

REJECTING SALVATION

By Bill Irby, Minister, West Hobbs Street c/C, Athens, AL

God has made a gracious offer. He will save all that obey His Son (Hebrews 5:8-9). This is a beautiful thing because none of us deserve to be saved (Romans 6:23). We sinned even after we knew better (Romans 3:23). Yet God has said that He will save us (Ephesians 2:1-12).

God's plan to save us required the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary. There the Lord took upon Himself the sins of all mankind for all time (1 John 2:1-2). He continues to forgive us when we repent of sin; His blood keeps on cleansing us (1 John 1:5-10). In no way do we earn our salvation, but we do not obtain it apart from doing God's Will. God has told us in His Word (John 12:48) what He expects us to do in response to the gift of salvation in the blood of Christ. We must believe that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 8:24). We must turn away from the sins in our lives (Acts 2:38, 3:19). We must confess that we believe in the Lord (Romans 10:9-10). We must be baptized, immersed in water, for the remission of our sins (Mark 16:16, Romans 6:1-6, Colossians 2:12). Then we must continue to live faithfully according to God's Word (Revelation 2:10, 1 Corinthians 15:58, 2 Timothy 4:6-8).

This seems to me to be a wonderful situation. God sent His Son to die for us (John 3:16) so that we could have an opportunity to defeat sin and live forever with Him in Heaven. There is no way any of us could find a way out of the sin predicament we are in. But God did it for us and Jesus has invited us to take advantage of this offer of salvation (Matthew 11:28). He has said, "Come unto me." Yet many do not come.

Some do not come because they do not know. These we must go out and teach, whether in Ghana, Barbados, Guyana, New York or right here next door. But some do not come even after they are taught. Minds these days can be clouded by many things and the world offers a tempting argument to reject God (1 John 2:15-17). Religious error and worldliness cause many folks to reject salvation.

I think, as I have said before, I can understand people wrapped up in the world rejecting salvation. Falling into worldly ways of thinking is no excuse for rejecting salvation, because all men are responsible to know and obey God (see Romans 1:18-32). These folks are a challenge for us that we must meet each day. We have to live and teach the truth before them so that they might have the opportunity to accept God's offer of salvation.

But the mind-boggling thing is that people who have grown up hearing the gospel continue to reject salvation. My perspective is that of a person who did not grow up in a religious environment, much less in the family of the church. I hesitate to state the obvious, but the church is a wonderful place in which to come of age and grow. No, the people are not perfect...no one would say that. But we are the family of God (1 Timothy 3:15) and as such a blessed place to be.

Yet people in this wonderful context still reject salvation. How can this be? I hear all sorts of "reasons" given. Hypocrisy; Standards too high; Church is boring; too much pressure; Wild oats need sowing; and you name it, you can hear it.

I used to think that there might be something to all of this and that if we would just work a little harder to eliminate our faults, folks would come around. I was wrong. The reason people who know better reject salvation is stubbornness. Don't allow your stubborn will make you miss Heaven.