

THE SAVIOUR'S INVITATION

And Other Evangelistic Sermons

by

Hyman Appelman

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SERMON FOURTEEN

SAVED

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house” (Acts 16:25-34).

May this meditation help you to consider seriously the vital question **“What must I do to be saved?”** It is the most important question in all the Bible, in all the world. Problems beset us on every hand, but this is the most important of all. If you solve any other problem incorrectly you may suffer for it, but the consequences will not be eternal. However, this problem involves both time and eternity. Other decisions may be local, individual, but this query is universal.

This is a personal question. We cannot decide it for each other. We are not born in crowds. We do not die in crowds. We are not saved in crowds. We are not lost in crowds. One by one we must face Calvary, the death angel, the judgment, eternity.

This is a pressing question. There is no escaping it. There is no denying it. There is no hiding from it. There is no being indifferent to it. We must face it because it will not let us escape from its implications. When it ceases to trouble us it is only because we have already accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour, or have fallen so far into sin that the Spirit of God has stopped striving with us.

Because of the importance of this great thought, it behooves us to learn all we can of it, to study it thoroughly, to analyze it, to come to a definite decision regarding it.

Let us, therefore, approach the question from three angles.

First, why should we be saved?

Second, what must we do to be saved?

Third, when shall we be saved?

We should be saved, first, because of the value of our souls. In substance, each of us has a body, a mind, a soul. These three are all important, but the soul is by far the most important. There are many ways in which we can take care of our bodies. We can eat the right kind of food, take the proper exercise, sleep the required number of hours, spend time in the fresh air. Occasionally we need medicine. Sometimes a surgical operation is required. There are many ways in which we can provide for our bodies.

There are also many methods which we can employ in the training and care of the mind. We can go to school. We can study, read, meditate, listen to others, practice, exercise. It is perfectly proper, fully essential to see that our bodies and minds have the best of sustenance. But what about the soul? There is but one way to take care of the soul: by salvation. Nothing can touch the soul but the regenerating power of God's Holy Spirit.

One of these days our bodies will die. They will molder in some cemetery. Our minds will disintegrate with our bodies. But our souls will go on forever with God in heaven or the Devil in hell.

We should be saved, second, because of the difference between heaven and hell. Think of heaven's characteristics. It is a realm of life, of love, of light, of laughter. There is no sickness there, no sorrow, no suffering. There are no disappointments there, no disturbances, no discouragements. Wars are unknown. Want is vanquished. Woe is outlawed. The afflictions of the flesh do not prevail. It is the delightful land of our fondest dreams, our loftiest imaginings.

Think of the company in heaven. God is there, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit. All the children who died in their infancy are there, rosebuds transplanted into the garden of God. The gentlest, the finest, the sweetest, the purest of the earth, those washed in the blood of the Lamb are there, forever serving God in His holy temple.

Think of what characterizes hell. It is a place of darkness, of torment, of eternal banishment from God, of pain, of anguish, of weeping, or unavailing remorse. Think of the company in hell. The vilest, the filthiest, the most corrupt, the most wicked in all creation are the denizens of the pit. People with whom you would shudder to associate compose hell's crowd. On earth you can choose your associates. In hell you are forever cast into the society of that awful bedlam, never to find release or relief from their lewdness, their corruption, their frightfulness. Yes, the difference between heaven and hell should lead you to seek salvation.

The third reason why we ought to be saved is this: the endlessness of eternity. If you could go to hell for a million years and then go to heaven, you would at last have deliverance. A million years would eventually pass. But heaven and hell are forever.

The minute you accept Christ as your personal Saviour you start on the journey to heaven, never to finish until you stand complete, glorified in Christ before God, and establish your abode in the mansions of bliss forever and ever. If you reject Christ, there is nothing you can do in time or eternity that will keep or take you from the torment of hell or release you from it. **“And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night.”** That is a frightful thought that should make all of us pause, that should constrain all of us to flee from the wrath to come. There is no way out of heaven. There is no way out of hell.

The fourth reason why we ought to be saved is perhaps not so self-centered and yet it is also eminently personal. It is because of our influence upon others. There is not one of you who would willingly, knowingly, consciously cause anybody to stumble over your unbelief into destruction. There is not one of you who would not gladly do anything, everything to keep a soul out of hell and start it on the road to heaven. You may if you wish. If you give your own heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, surrender your own life to Him in service, God will use you. God will bless and empower your testimony. I do not care how weak, how small you think yourself to be, God can and will use you to win others to the Lord Jesus Christ.

For these four reasons—the value of your soul, the difference between heaven and hell, the endlessness of eternity, your influence upon others—every one of you ought to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour in this very hour, then go out to live a consistent, consecrated, fruit-bearing life, a truly Christian life.

What must we do to be saved? If I told you out of my own heart or mind, if I gave you my own theological answer, you would have a right to hesitate, to question, to doubt. But I will let God tell you what you must do. There are three conditions essential for salvation. Regardless of what anyone may say, the Bible is the Rule Book. There are three things—not one, not two, but three—with which you must comply ere you may consider yourself free from all sin.

First, you must repent. **“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon”** (Isaiah 55:6-7). That is perhaps the Bible’s clearest statement of this first requisite. You must turn your backs on your sins, on yourselves, on each other. You must turn your faces to God. In substance you must plead, “Lord, I know I am a sinner. I know I cannot save myself. I know Jesus Christ died for my sins. I know He can save me. Lord, have mercy on me a sinner.”

