

June 1999 The Nature of Faith

by Aaron Greenway

As time goes on, it seems the term “Christian” has progressively become more ambiguous. What do I mean by this? Many in the church today seem to fall into two camps: the Radical, and the Carnal. The term “carnal Christian” is not to be found anywhere in Scripture, yet so many use it. This term is nothing more than the biggest oxymoron in the history of the church.

A brother in Christ, down at Texas A&M, when confronting a group of “Christians” about their immoral lifestyle (fornication), was responded to with “Everyone sins!” Much of the church today is marked by infidelity, divorce, pornography, backbiting, foul language, obscenities, stalking, debauchery, and a continual feeding on media (MTV, Rated R movies, Playboy, suggestive music, Soap Operas, etc.) that promote these things. There is no commitment, no surrender, no humility, no brokenness, and no regard for the things of God, much less a conscience. Believe it or not, some of them are in seminary. But because at some point, they said a prayer or made a profession of faith in Christ, no one, therefore asks any questions about the genuineness of their “experience.”

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In II Corinthians chapter thirteen, Paul says to “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves...” Jesus also said in Matthew 7:17-20, “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and THROWN INTO THE FIRE . Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.” (*all caps added*)

There is absolutely no assurance for people who practice unrighteousness. I John 3:10, “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.” John made statements like these as the basis for I John 5:13, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life...”

The cheap faith that I have spoken of has its roots in modern day evangelism. Many evangelical styles are devoid of any kind of Biblical substance. Salvation, in Scripture, was not marked by “walking an isle,” or “asking Jesus to come into our hearts,” or even “to make a decision for Christ.” Biblical faith is marked by the realization (by the conviction of the Holy Spirit) of our sin in the presence of a holy and angry God who doesn’t initially have any “wonderful plan for [our] life” except to send us straight to hell. Upon this revelation of our sin, we then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, come running to Jesus in humility, surrender, and submission. Someone who comes to Christ with their arrogance has not been convicted of their sin and therefore is not ripe for the free gift of salvation.

The gospel does not consist of Jesus as the cosmic genie, or God as a lovey-duvey Teddy Bear in the sky. It is not the latest gimmick. The gospel is not a conformity to the world's system. Jesus Christ demands commitment and a turning from (repentance) our old life to new life in Him.

This does not mean we are saved by works, but we are saved by a reckless abandon to Christ, seeing we are under the judgment of a Holy God. This is the mark of true, genuine faith. No wonder there are so many “Christians” out there with a half hearted faith, who bear no fruit. And why not... when they are given a cheap gospel.

Now, let’s take a trip to Littleton, Colorado. I do not need to review the circumstances of what happened over a month ago, but I want to tell you about a seventeen year old girl named Cassie Bernall. Two years ago, Cassie was involved in witchcraft, living in total rebellion against her parents and against God. When the Lord saved her, her life was radically changed. She became a woman of the Word, a passionate seeker of the Lord. And when she was asked, “Are you a Christian?” her response was “Yes, I love Jesus!” The rest is history. This girl’s faith was not cheap. It was not half hearted. Her faith was real. She was someone who knew God and everyone was aware of it... including the gunman.

Ironically, a youth pastor from a well known church in Chicago recently wrote about the incident, indicating that Cassie should have denied her faith in Jesus because he believed it was

not God's will for her to die. He said to someone in his youth group, "I sat down and told her that God wouldn't require her to sacrifice her life in that way. The Bible says not to deny God, but it's not talking about cases like this with a gunman bearing down on you. God knows what's in a person's heart." (Source: *Dallas Morning News*).

Then what CASE is the Bible referring to, sir??

A brother in Christ, in Colorado, wrote a friend of mine, in response to the article, with these words, "Stupid man-exalting, man-centered reasoning. That is not the advice that Christ gave to the persecuted church in Rev. 2:10, is it? Faithful unto death is the perspective He gives. I think you are right about a warped view of God. I would also attribute it to tickling men's ears, and that will continue to be more of the case as our country marches forward."

This is what American Christianity has come to... "peaches 'n creme" religion, "strawberry shortcake" faith. It seems that if you want money, fame, and a free ticket to carnality with no condemnation, then Jesus is the way. This is not the gospel of the Scripture and it is therefore not the gospel we should believe!

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace?

Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness. But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin yet you obeyed from the heart... What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"

— Romans 6:15-17, 21-23

It is about time that we are real with God, that we be real for Jesus. He went all the way to the cross, knowing the pain and realizing the shame He would endure. He was brutally beaten. He

was mocked and spit upon! — All so you and I could have eternal life.

Do we then have any business holding anything from Him?