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LET THE CHURCH DO IT

By Ted Knight

I got to thinking about the millions of people in the world who had never heard of Jesus. They do not know of the salvation which he made possible through His death. Someone desperately needs to take the saving message to them. But, I am just one person and I can't do much about it. The CHURCH should do it anyway.

I got to thinking about the bus ministry. It sure must be a challenge to work with those youngsters and bring them to Bible class and worship. That is a good work and I'm glad that someone is doing it. But, I just don't have time myself. The CHURCH should work up a good bus ministry program.

I got to thinking about the young people in the church and how they should be encouraged in this day of trial and temptation. They could mean a great deal to the Lord if they were involved in the work of the church. We really need a good youth program. The CHURCH should organize something for our youth.

I got to thinking about the lonely world of the widows and shut-ins. It

wouldn't take much time to drop in for a short visit and brighten up their lonely world. But, I am not too good at visiting with older people so I didn't go. The CHURCH should have a visitation program for them.

I got to thinking about the educational program of the church. There is always a critical need for Bible class teachers and helpers. It must be rewarding to teach and train the young minds of our children. But, I don't know too much about how to teach. The CHURCH should provide good teachers for our classes.

I got to thinking about how the church could meet its budget each week. The work which has been planned is worthy of our support. Just a small increase in each member's contribution is all it would take to exceed the budget each week. But, inflation has hit at my house and I just can't give any more myself. The CHURCH should come up with a plan to meet that budget each week.

I got to thinking about how the elders, deacons, preacher, bus workers, zone lea-

ders, teachers and others need to be encouraged. They put in a lot of time and effort. But, I didn't know what to say so I didn't say anything. The CHURCH should have some way of expressing gratitude to them.

I got to thinking about the orphans and other downtrodden people in our country. Jesus taught that we should be concerned about them and relieve their needs as we have opportunity. I didn't know what to do though so I didn't do anything myself. The CHURCH should take care of them.

I got to thinking about the judgment of the Lord. I imagined that I was standing there waiting for Jesus to call my name to be presented to the Father. I was surprised! The CHURCH was presented to him. I was left out!

I got to thinking about the CHURCH. Who is the church? It's ME! It seems to me that if I want the church to do something that I had better do it. If I want the church to do more and be better then I will have to do more and better.

SALVATION BY FAITH

By Robert Ball

To say that salvation is by faith is not to suggest that one is saved by faith alone, that is, apart from and without obedience to God's will. The Bible clearly shows that there are some things that one must do to express his faith. Faith comes from hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). Therefore, saving faith is linked to God's word. What his word teaches, we must do. Heb. 5:9 tells us that Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him, not just those who believe in him. He commands all to repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30). Can one have saving faith and not repent? He commands that we confess him before men (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9, 10). Can one have saving faith and not confess him? He also

teaches us to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Can one have saving faith and not be baptized. And after we have been baptized into Christ, he commands that we be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). True faith will cause us to be faithful at all times.

The Bible also clearly shows us that after becoming a child of God, we can turn and be lost. Christians are constantly warned in the gospel to be on guard against this (Heb. 3:12, 13; 1 Cor. 10:12). Our faith can be overthrown unless we keep on guard.

Since our faith plays such an important role in being saved and in keeping

saved, let's consider just how we are saved by faith.

In Genesis 22:18 God promised Abraham, "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed." In Gal. 3:16 Paul wrote, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The "seed" in which all nations would be blessed is Christ. In Gal. 3:29 Paul further stated, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Also, in Gal. 3:6, 7 he stated, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." He then showed that the same is required

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EDITORS: Erwin Cowen and
Harold Turner

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Good Morals and Salvation

By Ernest Loomis

I know of no one who would deny that a good moral life is necessary for salvation, but many people seem to think that this is all that is necessary. Some insist that one doesn't have to be anything religiously if they will just live a good moral life. Others declare that one needs to obey the gospel, but that he doesn't have to attend the worship services, give to support the Lord's work, or do anything other than just live a good moral life. Both views are wrong, and if followed will cause one to be lost eternally.

Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16). The apostle Peter said, "Repent and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:38.) Thus, faith, repentance and baptism are all prerequisites to salvation or forgiveness of past sins. This, however, does not insure eternal salvation, but only the forgiveness of past sins. To be assured of eternal salvation one must, ". . . be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58.) This fact is plainly taught both by examples and by commandments. Let us consider some of both.

MISPLACED VALUES

By Ordell Heavin

It is so easy for people to place emphasis on wrong things. We often put a premium on matters that are actually second best instead of on the "things that are excellent." (Phil. 1:10.) In Psalm 20:7 the writer states, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." And in Psalm 65:4 the writer states that wise men should always be "satisfied with the goodness of thy house." And adds, "For God alone can crown the year with glory and guide our pathways." Also in Psalm 37:39 we read, "But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; he is their strength in time of trouble." There is joy in the fellowship between the Christian and his Creator.

In one of the beautiful hymns we sing a challenge to our values and priorities. Listen to some of the words:

*"Jesus is all the world to me,
And true to Him I'll be;
Oh, how could I this friend deny,
When He's so true to me?
Following Him I know I'm right,
He watches o'er me day and night;
Following Him, by day and night,
He's my friend."*

How then could we ever put anything or anyone before him? Jesus is the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." (Prov. 18:24.) To "seek first the kingdom of God" should be easy for us if we truly appreciate the price that Jesus paid for our salvation. In view of this, it is hard to understand how anyone could continue in sin, or pervert (Gal. 1:6-9) the gospel of our salvation.

to him and render to him a spiritual service (1 Peter 2:5). At times, though knowing better, we may leave the Lord out of our plans, time, interests, and the way we spend our money. It is possible that one may be like the nine lepers (Luke 17) who didn't have the courtesy to return and say, "Thank you." How sad, and how tragic it is to misplace our values in life. One writer expressed why we should respond to the love of God when he wrote of Jesus, saying, "Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end, our Maker, Defender, Redeemer and Friend."

Sometimes we claim to be so strongly devoted to the Lord, yet it is evident that we emphasize the wrong things in life. One of the devil's most subtle tactics is to lull us into spiritual idleness when we think we are doing the best we can. Consider the following things and personally examine your values. (1) It is not enough to read the Bible - we must study it properly (2 Tim. 2:15). (2) It is not enough just to attend the assembly - we must worship as God teaches us (John 4:23-24). (3) It is not enough to go to church - we must also take the gospel to the world (Mark 16:15). (4) It is not enough to abstain from evil - we must also grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18). (5) It is not enough just to pray about the sinful world - we must take a strong stand against it. (6) It is not enough to love the brethren and pray for our rulers - we must also love our enemies and pray for the rulers of the whole world (1 Tim. 2:2; Matt. 5:44). (7) It is not enough to talk and sing about heaven - we must make preparations to go there.

In Acts 2:42 the Bible states that the disciples "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (teaching), and fellowship (joint participation), and in breaking of bread (eating the Lord's Supper), and in prayers." In Acts 20:7 the Bible states, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them . . ." In 1 Cor. 16:1-2 Paul ordered the disciples to give of their material possessions when they assembled together on the first day of the week. These are examples set forth by the early disciples as they were guided into all truth by the apostles. Could we expect less to be required of us?

Now let's look at some of the Lord's commands. In Matt. 6:33 Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness . . ." Can we fulfill this command by following our own way and satisfying our own desires? In Heb. 10:25-26 the writer stated, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is . . . For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Is the writer not saying that it is a sin to wilfully absent ourselves from the assembly to pursue our own way and gratify our own desires? Jesus said ". . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10.) Just how can we say we are faithful and thereby entitled to a crown of life, if we fail to follow the examples of the early disciples, and refuse to obey the commands of the Lord and his inspired apostles?

