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## **The Unconverted “Believer” (7): The True Disciple of Jesus Christ**

### **Introduction:**

A most blessed Christian author of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was **Arthur Pink** (1886-1952). He sought to exalt the glory of God in all of His writings. Pink’s life’s purpose might be stated, “to humble the pride of man, to exalt the grace of God in salvation, and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”<sup>1</sup> He sought to set forth the true nature and way of salvation against much prevalent error. He wrote these words of his desire and effort:

Now it is the duty of God’s servants to provide help to exercised souls on this extremely important matter, to expose the lies of these “false prophets,” to make plain the way of salvation. This is best done by defining and showing the relation of good works unto salvation, for it is at this point more than any other that the emissaries of satan have fatally deceived souls. The principle errors which have been advanced thereon may be summed up under these two heads: *salvation by works, and salvation without works*.<sup>2</sup>

The first of these two errors is taught by Roman Catholicism. Rome teaches that through one’s good works produced by grace, the sinner earns God’s favor and secures his own salvation by the merit of his works. This, of course, is contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture. The second error--that a sinner can have salvation without works--is the popular teaching of vast numbers of evangelicals. They have been taught that salvation may be attained if they only believe the truth regarding who Jesus Christ is and what He did through His life, death on His cross for sinners, and His resurrection from the dead. They teach that faith alone is necessary for salvation, not good works. Good works are desirable, but they are not essential to the obtaining of salvation.<sup>3</sup> Just as Arthur Pink sought to dispel and correct this false understanding, so have we. Although we are not saved by our works, we will not be saved apart from our works. Although good works are not the grounds of our salvation, they are essential to salvation. Addressing today’s passage will underscore this biblical truth.

The last time that we were considering this important subject, “The Unconverted ‘Believer’”, we spoke about the conversion event itself and the life that characterizes the narrow path that leads to eternal life. Jesus had taught His disciples the way of salvation. He said,

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:13f)

Entering the “narrow gate” is a metaphor of the conversion of a guilty sinner becoming a true Christian. The “difficult way” depicts the kind of life that leads the Christian unto eternal life. Jesus not

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<sup>1</sup> These words are the stated purpose of the publication, *Free Grace Broadcaster*, which is a seasonal publication of Chapel Library, Pensacola, Fl. ([www.mountzion.org](http://www.mountzion.org)). I have been receiving this publication for a number of decades. I have learned that I can endorse everything that this ministry produces and makes available. Virtually all of Arthur Pink’s publications are available for free through this website: <https://www.chapellibrary.org/author/pinkarthurw>

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Pink, **The Broad and Narrow Way** (International Outreach, Inc., 2014), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> A major cause of error in this matter is that many think that “salvation” is only the forgiveness of sins that is attained fully when faith is initially placed in Christ. But salvation is much more than God’s forgiveness. God saves sinners from sin itself, not just the penalty of sin. And our future and final salvation will occur at the final Judgment of mankind, after a life of good works show forth proof of having lived in saving faith.

only described the rather obscure and difficult gate of entrance, but He also spoke of the difficulty of the way and the relative fewness of people who choose that course in life. This is in contrast to the great number of the people of the world who will never find or pursue this “way” unto eternal life. Let us turn to **Matthew 16:21-28** in which we read our Lord setting forth in greater detail the nature of this difficult way that leads to life. The one who enters the narrow gate of repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ and sets out upon his life-long journey to gain eternal life is set forth here as a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

But before we read the specific passage we wish to consider, let us first provide the setting for our Lord’s words. The Galilean ministry of Jesus was drawing to a close and Jesus and His disciples would soon leave the region to travel to Jerusalem where He was destined to “suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed.” But there He would also be “raised the third day.” When Jesus had first called His disciples to follow Him, they did not understand His true identity or the true nature of His life and ministry. He had presented Himself to them in a veiled manner, referring to Himself to be the “Son of Man.” Jesus did not disclose to them His true identity as the promised Messiah lest they project their errant Jewish perceptions of the kind of Messiah they thought that God would send to remove their transgression of His law and to inaugurate the promised kingdom of David. Over the course of His ministry Jesus revealed to them the true nature of His mission. And it was just prior to the event recorded in our passage that His followers came to fully comprehend and confess His true identity—Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. Jesus had asked them, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matt. 16:13). After several responses He then asked, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter responded, perhaps on behalf of all twelve disciples, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). It was then that Jesus said to Peter:

“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup>And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matt. 16:17-19)

But then Jesus prohibited them from making known His true identity. We read, “Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ” (Matt. 16:20).

