

SALVATION WITHOUT WORKS

Scripture Reading: Romans 4:5

Many is the time we have shared the gospel of Christ's finished work on the cross with a "religious" person and had them respond by saying, "Oh, I believe that." Yet deep within our heart, we wonder whether the person has truly been saved. Of course, only the Lord knows their true spiritual condition. Are those who say they believe in Christ's death, burial and resurrection, yet continue in their old religious practices, really saved? The answer lies in our text: "But to him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

There are countless religious people who have been taught and may truly believe that Christ died for their sins. They may even have a firm conviction that He indeed was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea and that He actually rose from the dead. If they are still putting *one ounce* of trust in their own human works for salvation, then they can not possibly be saved, according to the teaching of Romans 4:5—"to him that *worketh not*, but believeth...." This is the person who, like Paul, has come to realize that his own goodness and religious fervor avails nothing before a holy God. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:7).

When we share the gospel with "religious" people, we must be careful to tell them to place *all* their faith in Christ and not in their own works; so that they might "be found in him [Christ], not having [their] own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

JF

Notes:

THE DOOR OF FAITH OPENED

Scripture Reading: Acts 14:27

God has always desired and provided for the salvation of the Gentiles. Indeed, even as He chose one man [Abraham] to form the new nation of Israel, it was to the end that "all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

How is it then, that Luke writes in Acts 14:27, "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the *door of faith unto the Gentiles*"? Had not a Gentile come to faith just a few chapters back in Acts ten, where Cornelius and the Italian centurion received the Holy Ghost as he listened to *Peter* preach? Yes, indeed! But when Paul and Barnabas reported the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles, they were referring to the beginning of an entirely new ministry and method by which Gentiles could be saved. To Cornelius, Peter still proclaimed a message requiring works to be made acceptable to God: "But in every nation he that feareth him, and *worketh righteousness*, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35).

It is not until Paul was officially separated by the Holy Spirit unto his great missionary work among the Gentiles that we first learn of the terms of salvation for today: "And by him [Jesus] *all that believe* are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). From this moment on, the Gentiles were given an "open door" to God, simply and entirely on the basis of *faith alone* in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. (See Acts 13:28-30.) These are the terms of the gospel for today (I Corinthians 15:3 & 4). Praise God that this "door of faith" remains open to all who will believe!

JF

Notes:

OUR SACRED TRUST

Scripture Reading: II Timothy 1:9-14

Most of us are familiar with the concept of depositing something to be guarded and administered by others. We do this every time we put money in the bank. We trust that the banker will keep our money safe, manage it well and give us a return on the principle. If this is important concerning "filthy lucre," how much more important it is to be good stewards of God's spiritual truth which He has deposited with us!

Paul speaks of this sacred trust in II Timothy 1:14. "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." "That good thing" literally means "that good deposit." (Greek word *parakatatheke* meaning something "put down alongside") Where did Timothy get the good deposit? From Paul, who received it from the Lord: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 1:13). These sound words, or good deposits, are the mystery which was revealed to Paul the apostle of grace.

Just as Paul received the good deposit and passed it on to Timothy to guard and defend, so we must continue to do so. Paul reminds us that "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." (See I Corinthians 4:1 & 2.) In a day of financial instability and bank failures, we are all concerned about our monetary deposits. Many would be devastated if their banking "stewards" should fail; but how do you suppose the Lord feels when His stewards fail to guard the mystery, God's truth for today? Let us be faithful with that sacred trust!

JF

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IS THIS A NEW BEGINNING?

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-4

According to most of the books now available on the book of Acts, something new and revolutionary began on the Day of Pentecost. Many draw a line at Matthew 1:1 and say the so-called New Testament marks the beginning of a new something in God's program. They seem to forget that events in the four Gospels and Acts are clearly predicted in the so-called Old Testament and are all in fulfillment of promises made to David in the matter of a kingdom and a King, as well as the fulfillment of prophecies by many of the prophets. When our Lord began His public ministry, He said He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He cured a leper and commanded him to go to the temple and offer the gift prescribed by Moses. Jerusalem remains to this day the center of Jewish religion and is still that in the book of Revelation. Wouldn't it be more accurate to say the four Gospels complete the so-called Old Testament, and the Book of Acts records the start of that kingdom so long anticipated by God's People?

God was ready on the Day of Pentecost to bring in the kingdom; but His people said, "Nothing doing!" So, God set them and the kingdom in abeyance, raised up the one apostle—Paul—and with his name change we are told by the Holy Spirit that something new was beginning. Remember, Abram became Abraham, and Jacob became Israel? Let's let God tell us when something new is beginning rather than men.

Harold Steinbron

Notes:

UNSCRIPTURAL OR UNDISPENSATIONAL

A Pastor friend of this writer has written the following: "There are professing Christians who religiously practice the washing of feet. Are they scriptural or unscriptural? There are some who anoint the sick with oil, while others use blessed handkerchiefs. Are they scriptural or unscriptural? Still others tarry for the Holy Spirit after they have received Christ for salvation. Some professing Christians claim to have visitors and angelic visitations while hearing supernatural voices. Are they scriptural or unscriptural? Thousands of others break forth in some kind of speech which they call the gift of tongues. Is it scriptural or unscriptural to speak in tongues?"

TO WHICH WE ADD: Scriptures can be found to substantiate all of these actions. However, it seems to us that it is less than intellectual honesty, much less a spiritual practice, to arbitrarily select certain Bible commands for obedience while completely disregarding others. Why not obey the mandates in Numbers 15:32-36 and Deuteronomy 21:18-21 where infractions were to be punished by publicly stoning the offender to death? Why not build a tabernacle and offer sacrifices as God commanded in Exodus 25-31? Why not "sell that ye have and give alms" as Christ instructed in Luke 12:33? In short, why obey only certain Bible commands and ignore others? Why not obey them all?

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