

PERSONAL SAVIOR?

Joe Slater

For decades religious people have been talking about “accepting Christ as your personal Savior.” Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, they have a warped concept of what “accepting Christ” means; most are referring to some form of the “sinner’s prayer” or to “salvation by faith alone.” But aside from that, why the emphasis on “personal” Savior?

True enough, your relationship with God has a personal or individual aspect. Your own personal sins separate you from God. You personally become one of God’s children when you believe and obey the gospel. You will stand before God individually to be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10). In this sense, and to this degree, referring to Jesus as your “personal” Savior is Biblical.

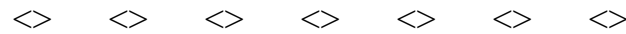
Significantly, however, the expression “personal Savior” became all the rage at a time when a “personal relationship” with Jesus was being emphasized to the virtual exclusion of any connection to the church. One common way of expressing this was, “Jesus, yes; the church, no.” The anti-establishment mentality impacted religion powerfully in many ways, one of which was to downplay the church. Thus we were told that we didn’t need the church; we could just have a personal relationship with Jesus while having nothing to do with the church.

Scripture teaches something quite different. Your relationship with Jesus is, indeed, personal; but it is also corporate. Acts 2:47 tells us that the Lord added the saved to the church. Notice that God did not say, “Jesus, yes; the church, no.” The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22, 23). Christ nourishes and cherishes the church (5:29). He loved the church and gave Himself for

her (5:25); He is the Savior, not just of the individual, but of the body (5:23).

We see, then, that Jesus is not just our “personal” Savior. When He saves us individually, He adds us to His church, which He loves, for which He died, and over which He is the head. You can no more have Christ without His church than you can have the head without the body.

“To [God] be the glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:21).



YOU CAN’T MAKE ‘EM BELIEVE

Regarding hounds, the old-timer wisely said, “If he ain’t got the desire, he ain’t gonna hunt . . . no matter how many times you take him to the woods.” The same is true about people. No matter how powerfully we preach, teach, or write, we can only stoke an interest that is already there.

Where does desire come from? A lifetime of learning and experience. This is why atheists work so hard to influence children in public schools . . . because the seeds that eventually mature into desire (or non-desire), can be planted with little interference.

In evangelism, we must work hard to find people who indicate even the slightest desire. We can work with them, fanning that spark of desire into a flame. But it is nigh unto impossible to influence and convert those who have no desire.

--Jared Jackson (Jackson, TN) via Jared’s File Cabinet

Fishing For Faith

“For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Ephesians 5:8,9).

If you're looking for Waldo, hunt for his red and white toboggan, shock of brown hair, black rimmed glasses, red and white striped sweater, blue pants, and brown shoes. He always wears the same thing, so he should be easy to find, right? No! Waldo creator Martin Handford hides him among hundreds of odd characters, and he's never easy to find, even though you know exactly what to look for.

Just like Waldo, Christians should be easy to find. What do they look like? They are clothed with humility (1 Peter 5:5), their loins are girded with truth, they have put on the breastplate of righteousness, their feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, they have on the helmet of salvation, and they carry the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:14-17). To all these they have added faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Can the world find us Christians? Do they know what to look for? Will the world find us set on a hill and shining brightly? Will we be on a lamp stand lighting up a room or a whole house? Or will we be hiding under a bushel? Let us not, like Waldo, be so hidden among those of the world that the lost souls living in darkness cannot see us.

--Donna Richmond Witliff (Denver, CO)