

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Will Good People of All Churches Be Saved?

By Bobby Witherington

Occasionally we hear the statement made that “there are good people in every church” (referring to the various denominations), and the inference is that such people will be saved. Because this is such a widespread belief, it deserves consideration in the light of the Scriptures.

How do we approach this question? If we approach it strictly from an **emotional** standpoint, we will most likely readily concur. After all, no concerned individual cherishes the thought of anyone being lost in torment. We, almost universally, want to believe that our friends and loved ones, regardless of church affiliation, are saved. However, if we approach the question **scripturally**, and rationally, we are likely to reach some startling conclusions.

First, **why** are people lost? Isaiah wrote: “*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*” (Isa. 59:2). Hence, sin separates man from God. But **who** has sinned? The apostle Paul said: “*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). So the fact is that since “*all have sinned*,” then not one of us will be saved because we are “good!” People, who are saved, are saved, not because they are “good,” but in spite of the fact that they are bad!

Get the point? A person, who was never lost, can’t be saved. How can you save one who is not lost. Can you save a man from drowning before he ever comes into contact with water? Can you heal a person of pneumonia who has never contacted the disease? So, the very fact that people are saved presupposes the fact that they were once lost. One who has reached “the age of accountability,” veered off into sin, is under “*the power of darkness*” (Col. 1:13), and is in servitude to the devil himself (John 8:44), the one whose influence led him into sin and consequently into condemnation.

How can such a person be saved? Clearly, there has to be a change of spiritual **relationship**. There is only one remedy in all the world which will take away sin and change one’s relationship from that of a sinner to that of a Christian, and that, my friend, is **the blood** of Christ (Heb. 9:14). No, the blood of animals could never take away sin (Heb. 10:4). Isaiah pictured the Messiah Who “*was wounded for our transgressions*,” and said, “*the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all*” (Isa. 53:5-6). John, the apostle, wrote of Christ as being the “*Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8). John the baptizer was right when he bore witness that Jesus is “*the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world*” (John 1:29). Hence, Jesus said, “*this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*” (Matt. 26:28). Paul wrote that “*we have redemption through His blood...*” (Eph. 2:7).

How does one contact the redeeming blood of Jesus? On the day of Pentecost, the people heard the gospel proclaimed; they believed, repented, and were baptized (Acts 2:22-41). Their baptism was “*for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). Hence, there must be some **connection** between baptism and the blood of Christ. Indeed, there is! We are “*baptized into his death*” (Rom. 6:3), and Christ’s blood was shed in His death (John 19:34). Therefore, when we are scripturally baptized, we reach the death of Christ whereby we contact His blood, and when we reach His blood, we obtain “*redemption through His blood*” (Eph. 1:7). This same act of obedience also results in our being “*added*” by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47), which “*was purchased*” by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), and which is the “*one body*” (Eph. 1:22-23), wherein we are reconciled unto God (Eph. 2:16).

Now, we again ask, “will good people of all churches be saved?” Let us think carefully. One can be a member of many churches **without** even **believing** in the divinity and deity of Jesus Christ – let alone without coming into contact with His blood! Will people in those churches be saved (Cf. John 8:24)? Friend, you know the answer! Hence, this removes some churches from the list of “all churches.” Consider further. Before one can be scripturally baptized, he must have been scripturally taught (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-16). Yet many churches “*baptize*” **infants** who could not possibly have been scripturally taught. Such persons become “church members” without ever having reached the blood of Jesus Christ. Are people of **those** churches saved? Thus, some more churches are removed from the “all churches” list. Scriptural baptism has to be by **immersion** and for the right purpose, i.e. “*for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). But most churches refuse to baptize for this purpose, whereas others practice sprinkling and pouring which they mistakenly call “*baptism*.” Hence, more churches are removed from the “all churches” list. A goodly number of churches have resurrected ordinances from

Moses' law and added these to the worship (i.e. the burning of incense, instrumental music in worship, Sabbath observance, etc., etc.) However, Paul taught that when members (even of the Lord's church) seek justification by the law, they are **"fallen from grace"** (Gal. 5:4). Can one be **"fallen from grace"** and saved simultaneously? Friend, we could go on indefinitely. But let us get back to the Bible.

