

July 21, 2019

“Blind Leaders of the Blind”

One morning last week I really splurged! I took my wife to MacDonalds and treated her to an Egg-Sausage McMuffin, plus a cup of decaffeinated coffee. As we were eating, I noticed a tract someone had left on the table; It was entitled “**Heaven — One Way and Only One.**” I do not know who wrote the tract; the mailing address is simply stated as “Witnessing For Him, 1503 Diehl Dr., Valrico, FL 33594-4403.”

Before taking issue with some of its contents, I do want to first commend the zeal of whoever left the tract on the table. However, it reminded me of Matt. 15:14 wherein, with reference to the Pharisees, Jesus said: “*Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a ditch.*” The Pharisees of the first century were very religious and filled with zeal. Sadly, most of them could very well be described by what Paul said of “*Israel*” in Rom. 10:2, that “*they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.*” Zeal, when directed by “*knowledge,*” is a wonderful trait; however, when it is not accompanied by true Bible knowledge, it can be a very dangerous thing! For example, I admire the zeal of many self-professed “Jehovah Witnesses,” as well as Mormons, and even Islamists who are willing to die for “Allah,” but, sadly, they do more harm than good in that they influence so many to believe error instead of “*the truth*” that frees one from sin, John 8:32.

Hence, with malice toward none, and love and concern for those who published and distributed the aforementioned tract, I now want to examine the tract in the light of the Bible.

The tract began with a quotation of John 10:9 wherein Jesus said “*I am the **door**: by me if any man come in he shall be saved.*” And then a correct application of that verse was made when the author said “The Lord Jesus made it crystal clear that He is and forever shall be ‘the door’ to the Heavenly Father, eternal salvation, forgiveness of sin and heaven.” Further affirmation of that fact was also cited by the reference to John 14:6, in which Jesus said “*I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.*” And then the author presented “four simple steps that will get you TO and THROUGH the ‘Door.’” The “four simple steps” cited are as follows: (1) “Realize you are a sinner,” (2) “Realize you can do nothing to earn or work your way to heaven,” (3) “Recognize there is a Saviour,” and (4) “Receive Jesus as Your Saviour.”

On the surface, these “simple steps” appear to be in agreement with the Bible. But the problem is the application made of these “simple steps.” **Step number one, “recognize you are a sinner”** is absolutely correct. The references cited, Rom. 3:23 and Rom. 6:23, could not be clearer on this point. Every accountable person is included in Rom. 3:23, wherein the apostle Paul, by divine inspiration, said “*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” And every sober-minded person should think long and hard on the implications of Rom. 6:23 which states that “*the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” “*Death*” in that verse means separation from God, and nothing can be more frightening than the thought of being eternally separated from God — especially in view of the fact that the location of those eternally separated from God is elsewhere described as a “*furnace of fire,*” where “*there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth,*” Matt. 13:50!

“**Simple**” **step number two**, on the surface, appears to harmonize with the Bible. It is stated thusly: “**Realize you can do nothing to earn or work your way to heaven.**” Then Eph.

2:8-9 is cited, in which apostle Paul said, “*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.*” In these verses two sides of our salvation are set forth — the grace of God, and the faith of man. It is true, as was stated, that “the word ‘grace’ means undeserved or unmerited favor.” And it is also true that we can “do nothing to **earn** or work” our way to heaven. But the implication that we can “do nothing” and still be saved is patently false. Some **doing** is required. Jesus said “*Not everyone who says to Me., **Lord, Lord** shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does** the will of My Father in heaven,*” Matt. 7:21. It is a fact that we must **do** the will of God to go to heaven. However, after we have done all that God has required we are still “*unprofitable servants,*” we have simply “*done what was our duty to do,*” Luke 17:10. When we have done the will of God we have not earned salvation; there is no way to earn something so precious as eternal salvation! But salvation is still conditional; we must **do** the will of God! In Eph. 2:8-9, as previously stated, the two sides of salvation are stated — the grace of God, and the faith of man. Even as God’s **graces** reaches down to us in the gift of His Son, our **faith** must reach up to God in humble obedience to “*the gospel of the grace of God,*” Acts 20:24. Yes, “*the grace of God...brings salvation,*” Titus 2:11, a salvation conditioned upon “*faith,*” Eph. 2:8-9, but the faith that saves is an obedient faith. It is interesting that in the book of Romans so much is said about “*faith,*” but it is also noteworthy that the first and last times when “*faith*” is mentioned in that great book, the sacred writer referred to “*the obedience to the faith,*” Rom. 1:5; 16:26. In a real sense, these verses serve as “book ends” to all that Paul said about “*faith*” in that epistle. Indeed, the faith that saves is the faith that obeys!

