

TWO APOLOGETIC INSIGHTS

(i.e. insights that serve to defend the faith against skepticism)

“It Took God to See That”

John M. Sinclair

I think one of the strongest evidences of the truth of the Gospel, is its *uniqueness*. All man-made religions boil down to saying, “try hard enough, and you’ll have good hope of making it”— that is, to whatever you hope to make it *to*. The Buddhist wants to make it to Nirvana, the Hindu wants to make it to a reincarnation into a higher social caste, and the Muslim wants to make it to the kind of heaven he believes in. Even some, who erroneously call themselves Christians, hope to make it to heaven. And they all try to “make it” by *striving* to attain it. Some will agree that God has done a *part* of what it takes to bring them to their hoped-for destination, but their emphasis is all on *their* efforts to get there.

The Gospel is unique in its teaching that Christ has *already done it all*. All human beings are sinners by nature, and there’s nothing that we can do to either merit or purchase eternal life and entrance to heaven (Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5; Philippians 3:9). Even our *greatest* efforts to please God, are *worse* than a big zero toward meriting salvation (Isaiah 64:6). That’s why Christ did all the work it took to save our souls; and that’s what He meant when, just before His death, He said, “It is finished.” We have only to come to Christ *empty-handed*, turn to God in repentance and faith, *trusting* in Christ’s finished work as having satisfied God’s justice, and receiving eternal life as God’s *free gift* (Romans 6:23).

Many people, especially those who follow man-made hopes, often ask us, “You mean to say that if a person takes God’s gift of eternal life and then lives a horrible life of crime and debauchery, he’ll still go to heaven? Doesn’t your teaching encourage carelessness about how you live?”

The truth is exactly the opposite. If a person tries to live a good live to *earn* his way to heaven, his efforts to do good are inevitably tainted with pride and selfishness. That’s why salvation is “not of works, lest anyone boast” (Ephesians 2:9). Trying to do good in order to *get something for oneself* is a *selfish motive*. And a generalized tendency is noticeable that those who think they have to work for their salvation do whatever they think they *have* to do to be saved, but *not one iota more*.

On the other hand, the person who has *repented* of his sin will not lead a corrupt life, as repentance is a *turning away* from sin, wanting deliverance from it through Christ’s strength. And a person, who has received God’s free gift of everlasting life, can *never do enough*, to his *own* satisfaction, to show gratitude to God for having saved him. He’ll pour out all that he has in him to seek to do not only what he *has to* do, but whatever he has reason to believe would *bring pleasure* to God. Therefore salvation by grace alone wins *much greater devotion* than the notion that one must *work* for his salvation. Furthermore, the good done by a person saved by grace alone, is **NOT** contaminated with selfishness and pride, as the person does it solely out of devotion to the God to whom he owes everything.

Why, then, haven’t any inventors of man-made religion ever come up with such an idea? Why have they always, consistently, taught that one must *work* to earn favour with God? The answer is that it took God to realize what devotion could be won by salvation by grace. Only God could foresee that a person saved by grace would pour out devotion to Him incomparably beyond any devotion that could be

one by obliging people to work to earn merit. The fact that it took God to see that, is strong evidence that the Gospel of salvation by grace is the unique divine truth.
