

From Where I Sit . . .

"Salvation Is A Gift"

There is no small confusion among religious people about the subject of our eternal salvation. There are individuals who believe that God will just universally save everyone. Some believe He will save no one. Others believe He will save those who work tirelessly and manage to get one last confession of sins in just before dying. Some believe that salvation comes through grace alone and nothing man does can affect God's decision as to who He will save. Their theory is that it is all predestined. Some believe that salvation is through faith alone, and that all one has to do is accept Jesus as personal savior.

What's a person to do? In all this confusion is there not a clear answer to the age old questions regarding our salvation? Certainly Jesus authored salvation, and God gave His only begotten Son that we might be saved. Just as certainly, not everyone will be saved. Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* However, this same text affirms that some will be saved.

Concerning working our way to heaven, one cannot deny that obedience to the Lord's Will is absolutely necessary, Hebrew 5:8-9, *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"*. Yet one cannot ignore Paul's very clear teaching that salvation is not of ourselves but rather is a gift of God that no one could ever possibly deserve: Ephesians 2:8-9, *"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."*

The only rational conclusion is that one must obey the Lord in whatever He asks us to do, but that this obedience is merely a demonstration that faith is genuine (See James 2:20-23). Salvation is indeed the gift of God to mankind, but not every man receives it, only those who in trusting faith respond to Jesus. That response consists of repenting of our sins, Acts 17:30; confessing Jesus with our mouth, Matthew 10:32,33; and being baptized into Christ, Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3-6. There is no way that any of these responses to Jesus puts Him in debt to us. They are our means of responding to His offer of salvation. One tries to prove too much who tries to prove that faith without these elements is faith at all. The Bible inseparably links them. We can freely claim that salvation is a gift of God!

At an auction sale in England, a nice pair of crutches were to be sold. A poor crippled boy, who wanted and needed them was the first to bid. A well-dressed elderly gentleman immediately bid against him. The crowd was surprised, and indignantly cried, "For shame!" Again the boy bid, but each time the gentleman raised his bid, until finally the lad offered his all. The man then bid, and the crutches were sold to him. The lad was turning away to hide his tears when, to the surprise of everyone present, the gentleman turned and made him a present of the crutches, changing his sorrow into gladness. So it is with our Heavenly Father. When we have bid all that we have, we cannot buy salvation. Jesus was the costly price that was paid. To all of those who come to God by Him, "*He is able to save them to the uttermost*" (Hebrews 7:25).

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