

ARE YOU SAVED?

Sometimes well-meaning people ask that question. I always want to respond with, "From what?" There's nothing wrong with the question, but it does need some further qualifications. Whether or not a person has a hope for heaven and immortal glory through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is a question we all should ponder. When the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream prior to the birth of Jesus, he assured him that it was right for him to marry Mary, for he said, "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for *he shall save his people from their sins*" (Mt. 1:21). If we believe the Bible, we believe that Mary did bring forth a son and that Joseph called his name Jesus, and that He (Jesus) did, indeed save His people from their sins when he shed His blood on Calvary's cross. To contemplate our interest in that great salvation is indeed spiritually profitable.

However, too many times Bible readers see that word *salvation*, or the word *save(d)* and do not stop to ask the question we have asked above. In the above text, no doubt the context has to do with *salvation from hell* and final damnation, but many times the context will show otherwise. For example, the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Tim. 2:11-15, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she *shall be saved in childbearing*, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." Obviously *a woman does not get saved from eternal hell by having a baby*. The context has to do with *temporal blessings* the woman may enjoy in raising godly children who follow her as she follows the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's look at another example of what might be called *temporal salvation* from First Timothy. "The Apostle Paul tells young Timothy to "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both *save thyself, and them that hear thee*" (1 Tim. 4:16). From an eternal standpoint, *we are not self-saviors nor do we help to save others*. Jesus Christ is the only one able to save one from the wrath to come. Besides, Timothy was already a minister of the gospel and obviously born again and therefore already saved eternally. Paul obviously alludes to *a temporal salvation*, a salvation from either moral or doctrinal error. The Apostle Paul speaking of his method in gospel ministry says, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, *that I might by all means save some*" (1 Co. 9:22). *The Lord Jesus Christ does not employ assistant saviors*, that is, as far as eternal salvation is concerned. He holds that job himself and asks for and looks for no assistance in the matter. In fact he won't use you even if you volunteer. But, the Apostle Paul clearly says that it is his desire to save some. The question is, "What did Paul desire to save them from?" Certainly he was not so presumptuous as to believe he could save them from eternal hell. His desire in preaching the gospel was to save some from error, false doctrine, immorality, paganism, Jewish fables and superstition or any other thing that is contrary to the word of God. That's what the gospel is for. It can, when accompanied by the Spirit of God, change lives, but it was never designed to save souls from hell.

The Apostle Peter wrote about the ark that Noah built to the saving of his family. He said of that old ark, "...wherein few, that is *eight souls were saved by water*." Then he said, "The like figure whereunto even *baptism doth also now save us* (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ"

(1 Pet. 3:20-21). One does not get to heaven by being baptized in water (important as that ordinance is) but it certainly does save the repentant sinner from a condemned conscience. So the next time you read the word save(d) or salvation in your Bible, ask yourself the question, "Saved from what?" You'll find the answer in the context and it will help you to a better understanding of many passages in God's book.

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