

SALVATION IN CHRIST ALONE

“Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” —ACTS 15:10-11

On a December day back in 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright, after numerous attempts to fly, finally succeeded. Ecstatically, they sent a telegram to their sister, Katharine, at home in Chicago. It said, “We have actually flown 852 feet. We’ll be home for Christmas.” Overjoyed, Katharine ran down to the local newspaper and pushed the telegram into the editor’s hand. After reading it, he smiled and said, “Well, well, how nice! The boys are going to be home for Christmas.” He had spectacularly missed the point. The fact the Wright brothers had flown was the greatest news story of the 20th century and the editor missed it!

How many people are spectacularly missing the point of the Gospel? Week after week, we can sit in church, trying our best to please God, but fail to realize it is Christ, alone, that is required for salvation, not Christ plus various things. Some think it’s Christ plus good deeds and behaviour, Christ plus observing the Sabbath, Christ plus certain kinds of baptism or specific doctrine. The problem is that when we make these in addition to Christ, we are, in reality, subtracting from Christ, because the measure to which something needs to be added to is the measure of its deficiency. And in Christ there is no deficiency.

In establishing the early churches, many Jewish people recognized Christ to be the Messiah, but their understanding of the Gospel was

faulty. They saw Christ not only as a fulfillment of Judaism, but as an addition to it. Gentiles could not start at the end, but had to go back and convert to Mosaic Law before receiving Christ. So that meant Judaism plus Christ, but Peter testified that God had given His Holy Spirit to the Gentiles, and it had nothing to do with anything they had done to earn it. There was no precondition other than an open and receptive heart.

The Gospel is about reaching people for Christ and adding any conditions, other than a repentant heart, would have violated Scripture and what God is doing; therefore, any addition to Christ had to be strongly and unequivocally resisted. Paul writes, “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:20). Scripture is about promise to fulfillment. It is by the grace of Jesus Christ, alone, that we are saved, and grace is the unmerited, unearned favour of God. Archbishop William Temple, a very godly man of Canterbury, wrote, “Our only contribution to our salvation is the contribution of the sin from which we need saving.”

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for the tremendous gift of salvation we have in You, and I pray with all my heart for those who have yet to receive it.

TO REFLECT UPON: Have I missed the point of the Gospel and am trying to earn my salvation?