It is then that Jesus began to teach them clearly and forthrightly of His approaching suffering, His death, and His resurrection that would take place in Jerusalem. And upon imparting this information to them, He then set before them their responsibility to commit themselves fully and wholly to live for Him. He assured them that though the way would prove to be difficult for them, the outcome of their life of discipleship to Him would be glorious; it would result in the salvation of their souls. We might say that is one of the clearest passages of Holy Scripture in which we are taught what it is to become and to live as true disciples of Jesus Christ. We might also say that the Lord Jesus set forth here more fully the nature of the “difficult way”, which leads to life, which we considered last time. Here is Matthew 16:21-28.

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

<sup>22</sup>Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

<sup>23</sup>But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

<sup>24</sup>Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. <sup>26</sup>For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>27</sup>For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. <sup>28</sup>Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

In our attempt to set forth the true nature of conversion and the way of salvation that the Word of God reveals to us, we have also sought to give reasons why there are so many nominal Christians in evangelical churches, those who wrongly believe that they have salvation. Our Lord Jesus declared that in the Day of Judgment there will be “many” who think themselves to be true Christians only then to hear His pronouncement, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matt. 7:23). They will be excluded from His presence, sentenced to everlasting damnation for having lived lives of lawlessness (Matt. 7:22f). It is difficult to imagine witnessing so many shocked and horrorstruck souls excluded from the blessing of eternal life as they are consigned to “the blackness of darkness forever” (2 Pet. 2:17). It is our desire and intention that no one here or within the sphere of influence of this church’s ministry discover themselves to be among the lost on that great Day of Judgment. We will do all that we can do and all that the Lord enables us to do to deliver you into the everlasting blessedness of His eternal Kingdom. We desire that every one of you will hear the words of the Lord on that Day, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34).

We have shown that there are presently in churches and there will be on that Day many who are Christian in name only, because the true nature of salvation is not clearly and widely taught and the content of the biblical gospel is not fully proclaimed. All too often the so-called gospel that is proclaimed is this:

“If you simply believe who Jesus Christ is in truth, that He is the Son of God and God the Son, who lived a sinless life but who died on the cross as a substitute for sinners but that He rose again the third day, then you will be eternally saved.”

And so, it is commonly asserted, “You need not do anything but believe, after all, we are not saved by works but by faith alone.” But that is a distortion of the way of salvation.<sup>4</sup> Again, we read in Matthew 16:21 that Jesus would suffer and die, and then be raised, but then He told His disciples that they too, must follow Him in the same way as He was going before them. Jesus said,

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. <sup>26</sup>For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>27</sup>For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works...”

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<sup>4</sup> As we have previously asserted, salvation is most frequently presented in terms limited to God’s forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ alone. In other words, the way of salvation is proclaimed to be limited alone to the biblical and reformation doctrine of justification by God’s grace alone through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. But the Holy Scriptures set forth salvation to be much more than God forgiving sinners, as essential as that is. Salvation is delivery from sin itself, not just God’s deliverance from the penalty of sin. God’s salvation through Jesus Christ is from all of the effects of sin, from its penalty, the alienation from God and His people, from its power over the lives of His people, and finally from the very presence of sin in His people. Therefore, biblical salvation includes the teaching of God’s justification of guilty sinners through faith alone, His reconciliation of believers unto Himself and of their adoption into His family, His empowering them through sanctification to defeat sin and live righteously in this life, and finally in their glorification when God will deliver His people fully from the sin that has plagued them since birth. The biblical gospel must address the full need of lost sinners who are unwilling and unable to come to Him in repentance and faith. Arthur Pink has also written regarding our Four-fold salvation, but he has a different emphasis than what I have set forth here. Here is a description: “*In this short booklet (A Fourfold Salvation) A. W. Pink gives a clear and uncomplicated explanation of God’s salvation. After noting that this subject has provoked age-long controversy among professing Christians, he assures us that “every genuine Christian has been saved, is now being saved, and will yet be saved.” Under four headings he delves into the four aspects of salvation: salvation from the pleasure of sin (regeneration), from the penalty of sin (justification), from the power of sin (sanctification), and from the presence of sin (glorification). In summary, Pink shows that God’s sovereign work of salvation spans eternity and time, stretching from election in eternity past, to justification and struggle with indwelling sin in this life, and culminating in a merciful end to the struggle as we leave this earth for our eternal home—never to see or experience sin again.*” (<https://www.chapellibrary.org/book/fsal/fourfold-salvation-a-pinkarthurw>)

