

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord Will Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

No. 52

June 2016

Buying My Way Into Heaven

The Story

Over the weekend of April 10-13th 2015, Tito and Amanda Watts were arrested for selling “golden tickets to heaven”. The price for a ticket was ninety-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents! It was a twofold confidence trick, for they told buyers the tickets were made of gold and secondly, having the ticket meant a reserved place in heaven for the individual whose name was on the ticket. Upon arrival at the pearly gates all they had to do was present the ticket and entrance was immediately granted. The tragedy is it seems no one thought of how they would carry the ticket beyond death into the spirit world! The greater tragedy was not only did hundreds of people lose the money, but they did not know they were being duped by Satan, for the price had already been paid. It is very sad that people think they can buy their way into Heaven! Then I thought, “Is that not what religious confidence tricksters have done for centuries, and are still doing today?”

Buying Your Way To Heaven

Old Grandma Jennings was for many years taken in by a spiritual confidence scam. Brought up in the north of Ireland the minister of her church told the congregation how they could buy their way to Heaven. Of course he did not use the word “buy” for the congregation would have known that was a scam. Instead he changed the word from “buy” to “work” your admittance into Heaven. It was and is a brilliant tactic of Satan, for it makes people think they can do something to merit Heaven! He taught them to try to be an honest neighbour; keep the golden rule; do the best you can; go to church; get confirmed and take holy communion. These things will count as good works before God and at the judgment, when the good works and bad works are put on the scales, the good will outweigh the bad and they will get into Heaven. It was a wicked lie from the devil. Other religious tricksters take a more financially rewarding for themselves approach. They instruct people to give cash to the church or individuals to help pay for either personal sins or those of others. One religious scam teaches that there is the “Treasury of Merit” which one can draw on to help offset spiritual deficiencies. Other lines of buying a place in heaven are to show respect for what is sacred; be careful how one uses the name of God; and don’t tell lies about other people. Across the world, from thousands of pulpits, people are being told that if they do good things they will get into Heaven. The dreadful reality is thousands do not know they have been told a lie, and by the time they discover they have been duped, it is too late.

There Is a Place in Heaven For The Individual

The holy apostle Peter wrote that there is an “inheritance . . . reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4), and the Lord Jesus said: “I go to prepare a place for you” (Jn. 14:2). The question is, “Who is the ‘you’ in both passages, and how can an individual be sure of a place in heaven?”

God is true (Jn. 3:33) and cannot lie (Titus 1:2), and He informs humanity that the only way of salvation is “without works” and “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). Despite what we have been told by men, God’s word stands true. The Devil is a liar (Jn. 8:44) and he has his emissaries preaching the way to heaven is by “good works”. This is totally opposite to that which God says. Note that the Holy Spirit, through Isaiah, does not say, “all our righteousness” but says “all our righteousnesses”, that is plural indicating that every aspect of our good works are all deficient. When the rich young ruler came to the Lord he bowed with respect and asked: “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (Mk. 10:17). The Lord reminded him of the commandments and his response was: “Master, all these have I kept from my youth” (Mk. 10:20). He presented all his “righteousnesses” but as with all of us, there was a deficiency and it came with a heavy cost. The inspired record is: “Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me” (Mk. 10:21). What a truth, no matter how many good works we do, no matter how long we do them, the divine assessment is: “One thing thou lackest”. We can never purchase or inherit salvation and Heaven through our good works. It is only through the finished work of Christ on the cross that salvation is available. Each individual must personally accept that Christ died for them and He offers this salvation as a free gift without personal merit. In the words of Toplady who wrote the hymn “Rock of Ages”:

Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress; Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Saviour, or I die!

The Impossibility of Getting To Heaven By Self Effort and Good Works

There are a number of “impossibilities” which prevent an individual getting to Heaven or having salvation by good works. Some of these are:

- a) The unchanging holiness of God
- b) The unchanging sinfulness of man
- c) The unchanging decree of God
- d) The exclusiveness of God’s way of salvation

The unchanging holiness of God

There are attributes of God which can never change His love, mercy, grace, justice, and holiness. He is impeccably holy. “Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God” (Josh. 24:19); “The LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness” (Isa. 5:16). Throughout the scripture it is emphasized the unchanging character of God, for it states: “I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. 3:6) and “There is no shadow (or confusion) caused by Him turning” (Jam. 1:17).

