

# OBJECTIVE FAITH

By

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*“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”* (Mark 16:16)

There are two ways of seeking the knowledge of God’s will. The popular method is the subjective approach, where man seeks inside himself for some clue that might indicate the leading of God. In this way a person simply acts out what he feels led to do.

The other method is the objective approach, where man seeks outside of himself, finding out, first of all, what God has revealed and what He requires” In. this way a person acts in response to God’s law rather than to subjective feeling.

God has not left us at the whim of naked conscience. He has not left us to search through trial and error and in pragmatic situations until we find His will. Instead He has given us the revelation of His will through inspired writers of the Bible. This is the whole purpose of Biblical writings, not merely to give us a history to satisfy our curious interests, but to reveal Himself and His purposes, and how we as His creatures may fulfill those purposes. The sin of Adam was to ignore the expressed will of God – the word God spoke – and seek experimentally to find out about life. Satan’s approach was the subjective one: “You shall not surely die”, he said, contradicting the plain statement of God. “You shall be as God knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4-5). What he meant was, “Do not heed the expressed Word of God. Act upon your feelings. Experience things yourself; then you will be acting like God, deciding good and evil for yourself, by experience.” It was a great experience, all right, but it cost them dearly. Ultimately they lost the life supplied by God.

The Old Testament history is one of objectivism versus subjectivism. God set forth the facts and expressed His will. Obviously the keeping of a command would be the fulfillment of God’s purpose, so that anyone seeking His will could know that he was doing it by obeying. But the history is filled with the rejection of God’s commands. “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). That is, each man “felt” what he did was right- with no regard for the expressed will of God.

Belief requires an object. One may make up his own object and believe in it with all his heart. That’s subjective faith. Christian belief requires that one believe in that which is set forth as fact by Christ and the apostles. That’s objective faith.

## **THE GOSPEL**

The Gospel, which one must believe to be saved, consists of the facts of Christ’s death and resurrection and what is accomplished thereby. In addition to the “Gospel” facts there are the express statements about the eternal state in which God’s people shall live in the

new creation under perfect circumstances where they reflect God's image and abide in His will.

The obvious reason for God revealing all of this is so that man might consider what God desires and either align himself with that Divine purpose or reject it. This is objective faith, to believe in and commit ourselves to the purpose God has revealed. It is to ask, "Do I really want the life that God designs? Do I want to be disciplined and chastened and transformed through many tribulations and painful trials in order to become what God wants me to be? Do I want to obey the commands which are ridiculous in the eyes of men? Do I want to be considered a citizen of a heavenly kingdom and at enmity with the popular and acceptable of this world? (Phil 3:20, Heb. 12:7-8, 1 John 2:15)

The preaching of the gospel is to set forth the truth of Christ in order that men might believe it. This truth involved (1) the doctrine of sin, that man is a sinner and as such will perish because he does not fulfill the purpose of God; (2) that Christ paid the penalty for man's sin by undergoing the judgmental death in the believer's stead; (3) that He arose from the dead, demonstrating that the saints will be restored to life by resurrection from death; and (4) that He ascended to the throne of power and thus has power to bring to fulfillment His purpose for each Christian.

These facts were not learned through man's subjective search inside himself, but were revealed by Christ. They are true, no matter how men feel about them. Objective faith is to believe them, in spite of how one feels. It is to obey when feelings would lead us on another course.

### **ASSURANCE**

With relation to the action of God, objective faith is to believe in something God has done, in sending Christ to die and rise again from death. With relation to God's feeling toward us, objective faith is to believe in something God has said.

We can know the mind of God only as God reveals it and that only by His word. We cannot understand God's mind by how WE feel, or by what WE experience. One may be struck dumb with awe as he considers the handiwork of God in the heavens, but such majestic glory says nothing to him about whether or not he is forgiven of sin. In fact it is likely to make him more aware of his weak and sinful nature than ever.

