

Fuzzy Gospels: The Popularity of Salvation by Works: Religious, Behavioral, Emotional, Inducement: “Inviting Christ,” John 6:5,19,24,35-37, Rom 5:12; 3:10-12; Jer 17:9; Rev 3:20

- 5) **Religious works.** (1) Keeping the Mosaic Law. Lack of biblical scholarship leads to the conclusion that the mandates given to the Israelites are transferred to the Church Age believer.

Salvation for both Jew and Gentile was the same as in the Church Age: faith alone in Christ alone. The theologians of the Reformation were “recovering Catholics” and they inevitably trended back toward their old legalistic wheel-tracks in the development of New Testament doctrine. Thus, the flawed theology of most denominations finds its origin in this inconsistency.

(2) Do penance. This is the “suffering for Jesus” concept. It is asserted that a person can be saved by acts of self-abasement performed to show sorrow for or repentance of sins.

(3) Asceticism: the practice of strict self-denial. This practice spans from the silly to the ridiculous – refraining from reading comic strips on Sundays to giving up something you like for forty days during Lent. Ascetics seek to impose their system of denial on others and thus have been influential in the passage of blue laws: statutes that regulate work, commerce, and amusements on Sundays. The history of blue laws originated from the strict and austere codes of conduct professed by the Puritans:

Blue law is a law restricting activities, especially of a commercial or recreational nature, at specified times, especially on Sunday. Such laws were originally enacted during our colonial period. The very first such laws were enacted in the early days of the New Haven colony, with the result that Connecticut was known at one time as the *Blue Law State*. The *blue* in *blue law* is a synonym for “puritanical” or “strict.”¹

(4) Physical health and conditioning. Great emphasis is placed today on pumping up, looking physically fit, and being in perfect health. This is an expression of a narcissistic society that is overly impressed with appearances rather than what goes on in a person’s soul. The underlying motivation is that the more attractive you think you are the more likely you will be sexually appealing to others.

Unfortunately, right-man right-woman is never a consideration but there are those who do think it has something to do with either one’s salvation or, if a believer, their spiritual advance.

¹ William Morris and Mary Morris, “Blue laws,” in *Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 72.

- 6) **Behavioral Works.** (1) Some believe that salvation is associated with morality. Consider this: if a person is an unbeliever does this mean that he is categorically immoral? No, morality applies to the laws of divine establishment. All people are expected to submit to the restrictions imposed by civic and cultural standards of good behavior. These are for the believer and unbeliever alike, therefore, they can have no relationship to one's salvation. Consequently, morality is not a virtue with reference to the spiritual life. The entire human race is expected to be moral. The believer is elevated above morality by means of his submission to the commandments of God. Therefore, the restraints that biblical principles place on a believer are virtuous whereas the restraints that civil society places on all mankind are virtuous on a human level but cut no ice with God for salvation.
- (2) Personality change. There is no question that all of us could use some improvement in our personalities. Arrogance, bitterness, self-pity, narcissism, and implacability define some, but trying to overcome these dispositions in order to be saved will not happen and rare moments of cordiality and objectivity do not result in salvation.
- (3) Observing taboos. If you don't drink or smoke, don't use profanity or cosmetics, and avoid those that do, it does not mean you are saved.
- 7) **Emotional works.** (1) Ecstasies and emotions. There are many occasions when events cause a person to enter an ecstatic state of overwrought emotion. Since this is a rapturous feeling the assumption is that it is spiritual.
- This is why Disneyland churches have emotion driven services with high intensity "contemporary" music, personal testimonials, and sermonettes that play on the emotions of the congregation.
- (2) Tongues. This was a temporary precanon spiritual gift that enabled Jews to be evangelized in foreign tongues, the method Isaiah prophesied they would be warned of the fifth cycle of discipline in Isaiah 28:11. This came to pass at Pentecost in Acts 2:5-11. The gift of tongues is actually better stated as the gift of languages. It was designed for believers to evangelize the lost, not a way for the lost to acquire salvation.
- (3) Salvation by euphoria. Feelings of elation that produce well-being and an exultant state of mind are not a part of salvation. One can be ill and feeling physically awful and be saved through faith alone in Christ alone.
- 8) **Inducement works.** This is a form of subtle works that has emerged out of the Fuzzy Gospel Movement. The catch phrases, "Invite Christ into your life," and "Invite Christ into your heart," are the popular expressions that this movement substitutes for faith alone in Christ alone. This is completely unbiblical and it is important to document this.

Principle: Christ is not motivated to respond to the inducements or enticements of a spiritually dead person. The spiritually dead must come to Christ through faith which results in salvation. Then Christ indwells the new believer who possesses divine righteousness. In chapter 6 of the Gospel of John, the Lord made it clear that the unbeliever was to “come to Him.” In this passage there is a multitude of over five-thousand people who have come to Him. The religious types have stayed in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover of A.D. 28.

The events of this passage take place on the northeastern side of the Sea of Galilee on a mountain outside the city of Bethsaida:

John 6:5a - Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him ...

Note that the people did not invite Jesus to come to them; they came to Him. This was the scene of the feeding of the five thousand with an inventory of five barley loaves and two fish. That night the disciples left the Lord alone on the mountain, boarded their boat and cast off for Capernaum on the western shore of the Sea.

The Sea of Galilee is 13 miles long from north to south but only seven miles wide from east to west. With that in mind we note a miracle in:

John 6:19 - When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat.

Three or four miles puts the boat half way across the Sea. These twelve men are rowing, Jesus is walking and though the wind is working against the disciples, it is amazing how the Lord overtakes them in a four-mile walk across the water.

The next day, the Lord and the disciples were back to the western shore of the Sea at the city of Capernaum. Notice how the people back in Bethsaida pursued Him:

John 6:24 - So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

Jesus' sermon to them at Capernaum stressed the difference of coming to Him geographically and coming to Him spiritually through faith in “the Bread of life”:

John 3:35 - Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and He who believes in Me shall never thirst.

v. 36 - “But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.

v. 37 - “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out”

Notice that for salvation, the unbeliever must “come to Him.” The spiritually dead are unrighteous and under condemnation, thus unqualified to invite the God of the universe anywhere, especially into their “spiritually dead” lives or into their “desperately wicked hearts.”

Romans 5:12 - Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and so spiritual death through the sin nature, consequently, spiritual death spread to all men because all sinned when Adam sinned.

Romans 3:10 - “There is none righteous, not even one;

v. 11 - There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God;

v. 12 - All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.”

Jeremiah 17:9 - “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately wicked; who can understand it?”

The Fuzzy Gospel of an unbeliever inviting the Lord into their life and heart has no biblical basis. The word “invite” is not found in the New Testament. The possible source for this heresy is the Lord’s quote in:

Revelation 3:20 - ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.’

This passage is directed toward believers at the church in Laodicea who are classified as “lukewarm” in verse 16. The Lord indicates in verse 19 that although He loves them – they possess imputed righteousness – he reproves and disciplines those who are in reversionism; therefore, He says, ‘Be zealous and repent.’

Notice that the Lord was not invited by these reversionists. He came of his own accord for the purpose of warning for the purpose of rebound.

His “voice” refers to His imposition of “reproof and discipline,” the “opening of the door” is the rebound of the reversionist, and the Lord’s “dining with him” is “restoration to fellowship.”

Therefore, salvation does not occur because a spiritually dead person invites Christ to come into their life or heart. This is works in which an unbeliever solicits the Lord to do something His integrity would not allow Him to do. Salvation is faith alone in Christ alone. There is nothing fuzzy about that.