

## Lesson 6: *Concerning Salvation*

Most of Protestantism is centered around the ideals of Calvinism, the theology of John Calvin, a Presbyterian who formulated the concept of salvation by faith alone. His doctrine, like the reformation effort of contemporary Martin Luther, was an extreme reaction to the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church, in which salvation is attained through meritorious works. Calvinism went to the opposite extreme and said that man had no responsibility in his salvation. Catholicism and Calvinism are opposite swings of the same pendulum. Truly man cannot merit his own salvation by himself, but he does have some responsibility in the matter.

Many passages affirm the idea that salvation is by faith (Eph. 2:8-10) and yet just as many show that it is not by faith *alone* (James 2:14-24). The only passage in the Bible that contains Calvin's phrase, "faith only" is James 2:24: "You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only."

Christ's own teaching makes it clear that obedience to God's terms and will are vital to one's salvation. Such obedience is a part of God's grace and does not negate it. Listen to Jesus: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). It is more than belief; it is also obedience. To those who claimed belief but proved otherwise in their disobedience, he said, "But why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"

Three times the Holy Spirit ties obeying the gospel to salvation (Romans 10:16, 2 Thess. 1:8, 1 Peter 4:17). God has done his part in sending his son to die on the cross; it remains for man to work out his own salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). Salvation is by faith, but not by faith alone.

The roots of salvation exist in the preaching and hearing of the gospel. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard .... So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:14, 17).

Once the gospel has been heard, every auditor must decide whether or not he believes the message, for faith comes from hearing God's word. For this reason, infants and the mentally incompetent are not proper subjects for obedience to the gospel; they are unable to believe anything. "But without faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Believing the gospel message means believing that Jesus is the son of God and that he is the savior of souls.

One who has this belief should be willing to confess it before others. "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). This verse obviously adds an act of obedience to faith in order to obtain salvation. There were many in Christ's day who believed he was the messiah but refused to confess that faith for fleshly reasons (John 12:42-43); he promised to deny them also in the day of judgment (Matt. 10:32-33).

Salvation depends upon a conversion of the soul (Matt. 18:3-5) and conversion means change, repentance of sinful ways (Acts 3:19, 8:22). True repentance comes from godly sorrow and is a commitment to cease the sin and do better (2 Cor. 7:8-11).

None of these is anywhere near as controversial as baptism, or immersion in water. Although Christ taught its necessity (Mark 16:16) and Peter gave it as the answer to the Pentecostians' query, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:38), many reject it as a work. The evidence mounts when one considers Romans 6:1-4, Galatians 3:24-27 and 1 Peter 3:20-21. Baptism no more earns one his salvation than confession or repentance. Baptism must be immersion in water according to the Bible example.

Finally, salvation will be forfeited by the apostate (Heb. 12:15). One must remain true (Rev. 2:10).

1. What is the source of Calvinism (its originator and logic)?
  
2. Is salvation by faith (Eph. 2:8-9)? Is salvation by faith only?
  
3. What does it mean for a sinner to be justified? Could one be justified and sent to hell anyway?
  
4. Calvinism pushes something called the sinner's prayer to obtain salvation. Is calling Jesus "Lord" sufficient for obtaining salvation?
  
5. What do the following passages say about obedience to the gospel?
  - ◇ Romans 10:15-17:
  - ◇ 2 Thess. 1:8:
  - ◇ 1 Peter 4:17:
6. Is one who works out his own salvation in fear and trembling trying to earn his salvation?
  
7. From whence does faith come (Rom. 1:16, 10:17)?
  
8. Should infants be "baptized" as is done in Catholic services? Why or why not?
  
9. Is confession necessary to salvation (Rom. 10:9)? Is it a work that merits salvation, then?
  
10. Why did some "believers" refuse to confess Christ during his ministry (John 12:43-44)? Will they be saved anyway (Matt. 10:32-22)?
  
11. Is repentance being sorry you were caught? What is repentance (2 Cor. 7:8-11)?
  
12. What do the following passages say about the necessity of baptism to salvation?
  - ◇ Mark 16:15-16:
  - ◇ Romans 6:3-4:
  - ◇ Acts 22:16:
  - ◇ 1 Peter 3:20-21:
13. Can a Christian be lost (Gal. 5:4)?