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Placebo Salvation

Middle age brings with it many heretofore unknown joys -- such as heartburn. My doctor prescribed a popular medication for mine. Reading the package insert that came with the medicine, I was excited to learn that studies have shown this medication to be over 80% effective in providing relief from heartburn after six weeks of treatment. However, the same studies indicated that a placebo or sugar pill was over 60% effective in curing heartburn over the same period of time. Imagine that! The best medication modern science can provide for heartburn is only 20% more effective than a sugar pill!

Of course, I suspect that the placebo never actually cured anyone's heartburn. But people took it, thinking it was effective medicine, and so either convinced themselves that they were getting better or actually got better on their own. The pill itself did no good; it was just a mind game. The placebo was only capable of directly producing a psychological effect, not a physical one.

There are placebos in the realm of spiritual things too. Spiritual placebos are doctrines and beliefs which people think benefit their souls, but which in fact have no positive spiritual effect.

Now the folks who take spiritual placebos don't see it that way. They insist that they "feel good," and they cite this as evidence that their doctrines and practices are effective. For instance, there are those who say they have been saved by faith only, separate from or before baptism. Of course the Bible says that we are "justified works and NOT by faith only" and that baptism also "saves us" (James 2:24; 1 Peter 3:21). But those who have taken the "faith only" placebo feel good, so they will take nothing else. The same is true of those who have taken the "personal salvation experience" placebo. These folks think that Jesus or an angel or the Holy Spirit have miraculously intervened in their lives to save them. Some of these individuals describe personal experiences involving visions or voices which made them "feel good." They cannot explain how a God who "shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34) could save them in this way, and yet fail to miraculously intervene in the lives of millions of other lost souls. Nor can they explain how they KNOW that what they saw or heard in their salvation experience was from God and not from Satan (2 Corinthians 11:14; 1 Timothy 4:1). What about you? Have you taken God's cure for sin, or are you still swallowing spiritual sugar pills? -- by Steve Klein - *from The Exhorter* - April 18, 1999

Times of Services

Sundays - 2:00 pm Bible class, 3:00 pm Assembly

Wednesdays - 6:30 pm Bible class

The Thief on the Cross

By Dick Ward

Did you know you cannot be saved like the thief on the cross? Often, in religious conversations, we hear of those who point to the thief on the cross as a good example of salvation by faith only. Well, a detailed investigation of the thief's conversion will prove too much for the "faith only" advocates to bear.

A Look at the Thief

Let us notice briefly what the scriptures say about the thief:

- 1.He fulfilled prophecy - Luke 22:37; Isaiah 53:12
- 2.He was guilty of sin - Luke 23:41
- 3.He, at first, opposed Christ - Mark 15:32
- 4.He had a change of mind (repentance) - Luke 23:39-41
- 5.He had knowledge of Christ, God and the kingdom - Luke 23:39-41
- 6.He received a promise from the LIPS of Christ - Luke 23:43

The thief lived at the time when Jesus was on the earth and exercising His power to forgive sins (see Luke 7:48; Matthew 9:2; 19:21). The thief received a "direct statement" from the mouth of the Lord, "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." No man, today, has heard such words of grace from the lips of Christ. We hear Him only through His revealed word (the Bible).

Your Salvation and the Thief's Salvation

Your salvation and the thief's salvation differ in many, many aspects. First, the thief lived under the law of Moses; you live under the law of Christ. Also, the thief lived while Jesus was on this earth in a human body. While on earth, Jesus exercised His "power to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6); the thief was one who enjoyed this diverse method of using this "power"; he was promised "paradise" that very day! Have you realized the thief received the "promise" BEFORE Jesus died? The thief was in "paradise" BEFORE the 3 days of the BURIAL of Jesus. The thief enjoyed what he got BEFORE the resurrection of Christ. Answer the question, "Can one be saved today, without the death, burial and resurrection of Christ?" No sir! The Thief is not our example of how we can be saved, neither is he an example of salvation by "faith only".

Why People Appeal to the Case of the Thief

Although there might be several reasons for bringing up the thief's salvation, the most often one is to flee the force of the Bible teaching about baptism. **Jesus said**, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). **Men contend**, "he that believeth (only) is saved and you can be baptized if you want to." **Which do you understand as the truth on this subject?**

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