

Is Faith Alone the Basis for the Final Judgment?

By Steve Ray

Dear Jerry:

I had no intention of writing you again this soon but after having dinner with your brother the other day and picking up a copy of a booklet you gave him entitled *Studies In Contrasts: The Doctrine of Salvation* (by Herb Vander Lugt and published by the Radio Bible Class, Grand Rapids, MI.), I thought I'd drop you a short note. I was not surprised, but I was again disappointed in the obvious dishonesty (or ignorance) and the unfounded assumptions of the booklet. I decided to write a short note to ask you a few questions to see if you agree with me.

First, I will be honest, I did not read the entire booklet. I first flipped to page 18. The title was *Everyone / Not Everyone Will Be Judged*. The first passage of Scripture quoted was John 5:28, 29, which was prominently placed in a text box at the top of the page.

But first, before we look at John 5:28, 29, let's take a look at the contrast that Herb Vander Lugt sets up. He says under the heading *Explanation*: ". . . we are told that all people, believers and unbelievers [here is his contrast] will be resurrected and appear before Christ for final judgement." He makes the opposing categories *believers* and *unbelievers*, but this is not what the Bible says. What contrast does the Bible set up? This booklet is written by those who are supposed to be the "Bible-people" who do not interpret the Bible on the basis of "tradition" but objectively, based on the supposed perspicuousness of the Scriptures. Let's see how honest they are, or how blinded by their tradition they are . . .

If the reader goes to the text box to read the passage of Scripture referred to, they will find this: "*The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth . . . to the resurrection of life, and . . . to the resurrection of condemnation.*" John 5:28, 29. Now, what do the three periods ellipses (. . .) delete from the text? An ellipsis is defined as by the *American Heritage Dictionary* as "The omission of a word not necessary for the comprehension of a sentence." The unwary reader might expect *believers* and *unbelievers* to be the words cut out. Am I correct? This is of course what the author expects you to read and understand. He deceives his readers.

Yet, get your Bible out and read for yourself the words of our Lord that the author "cut out" or deleted.

*"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; **they that have done good**, unto the resurrection of life; and **they that have done evil**, unto the resurrection of damnation"* (John 5:28, 29).

My question to you is this: why did he remove words to hide the meaning of what our Lord Jesus was saying? And why do you condone such actions by believing and perpetrating the material?

Why do you think Vander Lugt cut these essential words out? Was he trying to put words into our Lord Jesus' mouth? Why did he want the readers to misunderstand what Jesus was actually saying? The author could not come up with a verse in the Bible that describes the final judgement in terms of *faith vs. no faith*, or *belief vs. disbelief* could he? There *are* no verses in the Bible that discuss the Judgement in these terms. In fact, isn't it true that every time the judgement is discussed, the basis for judgement is *deeds* or *actions* or *works*? One must be careful of playing with our Lord's words and especially careful of misrepresenting His intent. He condemns the Pharisees in no uncertain terms for doing exactly that.

(Editor's Note: One would do themselves a great service to study this matter throughout the whole history of the Church. Was this "faith alone" doctrine taught in the time of the Apostles? Was it taught during the glorious first centuries when the Church struggled with all the doctrinal aspects we have come to trust so much (deity of Christ, Trinity, canon of Scripture, etc.)? In fact it wasn't, so the next question is, when did this "faith alone" position actually invented? Many Protestant scholars admit it was a result of the Protestant Reformation, a theological *novum*. It is a good question you may want to research. The book by Jimmy Akin, [*The Salvation Controversy*](#) is a good place to start.)

Do you think the above example is a case of the author's Fundamentalist tradition, his own personal and private interpretation, causing him to nullify the Word of God and manipulate the words of our Lord? How could Jesus have reworded this verse to better fit Vander Lugt's, and your tradition and theology? Is this just a slip of the word processor, or is it blatant dishonesty on the author's part? I do not know, but I have a hunch. The author seems to understand the implications of Christ's words and has attempted to change the wording to avoid Christ's conclusions.

Let me ask you this: do you think Paul and Jesus contradict each other at times, or at least seem to? And, do you interpret Paul's words in the light of Christ's teachings, or do you interpret Christ's teachings based on your understanding of Paul?

What is the basis for judgment Jerry? Let's take a look at a few other passages of Scripture. Let's open our Bibles to Matthew 25:31-46:

"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? And when did we see You a

stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You? And the King will answer and say to them, Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me. Then He will also say to those on His left, Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me. Then they themselves also will answer, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You? Then He will answer them, saying, Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life .”

What is the basis of judgment here, Jerry? Our faith alone? What about a few other passages. How about Revelation 20:11 15. Look for the words “faith alone” in this passage.

*“And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, **according to their deeds**. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and **they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds**. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”*

And again, in Matthew 16:26 27:

*“For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then **recompense every man according to his deeds**.”*

And what about Revelation 2:23:

*“And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; **and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds**.”*

And what amazing information does St. Paul give us in Romans 2:5 11?

“But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of

God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

This is not the end of the biblical passages to suggest that the judgment will be based on works and not on faith alone. I would challenge anyone to find a verse that attributes the result of the final judgment to faith alone.

This is not something I was willing to admit when I was a Baptist. Just as the Mormon does not tell us that in their theology God is actually Adam, neither was I willing to admit that the judgment was based on works and not on faith alone.

Another interesting fact, is that the words “faith” and “alone” appear nowhere in the New Testament except in James 2:24 which reads, “You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.” This passage is no comfort to those who believe in “faith alone” salvation and to watch them wiggle around trying to dismiss this verse is humorous indeed.

I didn't read a lot further in *Studies In Contrasts*, for once I see such a disingenuous “error” glaring at me, I don't have a lot of confidence in much else the author says. However, the other pages I did look at have the same kind of blatant disregard for honest Scriptural interpretation. There are many examples of wrongly dividing the word of truth. On top of that there is a lot of sloppy thinking, unwarranted conclusions, and obvious personal bias displayed over and over again in the booklet.

Another simple and quick example is on page 20 where he reduces the judgement of Christ to a simple *evaluation of our doctrine and lifestyle!* Good grief, this is nauseating. Show me from Paul's writings where such a cavalier approach is taken to the judgement. Anyone familiar with the Scriptures will see the travesty of such absurd comments and “teachings.” They are a great discredit to the Gospel.

I didn't think you would appreciate me commenting on *every page* so I kept it to this one topic. I will not belabor the issue further, but I thought you should be aware of the lack of integrity this booklet contains; you may want to read with a more critical eye and be more careful about passing this kind of stuff around, especially if you are trying to promote your tradition as the Christianity of our Lord and His Apostles. I pray for God's mercy in your life and for His special grace in your family.

God bless you brother,

Steve Ray