

# Receiving the Gift

Joe Slater

Salvation is a gift. It's free (Romans 6:23). Jesus paid the price: His own precious blood (Acts 20:28). Since the price has already been paid, and salvation is a gift, does it follow that there are no conditions for receiving that gift?

Consider this example from the Old Testament; after all, that's why it was written (see 1 Corinthians 10:11). God told Joshua, "*See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor*" (Joshua 6:2). Note that God didn't say, "You are going to earn Jericho by your own strength and military genius." He said it would be a gift.

The remainder of the chapter, however, shows that this gift was not unconditional. God laid down some requirements with which Israel had to comply in order to receive Jericho as a gift (6:3-5). In short, they were to march around the city once each day for six days, with the priests carrying rams' horn trumpets before the ark of the covenant. Then they were to march around the city seven times on the seventh day, after which the priests were to blow the trumpets and the people were to shout loudly. If they did this, God promised that "*the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him*" (6:5b).

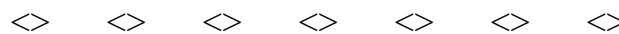
Take that plan to the Pentagon and see if they're willing to try it! Militarily it makes no sense whatever. But that's just the point: Israel was not earning Jericho by their own strength and military genius. They were demonstrating faith in God, and God gave them the city only when they met his conditions.

Salvation from sin is a gift. But it, too, has conditions. God's word stipulates that to be saved, one

must have confident trust in Jesus, the Son of God (John 8:24; Acts 16:31); one must repent of sins (Acts 2:38: 17:30); one must confess Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9, 10); and one must be immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3, 4).

Not one of these conditions, not even all of them together, could possibly earn salvation. They are not works of merit at all, but acts of obedient faith. Just as God gave Jericho to the Israelites only when they trusted and obeyed Him, so now He gives salvation only to those who trust Him and obey the conditions set forth in His word.

Israel did not earn victory over Jericho. Neither do we, by our personal goodness, merit salvation from sin. In both cases, God's gift is received upon faith and obedience.



## Is Anything Happening in the Church?

A few years back, a small-town newspaper reporter gave an unusual excuse for his abbreviated, barely-there story. He explained: "First, nothing happened. And second, what did happen, happened to people who don't happen to want everybody to know what happened!"

There are always those who are quick to point an accusing finger at the church where, as they claim, "nothing is happening." Yet, beneath the congregational crust, in the day-to-day lives of sincere, consecrated brothers and sisters, a great deal is happening. The church's hardest workers are usually those least inclined to publicize their own good works. Because of their Christ-like humility, they don't "happen to want everybody to know what happened."

--Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK); via *Old Paths*

## TAKING REVENGE

*"Never take your own revenge"* Romans 12:19.

How are we able to avoid taking revenge? According to human thinking David had reasons to take revenge against King Saul, but he did not. The things that kept him from taking revenge are the same reasons we can use to avoid taking revenge.

First, David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). God wants us to be men after His own heart.

Second, David respected God's anointed (1 Samuel 26:9-10). When we feel that we have been wronged by one in a position of authority, we need to take the attitude that David took toward God's anointed.

Third, David realized he was called to a higher calling. You and I have been called to a higher calling (Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 1:27). We are not to walk according to the flesh, but after the Spirit, (Romans 8:1-8; Galatians 6:7-8).

Fourth, David realized that events must occur on God's timetable rather than his own schedule (1 Samuel 26:10). We need to remember, "*It is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord*" Romans 12:19.

God knows what happens to His people and He will hold the guilty parties accountable.

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