

The Saved and the Lost

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Introduction.

- A. In every church I've ever been involved with, there's been a group of people who spend their days in a spiritual twilight zone. In many ways, these people live the lives of Christians. They come to church sometimes, and they usually try to behave in moral ways. However, there's one big problem in their spiritual lives. Either they have never obeyed the gospel, and so they aren't really Christians at all, or they have some big sin in their lives that they aren't willing to give up. Furthermore, these dwellers in the twilight zone seem happy where they are, and their lives give no evidence that they intend to come to obedience.
- B. Now, I've never been a twilight-zone attendee, but I'm guessing that those who are stay there because they no longer feel an urgent call to be saved. On at least some level, they believe that because they're kind of obeying God, that they're kind of all right with God, and so, someday, they'll kind of go to heaven. It's like they've invented a new, less demanding form of Christianity that allows them to please God without changing.
- C. The problem with this new in-between approach to serving God is that the Bible doesn't acknowledge its existence. Look at Jesus' words in Matthew 12:30. The division that Jesus sets up here could not be any more stark. Either we are His disciples, or we are His enemies. This stark, black-and-white division is carried forward throughout the entire Bible. Let's explore it as we look at what God says about the saved and the lost.

I. The Saved and the Lost.

- A. Perhaps the most immediate difference between the saved and the lost is that the saved have a **SACRIFICE FOR SINS**. The Hebrews writer points out that Jesus is this sacrifice in Hebrews 10:10. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Just like any human law does, the law of God establishes a penalty for those who violate it. That penalty is death. Because of our sin, there must be a death. The only question is whether that death will be ours or another's death that God will accept in place of ours. The sacrifice of Christ means that Jesus died that substitute death. Christians won't have to die for their sins, because He already did.
- B. By contrast, for those who are lost, there is **NO SACRIFICE FOR SINS**. The Hebrews writer also explores this point in Hebrews 10:26. In its specific context, this verse is talking about those Christians who have become lost because of their willful rejection of Jesus. However, it applies generally to everyone who has heard the gospel but has not obeyed it. The point that this verse is making is not just that Jesus is A sacrifice for sins; it is that He is THE sacrifice for sins. There is no other death that God will accept in place of our own. That means that if we turn our backs on Jesus, we will have to bear the consequences of sin ourselves.
- C. As this previous discussion has at least implied, one of the results of salvation is **LIFE**. Paul discusses this in Ephesians 2:4-5. Before we are saved, we are on spiritual death row. Because both the knowledge and the justice of God are absolute, there is no doubt what will happen to us if no one intervenes to save us in our predicament. Thankfully, Jesus is just such an intervention. We don't deserve to be saved. We don't have the right to bang on the gates of heaven and demand that God rescue us. However, because God is a God who is rich in mercy, He chose to save us anyway. As a result of that, we are brought from spiritual death into spiritual life, a life that God has promised will last forever if only we remain faithful to Him.
- D. This life is not something that the lost can claim. Instead, if they choose to remain lost, all they have to look forward to is **DEATH**. Paul makes no bones about this in Romans 6:23. Just like we earn a living when we go to work during the week, when we commit sin after sin after sin, as all of us do, what we are earning by those sins is death. This doesn't mean that God is going to strike us dead on the spot because of the evil we do; instead, it refers to a much worse fate. It means that we are spiritually dead. We're just dead men walking, waiting until the sentence for our sin is executed against us or until we turn to God to save us.
- E. During their pilgrimage on earth, one of the things that the saved enjoy is the **RIGHT TO PRAY**. John describes the implications of this right in 1 John 5:14. We can confidently go to God in prayer and ask Him for whatever we want. When a Christian seeks help from the Almighty, He doesn't try to stall us or transfer us to customer service somewhere in India. Instead, when our prayer is according to His will, He hears us and answers us. Folks, this is an amazing blessing. Prayer is the Swiss Army Knife of life. It's good for just about anything. We can pray for forgiveness of our sins, we can pray for help in whatever earthly trials face us, we can pray for spiritual growth, we can pray for all sorts of things. None of us would even think of stomping into the Oval Office and asking the President for help, but through prayer, we have access to a much greater power. We can go before the throne of the Creator Himself and seek His aid anytime about anything.
- F. That's a big deal for the saved, but unlike them, the lost have **NO RIGHT TO PRAY**. Isaiah lays out the problem in Isaiah 59:1-2. God is entirely holy. To Him, sin is about as appealing as an open sewer, and sinners are about as appealing as people who have been bathing in that open sewer. He still loves them, but He can't stand to come into contact with them until they get rid of their sin problem. That's why sinners don't

have the right to pray: it would bring God's holiness into contact with their wickedness. This is not something that we culturally get. Most Americans think they have the right to pray no matter what they've been doing, but that's not at all the case. Only the children of God can pray. Sure, just like everybody else, we've spent our time in the sewer of sin. The difference is that we have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

