

Religious Experiences

Joe Slater

Does having a “religious experience” save you (or prove that you are saved)? Some religious groups require one to relate a religious experience; then they decide whether that experience shows the person is saved and should be granted membership. How does this compare to the New Testament record?

In Acts 2, the Jews in Jerusalem definitely had a religious experience! *“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they (the 120) were sitting . . . And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language”* (2:2, 6). But even though it was supernatural, that “experience” didn’t save anyone! When the apostles preached the gospel, 3000 believed and responded in repentance and immersion, thus receiving salvation.

Who can deny that Saul of Tarsus had a religious experience in Acts 9? *“Suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’”* (9:3-4). Contrary to popular belief, this experience didn’t save Saul. God sent Ananias to tell him what to do; Saul *“arose and was baptized”* (9:18).

Cornelius certainly could lay claim to having a religious experience. An angel of God appeared, telling him to send for Peter (Acts 10:1-6). But that experience didn’t save him! Peter told him *“words by which you and all your household will be saved”* (Acts 11:14). Cornelius and his household obeyed the gospel just like all the others (Acts 10:47-48).

Even if you had a supernatural experience today (which you won’t), that wouldn’t save you! *“Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord!”* (Acts 22:16)

Petting A Porcupine

Far too many people, and not a few brethren, feel rejected and lonely simply because they have spent a lifetime building walls instead of bridges. And is it any wonder why they find themselves so disconnected from everyone surrounding them?

When was the last time you tried petting a porcupine?

Any healthy relationship will thrive in an atmosphere of understanding and mutual forbearance, but continual carping criticism does nothing but destroy. Pettiness and selfishness too often drive deadly spikes into the very heart of what would otherwise be a healthy and thriving union.

The Bible instructs, *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:31, 32).

And again Scripture admonishes, *“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous, not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing”* (1 Peter 3:8, 9).

And still again, *“With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Ephesians 4:2).

In short, we are expected to get along with one another; to be kind and forgiving toward one another; to have genuine compassion for one another; to forbear with one another “in love.”

We get along best when we’re less selfish and more selfless; less critical and more understanding; less like the world and more like Christ.

And what is this but the “golden rule” in practice? (Matthew 7:12.) We would have others show kindness to

us. We would have others minimize our weaknesses and instead emphasize and encourage our strengths. Should we not then treat others as we would have them treat us?

It is always the right time to be kind!

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

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Eyes That See Not

“Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see; who have ears but do not hear.” (Jeremiah 5:21)

I can recall asking my mother if she knew where my socks were for my baseball uniform. Of course, she knew exactly where to find them and told me where they were. I went and looked for them, but didn’t see them. Being frustrated with me, she walked into my room, opened the drawer, grabbed my socks, and said to me, “Open your eyes!” God is saying the same thing here. You have eyes but you are not seeing anything.

God is upset that His people who should see Him and hear Him do not. How many of us in the fold of God do not hear our Shepherd’s voice calling out to us? We fail to open our eyes and fix them on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). I hope and pray that we will not find ourselves in the same position as the Jews here in Jeremiah. Instead, let us train our eyes and ears with God’s word, so that we will see Him, hear Him, and obey Him.

--Travis Robertson (via Bulletin Gold)