

Date: August 21

Subject: Salvation

Headline: Blueberries and Salvation.

Recently, my wife and I traveled to Michigan for a few days to celebrate our 33rd anniversary. Driving home we came across a small-town Blueberry festival and decided to stop. As we strolled by the various booths, we noticed one that was selling blueberry pies. We love blueberries so I lined up with all the other hungry people. Finally, when it was my turn to step up to the counter I noticed this booth was sponsored by a local church. As a pastor, I love asking people about their faith. I asked this nice couple what they believed about going to heaven and if they believed in a gospel of faith alone or a gospel that involved works.

I'll have to admit I was surprised by their answer, or actually by their lack of an answer. The husband and wife team gave me that "deer in headlights" look. After a long, uncomfortable pause they finally said "We've never thought about that before." This was a prime opportunity to share what the Bible really says about the gospel and being saved. Although they seemed receptive, what I told them seemed new.

Their response to the question about going to heaven, is not uncommon. Sadly, many who claim to be Christians and attend church have no idea what it takes to get to heaven. Should this uncertainty surprise us? Not if we read our Bibles. The Scriptures are full of warnings about the power of deception and false gospels.

The Apostle Paul wrote a lot about this. In 2 Corinthians 4 he warns the church at Corinth about false teachers who are crafty and adulterate the Word of God. Then he reveals the one who is behind all the deception. He writes, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Paul warns us about the "god of this world" (Satan) who blinds men to God's truth through the world's philosophies, education, and commerce. These world-systems pander to man's sinfulness and deepens their desire to serve moral darkness.

Jesus Himself also gives us a sober warning as well. In Matthew 7:21-23. He says "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" On judgment day many people will stand before Christ thinking they're going to get into heaven will be shocked to hear what Jesus says. He will declare to them that He never knew them and never acknowledged them as His own.

So how does such deception work? In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus explains there are two systems of religion. He says “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Jesus is telling us that there are two gates. The narrow gate is by faith alone in Christ alone, apart from works. It represents true salvation that leads to life eternal. The wide gate includes all false religions who add works to faith. It is wide because anything is accepted. Although there are many denominations around the world, they are all lumped together on the broad road. This road is tragic because it deceives so many people. It makes promises of hope and peace, but it leads to hell, not heaven.

So, what do you believe about the gospel? If you were asked how to get to heaven, could you answer? Ephesians 2:8-9 couldn't be any more clear, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” It is my sincere prayer that you know and trust in Christ alone for your salvation and entrance into heaven. Please take the narrow way; through Christ alone.