

# GOSPEL GUIDE

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?  
 HOW CAN I, EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME? (ACTS 8:30,31)

## *In This Issue:*

Noah's Salvation (2) • 1

Elders • 3

"Keep Thy Heart" • 4

Can  
 "Faith Only" Save? • 5

Jealousy — King Saul  
 An Example • 6

Why Are  
 You Not Saved? • 6

Everyone Dis What Was  
 Right In His Own Eyes • 8

"That We May Be  
 Like All The Nations" • 8



## Noah's Salvation (2)

### The Time of Noah and Now

**LAST MONTH IN OUR STUDY** of Noah it was found that he was saved by grace, by faith, and by water (Genesis 6:8; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20). Again we want to look to this great man of old, whose name is found forty-two times in the Old Testament and eight times in the New Testament. It is to be noted that in many respects conditions in Noah's time and conditions in our time are similar.

I. Noah lived in a sinful time. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Our time is also sinful. "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). In regard to our dispensation Jesus said, "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark .... Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30).

II. In Noah's time God offered man a place of salvation—the ark (Genesis 6:14-16). In our time, in this last dispensation of time, God has offered us a place of salvation. In the Ephesian letter Paul identifies the church as the body of Christ "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22,23.) In Ephesians 5:23 Paul says that Christ "is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." If Christ is to be our Savior, we must be in that of which he is the Savior. He is the Savior of the body; therefore, we must be in the body.

After 33 years of publication in printed form, GOSPEL GUIDE now appears in electronic form. It is an eight page publication designed to teach basic principles of the gospel of Christ.

Mail Address:  
305 Coffee Avenue NE  
Russellville, AL 35653 US

e-mail Address:  
Gospel-Guide@MyWay.com

web page:  
www.gospel-guide.org

Editor: Billy Norris

## NOAH'S SALVATION 2

The body is the church; therefore, if Christ is to be our Savior, we must be in the place God has provided for our salvation—Christ's body, the church. As it is understood that during the flood salvation was in the ark, so now salvation is in Christ, in his body, in the church.

III. In Noah's time preaching of God's word was essential to man's salvation. Peter calls Noah a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). Evidently Noah preached to the people of his day, warning them of the coming destruction, but no one other than his own family listened to this preacher of the righteous will of God. Preaching is still essential to man's salvation, that is, preaching of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe...But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks

foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:21-23). Christ has said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

IV. Noah was saved by obedience. He prepared the ark. He did all that God told him to do. "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded, so did he" (Genesis 6:22). By doing all that God told him to do he was saved. We are saved by obedience, by obeying the gospel of Christ. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8,9). Had Noah failed to build the ark, he would have been lost. Had he built the ark out of wood other than gopher wood, he would have transgressed God's commandment. If we fail to obey the gospel today, or if we alter or change God's pattern, we are lost. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

V. Noah, a righteous man, meant much to the world. Because of the wickedness of man, "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart...But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:6-9). Because of the righteousness of this man he was able to save the human race. If it were not for some righteous in the world, the world would be doomed. God was willing to spare wicked Sodom

if only ten righteous people could be found there (Genesis 18). The righteous still mean much to the world. The Christ, who overcame every temptation of Satan, has set in his own life the perfect pattern of conduct for all mankind. "For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:21,22). One Peter, one Paul, in the life that they lived, and in the work that they did in the name of Christ not only helped to save men in their own generation but in all the generations since their time. The righteous today are still those who find favor with God and who help hold the world together.

VI. Noah's obedience condemned the world. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7). Noah did what God told him to do in order to be saved. Others no doubt had the same opportunity to obey, but they refused to do God's will. Thus the obedience of Noah that brought about his salvation at the same time condemned those who rejected God's provision for their salvation. Through the gospel God has provided the means of salvation for the lost today. (Rom. 1:16.) The same gospel that saves those who obey condemns those who disobey. To one it is "the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life" (2 Corinthians 2.16).

## NOAH'S SALVATION 2

VII. In a new state Noah worshipped and served God. After the flood, Noah, saved from the wicked world and in a new state, built his altar unto the Lord and offered sacrifices. (Genesis 8:20). In a new state we are to worship and serve God. When one obeys the gospel, he obeys the command to believe. "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23). When one obeys the gospel, he obeys the command to repent. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). When one obeys the gospel, he

obeys the command to be baptized. "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48). Faith leads to and is in the direction of salvation. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:9). Repentance leads to and is in the direction of salvation. "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). Baptism is into Christ, into his death, wherein he shed his precious blood by which man is cleansed from sin. (Romans 6:7; Ephesians 1:7). When one is buried with Christ in baptism, he rises to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). His state is changed. He is a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). He has been delivered from the power of darkness and has been translated into the

kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13).