Salvation is not to be understood as a one-time decision to believe on Jesus. For although the Scriptures do describe in places that true believers have been saved (past tense), in many more instances salvation is set forth as the promise of future deliverance from condemnation on the Day of Judgment. Biblical salvation is assured to them who show forth a life-long commitment of faith to believe upon and to follow in obedience the Lord Jesus Christ. The “difficult” way that leads to life in Matthew 7:13 is the life of a true disciple set forth here in Matthew 16:24ff. Our Lord not only informed His disciples of what was before Him, but also of what was before them if they desired His salvation. **J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900) wrote of our Lord’s words in verses 4ff:

In order to see the connection of these verses we must remember the mistaken impressions of our Lord’s disciples as to the purpose of His coming into the world. Like Peter they could not bear the idea of the crucifixion: they thought that Jesus had come to set up an earthly kingdom; they did not see that He must needs suffer and die. They dreamed of worldly honours and temporal rewards in their Master’s service; they did not understand that true Christians, like Christ, must “be made perfect through sufferings.” Our Lord corrects their misapprehensions in words of peculiar solemnity, which we shall do well to lay up in our hearts.<sup>5</sup>

Let us consider more carefully...

## **I. The meaning of our Lord’s instruction (Matt. 16:24)**

Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

### **A. “If anyone desires to come after Me...”**

This language describes the true desire of anyone who desires to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ. It is his heart’s desire to know Christ, to be His follower. This suggests a deliberate choice with a holy resolve to begin and to continue in this course of life. This is what **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) wrote,

Here is the law of discipleship laid down, and the terms fixed, upon which we may have the honour and benefit of it (v. 24). He said this to His disciples, not only that they might instruct others concerning it, but that by this rule they might examine their own security. Observe, what it is to be a disciple of Christ; it is to come after Him.

This is the language of discipleship. To become a disciple of Jesus Christ is to come “after Him.” It is to follow the same course that He had traveled through life unto His cross. It is a life of faith and obedience to the will of God. Jesus tells us that the one who desires salvation will be that one who “desires to come after” Him. He asks His people to do nothing that He has not done before them. Revelation 14:4f describes the true Christian.

*These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.* These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

**Charles Spurgeon** (1834-1892) wrote of these words of our Lord: “As our Lord, to fulfil His destiny, must sacrifice Himself, so also must everyone who would be His follower.” To come after Jesus is to stay close to Him and to walk in the way that He had lived, and died. As **Matthew Henry** also wrote,

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<sup>5</sup> J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on Matthew** (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986, orig. 1856), p. 201.

A disciple of Christ comes after Him, as the sheep after the shepherd, the servant after his master, the soldiers after their captain; he is one that aims at the same end that Christ aimed at, the glory of God, and the glory of heaven: and one that walks in the same way that He walked in, is led by His Spirit, treads in His steps, submits to His conduct, and *follows the Lamb, whithersoever He goes* (Rev. 14:4).

Jesus then said of the one who desired to come after Him...

### **B. “Let him deny himself...”**

What is it to deny oneself? It is to subordinate one’s own desires, comforts, and one’s own will, in order to do the will of God in Christ. The disciple of Jesus Christ is committed to doing God’s will foremost rather than serving himself in his sin. He has sinful desires as everyone has sinful desires, but through the grace of God he is no longer driven to order his thinking or living according to those desires, but rather he purposes to live according to the will of God. This is why Jesus could say, “For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother” (Mark 3:35). And the Scriptures declare elsewhere, “The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17). True Christians are true disciples of Jesus Christ who desire and are committed to doing the will of God from the heart, that is, they desire and purpose to order their thinking and their living according to the Word of God, the Holy Bible.

