

# BEING HONEST— SPIRITUALLY (A SALVATION ISSUE FOR EVERYONE)

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(Psalm 32:2) “Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him, and in whose spirit is no deceit [guile].” Jesus said (John 1:47) that Nathanael was an Israelite “in whom is no guile; “Here comes an honest man,” (HE said). It is those people who enter God’s kingdom (Rev.14: 5) “In their mouth was found no guile,” [deceit; or dishonesty] “for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

God requires our loyalty with regard to our faith in Him, so, we must make an honest evaluation of our trust on His divine power (through the Atonement Blood of His Son). For a person to just speak about faith in God, but *not obeying* what His Word teaches for us, is not honest, but it is deceptive. (James 1:22) “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” because “faith without works is dead. (James 2:26)

A ‘righteous standing’ in the sight of God can *only* come by combining our belief in the ‘resurrection power of Christ’, with an acting faith on the ‘divine power’ of God. (James 2:22) Abraham’s “faith was co-operating with his actions, and that by his actions his faith was perfected.” Our faith in God must be perfected, not divided between and among our other plans, policies, or prescriptions. (Matt.5:48) “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

For us to make honest assessment of our faith in God, is our being willing to see our spiritual condition in the light of God’s Word. We all need to and must be truly trusting God in faith, to receive our answers to prayer. Only two classes of people are in this world, those who are willing to be spiritually honest before God, and those who are not willing to be shown by the Holy Spirit, of God’s ‘spiritual requirements’. (John 12:46) “I am come a light into the world,

that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.”

At times we may *think* that we are making an honest effort to trust God, but may also be justifying ourselves and our decisions, and placing the blame on God (instead of on our efforts of self which hinders our answer to prayer). The devil tries to convince us that we are doing our best, so something else must be the problem and hindrance. A dishonest spiritual assessment of ourselves and our actions and decisions is deceiving ourselves, and it will hinder our receiving the spiritual light that we need (and the answer to prayer), that God wants to give to us. (Gal.6:7) “Do not deceive yourselves. God is not to be scoffed at. For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” (we cannot fool God since He knows our heart and everyone else’s heart).

For us to be honest spiritually, would be to ask ourselves if (and where) we are hindering the answer to our prayer that God wants to give to us. God is always right, so there *must* be a spiritual lack in us (or on our part). If we would be honest with ourselves, and take an attitude of humility before God, He promises to give the spiritual wisdom we need to meet a situation right (or to receive an answer to prayer). (James 1:5-7 “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;”

Again, we need to and must be honest with ourselves and take an attitude of humility before God. Our prayer should be as that of the Psalmist (Psalm 51:4) “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.”

If we are willing to forget any preconceived ideas (and pre-meditated excuses) and be open to God’s promised ‘divine light’, God will surely show and reveal to us any hindrance or hiding place of the devil in the way of efforts of a self-life still in our heart). (Eph.5:13-14) “Everything can be tested by the light and thus be shown in its true colors; for whatever shines of itself is light. For this reason it is said,

'Rise, sleeper; rise from among the dead, and Christ will shed light upon you.'"

The Holy Spirit is ready to enlighten our mind to understand spiritual truth if we are willing to make an honest assessment of our faith. (1<sup>st</sup> Cor.2:12) "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." The spiritual benefits of the Atonement of Christ are waiting to be given to those willing to accept and follow.

We need to and must always 'be alert to deception', because Satan can deceive us into seeing things opposite to what God's Word says. An 'honest assessment of our attitude toward God', will bring 'spiritual wisdom' from God. Again, it is a promise (James 1:5) "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." Our responsibility is to be spiritually honest and place the blame on our own 'spiritual condition'.

The Bible gives us some examples of honesty in spiritual matters. The two criminals crucified with Jesus showed two opposite attitudes. They were both in the worst situation anyone could be in; but one was honest and the other was not. One was willing to admit that his own sins caused him to be in that horrible situation—the other was not. The first one blamed himself—(did not blame God).

Those two criminals were at the very gate of Hell, and only one thing stood between them and that fire— 'a change of attitude'! One was honest before God and he changed his attitude— which enabled God to change his direction, to Heaven. The other criminal justified himself, blamed Jesus, and went to the flames forever and ever. Only an attitude change separated the two men— and only an attitude separates Heaven from Hell!

Making an honest judgment of our attitudes, and being open to spiritual *light*, is a 'salvation issue'. The only difference between the two criminals and their opposite fate, was their attitude toward God. That was recorded for our spiritual benefit, and our preparation for the Kingdom. (Luke 23:39) "Now one of the criminals who had been crucified, insulted Him, saying, 'Are not you the Christ? Save yourself and us.'"

The devil caused that man to 'take that wrong attitude'.

(Vs.40) "But the other, answering, reproved him. 'Do you also not fear God,' he said, 'when you are actually suffering the same punishment?'" (he meant)- 'We are at the jaws of death', and yet you 'show no fear of God!' How can you have that rebellious attitude when you are facing eternity! That revelation should be valuable 'spiritual light' for everyone today.

