

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

INTRODUCTION

"What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Myriads of answers are available to this question, some primitive, others spawning elaborate religious systems. The Bible speaks definitively but simply concerning the all-important issue of how we can know where we will spend eternity.

1. WHAT SALVATION IS.

- a. Salvation is the forgiveness of sins.
 - (1) The mission of John the Baptist was, "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins" (Luke 1:77).
 - (2) Jesus linked the forgiveness of sins to salvation in His words to the woman of Luke 7:48 and 50. "And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."
 - (3) There could be no salvation without the remission (forgiveness) of sins since our sinfulness is the barrier which separates us from God. ". . . Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you. . ." (Isaiah 59:2).
- b. Salvation is deliverance from spiritual death.
 - (1) "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Ephesians 2:4,5).
 - (2) Spiritual death is separation from God. Salvation by grace overcomes this separation.
- c. Salvation is eternal life in the presence of God.
 - (1) Salvation and eternal life may be equated since both are defined identically as "the gift of God."
 - (a) "For by grace are ye saved through faith. . .it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

(b) ". . .The gift of God is eternal life. . ." (Romans 6:23).

- (2) As a result of the forgiveness of sins and thereby being rescued from spiritual death, the barrier between man and God is wonderfully removed in Biblical salvation, opening the door into His eternal presence.

2. HOW SALVATION BECOMES OURS.

a. It is received as a gift.

- (1) "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:27,28).
- (2) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).
- (3) "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).
- (4) A gift has already been purchased, often at great sacrifice, when it is offered in love to the recipient. It would be an insult to refuse it or to insist upon paying for it.

b. It is by grace.

- (1) "For by grace are ye saved. . ." (Ephesians 2:8).
- (2) By definition grace is unmerited favor.
- (3) "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. . ." (Romans 11:5,6).
- (4) "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21).
- (5) "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-8).

- (6) ". . .Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9).
- c. It is received through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- (1) ". . .Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. . ." (Acts 16:30,31).
- (2) Biblical faith is more than believing that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. True faith is complete trust and reliance. It is to receive Christ as our exclusive and only means of eternal life.
- (3) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).
- (4) In reference to Christ, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).
- (5) "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16).
- (6) ". . .Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm. . ." (Jeremiah 17:5).
- (7) Included in Biblical faith is repentance, a change of mind. For example, there is no salvation for those who believe in false gods, false christs, or who fail to recognize the horrible consequences of their sin. Properly understood, repentance is essential to salvation.
- (a) Paul's ministry in Ephesus was marked by a message of ". . .repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).
- (b) God ". . .commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness. . ." (Acts 17:30,31).

- (8) The kind of faith which results in salvation embraces a Savior who is Lord. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. . ." (Philippians 2:9,10).
- (9) While faith is the channel of salvation, our faith does not save. It is exclusively the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ by which we are saved.
 - (a) There is absolutely nothing within man which can contribute toward salvation. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing. . ." (Romans 7:18).
 - (b) ". . .Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

3. THE PRODUCTS OF SALVATION

- a. ". . .We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).
- b. Neither works by themselves nor in combination with faith produce salvation. It is precisely the opposite. Salvation produces works.
- c. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8).
- d. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, And all things are of God. . ." (2 Corinthians 5:17,18).

4. THE SUPERIORITY OF BIBLICAL SALVATION

- a. It is secure.
 - (1) "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-29).
 - (2) "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on

the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life. . ." (1 John 5:11-13).

- (3) ". . . I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).
- (4) "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 2:3-5).

b. God provides the strength to live for Him.

- (1) "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).
- (2) "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

c. It unites saved loved ones for all eternity.

". . . Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (Acts 16:31-34).

5. THE ROMANS ROAD OF SALVATION

- a. Paul introduces the Biblical doctrine of salvation through faith. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (1:16-17).
- b. Everyone is responsible to God and without excuse for his unacceptable spiritual condition. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly

seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up. . .Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (1:17-25).

- c. It is impossible to merit salvation by being righteous. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (3:10-12).
- d. Attempting to prove ourselves worthy of salvation by obeying religious laws brings guilt, not salvation. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (3:19,20).
- e. Because of man's terrible sinfulness, the only possibility of salvation or justification (literally, to be declared righteous) is by grace. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (3:23-28).
- f. By way of example, neither Abraham nor David were justified by works. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (4:2-6).
- g. Abraham was strong in faith and for that reason was declared righteous. We, too, can be declared righteous by faith. "He staggered not at the promise of God

through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (4:20-25).

- h. Justification by faith is the only way to real peace with God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1).
- i. Christ died for the ungodly. We are justified by His blood. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (5:6-9).
- j. We are all sinners by inheritance because of Adam's sin. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (5:12).
- k. But grace is more than sufficient to forgive the greatest sin! "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (5:20).
- l. Grace is not a license to sin. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (6:1,2).
- m. By sinning we earn death. But eternal life cannot be earned. It is a gift. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (6:23).
- n. Law keeping is not the answer to our sin problem. Christ is the answer. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3).
- o. No natural human being possesses the ability to please God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (8:7,8).

- p. God dispenses all His favors as gifts. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (8:32).
- q. God's plan of salvation and eternal life cannot be related in any way to concepts of pre-existence since mankind did not pre-exist. "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)" (9:11).
- r. Religious zeal is not the same as righteousness. Righteousness is only in Christ. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (10:1-4).
- s. Salvation is received only by calling on the name of the Lord. But there must be a genuine turning to Christ as Lord and Savior before a credible confession of faith can be uttered. ". . . If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (10:9-13).
- t. Salvation is all of grace. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (11:5,6).

CONCLUSION

From the depths of a grateful heart, Paul, the once proud Pharisee, has written, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Timothy 1:15,16).

May all to whom these words come follow the pattern of Paul the apostle. Indeed, it took extraordinary courage to lay aside a significant religious heritage. Yet, he realized the eternal consequences of refusing the truth found in Jesus Christ. With the full realization that his conversion would not be popular with former associates, yet he could exclaim, ". . . The preach-

ing of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

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