

What About My Father And Mother?

"A man said to me, 'Brother, I can't take the doctrine you preach that one must be baptized to be saved, because it damns my father and mother who were not baptized.'

"Well, let us see. Do you think one must believe in Jesus Christ to be saved? 'Oh, yes,' he answers. Very well, I will just change my subject from baptism to faith. A Jew comes around and says, 'Mr. Preacher, I can't accept the doctrine you preach, that faith in Jesus is necessary to salvation, because my father and mother died without believing in Christ.'

"The Jew thinks as much of his father as you do of yours. By the same argument with which you eliminate baptism, because perchance it damns some of your ancestors, he also eliminates faith in Christ. Then I preach that the knowledge of God is necessary to salvation and a Chinese comes around, and says, 'I can't take the doctrine you preach, because it damns my poor father and mother, who died without the knowledge of God' -- and there you see the whole plan of salvation is nullified by contingencies.

"Friends, I suggest that we leave the matter of clemency to the judge (a judge only has the power of clemency) and let us observe the law. I have no authority to preach clemency -- I must preach what God commands men to do to be saved -- and I know what the law says."

- by Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

Do You Feel Saved?

Are you saved? How do you know you are saved? "I know I am saved because I feel it in my heart," many often say. But are the feelings of your heart the proper standard to determine your salvation? We do not use this standard in other matters. No one says of his bank statement, "I know it is right because I feel it in my heart," while they ignore to properly add and subtract from their balance. No carpenter says, "I know the board is 10 feet long because I feel it in my heart" - he checks the board with the proper standard, the measuring tape! But, when it comes to a matter far more important than bank balances and board lengths - salvation - many are willing to trust their eternal welfare to their feelings.

Can you trust the feelings of your heart to tell you whether or not you are saved? The Bible says "No!" "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool" (Prov. 28:26), for "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12). Feelings are subjective, they change from person to person and even within the same person. Truth is objective, it remains fixed and does not change, regardless of the person or the year.

The way you feel about salvation does not change God's truth concerning it, just as the way you feel about math, does not change the truth of it. Whether or not you are saved is an objective fact, not subject to the whims of how you feel from moment to moment. So how can they know they are saved? The Scripture says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

You do not have to rely upon your own faulty and deceptive feelings concerning your salvation. The Lord has given "the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15). The knowledge and confidence of salvation can only come from the objective standard of God's Word. God will judge you by His Word, not by how you feel. Jesus proclaimed, "the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). What is your salvation based upon? Many people feel in their heart they are saved because they have "simply believed" in Jesus. While salvation certainly requires faith in Jesus, faith alone does not and cannot save according to God's Word.

James wrote, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:24). Other people have prayed and "asked Jesus to come into their heart" and now they feel they are saved. But nowhere does the Bible teach one must simply pray to Jesus in order to be saved.

God's Word teaches to be saved you must: hear the gospel (Rom. 10:17); believe Jesus is the Son of God (Mk. 16:16); repent of your sins (Acts 2:38); confess Jesus (Rom. 10:9; Acts 8:36-38) and be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16). Those who obey God's Word do not have to guess whether or not they are saved based upon the feelings of their heart.

They know they are saved because their salvation is based on the unchanging Truth of God's Word.

- by **Wayne Greeson**

"Numbers" versus Real Growth

I have an uneasiness about any great emphasis on statistics in measuring the growth of churches. I am skeptical because numbers can so often mask what is happening to people. The ultimate goal of our Father for His children is both spiritual and personal. He wills that we be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Success or failure in this enterprise cannot be measured by mere statistics. A far more important question to raise as numbers change is how individual saints are faring in their effort to be more Christ-like. Churches only truly grow as the individual members of those assemblies grow. What is the glory of our numbers if people are not prepared to go to heaven?

- by **Paul Earnhart**

Role Models

When it comes to sports - we do it. In business - we do it. In almost every field of endeavor we look for role models. We try to find others who have been successful, and then we imitate them. God's word tells us to do the same thing in spiritual matters.

The best role models are found right in the Scriptures. Jesus is the ultimate example: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Other great heroes of faith serve as good role models, too. Paul urged us to be "followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Hebrews chapter eleven is full of examples of faithful men and women who serve as worthy patterns for us to imitate.

Beyond these 'champions' of the Bible, let us suggest that we can also look to our own brethren. In any church there are faithful, zealous, devoted Christians who are working hard to live for the Lord. They resist temptation, spread the word, encourage others and generally work tirelessly to do His will. Look to them. Imitate them. Paul encouraged this approach: "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" (Philippians 3:17).

We know this method works in the material world. We look for 'winners' and we imitate them. Let's do the same thing when it comes to our most important endeavor - serving God!

- by **Greg Gwin**