True Christians, that is, true disciples, do not live lives governed by selfishness. There is no longer the selfish insistence, “I am going to do what I want to do, when I want to do it, and only what I decide is best for me.” He has denied himself of this way of thinking. His desire is now, “I want to do what pleases God first and foremost, not what pleases me.” But that does not really describe his attitude fully. Rather, he could say, “I want to do what pleases God first and foremost because that is what now pleases me foremost in life.” It is the desire of a renewed heart by the Spirit of God that thinks and feels that way. But then Jesus gave further instruction to the would-be disciple.

### **C. “And take up his cross...”**

This, of course, has reference to crucifixion. Just as Jesus was willing to take up His cross and to carry it to the place of execution, so His disciples must be willing also to lay down their lives, if necessary, in order to live as His true disciples. “To do thus in following Jesus signifies open allegiance to Jesus the Crucified One. Such allegiance will expose one to the hostility of the world and entail the risk of losing one’s life as He lost His.”<sup>6</sup>

This intimates that our resolve as His disciples is to submit to the will of God through Jesus Christ without reservation or qualification. Even if it entails difficulty and hardship, suffering and loss, we must be true and faithful to what He has called us to say and do. Just as Jesus had purposed to obey His Father wholly and fully although He knew that it would result in His suffering many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, so, too, His disciples must similarly order their lives. But His obedience, of course, led to His rising again the third day, and being exalted to the throne of God. His disciples, those who would have salvation, must also be willing to suffer and die in following Him, if they desired to be raised with Him. “They must make up their minds to persecution and affliction, if they intended to be His servants: they must be content to ‘lose their lives,’ if they would have their souls saved” (J. C. Ryle).<sup>7</sup>

And then our Lord declared that those who desired to be His disciples not only were to take up their cross, but also they were to “follow” Him.

### **D. “And follow Me.”**

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<sup>6</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew; A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Eerdmans, 1982), p. 339.

<sup>7</sup> Ryle, *Matthew*, p. 202.

Again, our Lord was telling them to do what He Himself was willing to do and was about to do. We are to follow Him. We are to tread the same path that He blazed before us. It had led Him to the physical city of Jerusalem where He would suffer and die. But He did so in order to rise and to enter the New Jerusalem, the eternal City wherein He and His people would live forever. And we are to follow Him in this same course that He has traveled before us.

But then we read...

## **II. Our Lord's reasons for obeying His instruction (Matt. 16:25-27)**

After the Lord Jesus exhorted the one who desired to come after Him to deny himself and follow Him as His disciple, He gave three reasons to encourage a response to His appeal. He *first* declared that the soul's salvation was contingent on his positive response to Him (v. 25). If he refused or failed to do what Jesus told him to do, he would lose his soul. But if he obeyed Jesus' instruction, his soul would be saved. *Second*, he should do what Jesus told him to do for there could be no greater tragedy or calamity than to lose his own soul (v. 26). And *third*, there would be a day when Jesus Christ would judge all humanity according to their works, the outcome of which will be either their salvation or damnation (v. 27). Here is Matthew 16:25-27:

<sup>25</sup>For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

<sup>26</sup>For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>27</sup>For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. <sup>28</sup>Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Let us consider each of these assertions of our Savior. First, you should desire and commit to be a disciple of Jesus Christ...

### **A. Because becoming His disciple will determine whether your "life" will be forfeited or found (16:25)**

Jesus said in verse 25, "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." The natural desire for self-preservation should be sufficient reason to become the follower of Jesus Christ. To fail or to refuse to become a disciple of Jesus Christ will result in losing one's life. Here saving one's life is obtaining entrance into eternal life and losing one's life is being consigned to eternal damnation.

When Jesus said, "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it", He was describing the one who insists on being the Lord of his own life. The one who desires to save his life is the one who insists not to do the will of God in his life, but to continue in his pursuit to do as he desires, as he wills, disregarding the will of God as set forth in the Holy Scriptures. He will lose his life; that is, at the end of his physical life he will be prohibited from entering into eternal life with the Lord and His people.

