

Call to Obedience
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By Pastor Reimar A. C. Schultze

On Setting Preconditions

“Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him”—Matthew 27: 41, 42.

Here at the cross, the leaders of Israel who refused to believe Jesus, who opposed and even tried to destroy Him, offered the miracle worker what they thought was a great deal: “Come down from the cross and we will believe you.” Compare this offer at the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry with Satan’s offer at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. There Satan also tried to strike a deal with Jesus. It was clothed in these words, *“if thou be the son of God”* prove it by doing a series of miracles (Matt. 4: 3-10).

Many of us are also tempted to strike an “if/then” deal with Jesus. Not only the atheist soldier says, “Lord if you get me out of this I will serve You,” but a myriad of other people, religious or not, set preconditions for Jesus to come into their hearts. But Jesus will never give anyone salvation on the basis of human preconditions, nor will He ever stay in any man who would move from unconditional surrender to making conditions for our Lord.

Jesus knew He had to die; no demand or offer of man would keep Him from the suffering that was His to endure. Jesus does not want our faith in Him to be built on what we want from Him. You cannot get Jesus into your heart if your invitation is:

provided He prospers me, *provided* he gives me a job, *provided* he gives me a spouse,
provided he saves my husband from alcohol, *provided* he helps me sell my house,
provided he heals my body, *provided* he gets me out of prison.

Indeed, our Lord is able to do all of these things and He may do some of them for you. But He will never do them on your terms, or because you demand them. Queen Esther required nothing but what the king’s chamberlain appointed (Es. 2: 15). That was why she was chosen to be the queen. Requiring nothing but what the Lord appoints is the basis of your being chosen. Nothing less will do.

Unless we accept what He has done for us on the cross as ENOUGH, as our only requirement, He will never be enough for us the rest of our lives. His terms are that you accept His finished work of salvation, confess your sins, repent of them and follow Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, regardless of any circumstance. Then He will come to you.

Enough for me that Jesus saves, This ends my fear and doubt;
 A sinful soul I come to him, He'll never cast me out.
 I need no other argument, I need no other plea,
 It is enough that Jesus died, And that He died for me.
 ("No Other Plea" by Lidie H. Edmunds)

Is it enough for you? Do you really know what you are getting from this Great Salvation: forgiveness of sins, freedom from guilt and everlasting punishment, sonship, fellowship, power over anything that wants to overpower you, and life everlasting with bliss and glory. Isn't that enough for you? How do you dare come to Christ after having received all this and then later say, "only if You do thus and so will I continue with You?" Let there be no "if/then", no "come down from the cross and I will believe" mentality in your life. Jesus does not want people who will quit if they don't get something they want.

If an "if" could get you into your faith, then an "if" can take you out it. Millions of people pass through such a revolving "if/then" door in and out of their faith. But if surrender to the cross brought you in, you will keep singing, "it is enough that Jesus died," whether you prosper or not, whether you get healed or not, whether or not you are persecuted, imprisoned or beaten.

How pitiful the sight of many a "Christian" when he loses his home. He mourns as if he has lost Christ himself. But consider the Apostle Paul speaking to Jewish Christians who lost their homes and all belongings saying "[you] *took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance*" (Heb. 10:34). Those Christians came in by the cross and the cross kept them in. It was enough for them. Is it enough for you?

Can you take the spoiling of your goods, your plans, your health, your reputation, your ministry joyfully? If you can, you have the real thing. If not, you need to trade in your make-believe for the real thing. Horatio Spafford lost his son in 1871, then all his property in a fire, then all four of his daughters drowned in a shipwreck. His response was to write the hymn, "It is Well With My Soul." Oh, what real faith in the Christ of Calvary can do!

So, your prayer for this and that may not be answered, you may not see the miracles others have. You may not prosper as others do. But you still have the miracle of faith itself. It is that pure, naked faith that needs no crutches or other miracles to sustain it. It only needs God Himself for sustenance. This miracle of faith creates a relationship with Jesus that cannot be broken by unanswered prayers, by miracles not being seen. It keeps Christ in your heart no matter what, under any condition of sufferings, disappointments and severe trials. Praise God for this miracle of faith.

Think of the Christians who suffer under persecution. What keeps them singing for Jesus? What keeps the glory on their faces after torture? They came in by the cross,

not by Jesus meeting their demands. And they are kept by what the work of the cross means to them. Most of them never see water turn into wine, bread and fishes multiplied, a cripple healed or cold air turning warm in their frigid cells. Yet, they consider their suffering as light affliction, not worthy to be compared to the glory that awaits them (2 Cor. 4:17).

Whose testimony is stronger, he who believes because he has been healed, or the one who believes without being healed? Didn't Jesus say to Thomas, "*blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe?*" (John 20:21b). Don't run after the miracle workers who will take you on a roller coaster ride. Run after those whose faith has been tested and tried, whose faith has found a resting place in the bleeding wounds of Jesus.

Joni Eareckson broke her neck at 17 by diving into a shallow lake. She is a quadriplegic, she is physically helpless. In the last 40 years she has gone from church to church testifying not of any physical healings, for she has had none. But with the glory of God on her face, she talks about the miracle she continually experiences: a loving relationship with a gracious God who saved her, who keeps her, and has a place prepared for her in the throne of God. She is in a wheelchair, shining, while her listeners with all the comforts of the world sit there stunned, with dim faces of shame and embarrassment. Drop your preconditions and you can get what she has!

I am all for miracles. I am all for answers to prayer. But listen, real faith can do without miracles, because in itself it is the greatest of all miracles. It is a faith that caused Job to say "*though He slay me, yet will I trust in him*", that caused Paul to say after listing all his beatings, shipwrecks and imprisonments "*in all these things we are more than conquerors*" (Rom. 8:37). It is this faith that makes up Hebrews 11: By faith Abel...By faith Enoch... Noah... Abraham... Sarah... etc.

What is at the root of this faith that sets no preconditions, a faith void of "if/then" proposals? Indeed faith comes by hearing, but the root of this indestructible faith that keeps us abiding in Christ is love. Paul said "*faith works by love*" (Gal. 5:6). Friend, your faith is no greater, it works no better than your love. When your love for Jesus fails, your faith vanishes. Jesus did more miracles in Capernaum than any city, but He condemned it to hell, because there was no love for Him in that town so their faith had no starting point. This is true for all those who come to Jesus on preconditions.

Set no preconditions! Love Him for who He is and for what He has done on the cross and your faith will be like Abraham and Paul's.

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