

# How Little of God Can We Get?

(and still be saved)

By Keith Surface

What we are about to say will shock many, especially if you've not heard it before; but if you honestly consider what is said, the truth becomes apparent. What are we speaking of? It is this: **To multitudes in the church, the term "saved" simply means, "the minimum experience, and/or the minimum amount of God a person must have, in order to be saved."** Some will say, "Not me." Well, maybe not, but don't be too quick to answer. Do you have a child or other loved one who had a religious experience sometimes in the past, but, is not presently living for God? How do you think they really stand with God? If you are honest, you will probably answer something like this; *"I know they are not where they ought to be with God, but I believe they are saved."* Translation: *"I believe they have at least, the minimum experience, or minimum amount of God it takes to get to Heaven."* Even believers whose walk has degenerated into a dead form, often tell themselves; *"Well, at least I'm saved."* In almost every group in Christianity today, the word "saved" has come to speak of the minimal Christian experience, and/or the minimal amount of God, it takes to get to heaven.

## Salvation without a Savior

There seems to be a disconnect, in the minds of most, between salvation and the Savior. Salvation is viewed as a possession, a privilege, or a prize that God will only let us have if we come to Jesus. Now that we have received this possession, what further need do we have for the Savior? So then, many live their lives as though they can ignore Him, have no love for Him, and have no necessity to serve Him. The prevailing attitude seems to be, now that we have salvation, we no longer have a present need for Jesus in our lives.

To illustrate this point, all I must do is to ask how many have ever been to the funeral of someone, who, almost certainly went to Hell? The truthful answer is,

we all have. It's just that, at their time of departure, we lay hold of some minimal standard to announce their arrival at the pearly gates. They may have lived their lives scoffing, or avoiding a real relationship with Jesus Christ; but surely that is not what matters now. We remember when they were baptized. They confessed Jesus as Lord many years ago. Occasionally they referred to Him; but only, as the man upstairs, or some other irreverent, disrespectful term. They even allowed someone to pray for them on their death bed. So then, somehow, somehow, we "know" they must have been saved; and are now in a much better place. We know they didn't have much, but surely they had the minimum that God requires. Will such a person have boldness in the Day of Judgment to say, "*O Mighty God, I know I don't have much of you, but I just did not want more than I actually needed?*"

## So Great a Salvation

I am writing this as one who believes, there is a "*minimum*" for entrance into salvation. Paul's words in **II Corinthians 5:17** seem very well, to be such a basis: "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" Anything short of a new creature is not a child of God; and anything that comes short of producing a new creature is not salvation. To the Galatians Paul says, "*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature*" (**Galatians 6:15**). You may go through any form, or formula, make any confession, and/or endure any ritual, believing that you are fulfilling scripture; but, if any one, or all, of these have not produced a new creature, it has not brought salvation to the believer thereof. The words "*saved*" and "*salvation*" both speak of rescue or deliverance. The apostle calls it "*so great (a) salvation*" (**Hebrews 2:3**). In this great salvation, we are rescued and delivered **from** sin, **from** the power of darkness, **from** this present evil world, **from** carnality, etc., and lifted up in victory from every enemy; all, defeated through Christ Jesus. It is to our shame, that instead of embracing such a full salvation, we seek to find "*what the minimum is we can receive,*" and/or, "*experience from God,*" and still get to Heaven. When did God become the God of the minimum?

## Stopping Points

I am a preacher of the cross. I fully believe and preach that Jesus went to the cross to crucify our old man; and in doing so, destroy the body of sin so that we would never again be slaves to sin. Nowhere, do the scriptures teach that a child of God is also a sinner. Nevertheless, there have always been sinners in the church; but never in Christ. John says, "*Whosoever abideth in him (Christ) sinneth not: (and) whosoever sinneth hath not seen him (Christ), neither known him*" (**1 John 3:6**). I believe in being "**made free**" from sin! (**John 8:31-36**). These things I believe, and these things I preach. Sometime back however, I began to be troubled about something I was seeing in some of those who also believed in this wonderful freedom through Christ Jesus. They were not sinful. They were not unclean. But I began to perceive that for some, the cross had become a stopping point. I had always preached that the cross and the freedom it brought was the starting point in Christ, so I was confused by what I saw. It shocked me to realize that everything I preached as "*the minimum,*" had also, for many, become "*the end.*"

Many years ago I noticed that some ministries were built totally around repentance. These, for the most part, were good ministries, ever urging the people to repent. I noticed, however, that repentance seemed to be the goal of these ministries. As long as the ministry preached repentance, the people seemed to do well, but there never was an answer for sin other than to repent if you sin; repent because you might sin; and repent because you probably had not repented enough. I saw the fallacy in all this, knowing that Paul preached both repentance and faith. Repentance without believing a gospel that lifts the believer out of sin, is just an endless religious exercise. To another group, holiness is the heavenly calling. Their battle cry is "*Holiness, without which no man shall see God.*" In this group we also find some very wonderful and dedicated people. But multitudes spend their entire experience striving for holiness, and many of them never see God. To them holiness becomes the end, the goal; even the prize. Maybe I thought myself wiser than these. I had seen the power of the cross. It gave deliverance and freedom to the penitent. It gave holiness, which was a natural fruit of being freed from sin, and joined to Christ. Paul confirms this, saying, "*But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*" Yet, even in the glory of the

cross, I saw that people found a stopping point. They had reached their “*minimum*,” and their minimum became a place to stop and go no farther.