When Jesus said, "but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it", He was speaking of the one who becomes His disciple, who ceases to order his life according to his own sinful desires, but purposes to order his life under the authority of Jesus Christ. That person will discover and experience true life, life with the blessing of God upon it and the promise of eternal life with the Lord and His people. Let any clear thinking man or woman consider the great gain that is obtained through abandoning one's sinful self-will and submitting to living under the authority of Jesus Christ. And then let that same person consider the great loss that will result in refusal or failure to become and to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

But the Lord gave a second reason you should desire and commit to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. You should do so...

### **B. Because there is nothing more important and valuable to you than the eternal well-being of your soul (16:26)**

Jesus said, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (16:26). When the damned soul is sent away by the Lord, having been condemned to everlasting misery, then ask that soul what he would be willing to give in exchange for the eternal damnation of his soul. He would eagerly, without hesitation, if he could do so, give the entire world to escape the eternal wrath of God. And yet people in this life will spend their whole lives pursuing just a small piece of this world that they might be able to possess and enjoy for a brevity of time, but then they will lose everything and will be gone to their just reward.

**John Calvin** (1509-1564) wrote of the value of the soul suggested by our Lord's words:

The word soul is here used in the strictest sense. Christ reminds them that the soul of man was not created merely to enjoy the world for a few days, but to obtain at length its immortality in heaven. What carelessness and what brutal stupidity is this, that men are so strongly attached to the world, and so much occupied with its affairs, as not to consider why they were born, and that God gave them an immortal soul, in order that, when the course of the earthly life was finished, they might live eternally in heaven! And, indeed, it is universally acknowledged, that the soul is of higher value than all the riches and enjoyments of the world; but yet men are so blinded by carnal views, that they knowingly and willfully abandon their souls to destruction. That the world may not fascinate us by its allurements, let us remember the surpassing worth of our soul; for if this be seriously considered, it will easily dispel the vain imaginations of earthly happiness.

**Matthew Henry** drew a number of lessons from these words of our Lord:

First, every man has a soul of his own. The soul is the spiritual and immortal part of man, which thinks and reasons, has a power of reflection and prospect, which actuates the body now, and will shortly act in a separation from the body. Our souls are our own not in respect of dominion and property (for we are not our own, 'All souls are mine', saith God), but in respect of nearness and concern; our souls are our own, for they are ourselves.

Secondly, it is possible for the soul to be lost, and there is danger of it. The soul is lost when it is eternally separated from all the good to all the evil that a soul is capable of; when it dies as far as a soul can die; when it is separated from the favour of God, and sunk under His wrath and curse. A man is never undone till he is in hell.

Thirdly, if the soul be lost, it is of the sinner's own losing. The man loses his own soul, for he does that which is certainly destroying to it, and neglects that which alone would be saving (Hos. 13:9). The sinner dies because he will die; his blood is on his own head.

Fourthly, one soul is worth more than all the world; our own souls are of greater value to us than all the wealth, honour, and pleasures of this present time, if we had them. Here is the whole world set in the scale against one soul, and *Tekel*<sup>8</sup> written upon it; it is weighed in the balance, and found too light to weigh it down. This is Christ's judgment upon the matter, and He is a competent Judge; He had reason to know the price of souls, for He redeemed them; nor would He under-rate the world, for He made it.

Fifthly, the winning of the world is often the losing of the soul. Many a one has ruined his eternal interest by his preposterous and inordinate care to secure and advance his temporal ones. It is the love of the world, and the eager pursuit of it, that drowns men in destruction and perdition.

Sixthly, the loss of the soul is so great a loss, that the gain of the whole world will not countervail it, or make it up. He that loses his soul, though it be to gain the world, makes a very bad bargain for himself, and will sit down at last an unspeakable loser. When he comes to balance the account, and to compare profit and loss, he will find that, instead of the advantage he promised himself, he is ruined to all intents and purposes, is irreparably broken. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

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<sup>8</sup> This is a reference to the handwriting on the wall that Daniel interpreted to mean that God's judgment had fallen upon Babylon. See Daniel 5:24-28.

But then the Lord gave a third reason you should desire and commit to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. You should do so...

