

# No Bargains, No Shortcuts on the Road to Heaven

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Who doesn't love a bargain? Whether it's a garage sale treasure or finding something online for way less than in the store, there's a little thrill in knowing you got more for less. But not all bargains are worth it. We've all had times when we bought a cheaper version of something that looked great at first, but quickly fell apart. That low price tag can fool you into thinking you're saving money when really you're just buying a headache.

And when it comes to spiritual matters, there are no bargains at all. Trying to cut corners with God's plan leads to eternal loss.

In 2 Peter 2:1-3, Peter warned that false teachers would come in, using deceptive words to exploit people. These weren't just harmless misunderstandings. They were selling a discounted version of the truth for personal gain. That's what happens when people want religion without responsibility, grace without obedience, or salvation without sacrifice.

Many are still being sold a cheap substitute for the Gospel. Some churches promise a relationship with God but ask for little in return. No repentance, no commitment, and no obedience. Just believe, send your donation, and you're good to go. But Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate... difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). That path is not about convenience. It's about faithfulness.

Paul wrote that there is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God (Ephesians 4:4-6). The body is the church, and Jesus is its head (Colossians 1:18). He said, "I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). Not churches, not choices, but His one church. And He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). That is not something to be replicated or remodeled.

Yet many are content to "join the church of their choice," as if picking a congregation were like picking a favorite restaurant. Some even believe it doesn't matter what name is on the sign, as long as you believe in God. But that is not the unity Scripture teaches. Paul condemned divisions in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, pleading with believers to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Calling ourselves by denominational names, whether after men or doctrines, gives glory to someone other than Christ. Paul asked, "Is Christ divided?" The answer is no. The name that matters is His. Romans 16:16 says, "The churches of Christ greet you." That name gives honor to the one who died for us.

We live in a world that loves convenience. And when it comes to religion, many want results without effort. It is like a spiritual infomercial. Just believe in Jesus from your couch and you're saved. But Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father" (Matthew 7:21). That means obedience is necessary.

James 2:24 says plainly, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." The Bible never says we're saved by faith alone. Belief is where it begins, but it doesn't end there. Romans 6 tells us that we are baptized into Christ's death, buried with Him, and raised to walk in newness of life. That is when we are freed from sin. Mark 16:16 says, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." Baptism is not optional. It is essential.

Some churches have dropped baptism altogether. Maybe it was hard to baptize large groups, or they wanted to speed up the process. So they created the "sinner's prayer," which is not found in Scripture. But shortcuts do

not save. On the day of Pentecost, three thousand people heard the Gospel, believed, and were baptized (Acts 2:41). If they could do it, so can we.

When we obey the Gospel fully, it is the Lord who adds us to His church (Acts 2:47). Not a man, not a committee, and not a denomination.

Today, many call for unity across all beliefs, saying we should just accept one another as long as we all believe in God. But Paul taught in Ephesians 4:13-15 that real unity comes from the truth, not from ignoring it. We grow into that unity through the knowledge of the Son of God. That means we must hold to what God's Word actually says, not just what sounds nice.

Unity that ignores truth is not unity at all. It is surrender.

Let's be honest. We are often tempted by things that promise big results with little effort. Whether it's a diet pill, a workout gadget, or a get-rich-quick scheme, the idea of doing less and getting more is attractive. But in the spiritual world, shortcuts are deadly. You cannot believe your way into heaven without repentance. You cannot sit at home and skip baptism and think you're following Jesus.

God's plan of salvation is not complicated, but it does require obedience. Believe in Jesus, repent of your sins, confess Him as Lord, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. Then walk in newness of life, faithful to Him.

If someone has offered you a cheaper version of salvation, one that skips baptism, ignores obedience, or treats the church like a social club, don't buy it. God's plan isn't a discounted deal. It is the full, priceless truth.

Obey His Word. Be baptized into Christ. Live faithfully. That is not the easy way, but it is the only way. And it is worth everything.