The second step all of you know. The greatest statement of it is found in John 3:16: **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”**

You must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. What does it mean to believe in Him? You must believe that He is the Son of God, that He died for your sins, that God raised Him from the dead, that He is sitting at the right hand of God, interceding for all of us, that He can save you, that He wants to save you, that He will save you if you trust Him.

There is one more thing you must do to be saved. You will find it mentioned in the Bible at least twice: once from the lips of Jesus and once from the pen of Paul. Jesus said, **“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. Paul wrote, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”** (Romans 10:9-10). *You must confess Christ as your personal Saviour.*

Our last question is: When should we be saved? Yesterday is gone. Some of you, perhaps, many of you, should have been saved yesterday, but yesterday is gone. It is too late to talk about it now. Not even God can call back those yesterdays. Shall you wait until tomorrow? How do you know you will be alive tomorrow? Will you want salvation more tomorrow than you do today? You know that every day of delay makes it just so much harder. Every day you postpone it you will want salvation less than the day before. How do you know God will want to save you tomorrow? Perhaps you say, “God will want to save me any time.” That is not what my Bible says. It declares, **“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy . . . My spirit shall not always strive with man.”** You dare not take a chance with God.

One night when I was conducting a revival, a boy came down the aisle, accepted Christ as his Saviour, and offered himself for baptism. The following Saturday night, a little before church time, he walked into his mother’s room and spoke to her. “Mother, I have a terrible headache. I’m going to take my motorcycle and drive around awhile, and then go on to church.” He used that motorcycle every day, and his mother saw no cause for concern. That night when I arrived home from church I received a call to “come quickly.”

Two motorcycle policemen cruising down the northwest highway had found the crushed motorcycle on one side of the road and the body of the boy on the other. He was dead. The following Tuesday his funeral was held. I attended. The church was crowded with people. Flowers were everywhere. There was barely room for the minister to stand in the pulpit. When the pastor told the story of the boy’s stand for Christ, his friends thanked God for his conversion. His father and mother thanked God through their bitter tears that their son was saved. Supposing that boy had said, ““Tomorrow.” His soul would have gone down into hell—everlasting hell.

There is only one time to be saved and that is today. There is only one time to repent and that is today. There is only one time to take a public stand for Christ and that is today. There is only one time today and that is now. There is only one time now and that is this hour. There is only one time this hour and that is this minute. Accept Christ as your personal Saviour now. Accept the offer of His matchless mercy now. Heed the call of the Spirit now. Say “yes” to God now. Step out on the Lord’s invitation and promises now.

Dr. George Truett tells the following story again and again. He held a service in his own Junior Department in his own great church. He gave the invitation. Seventy Juniors came down the aisles for the Lord Jesus Christ. Most of them joined the church. Dr. Truett went about his business.

That Thursday he received a telephone call from the Baylor Hospital in Dallas. A sick girl wanted to see him. The little girl, Nellie by name, was ill with influenza. Her father and mother were with her, and Doctor Truett led them in prayer. When he started for the door, the little girl—one of those who had accepted Christ on the previous Sunday—called him back.

“Will you do me a favor?” she asked.

“Certainly. What is it?”

“Will you go to my department Sunday and ask for me? If I am not there tell them where I am, and ask them to pray for me. Tell them Nellie said she wasn’t afraid, because she has trusted Christ.”

Sunday Dr. Truett saw that the child was not in Sunday school. He delivered her message and went on about his preaching. Saturday another telephone call came. Nellie was dying. Her parents wanted to see Dr. Truett. He rushed to the hospital, and found the mother and father standing at the foot of their little girl’s bed, weeping. The child was stretched out on her back. Her eyes were closed, and her face was pale with approaching death. Dr. Truett talked quietly to her parents. After awhile the girl, opening her eyes, saw her mother and father weeping. Moistening her dry lips, in a hoarse, small voice, she asked, “Why are you crying?”

They cried all the harder, naturally. Dr. Truett answered,

“Because you are going to leave them. You are going to be with Jesus.” It took her awhile to understand. In a minute she understood.

“You mean I am going to die?” she asked.

“I’m sorry, but you are. You are leaving Daddy and Mamma and going to heaven.”

She closed her eyes and whimpered softly, too ill to cry hard. Then she thought of something. Her face glowed with smiles. Lifting herself on her elbows in her eagerness, she said,

“I’m not afraid. I am a Christian. I am going to heaven. Don’t cry, Daddy. Don’t cry, Mamma. The first thing I am going to tell Jesus is how you both told me about Him, and got me to love Him. I will be waiting for you. Don’t cry. Please don’t cry.”

She continued to comfort her mother and father. The minutes ticked along. Her face grew more pale. She turned to Dr. Truett. He got down on his knees and pressed his ear against her lips. She was whispering.

“Will you go to my department again Sunday? I won’t be there, will I?”

“No. You will be in the Sunday school where Jesus is Superintendent, and the angels are the teachers.”

“Will you tell them where I am? Tell them I was not afraid to die because I have trusted Christ. Tell them Nellie said for all of them to give their hearts to Jesus, so when they die they will not be afraid either.”

That is Nellie’s message to you. Oh, let it come into your hearts. Let it fill your minds. Let it thrill your souls. Let it move your wills. You must be saved. God wants to save you. Jesus Christ died to save you. The Holy Spirit invites you to be saved. In this hour, this moment, right now, turn from your sins, put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, accept Him and confess Him as your personal Saviour. God for Christ’s sake will do the rest. You will then be a child of God, and you will be saved eternally.

~ end of sermon 14 ~

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