

## Menno Simons: NOT by grace alone

The thinking of Martin Luther still echoes within modern Protestantism: that salvation is by grace alone, without penance or "works." Our founder, Menno Simons, did not agree and neither did the Swiss Brethren of his time. They saw that doctrine as an impediment to the true doctrine of a "living" faith which results in works, and detected a tendency toward antinomianism in the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith. Even now, critics of Menno Simons point to this distinction with suspicion, suggesting that it leaves people to devise a righteousness of their own based on Law. Nevertheless, Menno Simons did believe that works do justify and were the proof of a truly converted life.

Luther would have liked to remove the book of Yaakov (James) from the cannon. Simons, however, took the opposite position and held to Yaakov's statement, "that a man is declared right by works, and not by faith alone." (2:24). Not incidentally, the earliest cannons placed the book of Yaakov immediately after the book of Acts in order to insure a proper emphasis on works as a consequence of faith. For Yaakov had written, "My brothers, what use is it for anyone to say he has belief but does not have works? This belief is unable to save him." (2:14). Menno Simons rightly understood that salvation is NOT by grace alone.

That works are integral to faith is consistently taught throughout the Scriptures. When a certain individual came running to Yeshua asking, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit everlasting life?" Yeshua quickly directed the inquirer's attention back to the Scriptures by saying, "You know the commandments." (Mark 10:17-19). I trust that no one thinks that Yeshua was being sarcastic in His answer or that He didn't mean what He said when He was making obedience to the commandments a requirement for everlasting life. Yeshua was, however, making it very apparent to the enquirer that the commandments were not uppermost to him and that he was not willing to follow Yeshua in obedience to His Father. In this instance, "believing" was not the issue. It was the keeping of the commandments that would lead to eternal life.

Yeshua made this abundantly clear in Mattithyahu (Matthew) 5:17&19 when He said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets.....Whoever, then breaks one of the least of these commands, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the reign of the heavens; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the reign of the heavens." In Matt. 7:21-23 Yeshua said even more forcefully, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Master, Master,' shall enter into the reign of the heavens, but he who is doing the desire of My father in the heavens. Many shall say to Me in that day, 'Master, Master, have we not prophesied in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and done many mighty works in Your Name?' And then I shall declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from Me, you who work lawlessness!'" There is no other way to read this passage than to conclude it is disobedience to the commandments that will

prevent us from entering into YHWH's kingdom. Those who continue in their lawlessness will have to depart from Yeshua's presence.

My brethren, we are entering into the time of YHWH's kingdom on this earth. Some have said that the Millennial reign has already begun. The truth is that if we think that we are going to be saved simply on the basis of our faith, a rude awakening is in our immanent future. Naive "believers" have often twisted Shual's (Paul's) words to mean that we are saved by our faith only and not by our works. However Shual also said, "[Do we then nullify the Torah through the belief? Let it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Torah.](#)" (3:31). In Titus 2:14 we read about how Yeshua "[gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for Himself a people, His own possession, ardent for good works.](#)" Hence, we should be able to tell whether we are among the deceived or among received: "[And by this we know that we know Him, if we guard His commands. The one who says, 'I know Him,' and does not guard His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever guards His Word, truly the love of Elohim has been perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him](#)" (1 Yohannan 2:3-5).

Menno Simons has left us a wonderful heritage by denying Luther's doctrine of "salvation by grace only." But, now it is up to us to reject our antinomian ways and bring forth the works of YHWH's righteous commandments. It is our generation that will choose whether or not to enter into the Millennial kingdom, and it is through works that we will determine our salvation. Those who continue in their lawlessness will not enter in. Those who keep the commandments will not only enter in, but reign with Yeshua as kings and priests. My message to my fellow Mennonite Brethren has always been a simple one: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Shalom

Maria Wiens

"Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Dev. 4:6)

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