believe.

Praxis follows principle, is a fancy way of saying we do, who we are, and who we are, is determined solely by what we believe. Take a person who does not believe in a personal relationship with God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and trust me such a person has no personal relationship with God and their lifestyle will absolutely reflect that deeply held belief. Conversely, we have a person who sincerely believes in a personal relationship with God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and that person does have such a relationship and because of that it will show in how they operate.

The message in James is in perfect harmony with that of Galatians where James rhetorically asks, 14What use is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? What people misunderstand is that James wasn't saying that faith alone wasn't sufficient to Save, he was saying faith without evidence, without fruits, without works, is not sufficient Salvific faith.

He makes that clear as he goes on, 15If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,

16and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?
 17In the same way, faith also, if it has no works, is dead. It is useless as it is insufficiently real enough to produce change.

James makes his point crystal clear in the next verse, I will show you my faith by my works. He agrees that it is faith alone but demonstrates that such sufficient faith cannot exist without physical evidence of its existence. Works is ἔργον (ěř-gǒn), from which we derive our word energy. James uses it 15 times in his short letter.

Both Randy and I are teaching through the Book of Revelation on Wednesday nights. What’s striking is that Jesus, in directly addressing the Seven Churches, uses the word ἔργον (ěř-gǒn), works or deeds twelve times in two chapters. “I know your deeds.” Jesus repeatedly states.

What gives? Where’s the free Grace now? ἔργον, like the word Agapê, and many others, was developed by Greek philosophers to define a philosophical ideal

While in general, it simply means to expend energy, and so, to take action, to work, to perform, do, or act. More ideally, it is to engage in beneficial, purposeful, or useful, activity, as opposed to doing useless busywork, or worse, doing nothing at all.

The word began in the philosophy of Hesiodus who was the contemporary of Homer in the mid-eighth century B.C. 350 years later Plato, and then his student, Aristotle, refined Hesiodus' work, pun intended. To the ancient Greek philosophers, the ideal of ἔργον was someone, or something, fulfilling their God-ordained purpose.

It is the basis for the meaning of life – to accomplish what you were created to do, what you were put on earth to accomplish. For Aristotle, ἔργον was the fulfilment of the nature inherent in thing itself. Ultimately, it was to act with entire integrity as to who and what you are.

Aristotle's example was a magnificently sleek and powerful race horse. When that horse runs the race, giving it all that it has from its heart, it is fulfilling the purpose that God created for it to accomplish. It is

acting perfectly in concert with what the horse is. Anything other than that is not only a waste, it is a lie.

Hopefully, you can see that everything begins in the mind, and so, only when we understand who we truly are in Christ can we act in perfect concert with what we were created and predestined by Him to be.

The Holy Spirit transforms us instantly in a forensic sense and then He sets about renewing our mind so that we can understand that what we are spiritually is not what we seem to be physically.

Now, don't get me wrong, we are not Gnostics. Christianity isn't about gaining special knowledge that will Save you, it is about Jesus Who has already Saved us, but we enter that status and grow in that reality as our human mind believes in Him more.

The greater our faith in Christ as encouraged and enabled by the Holy Spirit the greater our conformity to Christ and His lifestyle. Christian growth and

maturity are easily measured by how much a person loves God and loves the church and loves the lost.

Love is not a theoretical, it is either real or it is not and either way there will be physical evidence to show that. Just as James wrote... False love is saying to a person without the basic necessities of food and clothing, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," I'll pray for you. Actual love is when you give that person what you can to help them.

Here's the most important bit for today. When we think about Salvation as an unmerited and unmeritable Gift in Christ on the one hand and then think about the absolute necessity to be conformed to Christ as evidenced by an actual evolution in our lifestyle on the other hand, it can get confusing.

There is a tendency to err too far in one direction or the other, becoming either far too legalistic or far too libertine. Because of that, some people settle upon the idea that it is supposed to be a tension between the two. That there is some middle ground that we are supposed to walk.

No, my dear friends, no that's not it at all – it is 100% faith and 0% works, but because it is 100% faith we are changed, and our lifestyle follows in accordance with that change, and so it becomes 100% works in keeping with who we are, and for what we were created to do.

I'll let you ruminate on that for a while as you take your freedom in Christ and use it to enslave yourself to love. Shackle yourself to Christ, allowing Him to fill your to overflowing with love for God, love for the church, and love for the lost. That is the work.