

Questions and Bible Answers



Once Saved, Always Saved?

Dear brother Thurman: Our preacher tells us we can know we are saved. That sounds suspicious to me, like 'once saved always saved.' -R.P., TX

First, we can and should know if we are saved, or not. The people on the day of Pentecost knew they were lost and cried out for help. Once they were baptized, I am sure they felt they had done what God commanded and that the Lord was pleased with them. I am sure they knew they were saved.

Second, John tells us over and over again, we can know we are saved. 'And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son' (1 John 5:11). 'These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life' (1 John 5:13). John says specifically that God has given us eternal life and that he wrote this letter to let these believers know they had eternal life. To suggest that we cannot be sure of our salvation is to display a lack of trust in the work of God accomplished on the cross.

Third, just because I can know I am saved doesn't mean that I can never turn my back on the Lord and lose my salvation. Some teachers came to the churches of Galatia and tried to get those Christians to accept the rules and regulations of the Law of Moses. The apostle Paul got very specific with that issue. 'And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace' (Gal. 5:3-4). Paul says clearly that accepting any rules outside of the message of Christ can cause us to fall from grace.

And, even more clearly we are warned about people who did just that. 'For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame' (Heb. 6:4-6). Notice these people had the Spirit, and had experienced the power of God. But, by turning away from the Christ, they had then fallen away.

Another group comes under the same condemnation. Paul condemned legalists in the book of Galatians. Peter condemns those who think they can use grace as some sort of excuse

to sin. 'For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them' (2 Peter 2:20-21). Again, pay attention to the fact these are people who have escaped the defilements of the world through their response to Jesus as the Christ. That can only mean saved people. But, they are now again entangled in sin and are worse off than ever.

In conclusion, we can know we are saved. And, just as true we can know when we have fallen away from the Lord, either by adding to His commands or by ignoring His righteousness. Nowhere does scripture support the idea that a believer cannot lose his salvation. 'Once saved always saved' is just not Biblical. But, neither is the idea of 'once saved, maybe saved, maybe lost'.

-DAVID THURMAN



We have discovered that it takes about as much effort to escape work as to do it.

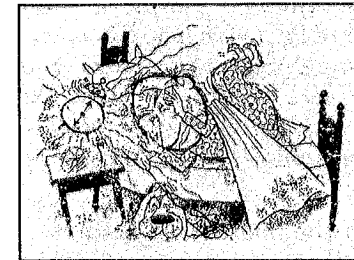
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GOSPEL MINUTES

The Gospel by Proclamation in Minutes of Meditation

'Bed Too Short and Cover Too Narrow'

The prophet Isaiah, in seeking to bring God's wayward people back to Him, pronounced many 'woes' them. Some of the most graphic of these is found in Isa. 28. He writes, 'Woe to the proud' and 'Woe to the rich' (v. 1), 'Woe to the drunkards' (v. 7) and 'Woe to those who trust in worldly wisdom' (v. 9). Then the conclusion is drawn with regard to all such in verse 20: 'For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it; and the covering too narrow than that he can wrap himself in it.'



When you are tired and weary and looking forward to a restful night, there are few things worse than a bed that provides misery instead of rest, and frustration rather than peace and comfort. A bed too short to stretch out on and cover too narrow to wrap around! One would spend a miserable night indeed. But look at his point: those who trust in, and live for, the wrong things are doomed to a life of misery and unrest. Why? Because those things are 'a bed too short and cover too narrow.' They may offer promise of rest, peace and satisfaction, but their promise is empty, there is no fulfillment in them.

Isaiah was writing to those who sought rest, but in the wrong place. They searched for happiness, but in the wrong activities. They searched for knowledge, but at the wrong

source. They tried to find meaning and purpose to life, but they looked to the world instead of to God. And so do many people today.

'They Loved the Praise of Men'

Some folk put a very high value on 'what others think' of them. The movie stars and the politicians thrive on the adulation of a gullible public, and often are willing to sacrifice their principles and moral judgment in order to keep others' approval. As Isaiah wrote, 'Woe to the crown of pride' (Isa. 28:1). Too many are like Pontius Pilate, who found no fault in Jesus, but 'willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered

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Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified" (Mark 15:15). To be popular with the Jews, Pilate did what he knew was wrong. How many other politicians have done the same thing?

When Jesus walked this earth, during His ministry, He gave plenty of evidence that He is God's Son, the Christ, the long awaited and promised Jewish Messiah. One of the rulers of the Jews came to him and said plainly, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). In spite of this correct assessment, we read: "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess (it), lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God" (John 12:42-43). As the apostle Paul put it later, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). It may be natural to want everyone to approve us; but if it means giving up our principles of right and wrong, the price is far to high.

Pride still "goes before destruction" (Prov. 16:18), and God still hates "the proud look" (Prov. 6:16). When we are so intent on "holding up our head" that we turn from God's way, we will find the "woe" of Isaiah. Then the pride we feel and the approval or admiration of those around us will be found "a bed too short and a cover too narrow."