### **C. Because Jesus Christ will judge the people of the world according to their works (16:27)**

Jesus said, “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works” (16:27). How you live will one day be judged by the Lord Jesus sitting upon the throne of His glory. This judgment according to works will not take place for only one group of people, those who will be damned.<sup>9</sup> This is a general judgment of all mankind on the last day. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

Note, if once the soul be lost, it is lost forever. There is no *antallagma* —*counter-price*, that can be paid, or will be accepted. It is a loss that can never be repaired, never be retrieved. If, after that great price which Christ laid down to redeem our souls, and to restore us to the possession of them, they be so neglected for the world, that they come to be lost, that new mortgage will never be taken off; there remains no more sacrifice for sins, nor price for souls, but the equity of redemption is eternally precluded. Therefore it is good to be wise in time, and do well for ourselves. (Matthew Henry)

Let us now consider...

## **III. The Implication of our Lord’s Words**

### **A. Saving faith is demonstrated in living as a disciple to Jesus Christ the Lord.**

Some time ago we referred to the following words of reformed pastor and writer, **James Montgomery Boice** (1938-2000). He is now with the Lord, but in his ministry he served faithfully at the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. He published over 50 books and he was a model leader among reformed pastors throughout the English speaking world. He wrote these words declaring that true Christianity is true discipleship to Jesus Christ.

There is a fatal defect in the life of Christ’s church in the twentieth century: a lack of true discipleship. Discipleship means forsaking everything to follow Christ. But for many of today’s supposed Christians—perhaps the majority—it is the case that while there is much talk about Christ and even much furious activity, there is actually very little following of Christ Himself. And that means in some circles there is very little genuine Christianity. Many who fervently call Him ‘Lord, Lord’ are not Christians (Matthew 7:21)... There are several reasons that the situation I have described is common in today’s church. The first is a defective theology that has crept over us like a deadening fog. This theology separates faith from discipleship and grace from obedience. It teaches that Jesus can be received as one’s Savior without being received as one’s Lord... Discipleship is not a supposed second step in Christianity, as if one first became a believer in Jesus and then, if he chooses, a disciple. From the beginning, discipleship is involved in what it means to be a Christian... Is ‘faith’ minus commitment a true biblical faith?... If faith without works is dead—how much truer is it that faith without commitment is dead... True faith involves these elements: knowledge...heart response...and commitment, without which ‘faith’ is no different from the assent of the demons who ‘believe...and shudder’ (James 2:19).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This is the errant teaching of dispensationalism that claims only the unsaved will be judged according to their works the outcome of which will be their damnation. The Word of God declares that all humanity will be judged according to their works. The works of one’s life will either condemn him or will exonerate him as a true believer justified by the death and the righteousness of Christ alone.

<sup>10</sup> James Montgomery Boice, **Christ’s Call to Discipleship** (Chicago: Moody, 1986), pp. 13f.



## **B. There are many things we must do besides faith in order to obtain our salvation.**

Earlier we quoted Arthur Pink who declared that the two great errors in today's proclamation of biblical salvation are the teaching of *salvation by works, and salvation without works*. It is popularly, but wrongly believed that since we are justified through faith alone, all that we need to do is believe on Jesus Christ and we will be saved. No, there are many things that we must do in order to inherit salvation. Please do not misunderstand. We are saved by grace through faith, and that without works. But saving faith works. Saving faith must be evidenced by works, or it is not saving faith. And on the last Day when the Lord Jesus judges you and me, a judgment of which the outcome is either salvation or damnation, it is not our "faith" that will be assessed. It will be the works that our faith produced. No, those works are not meritorious; that is the heresy of Rome. But our works will be and must be evident in our lives or we will be proven by our works to have actually been hypocrites, void of saving faith, although we claimed to be true believers.

We have urged in the past the reading of the sermon of **Jonathan Edwards** (1703-1758) that we have posted on our website. It is entitled, *The Manner in Which the Salvation of the Soul is to be Sought*.<sup>11</sup> He set forth this important aspect of salvation that is lost to much evangelicalism. He gave this message on Genesis 6:2, which reads, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."