Being Holy He will judge in holiness, and because of His perfection of justice, there will not be an individual who will be able to accuse Him of bias. His holiness will not be degraded due to sympathy for He gives man the opportunity for salvation, and if they call God a liar and reject His salvation, then His holy justice will be executed.

The unchanging sinfulness of man

The first obstacle to receiving eternal life is, “patient continuance in well doing” (Rom. 2:7). This means, despite all opposition and awkwardness of people, never once have they ever retaliated in anger, losing their temper, and saying things they ought never have said, not even once. If they have failed on one occasion they have not continued in well doing.

Consider the golden rule: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22:39). The question was asked: “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” (Matt. 22:36). The Lord answering said: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22:37-39). The golden rule is not the greatest commandment, but loving the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, then “love thy neighbour as thyself”. Can anyone say they have, since the day of their birth, always lived this way? There is not an individual who can say, “I have never broken any of the commandments”.

The unchanging decree of God

Paul goes to great lengths to explain that salvation is not by works and speaks of two individuals, Abraham and David. Concerning Abraham, he said, and I paraphrase: "If Abraham could be justified by works he would glory in what he could do" (Rom. 4:2), but God caused it to be recorded: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). Concerning David, the Holy Spirit recorded: "David also describeth the blessedness of the man (a generic term which means men or women), unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:6). Abraham was declared righteous by God, and he was not even circumcised. This is important for Abraham was declared righteous by God without any religious ritual. If a person has to work for salvation then it is not a gift but a debt being repaid.

If an individual determined to work for salvation, to buy their way into Heaven, then they are indicating that God is a liar for he promised righteousness through faith (Rom. 4:13-14). Therefore, a person who seeks to work for salvation, tries to buy their way into Heaven, not only is insulting God but also calling God a liar.

Consider the thief on the cross. What a background he had, a murderer, a rioter, a thief, and to this man the Lord gives the promise: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Lk. 23:43). The man was made fit for heaven without any works. He was on a cross, and would be dead within a few hours. What works could he do to buy his way into heaven? None. It was too late to turn over a new leaf, get baptized, say some prayers, help the needy, or be a good neighbour. Death was slowly developing throughout his body and there was only one thing he had in his favour. It was that he believed the Lord was who he said he was. On that foundation, he was made righteous and fit for heaven.

What about the centurion who was a Roman? He was brought up with a myriad of gods and just been responsible for overseeing the death of the Lord Jesus. What could he do to buy his way into heaven? Nothing. Yet, he will be there for he acknowledged who Christ is. In the acknowledgment of who Jesus was, both the centurion and thief realized Christ was the only One who could assure them of eternal life. They grasped the opportunity and received the gift without works.

The exclusiveness of God's way of salvation

It is exclusive on how it is bestowed.

- a) Thank God we do not work for salvation, it is a free gift. Let me quote the promises of God:
 - i) "The gift of God is eternal life" (KJV)
 - ii) "The free gift of God is eternal life" (ESV)
 - iii) "The free gift of God is eternal life" (ASV)
 - iv) "God's free gift is eternal life" (GNT)

In Summary

Can anything be clearer? No human being anywhere in the world can work for salvation for it is a free gift. For example, I buy someone a nice new car, far beyond what they could afford and tell them it is a gift from me because I love them. If that individual was to inform me that they would love to have it but will not accept it because they could not pay for it or gain it by some means, I would be insulted. The fact is, thousands are insulting God by rejecting the offer of His salvation which He provided by the sacrifice of His Son at Calvary. They are informing God by their actions that they will work to cleanse themselves from their sins and gain admittance to heaven. I would be infuriated and so is God, yet unlike me who would never offer the gift again, God does.

As with any gift, a price had to be paid, but it is more than a price being paid, it is being changed to be suitable for the presence of God and all sins eradicated so that the individual can stand before God in all the righteousness of Christ, clothed in garments of salvation.

Thank God salvation is the gift of God, and as in any gift, all one has to do is accept it. That is all a sinner can do and must do to be assured of a place in heaven. The tragic reality is that untold thousands will not believe the message of free grace and try to buy their way into heaven, only to find too late that they are banished from God for all eternity in the lake of Fire. It behoves each of us to answer the question:

If God were to take you right at this moment and ask, "Give me one reason why I should let you into heaven?"
What would you say?

... Rowan Jennings

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