In this new state God's people worship and serve him. About three thousand were baptized on the day of Pentecost, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42).

Though we are far removed from Noah's time, these lessons drawn from both the Old and New Testaments show us that if we are to find favor with God we must be obedient to the laws God has given us. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11)

— BN

## Elders

**THE NEW TESTAMENT** has much to say about some groups of people who are called "elders." Peter was an elder (1 Peter 5:1). Peter made some remarkable statements about elders. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:1-4). Let us consider a number of things which are mentioned in this paragraph.

### WHO ARE ELDERS?

What is an elder? The word "elder" is from a Greek word *presbuteros*, a presbyter. Originally, it referred to people of age, but it later is used to refer to some who were a special group of people in the church (1 Peter 5:2). The term "elder," in this sense, occurs first in Acts 11:30. In the beginning the apostles had the oversight in the church (Acts 4:37; Acts 6:1-4). By the time the 11th chapter of Acts records events, there was a class of people who had the oversight, and funds were being sent to these.

Elders are called by different terms in the New Testament. They

## **“KEEP THY HEART”**

Hear what the wise man says about the keeping of your heart:

“But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble.

My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh.

Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:18-23).

## **ELDERS**

are called bishops (Acts 20:28-30, A.S.V). They are called pastors (Ephesians 4:11). They are called presbyters (1 Timothy 4:14). It is implied in 1 Peter 5:2 that they are shepherds. Their qualifications are given in detail in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-14.

### **EACH CHURCH TO HAVE THEM**

Even a casual study of the New Testament would make us conclude that each church was to have elders. Barnabas and Paul appointed elders in every church as they visited them again on their return as recorded in Acts 14:23. Titus was told to set things in order in Crete and to appoint elders (Titus 1:5). A church is a church without elders. These churches were churches before Barnabas and Paul appointed elders. Yet, it is God’s plan for every church to have elders, and a church is not what it ought to be when it can have elders and does not.

### **MOTIVES OF ELDERS**

Peter gives us an insight on what the motives of elders ought to be by telling us what they ought *not* to be. The duties of elders show, in a vivid way, that their motive ought to be one of service. Peter tells us that their motive ought not to be for temporal gain (1 Peter 5:2). Neither is the motive to be that of having power. They are not to be lords (1 Peter 5:3). Every elder, and would-be elder, should search the very reins of his heart to determine why he is an elder or why he wants to be one.

### **DUTIES OF ELDERS**

Peter tells us much about the duties of elders. Elders are to rule, even though they are not to be lords. They are to take the oversight (1 Peter 5:2). They are to rule (Hebrews 13:7,17). Even the qualifications show that they are to rule. (1 Timothy 3:5). They rule in deciding the matters which have to do with work, worship, discipline, and life according to that which has been revealed in God’s word.

Elders not only rule, but have the duty of tending to the flock or feeding the flock (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28). How are they to feed? They do this by doing the teaching or directing the teaching that takes place in the assemblies, by teaching in the Bible classes or supervising those who do teach, by the use of tracts and other mediums of teaching, and by their lives.

Peter tells us, also, that elders are to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). They are to be leaders worthy of being followed (Hebrews 13:7). They are to set the pace. They should be a pattern in giving, in living, in working, in teaching, in attitude, and in everything those in the flock ought to be doing. It seems to many of us that some elders ought to take a good look at themselves.

Elders also have the obligation of watching for the souls of those in the flock (Hebrews 13:17). They are to watch for wolves which might enter in and play havoc with the flock (Acts 20:29). They are to watch for those who are within, who may speak perverse things (Acts 20:30). They are to watch for

## ELDERS

those whose mouths need to be stopped (Titus 1:11). They are to be like watchmen on the wall ready to warn against all dangers.

It is not a light thing to be an elder in the Lord's church. It is no easy assignment. It ought to be considered with all seriousness. Yet, God intended for some to be elders. God knew what he wanted, and he knew what he was doing. A man who serves well as an elder renders a real and genuine service.

### THEIR RESTRICTIONS

Peter also tells us about the scope of elders' responsibility. They are to take the oversight of the local

church of which they are a part. (1 Peter 5:2). They have no authority in any other place as elders. This business of a set of elders overseeing the work of many churches came out of the mind of men and not of God. The sooner elders learn this, the sooner the purity of the church can be had.

### THE ELDERS REWARD

Peter tells of the reward which is in store for elders. They are not to serve for filthy lucre, but they will have a glorious reward. "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4). Paul tells us of the elders' reward, also. "Let the elders that rule well be

counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." This shows that honor is a by-product of dedicated service. It is thought by many that the idea of double honor is the idea of remuneration also when an elder spends his time in teaching. There is good reason for this conclusion, as the laborer is said to be worthy of his hire relative to teaching (Luke 10:7; 1 Corinthians 9:1-14).

