

Are Those People Saved?

August 21, 2005

Matthew 16:24-27 (NKJV)

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. [25] For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. [26] For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? [27] For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

Two people sent me this e-mail last week.....

Pentecostal SQUIRRELS

There were four country churches in a small Alabama town: The **Presbyterian Church**, the **Baptist Church**, the **Pentecostal Church** and the **Catholic Church**.

Each church was overrun with pesky squirrels.

One day, the **Presbyterian Church** called a meeting to decide what to do about the squirrels. After much prayer and consideration they determined that the squirrels were predestined to be there and they shouldn't interfere with God's divine will.

In the **Baptist Church** the squirrels had taken up habitation in the baptistery.

The deacons met and decided to put a large plywood cover on the baptistery and flood it. The squirrels escaped somehow and there were twice as many there the next week.

The **Catholic** group got together and decided that they were not in a position to harm any of God's creation. So, they humanely trapped the squirrels and set them free a few miles outside of town.

Three days later, the squirrels were back.

But -- the **Pentecostal Church** came up with the best and most effective solution.

They baptized the squirrels and registered them as members of the church. Now they only see them on **Christmas** and **Easter**.

We laugh because we know that all too often that is true. People come to church and when the preacher gives the invitation, they walk down the aisle and repeat the sinner's prayer and they may even come back that night or sometime later and get baptized. They may even fill out a membership application and join the church. **But that's about all you see of them.**

Just like the story of the Pentecostal squirrels. If you're lucky you may see them on **Christmas and Easter.**

Several times here at Elim, we have presented a powerful drama called **'The Glory and the Fire'**. Last year almost 1000 people responded to the invitations that were given during the four nights of that drama. They repeated a prayer to receive Jesus as their Savior. That was wonderful!

Almost 100 of those people got baptized. That also was wonderful. But a big majority of those people didn't join our church and as far as I know most of them didn't join any church. **Are those people saved? Are they going to heaven?**

Almost every Sunday here at Elim people walk down the aisles and confess with their mouths that Jesus is Lord but then they go right back out of the church and live the same old way that they were living before they came. Nothing really changes! **Are those people saved? Are they going to heaven?**

There are people who attend church every Sunday but during the week you can't tell them from anybody else. They read the same trashy books as the world reads. They watch the same trashy programs on T.V. that the world watches. When somebody says something that offends them, they get just as mad as the unsaved get when somebody offends them. They use the Lord's name in vain. They don't always tell the truth. They get mad at the spouse and say unkind things to them. **Are those people saved? Are they going to heaven?**

Hey, I might as well take it a little farther. There are people who come to church, speak in tongues, pay their tithes, maybe even teach a Sunday school class and yet during the week, as **Mike Mille'** says... they are just like any other Wal-mart shoppin', Oprah-watchin', pill-poppin' person who doesn't profess that Jesus is his Lord. **Are those people saved? Are they going to heaven?**

I cannot answer that question. I am not the judge of whether someone is saved or not. God alone knows that.

The Bible talks about several kinds of people.

- (1) **It talks about people who are lost. They have never been saved. They've never been born again. They are spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins.**
- (2) **Then it talks about those who are saved. They have been born-again. They are spiritually alive. They have the life of God in them. They have passed from darkness to light. They are serving God with all of their heart.**

(3) But then, the Bible talks about those who have been born-again but are still carnal. They're saved but they are not living the way they ought to live.

1 Cor. 3:1-3 (NKJV)

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. [2] I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; [3] for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

(4) Then the Bible talks about those who say they are saved but they are not and never were.

Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. [22] Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' [23] And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Jesus told a parable one time about the wheat and the tares.

Matthew 13:24-30 (NKJV)

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; [25] but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. [26] But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. [27] So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

[28] He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' **[29] But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.** [30] Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' ' "

That tells me that it's hard to tell who are saved and who are not. Some who look like they are saved may actually not be saved and some who look like they're not saved may actually be saved. I'm glad I'm not the judge.

Matthew 7:1 (NKJV)

"Judge not, that you be not judged.

It's not our job to judge anybody but ourselves. However, it is very important that we judge ourselves.

2 Cor. 13:5 (NKJV)

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. **Test yourselves.** Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified.

2 Cor. 13:5 (Msg)

Test yourselves to make sure you are solid in the faith. Don't drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourselves regular checkups. You need firsthand evidence, not mere hearsay, that Jesus Christ is in you. Test it out. If you fail the test, do something about it.

That's a powerful verse.

The world just floats downstream. But when you decide to make Jesus the Lord of your life, you must turn around. You must head in the opposite direction from the world. You become like a salmon swimming against the current. If you're not swimming against the current then it would be wise for you to give yourself a checkup. Are you truly a child of God?

