

"I Cannot Feel Salvation"

by Walter Lewis Wilson, M.D.

AN AFTERNOON Bible class in a little mission hall was attended by eighteen women and one man on a cold, wintry day. The ice and the snow had kept away most of the friends who generally came, but these nineteen felt their need of spiritual help so deeply that they would not permit anything to keep them from attending.

The chairs were arranged in three rows, with six chairs in a row, and the woman concerning whom this story is written was seated in the front row. She showed plainly the depression of her spirit and the discouragement of her heart.

At the beginning of the service, I requested the friends to present any questions that might be troubling them concerning spiritual matters. Very quickly and without hesitation, this lady lifted her head, looked from under the broad brim of her hat, and said, with great emotion, "I want to know how to be saved. I cannot *feel* salvation."

This was quite refreshing to me, for it is not often that troubled souls are found, and less often that they will speak out in the meeting and acknowledge their heart hunger. Usually, the questions that are presented in such a service are questions which when answered satisfy only the curiosity of the one who asks them. Questions about obscure passages of Scripture are frequently asked. Questions also are asked concerning different interpretations of prophecy. This friend was interested in none of these. She desired help for her own heart and relief for her own mind.

In answer to her inquiry, I began to explain the gospel. I sought to show how the Lord Jesus is the Saviour and does all the saving. I read John 3:16 slowly, and called her attention to the fact that since God had given the Lord Jesus to do the saving she had the privilege of trusting Him for this salvation, and of accepting His saving grace and power. I read to her Acts 13:38 and 39, and explained how by this passage we are assured that the believer in Christ Jesus is at once justified or cleansed from all guilt. Then we turned to Colossians 2:14, and read how God the Father in heaven blots out the sins and the guilt of the sinner who trusts in the Saviour, because of His sacrificed death on Calvary and His intercession as our great High Priest at the right hand of God.

None of these messages seemed to help her heart. Her face was still clouded. Her countenance was sad and her deep sighs revealed the despair in her soul. The meeting closed with this woman still in the dark.

After the service, we were invited to have supper with our hostess at the mission. She very wisely seated this troubled lady at my side, where we might converse further. During the meal, I sought to bring the gospel truth before her by various illustrations. I said, "Have you noticed how God reveals His gospel message to us on the dinner table? This beef which is before us died for us. We partake of that which died for us and receive life from it. We eat these peas which are dead, and also these beans. The wheat in these rolls is dead, and so is the corn in this dish; but as we partake of these things which have given their life for us, our life is maintained.

"In some such way, the Saviour is presented to us. He died for us and by faith we reach out for Him, and partake of Him, and He saves the soul and gives us eternal life. Of course, He is not dead now. He is on the throne—the wonderful, living Lord. It is because He is the risen Christ that He can give us everlasting life, when we receive Him and rely on His precious blood for the forgiveness of sin."

But none of these illustrations gave any help. She still complained that she could not *feel* salvation.

Supper being over, we walked a few blocks to the city auditorium where the evening service was to be held. My friend took a seat near the front of the room where she could hear every word and would not be disturbed by late comers, crying babies or lovers passing notes. The message that evening was taken from II Corinthians 11:3, "The Simplicity That Is in Christ.." I sought by many illustrations to reveal the beautiful way in which God has made the way of salvation easy for every person. I quoted Psalm 34:8, "O taste and see that the LORD is good." I said, "I cannot explain to you the taste of an orange or the taste of beef, but you would know all about the *taste* of each within a moment after I gave you some to eat. I cannot explain God to you or Jesus Christ His Son, but if you will only trust Him, take Him for yourself, you, too, will realize what a wonderful Saviour is Christ Jesus our Lord."

I then read Acts 17:27, where Paul urged the men of Athens to "seek the Lord, if haply they might *feel* after him and find him." I then said to them, "If you were blind, lame and very sick, you could tell an object that was brought to you by the feel of it. You could tell whether

it was an apple, a banana or a watch. We learn many things by feeling them with our hands. So God invites us to reach out the hand of faith and find how wonderfully near He is, and how blessedly He receives, loves and saves the one who trusts in Him.

All this time I was watching this woman's face, to see the Holy Spirit bring light to her heart, but none came. She remained quite depressed, but watched me earnestly and expectantly, hoping to receive some light that would dispel the darkness and disperse the doubts.

My next illustration was Isaiah 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." In explaining this, I said, "The sick person looks to the doctor for relief. The mother, trapped in the burning building with her baby, looks to the fireman with his ladder for rescue. The lost man in the forest looks to the guide for a safe deliverance. So you, my friend, helpless in your weakness and inability, must look unto Jesus—the Lord Jesus on the throne of glory. He saves that one who looks unto Him for salvation." This illustration gave no light or help to the troubled soul.

Again, I took the passage in Romans 10:9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." I continued my explanation by saying, "We confess that which we believe. If you believe that God raised the body of Christ from the grave and that therefore He is able and willing to save you, a guilty, lost, helpless sinner, then you should at once receive and confess Him as your own personal Saviour, and rely upon God's sure promise that He saves you now, just as you are. He died for the ungodly. He died for you. Are you ready, my friends, to receive the One who died for you and rose again, and confess with your mouth that Jesus is your Lord, your Saviour? Do it now, and then you can believe this sure promise of God, who cannot lie, that you are saved. Until you do this, God cannot do more for you!" Still this explanation brought no help to the anxious woman.

At the close of the message, I quoted that beautiful and well-known passage, John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." I explained this passage by using the following story:

"When my friend, Ray, was a little boy of about twelve, a neighbor took him on a fishing trip and offered to teach him to swim. Ray went into the water and was taught to make the strokes properly, to kick with his feet as he should, and to commit himself to the water, as he

learned to swim. After some little time of coaching, the gentleman swam across the stream and asked Ray to swim over. Ray said, 'I am afraid, for I cannot swim.' But the friend replied that he would never learn to swim sitting on the bank. He urged him to jump in and try it. Ray jumped in, but was so frightened that he lost his presence of mind and sank in the stream. When he recovered consciousness, his friend was rolling him over and over to get the water out of his lungs and save his life.

"In commenting on this, Ray said to me, 'Doctor, how glad I am that my friend did not sit on the bank and tell me how to do it. It was not a teacher I needed. It was a Saviour. I would have drowned if he had not jumped in, got beneath me and saved me. That is what the Saviour did for me.'"

As I finished this story, my friend was deeply moved with a happy surprise and the joy of the Lord filled her face. The story had illustrated to her that Jesus is not a way-show-er or a teacher, but a real Saviour. She trusted Christ immediately. At the close of the service, with a radiant face and a buoyant spirit, she came to tell me that she had seen in Christ Jesus her own Saviour and Redeemer, who had finished the work, paid the debt and blotted out her sins. What a joyful deliverance this was! God grant it may be so with all who read this story.

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