

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIANITY

No. 5. What Must I Do to Secure Salvation?

(A sermon by Frank A. Andrews of The Christian Church.)

Acts 16:30 "What must I do to be saved?"

Altho church services have been resumed, I prefer to publish this sermon in the columns of the Gazette-Times rather than to preach it from the pulpit, because it is the concluding sermon of the series of studies in the fundamentals of Christianity and I am anxious to present this study to those who have read the

others of the series.

The question "What must I do to secure salvation?" or as it was asked by the Philippian jailor in the words of the text: "What must I do to be saved?" is a question which is assuredly worthy of a sincere and thorough investigation. Where shall we look for an answer to such a question? Christianity, in so far as it pertains to the spiritual and eternal, is not within the realm of science, therefore science can give us no answer to the question. Philosophy can give us, at the best, only vague speculations and possibilities, no assurance. If it were possible for man to attain eternal life and the forgiveness of sin by the devices of his own intelligence then man also might be qualified to say by what means salvation could be secured. However, such is not the case. Nevertheless some people seem to think that God has implanted in man's nature some

sort of faculty by which each may determine for himself what he must do to be saved. Evidently the Philippian jailor had no such faculty.

Conscience is no guide in such things. The conscience is a product of education. It approves as right or condemns wrong whatever the individual has been taught to consider as right or wrong. The Chinese used to bury living servants in the grave with the wealthy dead. The people of India used to burn the living widow with the body of the dead husband. Some of the African people used to live on human flesh. The Esquimaux used to kill their infirm and aged parents. In each case conscience approved these deeds because these things had been taught as right.

Salvation is of God. Therefore the only way by which one can answer the question "What must I do to be saved?" is to find out what God has

said. His word is authoritative and can be safely followed. To find out what God has said upon this subject we naturally turn to the New Testament because the New Testament contains the Christian scriptures. The Old Testament contains the Jewish scriptures.

Faith.

The answer of the Apostle Paul to the Philippian jailor was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." It has previously been pointed out that faith is one of the elements of Christianity. That the gospel has to do especially with this faith element, setting forth those facts in relation to Jesus which must be believed. Further, it was shown that salvation was impossible without faith in Jesus Christ. It may appear somewhat confusing, however, to mention faith in connection with the question "What must I do?"

But faith is properly regarded in the scriptures as an act, a mental act. To believe is just as much an act of the normal intellect as to remember, to purpose, or to think. To be unable to do any one of these things is to be mentally deficient. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." "God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." "He that disbelieveth shall be condemned." Mk. 16:16.

How can a man who does not believe obtain faith. First there must be the will, the desire to believe. Some men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Some don't want to believe. After the desire is there an intelligent study of God's word, the principal Christian evidence, will produce faith. Faith cometh not by prayer, or fasting but "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10:17.

Repentance.

It would be a serious mistake to conclude that to believe in Jesus Christ is the only thing necessary to secure salvation. It is the first thing, not the only thing. On the day of Pentecost, after the resurrection of Jesus, Peter preached in Jerusalem and many of his hearers asked, "Brethren, what shall we do?" The answer was "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." Acts 2:37-38. They were not told to believe because they had just listened to the gospel proclamation in which they had been

told that faith was necessary. They were told to take the next step, their question was evidence that they believed. The literal meaning of "repentance" is "a change of mind or purpose," but at the time the word was used by Peter it had come to have the meaning of a change in conduct, resulting from a change of mind or purpose. It is not sorrow, but sorrow, or regret, sometimes produces repentance; see 2 Cor. 7:10. Repentance is not penance, but penance may sometimes be a part of repentance. If we have lived lives of unbelief, of sin, and of selfishness we must change our conduct and make it harmonize with faith in Jesus. John the Baptist preached repentance, the Lord himself preached it, Peter preached it the day of Pentecost, Paul said "Now He commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Acts 17:30.

Confession.

In the Roman letter Paul makes this statement "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Chapter 10:9-11. No one who sincerely believes in Jesus Christ and honestly wants to live the Christian life will try to hide his faith. If Jesus suffered and died on the cross for you, surely the very least you can do for him is to publicly profess Him as your Savior, even if it is a little hard to do so. A study of the instances of confession recorded in the New Testament clearly shows that a confession of faith in Jesus Christ was required of converts before the administration of baptism. The history of the early church shows further that those who became Christians continually manifested their faith before the world by their words and deeds. They were not ashamed. Their confession of faith was not

limited to the period preceding baptism, it was continuous. If they were persecuted or laughed at for their faith, they were proud to suffer for the sake of the faith. Jesus himself said: "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in Heaven." Mat. 10:32-33.

Obedience.

Christianity would be unreasonable and destructive religion if it did not insist that its professors should strive at all times and in all ways to overcome sin and evil. The requirement of repentance has to do with a reformation of life. Confession requires that our words and deeds shall show forth our faith. If, as shown in a previous study, sin is the transgression of law then obedience to God will be the most helpful method of putting sin out of the life one lives. If there is one lesson that stands out prominently all thru the Old and New Testaments it is the lesson of obedience. The details for the building of the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, and the temple were laid down in the most minute particular and the people were instructed to be very careful to build according to the pattern laid down. At the time of the exodus from Egypt only those homes escaped, upon the door posts of which the blood of a kid had been sprinkled, in all other homes the first-born were slain. The Jews were instructed just how to carry the ark of the covenant, only the family of Kohath of the tribe of Levi were permitted to touch it. But one time a man named Uzzah thought the ark was going to fall over so he just put his hand against it to steady it. He had no right to touch it. "God smote him for his error; and there he died by the ark of God." 2 Sam. 6:7. This man had very good intentions but he had forgotten that God requires

(Continued on Page Seven)

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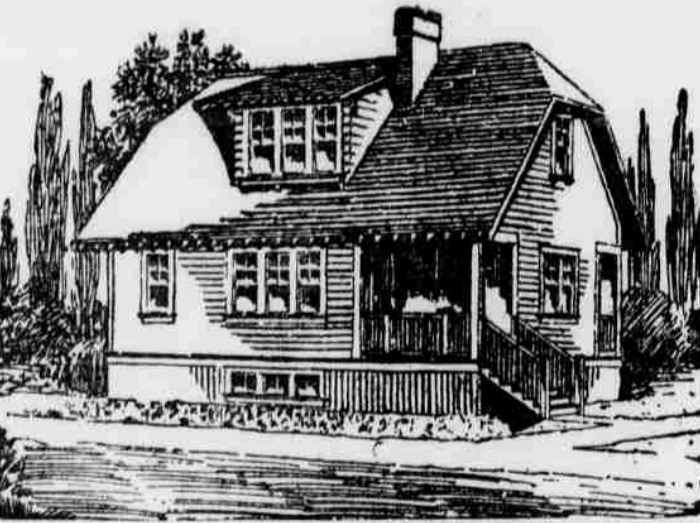
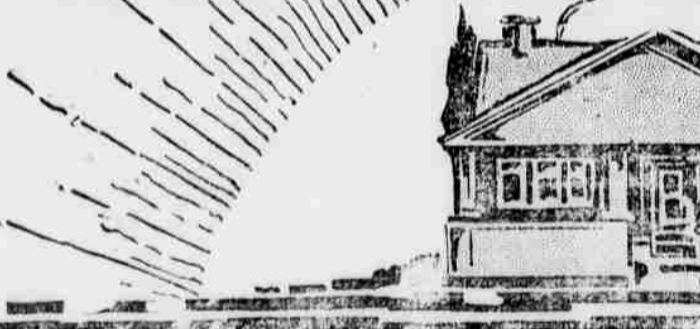
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