

# The Reflector

"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" • Acts 4:20

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## "What Must I Do To Be Saved?"

EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

"What must I do to be saved?", asked the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30). This great question still needs asking and answering. It, with a little variation in wording, is asked two other times in Acts. The Pentecostians asked, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Saul of Tarsus asked, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). The question implies certain recognitions on the part of the querist:

### I am lost

Asking, "What must I do to be saved?", acknowledges that one is lost thus needing to be saved. One reason for Jesus' sending the Holy Spirit to the apostles was to "convict the world of sin" (Acts 16:8). The apostles preached (orally and in writing) the revelation of the Holy Spirit in order to convict the world of sin. People, convicted of sin, know that they are lost and need to be saved. Preaching with this objective is not popular in modern religious circles. The more popular preaching today is patterned after the "I am OK, you're OK" philosophy. To enjoy wide acceptance as a preacher, one simply must not speak so as to make folks feel guilty and lost. One fairs better by with suggesting that people have *problems* that need working out or *sicknesses* that needs treatment or *needs* that need fulfilling—but never that

they are *lost sinners* that need salvation.

We sometimes bemoan the fact that we are not converting more people. Could one of the reasons be that we are not focusing enough on a sinner's lost condition? Maybe, we do not really believe that those who do not obey the gospel plan of salvation are really lost. Could it be that the reason for converting(?) folks has shifted from saving their souls to merely initiating them into "our church"?

### I am the one

Asking, "What must I do to be saved?", recognizes that salvation is personal? It is not merely a matter of what has or is being done by the Lord, my relative, or my friends, but what *I* must do. Others may have done many beneficial things on my behalf, but no one can obey and be saved for me. I am judged individually by the Lord. In that day when we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, "*each one*" will be judged "according to what *he* has done". (2 Cor. 5:10). Without the sacrifice of the Lord for my salvation, I could never be saved. However, *I* must make the decision to be saved and do what *I* must do.

### It is to be done

Asking, "What must I do to be saved?", grants that something

is *to be done*, if one is to be saved. A group of local cult-busters recently labeled "church of Christ" as a cult. In a discussion with some of the groups representative, we asked them to define a cult. "Any groups that teaches that man must do anything in order to be saved", was their answer. We kindly pointed out to them that, by their own definition, they would be a cult. You see, these folks believe that one must do something to receive salvation—one must believe. They answered that believing was not anything that man does, but that God does it all for man by implanting faith into his heart. We pointed out that the Bible says that believing is something that man does: "For with the heart *man believeth* unto righteousness". (Rom. 10:10) Hence, one must do something to be saved?

### It is a "must"

Asking, "What **must** I do to be saved?", acknowledges that whatever is to be done is impera-

## Our Regular Services

### Sundays:

Bible Classes . . . . . 9:45 A.M.  
Worship . . . . . 10:45 A.M.  
Worship . . . . . 6:00 P.M.

### Wednesdays:

Bible Class . . . . . 10:00 A.M.  
Bible Classes . . . . . 7:30 P.M.

Fultondale Church of Christ  
2005 Elmwood Drive

## Our Next Two Meetings

**December 3-8, 1989**

**Larry Rouse**

**May 6-11, 1990**

**Granville Tyler**

tive. The Lord, in answering Saul's question, said, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you *must* do". (Acts 9:6). It is not optional. It must be done, if one is to be saved.

### What must be done?

Asking, "What must I do to be saved?", indicates that one knows that *something* must be done. As this question, in its various forms, was answered, the answers varied because of the circumstances. Yet, when all accounts are considered the answer is really always the same.

To the jailer, who was still an unbelieving pagan, the answer was "Believe on the Lord Jesus". (Acts 16:31). That had to be his first step toward salvation. In verse 32, Paul "spoke the word of the Lord to him". The purpose of this was to produce the faith that he needed. (See Rom. 10:17). The verses that follow show that the jailer and his household took other steps. Verse 33 records the fruits of his repentance in that he washed the stripes of Paul and Silas. Verse 33 also records the jailer's baptism. It is interesting that, though he was told to believe in verse 31, it does not record that he had believed until verse 34—after he had been baptized. Sometimes the Bible uses "believe" in a comprehensive sense—including all acts of obedience that one does in response to faith.