Let us encourage more good men to desire to be elders. Their responsibility is great. However, the good they can do is without bounds. Their reward will be worth it all.

— Curtis E. Flatt

# Can Faith Only Save?

**THE MAJORITY THINKING** in the religious world is that faith by itself, plus nothing, can save the soul. Many fervently assert that faith is the only condition of salvation ever found in the Bible. Are these correct? Is this idea an accurate representation of the Lord's will concerning salvation? We shall seek to answer the questions in three ways.

### Faith Defined And Exemplified

Faith is the strong belief that a matter is true, joined with the conviction necessary to respond to that belief. The very meaning of faith rules out the possibility of faith saving without anything else. The kind of faith that saves the soul is never set off by itself, but it always is joined with obedience. John 3:16 in the American Standard Version

(which is the more correct translation of this verse) places *faith* and *disobedience* in contrast to each other, for the two are opposites. To fail to obey is to fail to believe in the full sense of the word. In fact, faith and believe in the Book of John seem to be used in the complete sense that includes an obedient response to the faith held in the heart. Romans 10:16 uses obeying and believing as

synonyms, for they are the same. The failure of some to obey the gospel is proved or explained by Paul's quotation from Isaiah to the effect that some had not *believed* the report. When the jailer of Philippi was told to believe on the Lord in Acts 16:31, he responded by obeying in baptism. Every case of conversion, in fact, shows that faith involves and includes baptism on the part of a penitent individual. The examples of faith at work in Hebrews 11 require the conclusion that faith that pleases God always obeys God. The teaching of the New Testament is so united in this point that it can be safely said that whenever faith that pleases God is mentioned, working the will of God (obedience to His will) is always involved.

## JEALOUSY—KING SAUL AN EXAMPLE

David was a faithful servant of King Saul and a mighty warrior in Saul's army. Their relationship was close until Saul heard the women singing when David came in from battle: "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." "Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, 'They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed [only] thousands. Now [what] more can he have but the kingdom?'" (1 Samuel 18:7,8).

Saul shows the destructive nature of jealousy.

(1) It can turn love into hate. Before Saul's jealousy, he dearly loved David. "And he loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer" (1 Samuel 16:21).

(2) It can be cruelly unjust. David had been faithful in his service to Saul, and had never given him any cause for jealousy. Saul should have thoroughly appreciated David's accomplishments in his army.

(3) It can lead to grievous sin. At different times Saul sought to kill David (1 Samuel 18:11).

(4) It can cost a dear price—the love and help of God (1 Samuel 27:15).

## FAITH ONLY?

### Faith By Itself

In view of the belief of many that faith by itself can save, it will do us good to see how the Lord views faith by itself. When John spoke of some of the chief rulers that were afraid to confess Christ in John 12:42, he said that they believed. Their faith was faith by itself, not faith in the full sense; thus, it was inadequate. James spoke mockingly of faith by itself in James 2:19-20: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" The mental agreement that a certain thing is true is the kind of faith James referred to, and it is surely put in a bad light here. Notice also that the twenty-fourth verse of that same chapter plainly says that faith alone cannot justify, but faith with the

works that complete or perfect it (see also verse 22). Whenever faith by itself is under consideration, it is always spoken of disapprovingly. Faith by itself accomplishes *nothing* in the realm of pleasing God and resulting in salvation!

### Emphasis On Other Conditions

The emphasis that the Lord places on other conditions of pardon also indicates that faith by itself does not save. Repentance is separate from faith, but it is necessary to be saved (Luke 13:3). Confession of faith in Christ, apart from faith, is also necessary (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10). If faith by itself could save, then the passages teaching these other conditions to be essential would be false. Can we not see that faith is never plus nothing if it is saving faith? May the Lord help us to study His word that we might fully believe and obey Him.

— Bobby L. Graham

## Why Are You Not Saved?

**THERE ARE TWO SENSES** in which being saved is pictured in the Word of God—being saved NOW, by which we have God's forgiveness of our sins and "every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:3-7), and being saved ETERNALLY in heaven when this life is over (Matthew 25:34,46). To be lost is to be charged with your sins (Romans 3:23); to be separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2); and to be cast into eternal hell fire when this life is over (Matthew 25:41,46). In view of this, **WHY ARE YOU NOT SAVED?**

## NOT SAVED?

IT IS NOT BECAUSE GOD WILLS SUCH. Satan's determined goal is that you not be saved (1 Peter 5:8), and he will do anything within his power to keep you from being saved. But this is exactly opposite to God's will concerning your eternal soul. He "is not willing that (you) should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). He desires that you be saved, and that enough to "give his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). He loved you enough that "While (you) were yet in sin, Christ died for (you)" (Romans 5:8f). Christ, in that terrible suffering on the cross, became "the propitiation for (your) sins" (1 John 2:2).

