

Call to Obedience
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BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH – What For?

Preachers sometimes preach a text out of context, either the immediate context or out of the total context of all God has revealed. Most doctrinal divisions, most denominations and sects come out of this kind of careless, neglectful scholarship. A preacher finds a text he is excited about, and then he runs with it and adds other Scriptures out of context to build a pyramid that he will defend to his very death. Let me list three popular Scriptures that are often taken out of context, and then we shall focus on one of them at length.

1. *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand* (John 10:28). The distortion: once we are saved, once we have become His sheep, we will always be His sheep, we will be everlastingly secure. But the previous verse, the context, tells us who the believers are to whom this verse applies:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life... (John 10:27). The question is: who shall never perish? The answer is those who hear and follow Jesus shall not be plucked out of His hand. They are the ones who are secure.

2. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever* (Ps. 136:1). Someone who is living in adultery once told me: “you just don't know how great God's mercy is, it is far bigger than you or I can imagine.” But look at the topical context of the word *mercy*. And there you find this verse:

But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.(Ps. 103:17,18). Conclusion: God's mercy is everlasting for the saints, but is given in measure to the sinner. Not one drop of mercy will fall upon the parched tongue of anyone in hell (Luke 16:24).

3. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast* (Eph. 2:8, 9). This word explains that one's forgiveness cannot be bought by any good works we may have done. Forgiveness and reconciliation with God is a result of God's work on the cross.

But unfortunately many just run with this verse and talk about this blood-bought salvation the rest of their lives. To many this becomes the only doctrine. As beautiful, as essential as this doctrine is, it was never meant to be our only doctrine. Paul admonishes us in Hebrews 6:1 to go on from there! The whole of Paul's salvation message in all his epistles is impregnated with *let us go on*. His grief, his deep sorrow with most of his converts was over the fact that most of them were slothfully parking on their salvation experience, going nowhere! Almost all testimonies in churches are a dry expression of Ephesians 2:8, *by grace we are saved*, neglecting what we're saved for, as he explains in the next verse: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them* (Eph 2:10).

So here Paul tells us what we are saved for. Here Paul tells us what a testimony meeting should be composed of: our experiences in walking with God, our walking in the works God has preplanned, prearranged and pre-appointed for us even before He made the world (1 Cor. 2:9). Oh, my friend, **salvation must never be understood as an isolated spiritual event in one's personal history, but always as a life given to God.**

There's not a single hour of your day for which God does not have a plan. There is no indifference in the Trinity toward anything you do any moment of the day. God has your life planned out for a fruitful ministry satisfying His divine purposes for you, in you and through you. God will never turn His back and say: I have no plans for you for the next hour. Your whole life in Jesus must be "*thy will be done*." That is what you are saved for.

Unfortunately, most converts, once they rise up from the altar as newborn lambs, will never be found at the next prayer meeting but will continue to be at the next movie or ballgame. They continue, as a whole, in their own plans, never realizing all that God has for them.

Now then, how do I find out what God's plan is for me as I go through the day? Well, first begin with the obvious. Much of this comes out of the Word of God. But once you begin to obey the Word on the obvious things, then the Holy Spirit will begin to prompt you and direct you in the more specific areas of your life. For the Bible says *as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God* (Rom. 8:16). If you don't obey God in what is already obvious, God will never take you into the spirit-led life, into those "*my sheep hear my voice*" experiences (John 10:27).

What is obvious?

Once you're born again it is obvious that you will give yourselves to daily prayer, the daily reading of God's Word and to praise (Acts 2:42, 47). Now, it is also obvious that you should testify of what God has done for you (Rev. 12:11), and be on a mission to lead others to Christ (Mark 16:15). It is obvious that you should break fellowship with ungodly friends (Ps.1), and go often to church services where the Word of God is proclaimed and prayer is being made (Heb. 10:25). It is obvious that you should forgive all those wronged you (Matt. 6:14, 15); that you should start tithing (Matt. 23; 23; 1 Cor. 16:2); and that you should start dressing for Jesus and not to please the world. You will stop dressing sloppy. Jesus was not sloppy and although He preached to the poor He did not dress like them. Women need to dress as becomes holiness, not to attract men sexually, and not adorning themselves as the world does (1Tim. 2:9). It is also obvious that you start being on time, that you start saying what you mean and meaning what you say (Matt. 5:37).

It is obvious once you're saved that you will keep the Sabbath day holy (Is. 58:13, 14); and that you will gather your family together daily to read the Bible and pray together. It is obvious that you will remove all ungodly magazines, books, tapes, CDs and videos from your home (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:11). Remember what you see and read is what you will think about. The apostle Paul tells you what to think about (Phil. 4:8). Keep ungodly or empty things out of your mind for they will prevent you from receiving living waters from the throne of God. It is obvious that you will be content with such things as you have (Heb. 13:5). The list goes on. The word of God will continue to instruct you.

If you do the obvious things, you will get to the precious beginning of a walk where you will at times hear the voice of Jesus giving you direction in all kinds of ways such as what to say in a conversation, whom to call or visit and what and whom to pray for. Jesus said, *"my sheep hear my voice and they follow me."* There can be no following without hearing. There can be no hearing unless we are empty of all worldliness and the self-life.

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for specific works that He has prearranged for us. You may want to be a doctor, but the Lord may want you to be a lawyer. You may want to vacation in the mountains, but Jesus may want you at the seashore. You may want to go to your favorite restaurant, but the Holy Spirit may direct you to another place where a waitress is ready to be saved. Preacher, how do you know what to preach on and what hymns to select? Only what is of the Holy Spirit will feed souls. The Holy Spirit wants to help us absolutely in everything. I heard of a farmer who never plants his seed when others do; he always waits for the Holy Spirit to tell him when to sow. He always has a good harvest. I have a friend who is a fisherman. Once he and others toiled all day for nothing off the coast of Florida. That evening a man of

God got on the ship and told him to turn 20° right off course. He caught more fish than he knew what to do with.

Friend, Jesus did not only come to give you forgiveness of sins, but He sent the Holy Spirit that through Him you might have life abundantly. I'm glad you're born again but remember that our Savior wants to live in your body exactly as He lived in his own body 2000 years ago. He wants intimacy with you every hour of the day. He's a jealous God and He never wants you to do anything without Him. He wants a bridal relationship with you. And being born again should only be looked upon as the beginning of that relationship!

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