

Grace and Paul's Conversion, No. 3

Single Factors

We can find prooftexts that attribute salvation to various single factors such as faith, repentance, calling on the Lord, confession, baptism, works, and doing the will of the Father. Are we left to choose the factor which appeals to us, fortifying it with prooftexts, while disregarding the others? No, for they are all involved in our reconciliation with God through the principle of grace through faith.

When an inspired writer emphasizes a single factor, he is using a common linguistic device called a *metonymy*. In the metonymy one part may be used for the whole. Consider these illustrations. If you say your life was saved by the quick response of the paramedics, you are including all their remedial activities. When we make a chocolate cake, we do not protest the necessity of other ingredients like flour, sugar, and eggs. All other ingredients are necessary prerequisites to creating a chocolate cake. Jesus explained that his Golden Rule “is the law and the prophets” in letting a part represent the whole. Also, in the beloved Golden Text of the Bible, John 3:16, when Jesus specified “*whoever believes*,” he was including all the responsive action that is involved in living faith.

Surely, Jesus was not referring to dead faith — faith without works (James 2:18-26). Even so, inspired writers may attribute our righteousness to the single or few factors being discussed as in Romans 10. Paul uses this device in answering the jailer's cry, “*Men, what must I do to be saved?*” with “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household*,” yet Paul then taught them the more inclusive word of the Lord and baptized them the same hour of the night. (Acts 16:30f).

It is a marvel to me that students of the Word will quote Paul in declaring, “*Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved*” (Rom. 10:13) without relating it to Acts 22:16 where Saul was told, “*Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name*.” In his epistle in later years Paul is not indicating that he was freed from his guilt on the Damascus road when he called out to the Lord nor at any other time simply by calling out in something akin to “the sinner's prayer.” The “calling on his name” is inclusive of his whole conversion process.

“*Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not what I tell you?*” Jesus chided (Lk. 6:46). Again, “*Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven*” (Matt. 7:21). To call upon the name of the Lord involves more than crying out to him in prayer.

What, then, does it mean to call on his name? The *name* denotes, not some proper name like *Jesus*, but the *person or authority of that person*. To do something *in the name of a person*

means to do it *by the authority of or in behalf of* that person. When Saul was baptized to wash away his sins, he was doing that *by the authority of* the Lord as he was directed to do through Ananias. In this procedure he was not only acknowledging the authority of Jesus but also the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Just before his ascension, “*Jesus came and said to them, ‘All **authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to **me**. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the **name** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age’*” (Matt. 28:18-20).

These considerations interpret Paul’s “***every one who calls***” in relation to his own account of his conversion directed by Ananias. They are in harmony with Jesus’ Great Commission. There is harmony with the conversion of the first converts on Pentecost when Peter told that great gathering, “*Whoever **calls** on the name of the Lord shall be saved,*” and then instructed convicted men, “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:21, 38).

Do we not compromise our integrity as interpreters when we dissociate Paul’s teaching from his own related conversion experience, from the very words of Jesus, and from the instructions of Peter on Pentecost to whom Jesus had given the authoritative keys of the kingdom? So, in view of these considerations, what does it mean to call upon the name of the Lord? You are accountable to God for the answer you give sinners.

Holy Spirit

When Ananias laid his hands on Saul, he received the Holy Spirit. The visible manifestations of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as depicted in Acts were not for the purpose of saving individuals or showing how or when salvation is given. Let it be stated again: There is no record of the Holy Spirit saving a person or even telling an individual what to do to be saved. Luke was not explaining the full work of the Spirit that Jesus had promised. What, then, was Luke explaining?

Please consider this. The Roman Empire frowned upon new religions among its subjugated provinces while allowing free practice of their traditional national religions. Thus, Judaism was permitted. But here were the *Christianos* spreading from the Jews but with the disfavor of Jewish leaders. They were becoming the target of persecution. Luke was writing Theophilus, evidently a Roman official, not so much to convert him to Christ, but to assure him that Christianity was the true Judaism which was no longer just nationalistic but worldwide in its thrust. This was attested by the Holy Spirit being given to Jewish apostles. Then others, like the Samaritans who were sort of *Jewish cousins*, Cornelius who was a Roman, Saul who was to be an apostle to the Gentiles, and converts to the teachings of John the Baptist were attested as being in harmony with the Jewish apostles. Thus the Holy Spirit was demonstrating God’s acceptance of persons of different races and cultures in one body of disciples of Jesus. This would indicate that Christians were the true Israel and that Christianity was the “national” religion approved by God through the Spirit. Such status should relieve them of persecution in their spread into the Roman Empire.

All converts since Pentecost had received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit at the time of their baptism, but only a few received visible manifestations as proof to onlookers. The visible manifestation was given in those five instances mentioned above — to some before baptism in water and to some afterward — to indicate God’s inclusion of them in the “all nations” scope of his kingdom. Those visible manifestations were neither the cause of the remitting of their sins nor the result of their having received their forgiveness.

More to follow. []

(Cecil Hook; December 2006)