The man who reproved the other, had the 'right attitude', and he said (Luke 23:41) "We indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving due requital for what we have done. But [Jesus] has done nothing amiss." If God can find one soul anywhere in the world, who will take that right and humble attitude, and, be open to spiritual light, He would give it. It would enable them to (Romans 12:2), "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is."

The honesty of that man's prayer, showed the sincerity of his heart— (Luke 23:42), "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." He would be acquitted and justified by his faith in Christ. It was a humble attitude and an honest prayer like (Luke 18:13) "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Jesus answered that man's prayer (while he was hanged on a cross), and He promised him Paradise (Luke 23:43), "Verily I say to thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

It is the same promise of (Luke 18:14) "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself [by making an honest 'spiritual judgment'] will be exalted." Our words are vitally important and are indeed an Eternal Life issue; (Matt.2:37) "For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." (Meaning, we can lose our Salvation if we do not repent from the heart of our proud or deceitful words). Jesus explained for each of us to know (Matt.12:34-37), "For it is from the overflow of the heart that the mouth speaks. A good man from his good store produces good things, and a bad man from his bad store produces bad things. But I tell you that for every careless word that men shall speak they will be held accountable on the day of

Judgement. For each of you by his words shall be justified, or, by his words shall be condemned.

*We do not have to answer to the Church, nor do we have to answer to each other for our words, and the decisions that we make in our life, but to be very sure we will all (each person) have to answer to our Judge, Jesus Christ (when 'everyone' must stand before Him on that last day). Thus, we all need to hear or read and know what God's Word teaches for us and take heed to listen and follow His Word as it was written for us.*

His Words and the examples recorded and written in Scripture are for us today, and they show how important it is for each one to be humbly obedient and repentant, and ready to 'change wrong attitudes'. The man with humility and a willing heart, was given 'Eternal Life'—just by reversing his attitude toward God. He went from no faith to complete trust. One man would suffer the tortures of Hell forever, and the other would praise God through the endless ages of an Eternity in 'Heaven'. What a contrast between an honest heart, and a rebellious unrepentant heart!

John the Baptist recognized the 'spiritual pretense'. The scribes and Pharisees looked religious on the outside, but their actions and decisions proved that their hearts were rebellious. If those Pharisees were here today, most denominational churches would consider them as Christians on their way to Heaven, because they do not recognize the rebellious attitude in their own heart—much less recognize that in someone else. 'Outward piety' within an outward 'cloak of religion', does not justify our sins, but a genuine inward faith in the 'Atonement work of Jesus Christ' does.

The religious leaders in the first century looked pious, and they tried to follow their laws and the traditions of men. They were careful not to carry a carpet, nor to light a fire on the Sabbath. Jesus said that such people only appeared to be righteous to men (Matt.23:27) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean."

They wanted to be baptized, but John the Baptist was enlightened to see their hypocrisy. (Luke 3:7) "Then to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O 'generation of vipers', who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" He was calling them 'children of the devil', (which was what they were) because they wanted John to think that they were sincere in trusting God, when they were not sincere. They were hypocrites because they were not willing to admit they had no 'conversion of heart'—a heart that would accept God's Son. A 'generation of vipers' would mean they were descendants of that same wicked serpent who deceived Adam. Jesus said (Luke 20:46) "Beware of the Scribes" who look pious on the outside but are wicked on the inside.

John knew their real intentions, so he had to warn them of God's wrath to come upon them. They had no intention of accepting Christ as their Savior, and they had no willingness to trust God for anything— but they wanted to be baptized. John said (Luke 3:8) "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance."

They were not willing to change, so he told them— 'Do not just profess faith but actively show that you are trusting God' (and not turn to man for help when you face difficulties in your life) and show that you really are living by faith in the Atonement sacrifice of His Son. It was a 'strong rebuke'— but just what they needed (and he did not want them to perish for their unwillingness to repent.)

If there was ever an issue where spiritual honesty is needed, it is when our 'eternal life' is at stake. John spoke the truth in love as we are told to do (Eph.4:15-16) And so, John said Luke 3:9 NIV "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." John was just simply telling them where they stood spiritually—in the sight of God.

A logger places the ax against the tree when he stops for lunch, with the intention of cutting down that tree next. God has already placed an ax at the feet of those who are not producing 'spiritual fruit', because they are not trusting Him fully in believing faith without compromise, for— 'healing' without 'drugs', for 'protection' without guns and security devices and surveillance cameras, for 'justice' without

lawyers and law enforcement, for ‘provisions’ without welfare money and the many other forms of Government assistance programs that one could apply for, instead of depending on God to provide all that is needed (and for every other issue that involves trusting faith in God).

If those religious leaders would have been spiritually honest, and had they truly repented, God would have done as much for them as He would for anyone else to this day. However (from what the Bible records), they did not repent, and they continued to be controlled by the devil, so they would find themselves in the flames and pleading for relief. In conclusion, ‘being honest—spiritually’, is a ‘salvation issue’.

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