

## Am I Really Saved?

It has become troubling over the past decade how the doctrine of faith has been taught and received in evangelical circles. Historically, there has been great emphasis upon faith among orthodox Christians, which is very right and good; however, there seems to be something drastically wrong, specifically, with the modern conception of faith. It seems as though we are gradually slipping from what the Bible writers meant by the idea of saving faith. Today, there is a decreasing emphasis on the necessity of spiritual fruit. If one claims to have been saved, then they must be saved. There seems to be a lack of spiritual realities in the lives of so many that profess Jesus Christ as their Savior. Those who claim to have been saved demonstrate very little if any change in their life. Their profession to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior carries with it no power of change in their character, conduct, or in their general outlook in life. There is a heartbreaking failure of multitudes, even though they are earnest, to experience satisfaction in doctrine, specifically the doctrines of Christ. It would seem logical that anyone who professes to have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and experiences no change, something is drastically wrong. Any professed faith in Christ as personal Savior that does not bring the life under submission to Christ as Lord is simply inadequate.

The question must be answered. Did Christ's efficacious work on the cross procure an a life of indulgence for men to continue gratifying their fleshy, worldly lusts? Can one who claims to believe in the vicarious death of Christ and claims to be resting upon Him alone for salvation pass for a real Christian? Can one be united to the resurrected Christ and live a life that's no different from those who reject Christ? It would seem evident from such unaffected lives that Satan is chloroforming many into hell by a delusion of salvation.

In an alarming fashion, the gospel of today differs from the gospel of the Bible. Our expectations go no further than the initial "profession" of faith. We are told to walk forward, repeat a prayer, or raise a hand if we desire to enter eternal life. After such a "profession", it is automatically assumed that eternal life has taken root and to question one's eternal existence is offensive and politically incorrect. However, the gospel of the Bible requires much more than a "profession". We must be careful at this point to say tht the Bible is clear that salvation is not by works. Works do not save, but salvation does produce works (James 2:17). The Bible teaches that true saving faith includes fruit such as surrender, commitment, and obedience. Jesus clearly taught that saving faith is more than belief in facts, but is a willingness to surrender to Christ as Lord Matthew 19:16-22. It's surprising to most that Jesus didn't grant eternal life to the rich man, not because of works, but because he failed to give Jesus his entire life. This example of the rich man failing to receive eternal life proves that when we are more interested in the temporal and not the eternal, we will not be granted eternal life.

Contrary to popular belief, the Bible gives many warnings about false and insufficient conversion. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus claims that "not everyone who says to Me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven." This is alarming because many today claim Jesus to be their Lord, however, they show no evidence in their life. Jesus continues in the second half of the verse to explain what does prove genuine conversion. He said "he who does the will of My Father in heaven who is in heaven will enter." The point Jesus is making is that it's not what we say that proves regeneration, but what we do that demonstrates the possession of eternal life. Jesus says its similarly in Luke 6:45 "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say? It cannot be summarized more accurately than Martin

Luther's quote on saving faith "Faith is something very powerful, active, restless, effective, which at once renews a person and again regenerates him, and leads him altogether into a manner and character of life, so that it is impossible not to do good without ceasing."

Many today claim to know God but have never truly embraced Him for eternal life. There are some who even hold high religious positions as teachers and scholars and do not possess a saving relationship to Jesus. Nicodemus was such an example (Jn. 3:1-18). As he began to address Jesus as a teacher, the Lord interrupted him in verse 2 and told him "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God". This had to be a shock to Nicodemus. After all he was a highly respected teacher (10-11) and didn't understand the most crucial truth of all scripture, how to be saved (Jn. 3:16-18).

The Bible teaches that we cannot claim true faith at salvation and that same faith have no transforming effect on the emotions or behavior in everyday life. True transforming faith creates a new person (2 Cor. 5:17) and creates new affections (Jn. 4:14). Because of this, we receive a newly created disposition. We come to hate the sins we used to love, and love the holiness we used to despise. This idea is proven in Jesus' own words in John 3:19-21 where He claims that coming to the light is not simply a mere ascent to the truth but is a deep transformation that moves us from hating the light to loving it. Salvation includes deliverance from sin. If therefore, our faith does not deliver us from sin, it has not saved us.