“**Simple Step**” number three encourages us to “**Recognize there is a Saviour.**” Rom. 5:8 is cited as proof. The text says “*God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” And I concur with the application the author then made, namely this: ‘When Jesus died on the cross and then arose from the dead, He paid the price that was owed for our sins and provided the only ‘door’ to Heaven!’ Personally, to that statement I would have also added Matt. 1:21 wherein the angel told Joseph concerning Mary that “*she shall bring forth a Son, and you will call His name Jesus, for He will **save** His people from their sins.*” However, the point is clear, “there is a Savior,” and Jesus is that Savior!

“**Simple Step**” number four says “**Receive Jesus as Your Saviour.**” And then Rom. 10:9 is cited which says “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*” And Rom. 10:13 was also cited which says “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” The author of the tract then asked “do you understand these Bible truths?” Then he said “if so, then, let’s tell the Lord.” And at this very point a prayer is cited, and you are thereby told that if you pray this prayer, then you are assured of salvation. The prayer is worded thusly: “*Dear God, I admit to you that I’m a sinner headed for hell. I know I cannot save myself. I believe with all my heart that Jesus died on the cross and arose from the dead to pay my sin debt. I do right now place my trust in Him (I think he meant to say “place my **trust** in Him, bw) to be my Saviour. Forgive me my sin, save me and reserve for me a home in Heaven. In Jesus name. Amen!*”

And this is where the author of the tract really went astray! Read the New Testament through repeatedly, and you will not once read where an inspired apostle ever told an alien sinner to pray such a prayer! Yes, I recognize that the apostle Paul said that “*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,*” Rom. 10:13. But calling “*upon the name of the Lord*” involves more than simply praying! In fact, Jesus said “*why do you call Me **Lord, Lord**, and not **do** the things which I say,*” Luke 6:46. He also said “*Not everyone who says to Me **Lord Lord**, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will** of My Father in heaven,*” Matt.

7:21. It is noteworthy that Peter, on the day of Pentecost, when the first gospel sermon was preached in this the gospel dispensation, prefaced his sermon by quoting from Joel 2:32 wherein God, through the prophet, promised that *“it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved,”* Acts 2:21. Peter then preached that great sermon, informing his audience that God raised up Jesus (Whom they crucified) from the dead, and that God had made Him *“both Lord and Christ,”* Acts 2:24,36. Those who *“heard this”* were *“cut to the heart, and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* (Acts 2:37). The fact that they were *“cut to the heart”* proves that they **believed** his message. They, at this point had faith, but it was faith only! Peter did not say to simply *“pray the sinner’s prayer!”* To the contrary, he said to them, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,”* Acts 2:38. *“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them,”* Acts 2:41, and they constituted the **“saved”** whom *“the Lord added to the church,”* Acts 2:47. Also we call to mind Acts 22:16 wherein Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus, *“and now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* From other references we learn that by this point in time Saul had been *“three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank”* and was **“praying”** (Acts 9:9,11), but Ananias told him to *“arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord,”* Act s 22:16. Grammatically, in that verse *“calling on the name of the Lord”* is used in apposition to *“arise and be baptized,”* meaning that it identifies what occurs when one is scripturally baptized. Summarizing what has been stated, it becomes evident that for an alien sinner to be saved, he must **hear** the word of God which produces **faith**, Rom. 10:17; He must **believe** the gospel, Mark 16:16; he must **repent** of his sins, Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30; he must **confess** his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37, and he must be **baptized** *“in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,”* Acts 2:38. Upon so doing, he enters *“into Christ,”* Gal. 3:27, who is the *“door”* of John 10:9, and is thereby saved *“by grace through faith,”* Eph. 2:8-9.

Conclusion: The aforementioned tract sets forth what is commonly taught in today’s denominational world, but sadly the teaching that one can simply “pray through” and thereby receive salvation is false doctrine, and those who so teach are *“blind leaders of the blind.”*

—Bobby Witherington