

A SYSTEM OF BONDAGE

Elder Ralph Harris

Any religion, which maintains that souls are saved eternally on the basis of the efforts of men, is a system of bondage. Those who subscribe to such a religion can *never* know for sure whether or not they have done enough. If they think that by contributing to a Mission Board they may be instrumental in the eternal salvation of souls, they can never know for certain when they have contributed enough. If they think that by so-called "witnessing" they may rescue some from eternal damnation, they must always be questioning whether or not they have witnessed enough. If they think that by praying for the lost some of them will be eternally saved, they can never be totally confident that they have prayed enough. And so it might also be said of any number of the other supposed duties or such a religion.

The person who is convinced that he may in some way be instrumental in the eternal salvation of souls must *ever live* with the burden of wondering if perhaps by his failure to do as much as he could have done he may be responsible for the eternal damnation of some precious soul, or souls. And he must also continually question that if by his neglect some are eternally damned, whether his *own* soul will be spared. Such a burden is an awful weight for anyone to carry. If they really took it very seriously it would drive them mad.

The truth is, that if the efforts of men could contribute in any way to the eternal salvation of souls they would never have performed enough work toward that end until they had done *everything they possibly could do*. Anything short of that, according to such a system, would almost surely issue in the eternal misery of some. If the contributing of money to missionaries could result in the eternal salvation of souls then the only way a person could ever donate enough of his money would be when he had given *everything he possibly could* short of what he absolutely had to have for his, and his family's, sustenance. This whole system cries aloud with anguished voice, "Bondage, bondage, bondage!"

The true gospel proclaims liberty to those who are captives to such a system (see Isaiah 61:1), for it declares unto them that the eternal salvation of God's people is "by grace," and not by *anyone's* works. It proclaims "the opening of the prison to them that are bound," for it declares that Christ "*shall* save His people" without the loss of one (Matt. 1:21 & John 6:37-39). It declares that good works are God's ordained means by which His born again children express their love and gratitude to Him for the life He has given them, ---not the means by which they *obtain* that life. ---Elder

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