There are a number of Biblical examples of people who professed to believe in Jesus but did not receive the gift of salvation. For example in John 2:23-24 when Jesus "was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name.... But Jesus "was not entrusting Himself to them." These verses show us that God knows the heart of those who make a "profession" of belief in Jesus. However, superficial faith does not bring God's gift of regeneration. Believing in Jesus because it is a novel thing to do or a profession out of curiosity will not bring eternal life. Salvation will not be granted to those who "profess" Jesus simply out of emotion or enthusiasm for the spectacular. A second example is found in a man named Simon who was a sorcerer (Acts 8:9-24). In verse 13 "Simon himself believed; and after being baptized he continued on with Philip;" In verse 18 Simon showed his real intentions for believing and being baptized, he offered money for the Spirit of God. This outraged Peter and he responded to Simon by telling him to "repent of this wickedness of yours" and "pray that the intention of your heart may be forgiven you." Simon's counterfeit faith teaches us that salvation will not be granted if one believes for selfish or self-centered motives.

Now that we have seen that not all believing brings about eternal life and that Scripture warns about counterfeit faith, we must consider what spiritual realities do characterize genuine salvation. Scripture helps us to discern what spiritual realities characterize one who possesses eternal life (1 Jn. 5:13). Jesus never concerned Himself about the time or circumstances of profession, but He constantly held forth the high standard that eternal life demands. Let's examine what those characteristics are:

1. A discernable change in one's life

2 Corinthians 5:17 17Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

This verse implies a number in inexhaustible blessings: 1) eternal security because Christ bore in His body God's judgment against sin; 2) the believers acceptance in Him with whom God alone is well pleased; 3) the believers future assurance in Him who is the resurrection to eternal life and the sole guarantor of the believers' inheritance in heaven; what He did concern Himself with was the evidences that eternal life took root; and 4) the believer's participation in the divine nature of Christ, the everlasting Word (2 pet. 1:4). Being a new creation describes something that is qualitative and new. It refers to changes that take place immediately upon salvation. After a person is regenerate, old value systems, priorities, beliefs, love and plans are made new. It's not that all evil is totally gone from the heart, but sin is no longer in control. The believer's new disposition lives by faith and he lives for eternity, not totally consumed with temporal things.

Scripture mentions as least six marks of eternal life

#### A. A broken pattern of sinful behavior

1 John 3:9-10 9No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Are you characterized by obedience to God? Do you live to please Him. Do you avoid the those things He dislikes?

#### B. Embrace God's Word and to believe it

John 8:42-47 42Jesus said to them, " If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43" Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. 44" You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. 45" But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. 46" Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? 47" He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

1 John 2:3 3And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

Do you understand the meaning of scripture? Do you believe what scripture says?  
To believe the word of God is to act on God's word. Does Scripture have a hold of you thinking,

speaking, and acting?

#### C. To have a love for other Christians

1 John 3:14 14We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

Do you desire to serve, help, and encourage other Christians? Are you actively engaged in your church in the service of others?

#### D. A faith that gives you victory to life's problems

1 John 5:4 4For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Has your attitude changed regarding your view of life? Do you live with a heavenly perspective? Do you apply scripture to guide your life?

#### E. Resistance from others

John 15:18-19 18“ If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19“ If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Have you experienced some degree of separation from family, co-workers, friends, and acquaintances? Do those around you see you different from others to reject Jesus Christ.

#### F. A new battle from within to do right

Galatians 5:16-17 16But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Romans 7:18 18For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

Do you struggle with wanting to do God's will? Is your inclination to do right even though you don't always do what you know you should? Do you have an increasing awareness of your own wretchedness?

The Scriptures are clear that salvation creates within us profound change. Those who have embraced easy-believism may be deceived about their eternal condition. A belief that demands no change is a belief that does not save. When Jesus Christ enters our life, we will never be the same again. We are quickened to a slavery to righteousness, a life that desires to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.