I could speak of many other things that have become an end for many. In the full gospel movements, even among those who still preach the true baptism with the Holy Ghost, this baptism often becomes a stopping point. We seek, and seek, and seek, until the baptism with the Holy Ghost comes; and then we sit down, thinking we have reached the goal. So often we do not know that what we received was not an end, but a beginning; an entrance; a pledge sent from God to lift us up into the riches of Christ. Too often the shout, the dance, and the emotion of a Pentecostal service become the stopping point for those who have received the Spirit of God, and of others who haven't received. We must understand that everything, pertaining to God, is a beginning. Nothing, which He has prepared for His people, is an end. We are the ones who turn His beginnings into an end. It does not matter where the stopping point is, or if it is mine or yours, any stopping point in Christ is also a dying point.

## Call to Glory

**But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit (our spirit) and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**  
**II Thessalonians 2:13-14**

It is from the verse above that God reminded me that He has no stopping point. Paul wrote, “*Whereunto **He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.***” God has never been the God of the minimum. He has never called a sinner, just, to repentance. From the moment a sinner first hears the gospel, or feels the touch of God, they are being called to sit with Christ in heavenly places and partake of His glory. God is calling that person to a life of miracles. He wants them to experience the riches of His grace. He wants them to manifest Him, through them, unto the world. I have heard all my life that God is calling people *to* repentance, but the truth is, God is calling people **through** repentance. He is calling them **through** faith. He is calling them **through** the cross. He is calling them **through** the baptism with the Holy Ghost. He is ever calling men and women to come and partake of the glory of His Son, Jesus Christ. The call is the same for sinner and saint alike. I can tell the vilest of sinners, that God is

calling them to glory. Yes, there are many things He calls them **through**, but there is just one *"hope of the calling."* It is the invitation to sit with Jesus in heavenly places and partake of His glory. There will be repentance and faith. There will be the death of the cross in union with Christ. There will be deliverance and holiness. And there will most certainly be the baptism with the Holy Ghost. None of these, however, are an end, for God has no stopping points.

As both a dad and a pastor, I have observed that some parents think the best way to never be disappointed in their children is to never expect anything of them. *"Expect nothing and you will never be disappointed in what you get."* The truth is that if a parent expects nothing of their children, they will always be disappointed. I have seen this same thinking take hold in the houses of worship. Our preachers today, spend much effort to assure us that God expects nothing from His children. Decades ago when I first came to the Lord, I would hear a teacher on the radio who could teach gospel truths in a way that would make you want to shout with joy. I was always saddened though, that he would end his messages by reassuring the people that these things had nothing to do with their salvation. They had confessed Jesus. They could never lose their salvation. They were alright. I called this his *"disclaimer."* I knew even as a young believer, that most of those who followed that ministry would never go on to anything more than his *"minimum."* He could preach glory, but as long as he reinforced the minimum, that was where the people would stay...and die (if they were ever alive). Almost thirty years later I see the same thing everywhere I turn. Every glory of Christ is preached with a disclaimer. *"This is what God has set before you, but it is OK if you never possess it."* Some proclaim the reality of *"Christ in you,"* but if that is not your experience, then your dry confession of faith will do just fine. A large ministry prides itself in the message of freedom by the cross, but never fails to reassure the people that everyone struggles with sin; even (they say) the Apostle Paul. Others preach the great need for the baptism with the Holy Ghost, but always make sure the people know that it is *"optional."* The glory is preached to get the people to shout, and the minimum is preached to keep them in the building. So then, why should we be surprised that multitudes in the church are *"camping out"* as far from God as they think they can safely be and still make Heaven?

We must once again hear the call of the Savior; the one who sits in the heavens, inviting whosoever will to come and sit with Him in glory. We must tear down our *"ends,"* our *"stopping points,"* and throw away our disclaimers. We are called to a

walk in freedom, holiness, victory, and glory. We must abandon our search for the *“minimum amount of God that is needed,”* and begin to *“seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God”* (**Colossians 3:1-4**). We will never see a glorious church, if we never see a church that hears the call to glory. Nevertheless, we are called by the gospel, *“...to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ!*