The apostle Paul said the church is **"the fulness of him that filleth all in all"** (Eph. 1:22-23), and he further said there is **"one body,"** which is the church (Eph. 4:4), over which Jesus reigns as head (Col. 1:18). If as many as one sinner could be saved while remaining outside the New Testament church, then how could the New Testament church be the **"fulness"** of Christ? It was to this body that the **"saved"** were **"added"** (Acts 2:47). There is no indication in the Bible that the Lord in the gospel age ever added one person to any religious body except the **"one body"** which is the **"fulness"** of Christ. Reconciliation unto God is in the **"one body"** (Eph. 2:16). There is a vast difference between **"one body"** and **two** bodies – let alone many hundreds of different and differing religious bodies. Friend, eternity is too long, and your soul is too important, for you to jeopardize its safety by your being a member of a religious **"plant"** which was built by man, and which will be uprooted in that last day (Cf. Matt. 15:13). Consider ye well! ■

When Is A Local Church **"Sound?"**

By Bobby Witherington

We hear much talk now-a-days about "sound churches." Usually, among brethren, a church is considered **"sound"** if it does not contribute to or support human benevolent, or missionary societies, which have been formed by men for the purpose of doing the work God bound on the church. On the other hand, if a local church supports, condones, or endorses the many innovations that are sweeping the land, it is often termed "liberal."

However, we ask is a church **"sound"** merely because of certain things it does **not** do?" Physically, the word **"sound"** denotes that which is **"free from injury, damage, decay, defect, disease, etc, etc.; in good condition; healthy, or robust"** (*American College Dict.*). Biblically speaking, we read of **"sound doctrine"** (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9), of **"sound words"** (1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:3), and of the importance of being **"sound in the faith"** (Titus 1:13).

When one's body is sound, it is healthy and in good condition. Soundness of health takes into consideration the whole body – not just a part. By the same token, a church is **"sound in the faith"** when all its distinctive features are according to **"the faith."** This includes its organization, its worship, work, and even its purity. It includes both positive and negative qualities.

Is a church **"sound"** that does not use mechanical instruments of music in worship, but whose members refuse to **sing**? Is a church **"sound"** that does not contribute to man-made Missionary Societies, Benevolent Societies, or to "Sponsoring church arrangements" in order to carry on its work, but whose members **will not work** toward the building up of the church and striving to save souls? Is a church **"sound"** which preaches against **"worldliness,"** but which fellowships worldly members? In brief, is soundness determined merely on the basis of what an individual or a church is **opposed** to?

Is it not possible to speak **"sound words,"** preach **"sound doctrine,"** and from a doctrinal standpoint to be **"sound in the faith,"** and yet be displeasing to God? Ephesus was such a church. The Lord commended that church, saying, **"thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars"** (Rev. 2:2). Nevertheless, they were in a **"fallen"** condition because of having left their **"first love,"** and were therefore commanded to **"repent and do the first works,"** (Rev. 2:4, 5).

I say, therefore, that in the sight of God, true soundness is both positive **and** negative in its approach, and it takes into consideration the things to which we should be scripturally opposed, and it also embraces the many duties and responsibilities which devolve upon each of us as children of God. Too many professed Christians, as **"salt,"** have lost their **"flavor,"** and as **"the light of the world,"** have let their light be hidden **"under a basket"** of neglect, indifference, and worldliness (Cf. Matt. 5:13-16). Indeed, true soundness is both positive and negative – negative in that we must oppose that which is not authorized, and positive in that we must be zealously involved in that which is commanded.

Brethren, it is not enough merely to **sound "sound!"** We must be **"sound"** both in doctrine, godly living, and fervent activity in the service of God. Soundness includes all that is done in **"word"** and **"deed"** (Col. 3:17). It also includes abstaining from **"the works of the flesh"** (Gal. 5:19-21), and developing in our hearts and lives those qualities described as **"the fruit of the Spirit"** (Gal. 5:22-23). Yes, let us do more than merely **sound "sound"** – let us be **"sound"** – both in doctrine and conduct! ■

Service Times — Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM — Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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