Typical of puritan preaching of the time, Edwards first made a few general observations about Noah and his effort, and then he stated the doctrine or the major teaching of the passage that God was communicating through this text. He wrote these words:

Concerning these words, I would observe three things:

1. What it was that God commanded Noah, to which these words refer. It was the building of an ark according to the particular direction of God, against the time when the flood of waters should come; and the laying up of food for himself, his family, and the other animals, which were to be preserved in the ark. We have the particular commands which God gave him respecting this affair, from the 14th verse, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood."
2. We may observe the special design of the work which God had enjoined upon Noah: it was to save himself and his family, when the rest of the world should be drowned. See verses 17, 18.
3. We may observe Noah's obedience. He obeyed God: thus did Noah. And his obedience was thorough and universal: according to all that God commanded him, so did he. He not only began, but he went through his work, which God had commanded him to undertake for his salvation from the flood. To this obedience the apostle refers in Heb. 11:7, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

And then the doctrine that Edwards set forth is as follows:

**DOCTRINE:** We should be willing to engage in and go through great undertakings, in order to our own salvation.

After explaining some of the great effort and dedication that Noah gave to building the ark for the saving of his family through God's world-wide judgment of the flood, Edwards addressed more fully the doctrine in three propositions. He wrote:

I shall particularly handle this doctrine under the three following propositions.

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<sup>11</sup> Located at <https://thewordoftruth.net/the-manner-in-which-the-salvation-of-the-soul-is-to-be-sought>

I. Proposition: There is a work or business which men must enter upon and accomplish, in order to their salvation. Men have no reason to expect to be saved in idleness, or to go to heaven in a way of doing nothing. No; in order to it, there is a great work, which must be not only begun, but finished...

II. Proposition: This work or business, which must be done in order to the salvation of men, is a great undertaking.

III Proposition: Men should be willing to enter upon and go through this undertaking though it be great, seeing it is for their own salvation.

Edwards then gave extended explanations of each of these propositions. Under the heading of the first proposition he addressed this matter:

I. What is this work or business which must be undertaken and accomplished in order to the salvation of men?

Answer. It is the work of seeking salvation in a way of constant observance of all the duty to which God directs in his word. If we would be saved, we must seek salvation. For although men do not obtain heaven of themselves (i.e. through their own effort); they do not go thither accidentally, or without any intention or endeavors of their own. God, in His word, hath directed men to seek their salvation as they would hope to obtain it. There is a race that is set before them, which they must run, and in that race come off victors, in order to their winning the prize.

The Scriptures have told us what particular duties must be performed by us in order to our salvation. It is not sufficient that men seek their salvation on in the observance of some of those duties; but they must be observed universally. The work we have to do is not an obedience only to some, but to all the commands of God; a compliance with every institution of worship; a diligent use of all the appointed means of grace; a doing of all duty towards God and towards man. It is not sufficient that men have some respect to all the commands of God, and that they may be said to seek their salvation in some sort of observance of all the commands; but they must be devoted to it.

They must not make this a business by the by, or a thing in which they are negligent and careless, or which they do with a slack hand; but it must be their great business, being attended to as their great concern. They must not only seek, but strive; they must do what their hand findeth to do with their might, as men thoroughly engaged in their minds, and influenced and set forward by great desire and strong resolution. They must act as those that see so much of the importance of religion (true Christianity) above all other things, that everything else must be as an occasional affair, and nothing must stand in competition with its duties. This must be the one thing they do; Phil. 3:13, "This one thing I do." It must be the business to which they make all other affairs give place, and to which they are ready to make other things a sacrifice. They must be ready to part with pleasures and honor, estate and life, and to sell all, that they may successfully accomplish this business.

We will cite one more section of this message and then we will close. Edwards explained why God would have us expend such great effort in order to obtain our salvation.

Inquiry 2. Why is it needful that men should undertake to go through such a work in order to their salvation?

Answer 1. Not to merit salvation, or to recommend them to the saving mercy of God. Men are not saved on the account of any work of theirs, and yet they are not saved without works. If we merely consider what it is for which, or on the account of which, men are saved, no work at all in men is necessary to their salvation. In this respect they are saved wholly without any work of theirs: Titus iii. 5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." We must indeed be saved on the account of works; but

not our own. It is on account of the works which Christ hath done for us. Works are the fixed price of eternal life; it is fixed by an eternal, unalterable rule of righteousness. But since the fall there is no hope of our doing these works, without salvation offered freely without money and without price.

