



Salvation Negatives, 4

“Not . . . With Perishable Things Like Silver or Gold”

“Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Peter 1:18–21).

The Scriptures include several salvation negatives—specific explanations of things that *cannot* bring salvation. We come now to the “not” that Peter gave: “not . . . with perishable things like silver or gold” (1 Peter 1:18). For a long time, people have said that “the best gifts in life are free.” This old adage has a far-reaching application when spoken in connection with our redemption. It reminds us of the complete, total, and non-negotiable nature of salvation. It simply is not possible to purchase our forgiveness from the Lord. Truly, as we stand in this salvation, we are fully cleansed, fed, and clad in the robe of righteousness at the expense of God’s grace. The invitation of the cross to the lost, the wayward, the perishing, and the sinful is to come to the table of eternal life. The invitation reads:

“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you who have no money come, buy and eat.
Come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without cost” (Isaiah 55:1).

This salvation that cannot be bought or sold, borrowed or built, carries with it several important implications.

The first implication is that the cross requires us to live before the Lord “as though” we have nothing;

for, in reality, nothing we have has any purchasing power before God. As we often sing, “Nothing in my hand I bring: Simply to Thy cross I cling.”¹ Silver and gold have no value at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In his exhortation to the Corinthians, Paul used the phrase “as though” five times in urging them to lead the life of a pilgrim. They were to trim away all physical and earthly ties and live as servants of the Lord, citizens of heaven who were passing through this world. He wrote,

But this I say, brethren, . . . from now on those who have wives should be *as though* they had none; and those who weep, *as though* they did not weep; and those who rejoice, *as though* they did not rejoice; and those who buy, *as though* they did not possess; and those who use the world, *as though* they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:29–31; emphasis mine).

The relationships that are specifically named here are the personal, emotional, possessive, and physical ones, essentially covering every aspect of life.

We cannot borrow salvation from others, not even from our wives or husbands. We stand before God as though we had none. Our

¹A. M. Toplady, “Rock of Ages,” *Songs of Faith and Praise*, comp. and ed. Alton H. Howard (West Monroe, La.: Howard Publishing Co., 1994).

salvation rises above all the temporary concerns of this life. We are to regard the sorrows that we experience as nothing, and must see our joys as unimportant. Earthly losses and gains mean little when compared to eternity. Our salvation is not connected to the exchange systems of this world, such as its currency, silver and gold, positions, houses, or lands. We may possess some things from the world while we are in it, but they should be viewed as borrowed, time-bound, and powerless except as vehicles through which we give glory to God. The world itself is only the vestibule of eternity. It is temporary, as fleeting as a shadowy image that appears today but is gone tomorrow.

Simon, the man of magic who proclaimed himself to be someone great by performing sorcery, thought that he might purchase the gift of the Spirit with money. Peter gave him one of the severest rebukes in the New Testament: "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God" (Acts 8:20, 21). If we ever attempt to buy the blood of Jesus or any other spiritual gift of God's love, we too (unless we repent) will perish with our corruptible, perishing silver. The imperishable cannot be purchased with the perishable; the corruptible cannot create the incorruptible.

The second implication is that the cross stands as the greatest of all equalizers. It brings the poor man to the priceless riches of the kingdom of God, and it demotes the rich man to abject poverty. James wrote, "But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away" (James 1:9, 10). The poor man who has nothing in terms of money or position is lifted up by the cross and made to sit as a child at the table of the King of kings and Lord of lords. In contrast, the rich man is stripped of his wealth—his purple robes, houses, and possessions—and left with empty hands. He can buy nothing, earn nothing, and make nothing; in and of himself, he is nothing. He has absolutely no means with which to purchase any of the treasures of the gospel. He has to come to them exactly as the poor man does—with faith in his heart, obedience in his life, and nothing in his hands or pockets.

To say it another way, the ground is level at the foot of the cross. Anyone—the poor, the middle class, or the rich—may come to God's salvation and receive its fullness. No one stands above anyone else, and no one is poorer than another. All must come as sinners—lost, hopeless, and empty. Societal status, education, and positions of influence in the city, state, or nation are unable to qualify a person to receive salvation or disqualify one from receiving it. All who come with the heart of a child, believing, trusting, and obeying the plan of salvation, can stand in His grace, fully saved, fully received by Him, having the full status of children in His family.

The third implied truth is that Jesus is the only One who has come into this world who has had and will have a universal impact upon it. He died for all people, for all time. His gospel is for all—the young, the aged, the poor, the princes, the slaves, the prisoners, and the potentates. His blood reaches to anyone who lived by faith and obedience before the cross, to anyone who lives now and walks before Him in the obedience of faith, and to anyone who will live by faith and obedience in the days to come.

One preacher spoke of the question that no one can answer—the question that even God cannot answer. He pointed to the question of Hebrews 2:3a: "How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" No excuse can be given for not having this salvation. It is free, anyone can receive it, and it transcends time, reaching out in its efficacy to all ages. One either comes to it, or he neglects it. At the throne of mercy, no one can say, "Lord, I would have come, but I could not afford it. I had nothing with which to buy it." Whoever makes such a claim as this will only hear the Lord say, "I did not redeem you with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." Eddie Cloer



"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Revelation 22:17).