I was reading the Book of Philippians the other day and I read where the Apostle Paul said.....

Philip. 3:7-14 (Living)

But all these things that I once thought very worthwhile--now I've thrown them all away so that I can put my trust and hope in Christ alone. [8] Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have put aside all else, counting it worth less than nothing, in order that I can have Christ,

[9] and become one with him, no longer counting on being saved by being good enough or by obeying God's laws, but by trusting Christ to save me; for God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith--counting on Christ alone. [10] Now I have given up everything else-I have found it to be the only way to really know Christ and to experience the mighty power that brought him back to life again, and to find out what it means to suffer and to die with him.

[11] So whatever it takes, I will be one who lives in the fresh newness of life of those who are alive from the dead. [12] I don't mean to say I am perfect. I haven't learned all I should even yet, **but I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ saved me for and wants me to be.**

[13] No, dear brothers, I am still not all I should be, but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, [14] I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us.

Philip. 3:12 (NKJV) The New King James Bible puts verse 12 this way.....

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

Paul makes it clear in that chapter that our salvation depends on our faith in Christ. It does not depend on our works. Yet, he says, I am using all of my energy to become the person that God saved me to be.

He said, "I haven't attained it yet, but I'm working at it. Whatever it takes, I will be one who lives in the fresh newness of life of those who are alive from the dead. Are you doing that? Are you using all your energy to make sure that you are becoming the person God saved you to be?"

I asked a question a while ago. Are people who have repeated a sinner's prayer but have not changed their lifestyle saved?

I cannot answer that question. I am not the judge of whether someone is saved or not. God alone knows that.

But I do know this.

The message of Jesus was a message of repentance!

Mark 1:14-15 (NKJV)

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, [15] and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent, and believe in the gospel.**"

If you want to be saved, you must repent. Repentance is an act of your will. It is a decisive decision to turn from serving yourself and start serving God. It means to reverse the course of your life and start heading upstream. It means to get off of that freeway that leads to death and get on that straight and narrow way that leads to life.

You need to examine yourself.

Have you repented? Have you experienced a new birth? Have you become a new creation in Christ Jesus? Has Jesus really become the Lord of your life?

It's easy to look at someone else and judge them. We can see the hypocrisy in others, but often we often excuse it in ourselves.

Mike Mille' said.... "I can handle the people who worship pine trees and want to save the whales. They want to put people in jail for killing eagle babies but will pay somebody for killing human babies. Those people who promote homosexuals marriages and pornography every other ungodly thing you can imagine. I can put up with them because they're in darkness. They're going to hell. They will be in torment forever.

But it's the church folks who have bruises on their hinnies from playing their tambourines while singing "Won't it be wonderful there, we won't have to change underwear....these people are everywhere.

They are devil hatin', tithe payin', pew jumpin', body shakin', rapture waitin', bumper-sticker Christians....but they practice darkness.

They love darkness! These things ought not to be so!

He said, “I know church people who are so “wacked” that I’ve cast the devil out of them and the devil has come out and thanked me. He said, “what a relief. Thank you. I couldn’t stand one more day in that woman.”

Are people like that saved? I’m not the judge. But if you’re one of those people you need to examine yourself.

Jesus said.....

Matthew 23:27-28 (NKJV)

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. [28] Even so you also **outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**

The Apostle Paul said.....

2 Tim. 3:1-5 (NKJV)

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: [2] For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, [3] unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, [4] traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, [5] **having a form of godliness** but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

The people Paul was talking about had **a form of godliness**. They were church people, yet they were no different than the world. They were counterfeits.

When I was over in Ecuador, a man came up to me with about a dozen watches on his arm. They were expensive brands. He had several Rolex watches. They looked just like genuine \$8,000 Rolex watches. He was selling them for \$25. The only problem was, they were fake.

They looked good on the outside but on the inside they were junk. They were counterfeit.

I am afraid that there are a lot of people in churches who are like those counterfeit watches. They look like the real thing but they're not. They have a **“form of godliness”** without the power of God in their lives.

The apostle Paul told Timothy....

2 Tim. 4:1-5 (NKJV)

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: [2] Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. [3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; [4] and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. [5] But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Every preacher who is called by God is commanded to preach the truth.

It may not be popular but that doesn't matter. Today, I have preached the message that God gave me to preach.

There is more to being a Christian than having a form of godliness.

Matthew 16:24 (NIV)

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

He also said.....

John 14:15 (NIV)

"If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 14:21 (NIV)

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

Examine yourself right now. Look inside your heart. Is Jesus the Lord of your life or not? If not, it's time to get real. Stop faking it. Stop trying to fool people. Make that total commitment.

Give invitation.