To those on Pentecost, Jews who had just become believers (Acts 2:36,37), the answer was

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized..." (verse 38). This was in order to be saved or to have the remission of sins.

To Saul of Tarsus, who, by now, was a penitent believer, the answer was, "Arise and be baptized" (Acts 22:16). This was to save him, or to give him remission of sins, or to wash his sins away.

In each case they took well-defined steps in order to be saved. Each one heard the word God, believed in the Christ, repented of their sins, and was baptized. Romans 10:9,10, shows the importance of confessing with the mouth what is believed in the heart concerning the Christ. The Ethiopian eunuch, of Acts 8, illustrates such a confession in verse 37.

So, what must one do to be saved? It depends on how far

### Alcohol

Sir William Osler, the famed physician was examining a patient who was a heavy drinker.

"You'll have to cut out alcohol," ordered Osler.

"But, doctor," protested the other, "I've heard it said that alcohol makes people do things better."

"Nonsense," said Osler, "it only makes them less ashamed of doing them poorly."

*Listen, via The Speaker's Sourcebook*

along he is toward being saved? If he is an unbeliever who has never heard the gospel, he must first hear, then believe, repent and be baptized. If one has heard the gospel, he must now believe it and then go on to repentance and baptism. If one is already a believer, he must proceed on to repentance and baptism. If one is already a penitent believer, he must go on to baptism. This he should do without delay (the jailer did it the "same hour of the night") because it is essential to his salvation (see 1 Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16). □

### Harmony

There is a unique harmony in the Bible. Compare, for example, the first two and the last two chapters:

In GENESIS the earth is created;

In REVELATION it passes away.

In GENESIS the sun and moon appear;

In REVELATION there is no need for the sun or moon.

In GENESIS there is a garden, the home of man;

In REVELATION there is a city, the home of the nations.

In GENESIS we are introduced to Satan;

In REVELATION we see his doom.

In GENESIS we hear the first sob and see the first tear;

In REVELATION we read: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

In GENESIS the curse is pronounced;

In REVELATION we read: "There shall be no more curse."

*Via The Speaker's Sourcebook*

# Sharing Sin

EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

Many good people, while scrupulously shunning direct participation in various religious practices, carelessly share indirectly in those very same things. Both Paul and John specifically warn against sharing in *other people's* sins.

## 2 John 10-11

"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him **shares in his evil deeds.**" — 2 John 10-11.

Second John was written to an anonymous "elect lady and her children" (v. 1) This family walked in truth and was loved by all those who loved the truth. (vv. 1,2,4) John reminds them that true love was characterized by walking in truth. (v.6)

He tells them that deceivers are in the world (v.7) and further reminds them that "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God." (v. 9). Because of this, he warns of two dangers, one direct and another indirect, that such deceivers posed to even this fine family who were walking in truth:

**1. They could be deceived into accepting the tenets of these teachers:** "Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward." (v.7).

**2. They could become accessories to the evil deeds of these teachers:** "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he

who greets him shares in his evil deeds." In short, they were to do nothing to identify with, aid, or encourage such teachers, in their evil work.

In the first century, teachers did not have access to hotels and motels as we do today. As they went from community to community to spread their teaching, they depended much more upon the hospitality of private homes than today. (cf. Matt. 10:11-13). So, if a teacher came into a community he would likely stay with a family and work out of (and sometimes within) that home in spreading his teaching. So, one receiving such a one into his or her house furnished him both the means and opportunity to teach his doctrine—whatever that doctrine may have been. In such cases, even if the householder did not accept the doctrine, he was sharing in its spread by furnishing accommodations for and lending influence to the one doing the teaching. So, this "elect lady" needed to be sure that those teachers that she so received were teaching the "doctrine of Christ".

I do not take this to mean that this "elect lady" was forbidden to show any kindness at all nor that she could not, under any circumstances, invite an advocate of false doctrine into her house. But, she was not to show such hospitality that would aid and/or encourage him in his work. My wife and I have close friends and relatives whom we believe to be teaching false doctrine. Under most circumstances they are welcomed into our home and we in

theirs. We even have many good times together. If they come to this area for medical treatment, to attend a ball game, or for just a visit, they know that they will find the welcome mat out at our house and they may feel free to stay as long as they like. However, should they come on a mission to spread their doctrine in this community they would be kindly told that they would have to stay elsewhere. Under those circumstances we could not receive them into our house. It would not be that we did not love them. It would be a matter of our love for God and His truth demanding that we keep ourselves pure of religious error.

