

A Little Salvation And A Shrunken God

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There is a cliff in Mexico that you stand there and gaze down at a certain village of Mexican workers. These people work down in the riverbed in their corn patch and there they grow their corn. And when the corn is ready to harvest, they shuck it and after it dries out, they'll take it and grind it into corn meal and make tortillas. They'll take those tortillas down to the open market and there sell the tortillas for a few pesos and put them away, come back out to their house and they will there live off of lizards. They'll go out among the rocks and catch these huge long lizards and they'll eat those lizards and save that money for a special day, a special day when they will start a pilgrimage to a wooden statue of Jesus up in the mountains. The terrain to that statue is so bad that most of the people will have to crawl on their hands and knees a couple of miles and by the time they get up to that statue, they are bleeding all over. Standing beside the statue is a priest and that priest is saying, "Now, you love God, give to him because you show your love to God by giving." And those people will reach into their little bags and purses and pull those pesos out, stained in their own blood and drop that money in a slit in the top of the head of that wooden Jesus. Then the priest gives a prayer and when he is finished, the priest will yell at them, "You have not given enough! Look, Jesus is sad. He is crying," and all that time, there would be another priest hidden in that hollow statue and with a little hand pump he will pump water to where it comes out of human made tear ducts and that statue is crying and there those people will reach into their bags and give every last peso to that dead wooden Jesus. Then those people will crawl down that mountain and go back to eating lizards and growing their corn to make more tortillas to get more pesos to give in sacrifice to a dead god that cannot move or hear. But they are quite content in their service to this god.

Our passage today is found in the book of Hebrews 5:7-9. Allow me to read them to you now,

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that walked an aisle and accepted him into their hearts.”

Isn't that what the text says? Let me reread it,

“...became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that repeated the Sinner's Prayer and tithed their money.”

Isn't that right. Well, let me read it again,

“...he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

That's what the Word of God says, friend. “Them that obey him” are the ones who are saved, but that's not what modern evangelism says. You can have a little salvation by merely accepting Jesus on your terms. Just come to Jesus and accept him and you will have eternal salvation. All you have to do is walk this aisle and say “yes” to Jesus and you will get enough salvation to get you to heaven because that's all you really want anyway, an eternity in heaven so you won't go to hell. And you take out your pocket knife and carve yourself out a little wooden Jesus and you serve him because he suits you fine. And you go on and live your life the way you want to and by your very life and actions, you are telling God to go to hell because the god you serve is a shrunken god that can fit in your back pocket and if you get in a jam, you can just reach back there and pull him out and rub him like an African fetish and say your long prayers and he will meet your needs because he exists to meet your needs and to bring you happiness. That's what the shrunken god you serve does. He exists solely to serve you and your demands upon him.

You just want a little salvation and a little god that you have shrunken down to your size or smaller and one that suits you just fine as you serve him. That's the evangelism of our day, friends. A little salvation, just enough to get you to heaven and that's all you need, a little god to please you when you want him to and all you have to do to have this little bit of salvation is to walk an aisle, say a prayer and say “yes” to Jesus and believe the fact that he died for you. That's all you have to do. And millions upon millions of Americans for the last 40 years have done just that. They serve their little god that they shrunk down to their size and they have just enough salvation to suit them and they worked and loved and died and by the way they lived their lives, they told God to go to hell and when they died, that is just where they went, to a terrible place called hell.

My message today is entitled “A Little Salvation and a Shrunken God” and this message is a contrast to the popular gospel of our hour, a gospel which has taken all the teeth out of its claims on man's life, a gospel that offers a little salvation from a little god. That's the predominant message today and has been for quite some time in our country. It's the message that has made the institution of the church in America lose her influence with society because a little god has no influence at all and a big God, a bible-sized God is just a nuisance to people and the majority yells, “We will not have this man to rule over us,” so they choose themselves pastors that preach a nice little gospel that doesn't upset anybody. The problem is, that it doesn't save anybody either. But most folks don't seem to mind as long as they can have a little salvation from this little god that they've shrunken down to please them, a toothless god that has no bite.

Listen friends, there is a great danger in the land today. The danger sits not in the White House nor in the courthouse but in the church house. The danger is a watered down gospel to suit man and his needs and when people sit and listen to a diluted gospel and swallow it, they swallow it hook, line and sinker and they are sunk. The pulpits of America today tell us that we are sinners because we sin and we don't need to repent to be saved because we're just not as bad as some others are. We are good little people who just need a little bit of salvation to get them through this earth and then into heaven. But that's not so, friends. We are not sinners because we sin, we sin because we're big sinners and because we are big sinners, we need a big God to save us, not some shrunken god we have carved out for ourselves with our own pocket knives to suit us.