2. But though it be not needful that we do anything to merit salvation, which Christ hath fully merited for all who believe in Him; yet God, for wise and holy ends, hath appointed, that we should come to final salvation in no other way, but that of good works done by us. God did not save Noah on account of the labor and expense he was at in building the ark. Noah's salvation from the flood was an instance of the free and distinguishing mercy of God. Nor did God stand in need of Noah's care, or cost, or labor, to build an ark. The same power which created the world, and which brought the flood of waters upon the earth, could have made the ark in an instant, without any care or cost to Noah, or any of the labor of those workmen who were employed for so long a time. Yet God was pleased to appoint, that Noah should be saved in this way. So God hath appointed that man should not be saved without his undertaking and doing this work of which I have been speaking; and therefore we are commanded "to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. 2:12.

There are many wise ends to be answered by the establishment of such a work as prerequisite to salvation. The glory of God requires it. For although God stand in no need of anything that men do to recommend them to His saving mercy, yet it would reflect much on the glory of God's wisdom and holiness, to bestow salvation on men in such a way as tends to encourage them in sloth and wickedness; or in any other way than that which tends to promote diligence and holiness. Man was made capable of action, with many powers of both body and mind fitting him for it. He was made for business and not idleness and the main business for which he was made, was that of religion. Therefore it becomes the wisdom of God to bestow salvation and happiness on man in such a way as tends most to promote his end in this respect, and, to stir him up to a diligent use of his faculties and talents.

It becomes the wisdom of God so to order it, that things of great value and importance should not be obtained without great labor and diligence. Much human learning and great moral accomplishments are not to be obtained without care and labor. It is wisely so ordered, in order to maintain in man a due sense of the value of those things which are excellent. If great things were in common easily obtained, it would have a tendency to cause men to slight and undervalue them. Men commonly despise those things which are cheap, and which are obtained without difficulty.

Although the work of obedience performed by men, be not necessary in order to merit salvation; yet it is necessary in order to their being prepared for it. Men cannot be prepared for salvation without seeking it in such a way as hath been described. This is necessary in order that they have a proper sense of their own necessities, and unworthiness; and in order that they be prepared and disposed to prize salvation when bestowed, and be properly thankful to God for it. The requisition of so great a work in order to our salvation is no way inconsistent with the freedom of the offer of salvation; as after all it is both offered and bestowed without any respect to our work, as the price or meritorious cause of our salvation, as I have already explained. Besides, salvation bestowed in this way is better for us, more for our advantage and happiness both in this and the future world, than if it were given without this requisition.

### **C. Take action now. Purpose now to put away sin and to follow Christ without reservation.**

Noah was moved with "godly fear." This reveals that once God had revealed to Noah His impending judgment of the world and of His provision for Noah and his family to escape it, the matter became central to Noah's thinking and living. He gave himself and his life over to this matter. He pressed the fact upon his wife and children. God had warned him; in turn he warned his wife and children. Their entire family thereafter lived with is great event upon their minds.

Noah put forth great energy and effort to secure his own salvation and that of his family. The Scriptures tell us that it is the same for us. In one sense salvation is free; in another sense, it costs everything that you have. It requires your diligent watchfulness, it requires repentance. It requires obedience. It requires reading and learning, and listening and doing. You have a cross to bear, a reproach to endure, a

journey to travel, a race to run, a battle to wage, a fight to win. God would save Noah from His judgment, but he would do so through a long arduous process of building an ark. So it is with us.

We read in Hebrews that Noah became an “heir of the righteousness” (Heb. 11:7). That is, he too would one day receive the “reward” or the “inheritance” that is given to those who live righteously. On the great Day of Judgment he will stand in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the righteousness that he had inherited through faith alone. Why did he live righteously? Because he *believed* that God was going to judge the unrighteous and that God had intended to save him through that ark. In the same way we know that one day the Lord Jesus will return to judge the world. He will damn the unrighteous; they will receive their reward. But thankfully He will reward people of true faith with the gift of everlasting life, which was theirs through faith in Him. In Noah’s day the fallen world lived for the present only, each day as it came but Noah lived with his eye of faith on the future. This is what governed his attitudes and actions. This faith governed his life. May the Lord enable each of us to follow his example.

What is it God has told you to do in His Word that you have failed, or perhaps even refused to do? You must repent of your sins. You must deny yourself and submit your mind and will to the Lord Jesus. If you truly believe Him to be the Lord and only Savior of mankind, and if you have true concern for the eternal salvation of your soul, you will do so.

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Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24f)