

and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of our evil will." (Jeremiah 18:11b-12)

Who said we have no part to play in our salvation? Martin Luther did. The Bible certainly *did not!* It's a tradition within Reformist theology that has been lifted to the level of indisputable doctrine. Luther's conclusion is disputable and is easily refuted!

Most evangelicals accept Luther's scheme of salvation by faith alone as gospel. In order to fully support the doctrine, one must remove large portions of the New Testament that contradict Luther's conclusions. Faith does not nullify Scripture. Nullifying scripture is not an act of faith no matter who does it, whether Luther or Calvin or any of us.

We have a role in our salvation. Getting to Heaven is not easy. We should not relax about it.

Asbury Commentary on Philippians 2:12:

This is a call to perseverance, which requires human cooperation. "Here is our duty," says [John] Wesley. This is to be done because "**it is God who works in you,**" to which Wesley responds, "Here is our encouragement." That there is paradox in perseverance is obvious. Salvation is ultimately the work of God's grace; but his grace is effective in salvation only as we "trust and obey."

Prayer List:

Healing: Tatyana's daughter Olga, Jerry Robinson's daughter Christie, Mike Cavasos, Sandy Cavasos, Ben Atchley, Faye Atchley, Nicolas Self, Annie Self, Douglas and Jonda Gardner, Brandon (Gerry Clark's grandson), Inez' son Lee, Dave Morse, Richard Tuey.

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Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

24 February 2013

Sermon Topics
A.M.: God Knows Best!
Matthew 26:36-46
P.M.: To Us A Child is Born
Isaiah 9:1-21

Pulpit Evangelist
Ken Knowlton: 428-5974

Elders
Ben Atchley: 428-2246
Greg Briggs: 428-8756
John Cunningham: 428-0895

Services

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

Getting to Heaven is Not Easy

By Neil Short

When I study the Scriptures I draw doctrinal conclusions. As I study further, I sometimes encounter more Scriptures that contradict my earlier conclusions. When that happens, I cannot treat my earlier conclusions as if they are somehow on the level of inspired prophecy and unchangeable. I must be ready to think about the several Scriptures and adjust my conclusions; then, the Scriptures will be my schoolmaster (and not the other way around).

The great reformer Martin Luther had one of those moments and he did not handle it very well. He encountered scripture that contradicted what he had been preaching and rather than adjust his theology he chose to disregard and even abandon the disagreeable Scriptures.

I imagine Luther studied Romans 4 and 5 and concluded that

salvation is an easy thing. All action is God's and no role at all belongs to the man. This conclusion is enhanced by passages in John and Paul, such as John 3:16 and Romans 10:9-10. Paul wrote,

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9, NRSV)

The problem is, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Hebrews and James teach that salvation is not easy. It is hard.

Luther did not work into his faith-only doctrine the teachings of these other New Testament writers. Instead, he moved to disregard them altogether.

Luther wrote:

If I had to do without one or the other, — either the works or preaching of Christ, — I would rather do without His works than His preaching; for the works do not help me, but His words give life, as He Himself says. Now John writes very little about the works of Christ, but very much about His preaching, while the other Evangelists write much of His works and little of His preaching; therefore John's Gospel is the one, tender, true chief Gospel, far, far to be preferred to the other three and placed high above them. So, too, the Epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter far surpass the other three Gospels, — Matthew, Mark and Luke.

In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially Romans, Galatians and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first Epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that it is necessary and good for you to know, even though you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore St. James' Epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to them; for it has nothing of the nature of the Gospel about it.

- Prefaces to the Books of the Bible – 1522-1545.

http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/NEW1luther_f8.htm

In other words, Paul and John clearly (!) teach that salvation is by faith and faith alone. And, according to Luther, any contingent action by a man contradicts the "alone" part of "faith alone." Matthew, Mark, Luke and James focus too much on works and they treat works as necessary. Therefore, don't pay any attention to those writers, says Luther. Whom should we heed? the new testament writer James, or the reformer Luther?

(Incidentally, Matthew presents far more preaching of Christ than

does John).

What was Luther's problem with these writers? His criticism of Hebrews was that it "forbids to sinners repentance after baptism." That was enough to throw the whole epistle into doubt. His real problem with Hebrews was probably chapters 11 and 12. There are many scriptures that teach us salvation is hard: Matthew 7:13-14; 18:8-9; Mark 4:24-25; 16:16; Luke 9:62. Luther's trouble with James is obvious.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you (James 2:14)?

So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead (17).

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder (19).

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone (24).

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead (26).

Luther misread Paul. Paul, James, John and the other Gospel writers are in agreement. It was Paul who wrote Romans 6 (right after the popular 4th and 5th chapters). He wrote Philippians 3:7-14 which speaks of the resurrection from the dead to be something for which to work very hard. He also wrote Philippians 2:12:

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling[.]

Even John emphasized the need for obedience. "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them" (John 14:21).

We have become very comfortable in our delusion that God handles everything. It's the perfect stress reliever. "God. I give you all my problems." Wow. That's sure a load-off. On the extreme Calvinist side, the view is that there is nothing I can do to forfeit my salvation. I can work towards righteousness or I can binge on sin. It makes no difference. If we aren't saved we aren't saved. If we are, we are.

Thus says the Lord: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings. But they say, "It is no use! We will follow our own plans,