Men today don't even realize they are in need of a Savior. They just don't need him and when some evangelist offers him a Jesus he doesn't see any need of, then he can take or leave him but if that person has this Jesus pressed hard enough on him, he will eventually take him because, after all, he is free and then he'll stick him in his back pocket along with all his other idols and pull him out when he needs him, just like he needs a Swiss army knife once in a while. And this once in a while Christianity is the life that he lives because that's all he knows because that's all the evangelist told him, "Just come forward and say this prayer and receive this little Jesus and you will have enough salvation to get you through this earth and then into heaven." And so, millions have done just that and they live and die and go to hell and when they are in hell, that evangelist's name will be a curse word to them for feeding them such a diluted gospel that offered such a shrunken god that can't save anybody.

Let me ask you now: why do you need a Savior? Mull that over in your mind. Your answer may fall short of what I'm about to tell you. Listen friend, you need a Savior because you are under a curse and you are a rebel against a holy God. You drink iniquity like its water because you have a ruined nature that is inclined to sin and is in rebellion to God Almighty. If you had been in the Garden of Eden in Adam's day, you would've reached up and tried to snatch God off the throne and sit there yourself because you sit on the throne of your life right now and you have just enough religion to get you through here and into heaven and that's enough for you as long as you do not have to submit or surrender to all the claims and rights of the Lord Jesus Christ upon your life.

Listen friend, you need a Savior because you are exposed to the utter severity and strictness of God's holy law and that means you have to be perfect not to break that law and be in judgment. But no man is perfect and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and for that very reason, you need a Savior from sin. That is your only escape from the condemnation of a just God who will send all to hell who have broken his law through sin. You cannot stand on your own merits against the utter strictness and severity of that holy law, friend. You will fail that test. You will go to hell unless you have another who stands there for you in your place. I am a sinner and I know I need a substitute for sin in the person of Jesus Christ and so do you, friend. The little salvation you have swallowed isn't enough to get you out of this jam. The little god you serve, that

you've whittled out for yourself won't be any use to you as you drop into hell for eternity.

The greatest failure of evangelism in your day and mine has been the pressing of a Savior upon people who see no need of him so they take a lesser version, a little salvation, just enough to suit them. And because we don't want to offend anybody when we preach, we give them only enough of the gospel that they can swallow comfortably. We shrink God down so he can be swallowed by most folks without giving them any indigestion and we fill up our churches with these people and tell them they are saved and on their way to heaven and we offer them the remedy for sin without ever telling them why they needed it.

Listen friends, today's evangelism offers the remedy of Jesus Christ before we show the patient why he needs him. A person has no need of a doctor unless they learn of their sickness. If a man is shown the results of a blood test that reveals he has a fatal disease and the doctor has a remedy or treatment that will cure him, you better believe that man will be desperate enough to take that remedy and swallow every bit of it down for his benefit. We must be honest with men as we proclaim the gospel of the Son of God and tell them of their ruined condition, their condemned state as lawbreakers and their perilous position outside of Christ. A sinner must be awakened to the fact that he is lost before he can be saved. He must be warned to flee from the wrath to come, but we just don't believe that today with our brand of evangelism, so thousands upon thousands take a little bit of salvation, just enough to get them through and they join our churches and they've never been awakened and convicted and regenerated and converted because they never saw any need to exercise repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ and they die. They die in their ignorance and they die in their sins and they drop down to a Christless eternity.

But the God of the Bible is a God of majesty and holiness and when man encounters him, man falls down before him as old Isaiah did and says, "I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips." The Christ of the Bible is not a little god, but a risen and living Lord who sits on a throne and he got there by way of a bloody cross. That cross had his blood all over it because of sin for without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. The blood and the cross go hand-in-hand, friend, and repentance and faith go hand-in-hand as well. Take away the blood and the cross and repentance and faith and you have the gospel of our hour, a powerless gospel and a little bit of salvation and a shrunken down god that is so powerless he can't save anybody.

But the Jesus of the Bible declared, "Unless you repent, ye shall likewise perish." The Christ of the Bible told people to "go and sin no more." The Christ of the Bible speaks of his rights and claims on a person's life who comes savingly to him. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me for whosoever will save his life shall lose it and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." But our problem today, friends, is that the majority of church members save their lives, hug their sins and perish on a false foundation and they die and enter an eternity that shocks them, alarms them, startles them but it is too late for them then. They needed to

hear a gospel that alarmed them of their danger, that startled them out of their sins. They needed to be told the truth but now it is too late for they have died in their sins and they perished.

Our text today says, “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” Jesus told his followers “if you love me, obey my commands,” but too many today who have swallowed the modern gospel join the ranks who cry out, “we will not have this man to rule over us,” so they rule their own lives with their own brand of religion that suits them like those Mexican workers in their ignorance who served a dead god on a hilltop. A little salvation and a shrunken god never saved anybody from a burning and everlasting hell.

There is a remedy for sin and it is for those hungry for that remedy, thirsty for that remedy, weary for that remedy. Here now is that remedy for sin: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Jesus is the remedy for sin, friend. Throw down your shotgun of rebellion and exercise repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ, the Living God.