Besides not furnishing the one who transgresses a base for operation by her hospitality, "the elect lady" was not to "greet him". This greeting was more than just a pleasant "hello" or a friendly handshake. It was wishing one well in his endeavors. John is not suggesting that one should be rude or hostile by refusing to courteously speak to the one who "does not bring this doctrine". It is just that he should not be wished well in his work. One might wish him well in others things, such as health, safety and general well-being, but not in his work of teaching. To do so would make the well-wisher a partaker of evil. Though the well-wisher himself might not personally believe the teaching, he is fellowshiping it by a gesture that encourages the false teacher to continue his teaching. Paul sums up the principle taught by John with "have **no** fellowship with the unfruitful works of dark-

ness" (Eph. 5:11). Paul even takes it a step further than John by adding, "but rather expose ('reprove'-KJV) them." It is not enough for us to just refrain from encouragement, we must expose or reprove them concerning their error. Our failure to reprove may, in fact, encourage them to persist in their error and cause us to share in their sin. Remember the illustration of the watchman that the Lord gave to Ezekiel (33:1-9).

### 1 Timothy 5:22

"Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor **share in other people's sins**; keep yourself pure." — 1 Timothy 5:22

Paul warns Timothy, in his dealing with elders, against sharing "in other people's sins". (1 Tim. 5:22). The "laying on of hands" was sometimes associated with the appointment and/or endorsement of men for certain works (cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3). Since, Paul is writing to Timothy about elders in this section, we take it that this laying on of hands would have been in connection with their appointment. He had earlier been given the qualifications. (3:1-7). Timothy should not hastily appoint elders lest he share in other men's sins. How could this happen? I can think of a number

of ways. The church might select an unqualified man and ask Timothy to appoint them. Or, there might be some ambitious, but unqualified person, who desired the office. If Timothy were to hastily endorse or appoint such men, he would share in their sin. He could not afford to be a party to their sin. He must keep himself pure.

Brethren sometimes leave the truth and openly advocate and/or practice something that would destroy the peace and scriptural purity of the church to say nothing of souls—even though they may still hold to truth for the most part. Other brethren, who themselves do not agree with their position and even believe it to be destructive, are willing to look the other way or even worse continue to lend them support in word and deed. It is easy for us to rationalize such actions by saying, "They know how we feel about it." Yes, but refusing to receive them into our house, refusing to wish them well in their work, and refusing to lend our influence to them, might send an even stronger signal of our feeling about the matter.

Our critics, implying that we are arbitrary and inconsistent, may ask, "Are you prepared to so re-

ject every brother with whom you may disagree on some point of their teaching?" Of course not! Not every mistaken view needs to be considered a "destructive heresy". (Cf. 1 Pet. 2:1). We might ask our critics, "Are you prepared to so reject any brother with whom you disagree on some point of his teaching?"

Regardless of what others do, *one must keep himself pure*. This he cannot do if he shares in other people's sins. Nor can he do it by violating his conscience in lending his influence to those whose soundness, in things vital to the kingdom of God, he sincerely doubts. (See Rom. 14:23). Of course, he may need to realize that not everyone has had opportunity to view things from his vantage point. Thus, they may not share his doubts about a given situation. So, he may need to be a little charitable toward those who may react differently than he to that situation—though he, himself, in good conscience, could not bid it godspeed.

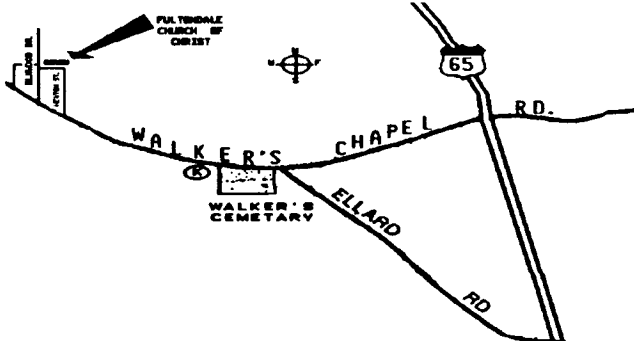
In any case, one should remember he does not have to believe and/or practice another's evil deed to share in it. He can just lend encouragement and influence to it by word and deed. □



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