

4 - "THEN WHO CAN BE SAVED?"

by
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Jesus told His disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:24). This was shocking to them "and they that heard it said, Then who can be saved?" (Luke 18:26). That is a good question for us. Surveys show that the majority of people in our country believe that they will go to heaven because the good in their lives outweighs the evil. Certainly this is a very comforting belief, but according to the word of God, it is not true. It is tragic that so many feel secure when they are not.

Let us begin with the recognition of our need for God's forgiveness. "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). While some sins may be against people, all sin is against God. Joseph replied to Potiphar's wife, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). The sin she suggested would have been against her husband, but Joseph saw a higher accountability. Since sin is against God, He alone can tell us when He grants forgiveness. Our feelings and man's reasoning do not change what God says. What God requires of one person today is what He requires of all for "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). Nowhere has God said that we may do good to erase our sins.

One basic teaching of Christ is that no one is saved by his own works. When Paul wrote to saved people he said, "For by grace have you been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Grace means favor unearned. Salvation is not earned by human efforts. Even when men by faith do what God requires, salvation is not earned. Again Paul says, "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saves us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Why did Christ die? In teaching His disciples about the Lord's supper He explained the cup saying, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). People were living good lives before Christ came. If that were all that is necessary, Jesus died for nothing. Why would God send His Son to die if one can be saved by living a good moral

life? In His sermon on the mount Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). When He commissioned His apostles to preach the gospel He said, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations" (Luke 24:47). Repentance is the changing of one's mind about his past. This leads to a change in life-style.

From the verse quoted we see several requirements God has made for one to be forgiven of his sins. Salvation is by faith. Regardless of how he lives, a person who does not believe in Jesus will not be saved. This is what Jesus said. "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Earlier He had said, "ye...shall die in your sin: whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:21). Paul spoke of the "washing of regeneration." This is the new birth Jesus demands. "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). We see this illustrated when the apostles began taking the gospel to the world in Acts 2. Peter preached that Jesus is Lord and Christ. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) Obviously they were convicted by the preaching for it was "when they heard" that they asked. Peter's answer was "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). The Lord spoke of repentance being preached, and of being born of water or the washing of regeneration. This is why Peter told them to repent and be baptized. God requires no less of each one today.

If you have not by faith repented and been baptized into Him, you are still unforgiven. Why continue to live outside of Christ? Obey His word. We are ever ready to study with you and to assist you in your obedience to Him. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name" (Acts 22:16).

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