A good moral life is indeed necessary for eternal salvation, but that is not all that is necessary. Will you agree that it would be good to follow the examples and commands we have noticed? James says, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17.) Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." (John 14:23.) Do we love the Lord enough to obey and follow him? Heaven is too sweet to miss for worldly pleasure and self gratification.

Jesus wants and expects us to be loyal

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THE THINGS JESUS CONDEMNED IN OTHERS

By Harold Turner

Jesus is frequently pictured in the Bible as a friend to the friendless, the underdog and the outcast. Frequently he was surrounded by the social rejects of his day. And because of this Jesus became the object of severe criticism. Notice, for example Luke 15:1-2, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Jesus recognized the value of each soul, and his heart went out to the misfortunate. In Matt. 10:36 the Bible states, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Jesus tried to provide direction for their lives as well as to minister to their needs. Acts 10:38 states that he "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."

In studying the life of Jesus we must not ignore the other side of him. While his life was characterized by love, compassion and mercy, there were times when he responded to people in quite a different way. In Mark 3:1-5, when the Pharisees looked upon him with criticism for healing a man with a withered hand, Jesus looked upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. In John 2:15 when he saw the people abuse the temple, "he made a scourge of small cords, drove them all out of the temple; poured out the changers money, and overthrew the tables; and said, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." In Matt. 23 Jesus used strong language in condemning the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. In verse 33 he said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" While Jesus was very patient and compassionate toward the weak and confused, he was very intolerant toward the hypocritical pretense of the religion of the Pharisees.

Paul warned Christians to consider both the goodness and the severity of God (Rom. 11:22). There is a stress among many today which wants only the picture of God's love and goodness preached, and to omit the condemning of sin and the preaching on the fires of hell. Such preaching does not give a true picture of Jesus. There were many things that Jesus condemned in others. While we need to learn about the great love and mercy of Jesus, we also need to learn about the things which he does not approve of.

One thing that Jesus condemned in others was self-righteousness. In Luke 18:9-14 Jesus "spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." As Jesus continued this story he showed his disapproval of this Pharisee. He also commended the publican who was aware of his weaknesses and flaws. His prayer was, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Look at the contrast between these two men. The one is proud of himself because he has no faults, the other is humble by the recognition of his sins. Jesus always expressed displeasure toward the self-righteous attitude. In Luke 16:15 he said unto the Pharisees, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." There is no way that a self-righteous person can please God.

Another thing that Jesus condemned in others was inconsistency in religion. There were some who taught others to be diligent in keeping God's law, but they themselves did not keep it. In Matt. 23:2-5 Jesus warned his disciples, saying, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men . . ." As Jesus continued this warning, seven times he called these people hypocrites, and in verse 33 he said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" These people were so religious, but they were so displeasing to God. To please God we must be doers of his word and not hearers only. It isn't enough to know his will or to believe it, we must be obedient to it.

Jesus also is displeased with religious insincerity. In Matt. 15:7, 8 Jesus called the people hypocrites because, he said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." These were much more concerned with the outward appearances than they were

with the condition of the heart. In Matt. 6 Jesus showed how they prayed, gave alms, and fasted, but in each case he showed that all of these were done to be seen and praised of men rather than of God. It is not the external that God is so much concerned with as the internal. Unless our attitude is proper toward God, there is no outward acts that one can do and thereby please God. Paul showed this in 1 Cor. 11:24-34 in regards to the Lord's Supper. He showed that one may eat the bread and drink the cup, and bring condemnation upon himself by so doing, unless he does so discerning the Lord's body. The Lord wants us to keep this supper in remembrance of what he did for us, not just obeying some act.

