

## HOW ARE WE SAVED?

The crux of our relationship with God is salvation. Salvation is the greatest need of mankind and cannot be had without God's intervention. Christ came to complete the plan of salvation. The Bible records all of this for our knowledge and provides everything we need for "*life and Godliness*" (2 Peter 1:3). Yet the method by which we are saved remains elusive to some. A survey of major religious bodies would find some who hold that all will ultimately be saved, some who believe we are saved by faith alone, some by grace alone, some by baptism alone. Still others hold, and we count ourselves among them, that we are saved by a combination of the above. In the end, how one *feels* is irrelevant. What matters is what the Bible says. So, let's examine the Scriptures and discover how we are saved.

We begin with the harsh, but very accurate statement that man is lost. "*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*" (Isaiah 59:2). Of God, the prophet Habakkuk said; "*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*" (Habakkuk 1:13). Speaking to Corinthian Christian who were formerly lost, Paul said, "*Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*" (1 Corinthians 6:9). He later reminds the Ephesians that they had "*no hope*" (Ephesians 2:12) until they came to a knowledge of Christ. Man is saved by Christ Jesus but not Christ alone. If Jesus' sacrifice was all that was necessary, all men would be saved. But some are not, even some who claim a relationship with the Lord (Matthew 7:21-23).

Some claim salvation is by grace alone while others claim faith alone.. While Scripture does say we are saved by grace, it never claims that grace acts alone. Paul writes, "*even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*" (Ephesians 2:5-8). Two important observations here. One, we see that both grace and faith are essential elements of salvation. We might say that grace is God's part while faith is man's part. The second observation however reminds us that salvation does not come from man, it is not of our own doing. It was God's initiative that brought salvation and Christ's sacrifice that completed the plan. Absent the work of God, there is no salvation regardless of how good a man may seem.

To suggest that man has no role to play in his salvation ignores clear and simple Bible teaching. Many passages demonstrate that obedience is essential to man's salvation (Acts 5:32; Acts 6:7; Romans 1:5; Romans 2:8; Romans 6:16, 17; Galatians 3:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 4:17). One central concept in these passages is the need to "*obey the truth.*" One must identify and then obey commands that exist within the body of truth. God grants salvation to those that love and obey him. To suggest otherwise is foolish and opposes the teaching of the Bible.

The Bible also teaches that we are saved by hope (Romans 8:24). The idea seems to be that by patiently looking for the coming of the Lord, we persevere in our faith. Again, however, it is not hope alone that saved. Instead the Christian finds salvation through the work of God coupled with the sinners obedience to the truth.

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