- G. Yet another consequence of salvation is that the saved receive **RIGHTEOUSNESS** from God. Paul tells us what this means in Romans 4:5. The Biblical idea of righteousness is that of being conformed to a standard. It's like if we're framing a house, and we want to know whether one of the studs is straight up and down, or if it's caterwampus. We take a plumb line and hold it next to the stud. If the stud follows the plumb line all the way up and down, we could call the stud righteous. There are two ways for human beings to be accounted righteous by God. The first, as Paul says, is to work: to live a perfect life so that nothing we do deviates from God's standard. Christ had this kind of righteousness, but none of us do. The second way is, even if we aren't righteous on our own merits, to believe in God's promise that He will save us and to do what we need to do to lay hold of that promise. This is what all Christians do. We aren't earning salvation by following God's plan; it's not like baptism is so impressive to Him that it outweighs our sin. What happens, though, is that because of our faith, we meet God's terms for accounting us righteous, even though we really aren't.
- H. By contrast, all that the lost can expect to receive from God is **WRATH**. This is clearly portrayed in Romans 2:5. When we know what God wants us to do but choose for whatever reason not to do it, this is the passage that describes us. We have hearts that are hard and unwilling to repent, and unless we change, there's only one way that God can deal with a heart like that. When we have that heart, we are in rebellion against God, and any king who deals with boldfaced rebellion by letting it go unpunished isn't really much of a king at all. The same thing is true of the King of heaven. God has given us laws, and He expects us to obey Him. When we know what those laws say but choose to live our lives differently, we invite His righteous wrath.
- I. On the other side of the column, only the saved can live with **HOPE**. This too is crucially important to the Christian. The Hebrews writer describes this hope in Hebrews 6:19. Sometimes, when we use the word "hope," we're referring to a kind of wishful thinking. That's not the hope of the Christian at all. Our hope is not founded on the whims of circumstance, but on the promises of God. That's why this passage calls it the anchor of the soul. We haven't seen the reward that waits for us in heaven yet, but because it is guaranteed by the word of the Almighty, we can be just as certain about it as about anything we can see or touch. No matter what happens in our lives, we are motivated to keep going by the sure hope of eternal life.
- J. When we consider the situation of the lost, though, we must admit that they have **NO HOPE**. Paul describes the situation of those who are without Christ in Ephesians 2:12. For the lost, as long as they choose to remain lost, there can be no hope. There is no reward waiting for those who choose to remain in rebellion against God. There is not even the oblivion that the atheist tells us we can expect. Instead, as the Hebrews writer tells us, for the one who rejects God, there is only the fearful expectation of judgment. That's no way to live.
- K. Finally, though, because of their saved state, the saved can look forward to **HEAVEN**. We see this promise of heaven made by Jesus Himself in John 14:1-3. If we have faith in God and have faith in Jesus, this promise applies to us. Even now, Jesus is working in heaven to prepare an eternal dwelling place for every faithful child of God that is better than we could possibly imagine, and this is a wonderful thing to contemplate. I guess that I've got enough miles on the odometer now that I've begun to realize that a lot of my life is already behind me, and that sooner or later it will come to an end. This is not a pleasant thought. I don't like thinking about a world without me in it, but unless the Lord comes back first, someday it will happen. When I'm thinking these gloomy thoughts, though, I have all the comfort I need in my Lord's words about heaven.
- L. Heaven, however, is not where the lost are going. Instead, they can only anticipate **HELL**. This is what John reveals in Revelation 20:15. Some denominations teach that there's a place called Purgatory, kind of an in-between afterlife where the sinners with little sin go for a time before they can head on into heaven. Brethren, there is no such thing ever taught in the Bible. In the afterlife, there are two options. Either our names are found in the Lamb's book of life, and we are welcomed into heaven, or our names are not found in that book, and we are condemned to hell forever. There is no third way, and just as heaven is more wonderful than we can imagine, hell is more terrible than we can imagine. We need to do everything we can to escape it now.

II. Am I Saved or Lost?

- A. Friends, there could not be more difference between two states than between being saved and lost. That means that each one of us needs to ask, "Am I saved or am I lost?" The answer depends on five questions:
 1. Do I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? (John 3:16)
 2. Have I repented of my previous life of sin? (2 Corinthians 7:9-10)
 3. Have I confessed my belief in Jesus? (Romans 10:9-10)
 4. Have I been baptized for the forgiveness of my sins? (Acts 2:38)
 5. Am I holding fast the word that was preached? (1 Corinthians 15:2)
- B. If we can answer "Yes" to each of those five questions, we are saved. If we can't, we're lost.

Conclusion. If you have not obeyed the gospel and claimed your salvation, you need to do so today.