

SAVING OUR LIFE

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One of the important titles that Jesus Christ the Son of God wears is that of Savior. Before he was born, God's angel told Joseph that the child in Mary's womb would "*save his people from their sins*" (Matt 1:21). On the day of his birth, an angel of God told the shepherds near Bethlehem, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Central to Jesus Christ's purpose of coming into this world was to seek and to save that which was lost (Matt 18:11; Luke 19:10; John 12:47; 1 Tim 1:15; 1 John 4:1). He shed his blood and gave his life to make possible the salvation of all mankind (Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2). But eternal salvation is not universal. There are conditions for our salvation which God has established that we are responsible for meeting. For example, we must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 3:16-17; Acts 16:31; Eph 2:8). And that faith must be a *living faith*, not faith alone. That is, our faith must be accompanied by works of obedience (Jas 2:14-16). Hebrews 5:9 says that Jesus Christ "*became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*" In Acts 2:40, Peter urged thousands on the Day of Pentecost, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Our role in our own salvation is emphasized in the commandment found in Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*" In Matthew 10:39, Jesus made a statement about saving ourselves that we all need to pay close attention to: "*He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*"

Losing our life

In Matthew 16:24-27, Jesus taught, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works*" (see also Mark 8:34-37 and Luke 9:23-25). To save our life in eternity, we must lose our life now. Losing our life means dying. That is also why the Lord used the symbol of taking up our cross, as the cross was an instrument of death. To be saved, we must put to death our old man and its ways. Before becoming a Christian, "*we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind*" (Eph 2:3), but now we have "*put off the concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*" (Eph 4:22) and "*put on*

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the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). We have “put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col 3:9-10). The old man is dead: “Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom 6:6).

Remembering Lot’s wife

In Galatians 2:20, Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” In Gal 6:14, he also stated that “the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” He had counted all things of this world for loss to gain Christ (Php 3:3-14). This echoes the Lord’s warning in Luke 17:32-33: “*Remember Lot’s wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.*” Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt when she looked back at Sodom and Gomorrah at the time of their destruction (Gen 19:26). God’s angels had commanded Lot and his family not to look back (Gen 19:17). The question is, why did she look back? Clearly, out of the abundance of her heart, her eyes looked. Lot hated living there. He was vexed by the wickedness of those people (2 Pet 2:7). “For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds” (2 Pet 2:8). So why did he live there? Undoubtedly, it was because of his wife. She obviously was *not* vexed by that wickedness. Her root problem was a love for this world. Jesus warns us not to fall to the same temptation. The parable of the sower warns us that some Christians fall away because of being “*choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life*” (Luke 8:14). Demas was once a faithful Christian who worked closely with Paul in preaching the Gospel (Col 4:14; Phm 24). Yet he forsook all of that “having loved this present world” (2 Tim 4:10). “*No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier*” (2 Tim 2:4). We must not love this world or live for anybody or anything but the Lord: “*For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*” (Col 3:3). We do not live anymore for ourselves but only for Christ (2 Cor 5:14-15). If we “save our life” now, we will lose our souls in eternity. In John 12:25-26, Christ says, “*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.*”