**"Enjoy Pleasure: Behold, This is Vanity"**

We live in a pleasure-oriented society. There are the movies, entertainment centers, television, theater, recordings, etc. All of them are saying, in effect, "Sit back, relax and we will entertain you." And people believe the ads, that "pleasure" is the need and right of all. So a young man goes berserk and kills twenty-six people in an elementary school. Another sets fire to a theater and opens fire with an assault rifle and fourteen more die. Demands are made to legalize everything from "pot" to baby killing. Divorce courts are jammed and children are destitute for the parental love, care and discipline which God has ordained for them. And the people cry for more. As Isaiah wrote, "These reel with wine; and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment" (Isa. 28:7).

Solomon recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes, his search for the meaning and purpose of life. He found that pleasure is not the answer: "I said in my heart, Come now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?" (Eccle. 2:1-2). A popular song of a few years ago boasted, "They satisfy." But they didn't, and they don't. Although man needs some relaxation, a steady diet of "pleasure" is empty of meaning and robs man of his purpose for living. In the avid pursuit of pleasure by modern society, the words of Isa. 55:2 must ring out: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"

Man needs something more than pleasure to give his life meaning and purpose. Man's SOUL needs food, also. As Jesus asked in Matt. 16:26, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lost his own soul? Or what will a man give for his soul?" Solomon sought for the meaning and purpose of life, and then recorded his search in the Ecclesiastes. He concluded pleasure was empty, the mighty works he had accomplished were also vain, as were all of his vast riches. But when he came to the end of his search, he wrote: "This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccle. 12:13). A frustrated society pursues pleasure, and finds it is "a bed too hort and cover too narrow."

**Riches Make Themselves Wings**

"If I just had lots of money, then I would be

happy." So goes the reasoning of many. But it ain't necessarily so. Jesus referred to "the deceitfulness of riches" (Matt. 13:22). The promise is made by riches, but it isn't kept. One of the riches men the world has ever seen was Solomon, but he wrote, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase: this also is vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what advantage is there to the owner thereof, save the beholding (of them) with his eyes? The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the fulness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept by the owner thereof to his hurt" (Eccle. 5:10-13).

Many trust that riches will bring them satisfaction, but they are wrong. The richer we get as nation, the more corrupt we become. The reason is clear. Man needs something to satisfy the SOUL. Ezekiel sums it up well when he wrote, "They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be as an unclean thing; their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of Jehovah: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels; because it hath been the stumbling block of their iniquity" (Ezek. 7:19).

There is much that money cannot buy. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). The false premise that money will cure our ills is exposed by the apostle Paul in 1 Tim. 6:9, "They that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts such as drown men in destruction and perdition." What will happen when we put our trust in riches? "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings, Like an eagle that flieth toward heaven" (Prov. 23:5). What a tragedy — a man spends his life making a fortune, then finds that his family doesn't really need it nor appreciate it. His own purpose is empty and meaningless and often he loses all this money for which he gave his life. He is then left only with "a bed too short and a cover too narrow."

**"The World Through Its Wisdom Knew Not God"**

The most "unteachable" people are those who already "know it all." And so the prophet asks, "Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine?" (Isa. 28:9). We should know, "That the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). Yet we still lean to human wisdom, look to the

human solutions and laud human learning. In our "intellectual age" it is not the Isaiah or the Jeremiah that is praised, but the Einstein or the Edison. But as much as we admire learned men, guidance for our lives must come from God: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). We cannot guide ourselves, nor can other men guide us. Jesus said, "They shall all be taught of God" (John 6:45).

Solomon wrote in Prov. 3:5-7, "Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding: in all thy way acknowledge him, and he will direct thy path. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear Jehovah, and depart from evil." This will satisfy the hunger of the soul, and nothing else can do that. We can never "know God" with our senses or through man's wisdom, but through the word of God. When Paul preached Christ and His cross, he said it is "to them that perish foolishness; but to us who are saved, it is the power of God." He then added, "The world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:18,21). "Science" can never prove that there is a God, nor reveal His nature, nor discover the will of God. The wisdom of the world can never know such things.

Only one source reveals God and His nature and His will for man. That is His word, the Bible. As the apostle Paul wrote, "For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:11-13). And of these words, he wrote, "All Scripture is inspired of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). You will not find God in a science laboratory, nor in any other field of secular knowledge. He is not revealed there. He reveals Himself only through His word. There are many who seek the academic degrees and wisdom, but leave God out of their curriculum. Then they find that their intellectualism is "a bed too short, and a cover too narrow."

For all of those who have fallen for the wrong source to try to find God, Isaiah gives the solution in Isa. 55:6, "Seek ye Jehovah, while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near."  
—CLEM THURMAN