Forgiveness takes place in the mind of God, not in us. If I step on your toe, I have offended you, and any forgiveness must take place in your mind, not in my own. Should I obtain a "feeling" that it is all right, since I didn't mean any harm, and therefore conclude that I am forgiven, it would not change your feeling toward me nor effect forgiveness on your part. I might convince myself that I am forgiven and that we are on good terms because I have such an emotional feeling about it all, when in reality you might be quite angry with me, and justifiably so. The forgiveness must come from you. It must take place in your own mind, not in mine. The only assurance of forgiveness I could have would be for you to tell me that you had forgiven me.

Sin is against God. We may work up a feeling, as Johnny Cash says in a popular song, “I’m working on a feeling”, but in the Day of Judgment we might find that God doesn’t share that feeling at all, and we will stand condemned. “Vengeance belongs to me, said the Lord. I will repay.”

It is our responsibility to learn what God requires, not to “become as God, knowing good and evil”, deciding for ourselves and by our experiences and feelings whether or not God has forgiven us. Faith is to believe, not only what God has done about sin, but what He says about our forgiveness. Assurance is ours, not on the basis of what we feel about it, but on the basis of God’s promise. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” This is about as clear as language could make it. Many have misunderstood this, and object to it, saying that it is adding our works to God’s grace. But baptism is no more a “work” than is faith. We are not saved by Grace *plus* baptism, any more than we are saved by grace *plus* faith. Baptism does nothing to save us. The salvation is effected by Christ in His death. Baptism is the application of that death to the believer. “All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death” (Rom. 6:3), and “he that has died is justified from sin” (Rom. 6:7). God promises to save us when we are baptized. So we believe this. This is objective faith in God. If we refuse to believe it, it is a failure of faith on our part, for to believe is to believe God will do what He says He will do: save us when we believe and are baptized. To believe this is not to rely on our works or on our feelings, or on anything about ourselves, but to place faith solely and completely upon what God does and says. This is the ground of our assurance that God keeps his word, and our sins are remitted when He said they would be, when we believe and are baptized unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

This kind of faith takes God at His word, that He reveals His mind and means it. How else can we know that we are forgiven? The forgiveness is in God’s mind. No amount of feeling, no amount of weeping, repenting, nor the deepest traumatic experience can assure us of what God thinks about us. All of that is in ourselves. It is what God says that counts. And when we have the assurance from Him, then comes the feeling of joy, of release from guilt, and the experience of “peace and joy in believing” (Rom.15:13).

Objective faith takes in the sovereignty of God, that “power belongs to God”, and that “to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them who are called according to His purpose” (Rom.8:28). Instead of holding séances (called prayer groups by the subjective sect) to try to get an inside track on all the events of tomorrow, the Christian has faith that God is in control of tomorrow as well as today, and that He “works all things after the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11). The believer does not have to know the details of the future in order to go contentedly about his daily work. He is not anxious about tomorrow, for God has promised to provide as He sees the need. This is a feeling of great comfort, based not upon the feeling itself, but upon the promise of God and His own word that He is in control.

Objective faith is comprehensive: it reaches back to the creation and forward to the ultimate and eternal goal. Christ has “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). Demonstrating by His own resurrection that His chosen – all

Christians – shall rise to immortality and be like Him in the glorified body forever. This is not because of an inward grace felt in one’s heart, but because of the grace that made Jesus the substitute dier for us, so that we are cleansed from sin. Since the sin-penalty is paid, we can have life in the day that Jesus gives immortality to believers.

This is the objective hope, and the purpose of it all, that man should not perish, but have everlasting life. The apostles saw Christ raised from the dead. It was not a subject feeling that motivated them to preach the resurrection in the face of bitter persecution and hatred from the Jews who stoned them, jailed them, and tried to stamp them out. It was not a feeling, but a fact. It was objective truth which they believed and which they have revealed in the New Testament letters.

Before His death, Jesus took a cup of wine and said, “This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many unto the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28). **SINS!** This is the problem. Sin mars the creature and dooms him. God provides the solution through the Gospel. God is calling out a people, a people who trust Him and believe that He cleanses them from sin according to His word. The greatest sin of all (and the basis of all other sin) is to disbelieve God. He intends to people a “new creation” with these believers, giving them life in glorious and incorruptible bodies. This is His stated purpose, proven by the resurrection of Jesus.

How dare anyone to follow his own faulty inclinations and think that his subjective feelings take the place of objective faith in God’s eternal purpose!

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