

Salvation In The Church

By David Phillips

Salvation is something that many people are seeking today. But salvation is not something that we can find just anywhere and it is not something that we can just pick up and put into our pockets and forget about as we go about our daily lives. As we will learn in this lesson, salvation is something that can only be found in one place and it is something to which we must be willing to devote our entire lives.

Only One Way

In Acts 4:2 Peter had just been arrested and was preaching to the Jewish counsel. He said to them, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* We must understand that these Jews were interested in salvation, just like we are today. They seemed to be very zealous for God. They seemed to be very zealous for the law of God. But Peter’s statement displeased them. You see, they wanted the salvation that God promised in the scriptures, but they didn’t want salvation through Christ. In spite of their zeal they could not have salvation until they were willing to believe in the one true gospel. For this reason Jesus said to them only a few months earlier, *“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life”* (John 5:39). Eternal life (salvation) can be found by reading the scripture, but only those who believe and obey the things concerning Jesus Christ will be able to have the salvation that He offers. Salvation does not come through simply being a good person. Salvation does not come through simply believing in God, neither does it come through attending church services. Salvation can only come through faith and obedience in Christ.

Salvation and the Church

Do you want salvation? Then you need to believe all that the scriptures say concerning who Jesus was, what He did, and what He taught, and you need to be willing to obey everything that He commanded. But there is more. For it says in Acts 2:47, *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*

Today some people think that they can become members of the church by simply showing up to the worship services. Some people think that they can become members of the church by simply being good people or by having their names put on the church directory. But not one of these things makes us a member of the church. God shows us in Acts 2:47 that **our salvation and our membership in the church go hand-in-hand**. A person is not saved if God has not added him/her to His church. If a person has not obeyed the gospel then they cannot be a member of the church. Are you a member of the church? Do you want to be a member of the Lord’s church? Then you need to obey the gospel today and commit your life to Christ.

As Members of the Lord’s Church

There are many people who have obeyed the gospel and have become members of the church. But remember that salvation is not something that we can just pick up and put into our pockets and forget about as we go about our daily lives. Paul tells us in Phil. 2:12, *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”* Our salvation is not something that we can just forget about. It is something that we must be working toward every day of our lives. It is something that should be on our

minds always as we approach God with fear and reverence. It is something that we must be working towards as we walk by faith in this life. It requires great effort.

Consider, for example, the teachings of Jesus. In Matt. 20:1 He said, *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.”* Jesus is the landowner and those who are saved are the laborers. When we are saved we become laborers. As such we are expected to work in His kingdom. When He called some of His disciples He said, *“Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men”* (Mark 1:17). He calls us, not just to give us salvation, but that we may fulfill a purpose as His servants. Paul agrees with this in his letter to Titus in Tit. 2:11-14. *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”* God’s grace which brings salvation has appeared to all men; to you and me. If we have truly received it then we will be learning how to be godly. But why has Jesus done this for us? *“That He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”* This is what it means to be a Christian. This is what it means to be a member of the Lord’s church. This is how we work out our salvation. To learn true godliness. To be zealous for good works. To be diligent in our service to God. To give ourselves to Christ. Therefore, just as Jesus sacrificed Himself to give us salvation, we too must make sacrifices in order to be faithful members of His church.

Sadly, however, there are many people in this world who have not applied these things to their lives. They may have obeyed the gospel and they may attend a few of the services of the church. But beyond that they are not working out their own salvation, they do not have reverence for God, and they are not zealous for good works. What about you? What is your relationship to Christ and to His church? We were condemned before we came to Christ because we failed to obey God. We did that which He condemned and we failed to do that which He commanded. Do you suppose that the Lord will grant you salvation if you are still doing that very thing, even though you call yourself a Christian? In the parable of the talents there was a man who was given something by his Lord, just as we are given salvation by our Lord. When his lord returned and he had failed to work the way he was supposed to His lord said to Him, *“You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matt. 25:26-30). This parable illustrates Christ’s reaction to those who fail to work as members of His church.

But as sad and as gloomy as this all may seem, if we simply turn our hearts to God and begin working today, then whatever gloominess we may be experiencing now can be turned into a joy more glorious than anything this world can offer. As God told Cain in Gen. 4:6-7, *“Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?”* Our salvation requires diligent effort. When we obey the gospel and become members of the Lord’s church we make a commitment to God Himself that we will put forth that effort. God promises that when we do so we will not regret it. Therefore we must heed the exhortation given in Hebrews 6:9-11, *“But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”* All who are members of the church have obeyed the gospel and have, at some point in time, shown great diligence. But our goal must be to continue to forth the diligence described in this passage. Our membership in the Lord’s church requires it; our

salvation requires it! Therefore, let the words be imprinted into our hearts, *“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”*

Conclusion

Do you look for the promises of God? Do you desire salvation? Then fix your eyes on Christ and put your hands to the work. We cannot be saved by simply obeying the gospel. Neither can we be saved by simply attending one, two, or even three services per week. If we want to be saved we must do all of these things, but we must also put forth great effort in the rest of our lives. We must be willing to give some things up in order to make time for God. We must be willing to take on responsibilities in the kingdom of God in order to be serving our God. And we must believe that if we are diligent in these things then we too will inherit the promises.

If you are not a Christian then understand that these things apply to you as well. If you desire salvation in Christ then you must obey His gospel and you must become an active member of His church. This is the only way. In order to obey the gospel you must believe in Him with all of your heart. You must repent of your sins and cast them away from you. You must confess Jesus as your Lord. You must be baptized in water. And you must be willing to live before Him as a faithful servant in His church. Perhaps you have been thinking about these things but have not made a decision. Salvation is a decision that you cannot go wrong with. But the time we have to make that decision is limited. Christ could come in five minutes, He could come in five days, or He could come in five months. But if we are not ready then we will not be able to join Him in heaven. Therefore, *“now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (2 Cor. 6:2). Do not delay.