Another thing Jesus condemned in others was false doctrines. In Matt. 15:9 he said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Where does man get the idea that he is wise enough to determine what God is pleased with? Because we may like something does not necessarily mean that God likes it. Through Isaiah (55:8, 9) God rebuked Israel with a principal that still holds true today, he said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Any time that we offer our ideas and practices with which to serve God, it becomes vain. In Gal. 1:6-9 Paul spoke of some who had perverted the gospel of Christ and by so doing had caused those who had accepted it to fall from grace. He then stressed that there is only one gospel to be preached, saying, "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." John showed that if we transgress (go beyond) and abide not within the doctrine of Christ we "have not God." (2 John 9.) There is no doctrine that man can preach and be accepted with God except the doctrine of Christ. Any other doctrine brings condemnation.

The most important thing in our life should be to try to please our Lord. He has expressed so much love and mercy toward us in forgiving us of our sins. But we must never come to believe that he will overlook and accept whatever we want to offer him. He has given us a plan that we must follow if we please him. To make any change in his plan, or to offer any substitute, brings his rejection. To serve God acceptably we must do so with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:28).

SALVATION BY FAITH

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of others to be righteous, saying, "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." If we are in Christ, we are of the promised seed of Abraham. The blessing in the promise was justification, thus those in Christ, the promised seed, have been justified by faith.

The Jews had a problem in understanding and accepting the promise in this light. They viewed the promise as belonging to the fleshly descendants of Abraham, and upon the conditions of keeping the law. To these, Paul said, "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." (Gal. 3:18.) He then showed that the law was "added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." The law was designed to bring them a knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20; 7:7), and to be a "schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ" (Gal. 3:24). The law did not save the people to whom it was given, but pointed them to the coming Christ in which they could be saved.

Until the coming of Christ, the world was lost in sin. In Gal. 3:22 Paul wrote, "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin." And in Rom. 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Though God had given the Jews a law, it was not designed to justify them. In Rom. 3:20 Paul said, "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." All were in the same condition, as Paul expressed in Rom. 3:19, "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." All men would have to depend upon God for their salvation. Because of sin, man is guilty of a crime punishable by death, and because God is just, he must punish every sin.

In Rom. 3:20-26 Paul shows how God provided a remedy for this condition of man. He first showed that man could not be justified by the law (the old testament) that the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, which is "by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned." He then showed that we

are "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." Through what Christ did for us, God was able to be both just and justifier. The price for sin was paid by his death.

We have been forgiven, justified, saved, and become heirs of God through faith in Jesus Christ. In Gal. 3:26 Paul said, "For we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." In the next verse Paul shows how this faith must be expressed in order to bring us into Christ. He said, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." We receive the promise by faith in Christ, but until we get into Christ we cannot receive the blessing. All spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3). We are baptized into Christ, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29.)

Yes, we have all sinned (Rom. 3:23), but Jesus died for all - "That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:9) His blood will wash away all the sins of those who express their faith in him through obedience - "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5:9)

We must have faith in the fact that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, and that he left heaven to come to this world, become flesh, and die for our sins in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21). Our faith for salvation is in Christ, not in ourselves, or what we do. We only do what Christ commands because we believe in him. The person who truly believes in Christ will not question why he wants him to do certain things. Abraham didn't question why God wanted him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. He trusted God enough to do this without question. In Heb. 11:17-19, the writer speaks of Abraham's faith as "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead . . ." Abraham was justified by faith, but James 2:21 shows that he was justified when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar. We are also justified by faith, but not until we express that faith by being baptized into Christ.

I hope that in studying the things in this and other articles, you will be strengthened in your faith in Christ, and in what he has done for you. And I hope that you might express your faith and trust in Christ by obeying the things he commands. If I can be of assistance to you in doing this, please let me know by writing - Robert Ball, Rt. 9, Box 122A, Florence, Ala. 35633.

MISPLACED VALUES

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When we place our trust solely in an inherited, convenient, no work, church-house religion, our attitudes and values are so misplaced, and when we stand before God on the day of judgment, we will be sadly surprised (Matt. 7:21-23). Let us awaken our hearts unto righteousness and become actively involved in serving the Lord, both in the assemblies of the church, and in the fields of souls about us.

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