

The Salvation of a Good Moral Man

Many times in personal study with a prospect the question arises concerning the “good people in other ‘churches’.” Someone will query, “How can you conclude that all these good people in these other ‘churches’ are not saved?” Experience has helped me to devise a response to these types of questions.

I never deny that there are good people in other churches, that’s because there are. Many of them are as morally good and rich in alms deeds as any Christian. However, that is not the issue. Is the fact that they are “good” and rich in “deeds” going to save them? Certainly not! The issue is whether or not they are Christians, whether or not they have “believed” in Christ, whether or not they have believed unto the saving of the soul (**Hebrews 10:39**).

The Salvation Of A Good Moral Man (Route 13)

Romans 3:23 We begin with this text because it is an affirmation of the universal need of mankind for the remission of sins. Verses 9-18 are a series of quotations from the Old Testament intended to prove to the Jews that God had revealed this indictment to them through their own Law. The application you should make of the text is that there is no one who can stand before God, except Jesus Christ, and proclaim his own goodness. There is no one that has been so good and moral that do not Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 20:9 Solomon recognized that it was impossible for a man to work enough in order to effect his own atonement. He and we are desperately dependent upon the grace and mercy of God in order to be accepted of Him.

Galatians 3:10-12 The Law of Moses required perfect, flawless obedience in the strictest detail in order to declare a man just or righteous. For those who failed in this sinless perfection there was only the condemnation of death (**Deuteronomy 27:26**). Paul states the reality; no sinner is justified before God by or through the Law of Moses (illustrate by the posted speed limit on the highway and being stopped for speeding.) Paul offers the alternative of justification by faith.

Ezekiel 18:24 The prophet makes it clear in this text that our good deeds which we do while in fellowship with God do not accrue or store up for us to draw against in the day that we sin. It seems that some folks think that God is keeping a great ledger book in heaven of our good deeds and that our goal is to have a zero balance at the end of life. Rather, the truth is that our righteousness does not offset our wickedness. What we need is a Savior.

Acts 10:1-6 Now let’s consider the actual conversion of a good, moral man - Cornelius, the Roman Centurion. He was (1) devout, (2) feared, that is, revered God (3) with his entire house, (4) gave alms to the people, (5) fasted [see: **Acts 10:30**] and (6) prayed (7) being obviously penitent for his sins (cf. **Acts 9:9**).

Acts 11:13-14 However, this man was in need of being saved, and in order to effect that salvation he needed to hear what Peter had to say and obey it (cf. **10:6** and **Hebrews 5:8-9**). If one is saved on the basis of morality or just having sincere religion surely Cornelius was saved - **but**, he was **not**.

Acts 10:29-35 Notice that Cornelius’ prayers were not efficacious to his salvation apart from his obedience to the Gospel. He could not “pray through” at the altar. However, they were a “memorial” and a “remembrance” before God to keep His promise to the Gentiles to justify them by faith in Christ even as He had the Jews (cf. **Acts 2:39**; **Isaiah 2:2-3**). Cornelius and his guests were present to “hear” everything that God had commanded Peter. Peter affirms that God had taught him by a dream (**10:9-16**) that all men were accepted of God through Christ if they would “fear Him and work righteousness,” that is, believe and obey.

Acts 10:43-48 Verse 43 is equivalent to verse 35, that is to say, “*believing in Christ*” is the same thing as “*fearing God and working His righteousness.*” This is a truth that applies to whosoever, Jew or Gentile, to “*everyone that believeth*” (**Romans 1:16-17**). Then the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles directly and they spoke in tongues. Seeing this sign Peter commanded that Cornelius and his house be baptized (**10:48**). [Note the question in verse 47, “*Can any man forbid water...*” To whom is that directed if not to the Jews present (**10:23**; cf. **11:12**)? Peter’s conclusion regarding the gift of the Holy Spirit on this occasion is that to refuse to baptize uncircumcised Gentiles was tantamount to “*withstanding God*” (**11:17**).]

Acts 15:7-11 Years later Peter used these events to quell the influence of the Judaizers in the Jerusalem Church. Notice the order (1) they heard the Gospel, (2) they believed, (3) God gave a witness that he put no difference between Jews and Gentiles, (4) their hearts were purified by faith - they were baptized (**10:48**), therefore (5) they were saved. The application to our lesson study is that the good, moral man is saved just like every sinner is saved. He must hear, believe and obey the Gospel - faith, repentance, confession and immersion into Christ.

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