Now that He has made salvation possible (for YOU), He INVITES YOU to take advantage of the same, regardless of your nationality, color, social or financial standing. (Matthew 11:28; Revelation 22:17). No, God has not arbitrarily excluded any person, the Calvinistic doctrine of "predestination and foreordination" to the contrary, notwithstanding. If you are not saved, YOU CANNOT BLAME GOD!

IT IS NOT BECAUSE OF OTHERS. We are all prone to want to "pass the buck"—to blame others for our own failures and mistakes. Granting that one may cause another to "stumble" (and "woe unto him" who does!), would you be willing to face your Judge, blaming others

for your lack of preparation to meet Him? No, "every one of us must give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

If you are not saved, IT IS BECAUSE YOU ARE OUT OF THE AREA OF SALVATION. All the human race, other than Noah's family of eight, were drowned because they were not in the ark; they were not WHERE God had placed salvation from the flood.

And so it is that the alien sinner is not saved because he is not in Christ, where redemption and forgiveness are to be found (Ephesians 1:3-7). The erring child of God is not saved (James 5:19f) because he has "gone into a far country" (Luke 15:11ff), allowing sin to "separate (him) and (his) God" (Isaiah 59:1-2). You are not saved, because you are IN SIN, just as the men in the flood were drowned because they were in the water, and not in the ark.

WHY ARE YOU NOT SAVED? Is it because you think you "have plenty of time yet"? If so, it may be that even now God is saying, "Thou fool, this night shalt thy soul be required of thee" (Luke 12:20). In the light of James' warning (James 4:14) that "ye know not what shall be on the morrow," heed Paul's admonition (2 Corinthians 6:2): "NOW is the day of salvation."

Truly, if you are not saved, IT IS BECAUSE YOU HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO BE! God, Christ and the Holy Spirit have provided salvation for you and revealed (in

simple terms in the Scriptures) the conditions you must meet to obtain that salvation. You are not saved because you, for one reason or another, as the rich young man of Matthew 19:16-22, are not willing to meet His conditions. Jesus spoke of those who "will not come to me that ye may have life" (John 5:40). In Romans 10:21 the Lord says, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The DISOBEDIENT (YOU) REJECT the salvation which has been provided by Heaven. In your disobedience you are CHOOSING to be lost!

Refuse His provisions no longer. BELIEVE that Jesus is the Christ (John 8:24), REPENT of your sins (Luke 13:3), CONFESS your faith in Christ (Romans 10:9f), and be BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST (Romans 6:1-4); and thus cease to be a servant of sin and become a servant of righteousness (Romans 6:17f). If you are a "prodigal" child of God, "REPENT of this thy wickedness and PRAY God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22); RETURN to your Father, that you may obtain His blessings.

REMEMBER, if you are not saved now, and you should die in that state, you will be LOST FOR ETERNITY! If you are not saved, it is because you make the dreadful mistake of choosing to be lost.

— Charles G. Maples, Sr.

**“EVERYONE DID WHAT  
WAS RIGHT IN HIS  
OWN EYES”**

**Judges (21:25)**

The book of Judges shows the depths of sin into which Israel fell when they denied God’s authority and chose to establish their own. In doing right in their own eyes they turned from obeying God to worshipping false gods, in whose worship they could satisfy their lustful desires. Because of their degradation God withdrew His protection from them. In constant fear of their enemies they left their homes and lived as animals in the dens and caves of the mountains.

The preceding book (Joshua) tells a different story. Under the leadership of this faithful man they were successful in taking the “land flowing with milk and honey,” the land God had promised them. Joshua set an example. “But as for me, and my house we will serve the Lord. So the people answered and said: ‘Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods’” (Joshua 24:15,16,31). “Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

# “That We May Be Like All The Nations”

**AFTER GOD HAD GIVEN HIS PEOPLE** the land which He had promised them, He raised up judges to be their leaders. Before the judges, under the leadership of both Moses and Joshua, they pledged their obedience to God. To Joshua they said, “The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey” (Joshua 24:24). Their memory was short, for time and time again they forgot their pledge of obedience.

Their last judge was Samuel, who through the years had faithfully judged the people. When he was old, they said to him, “we will have a king over us, *that we may be like all the nations*” (1 Samuel 8:19,20). God warned them of their rebellion, but they were determined to be like the other nations.

There is an element in the church today very much like these people in the days of Samuel. They want to be like the denominations around them. They have

drifted into proclaiming denominational doctrine and engaging in denominational practice. One has gone so far as to drop the name of Christ from their church identity. Even though Christ built the church and bought it with His own precious blood (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28), they have denied His ownership that they may not be identified with the church of Christ—the one that will be delivered up to God when the end comes (1 Corinthians 15:24). — BN

*Contact Information:*