

A detailed portrait of John Bunyan, a 17th-century English writer and Puritan. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark, textured robe with a white lace collar. He has long, wavy brown hair and a mustache. He is holding a small, thick book in his right hand. The background is a dark, textured grey.

**ABOUT
JOHN BUNYAN**

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S U M M E R 2 0 2 5

SALVATION

WITH MEN THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

BUNYAN'S

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

By Ron Metheny

As a new Christian, John Bunyan had many questions about Bible doctrine. He eagerly searched Scripture for the answers. One by one his questions were solved as he read the Word, meditated and prayed. He was concerned about his own righteousness being accepted by God. One day as he was walking in the fields he suddenly became aware of the righteousness of Christ. He said, "This sentence suddenly came across my mind, 'Your Righteousness is in heaven.' And amazingly, I thought I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at the right hand of God; I saw my righteousness there; so that no matter where I was, or what I was doing, God could not say about me, He lacks my righteousness, since that was right beside Him. On top of that I also saw that it was neither the good state nor the bad state of my heart that made my righteousness better or worse; since my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself—"the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8 ESV).

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Fascinating Facts about

...John Bunyan

Between the ages of 16 and 19, Bunyan served in the Parliamentary army.

When local magistrates sentenced Bunyan to imprisonment unless he promised them he would not preach, he refused, declaring that he would remain in prison till the moss grew on his eyelids rather than fail to do what God had commanded him to do.

In Bunyan's day great preachers swayed public opinion as much as mass and social media do today, which is one reason his unlicensed activities were perceived as a threat.

With the cooperation of his jailer, Bunyan occasionally was permitted to leave his prison cell to go and preach to "unlawful assemblies" gathered in secret, after which he voluntarily returned to his jail cell.

In January 1672 the Bedford congregation called John Bunyan to be its pastor while he was still in prison.

Bunyan would have been released from prison if he would agree not to preach in "unlawful" or unlicensed assemblies. His own writings attest that he was given every opportunity to "conform" It was a compromise he would not make.

Bunyan combined his skill as a tinker and his love of music to create an iron violin; later, during his imprisonment, he carved a flute from the leg of a stool that was part of his furniture.

In terms of numbers, *Pilgrim's Progress* would have been a runaway best seller had it appeared in our day. 100,000 copies were in print in English alone in 1692!

Bunyan made shoelaces while imprisoned to support his family, "many hundred gross" by his own accounting.

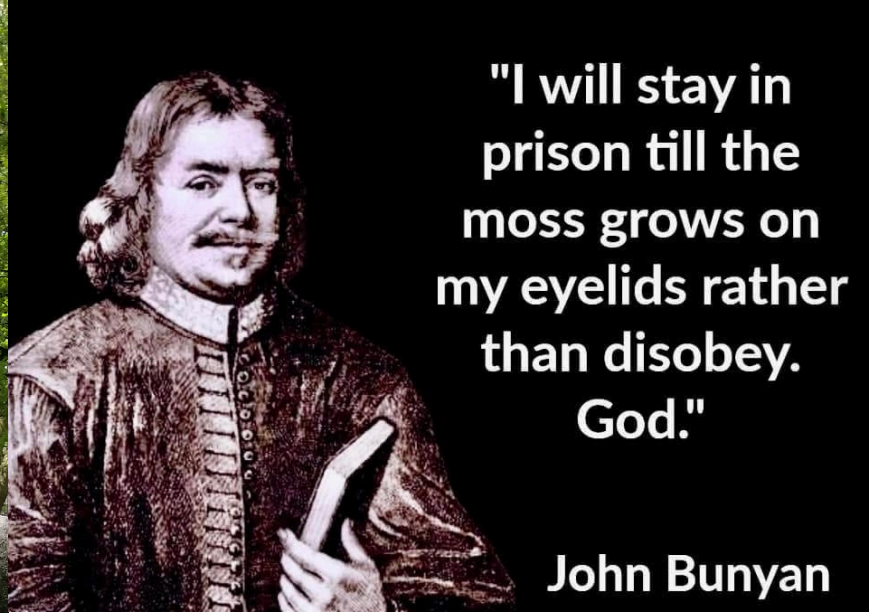
The church Bunyan pastored still continues in the heart of Bedford, England. Now called *Bunyan Meeting*, it is affiliated with both the Baptists and Congregationalists.

While some Baptists proudly claim Bunyan, other Baptists today still disown him because of his tolerant position in his work *Differences in Judgment About Water Baptism, No Bar to Communion*.

The position for which Bunyan contended, and for which he went to jail, finally prevailed with the Act of Toleration of 1689, which recognized in England the religious rights of Dissenters and Non-conformists.



Both William Blake and Samuel Coleridge, noted authors themselves, were much moved by Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Blake did 29 paintings based on the book. Above is Blake's "John Bunyan Dreams a Dream"



**"I will stay in
prison till the
moss grows on
my eyelids rather
than disobey.
God."**

John Bunyan

John Bunyan's Death

John Bunyan's death was brought on by exposure when he was engaged in an act of charity. A quarrel had broken out in a family at Reading with which Bunyan had some acquaintance. A father had taken some offence at his son, and threatened to disinherit him. Bunyan undertook a journey on horseback from Bedford to Reading in the hope of reconciling them. He succeeded, but at the cost of his life. Returning by way of London, he was overtaken on the road by a storm of rain, and was drenched before he could find shelter. The chill, falling on a constitution already weakened by illness, brought on fever. In ten days he was dead. His last words were: "Take me, for I come to Thee!"

**—F.W. Boreham,
"A Bunch of Everlastings"**

GOLDEN TICKET

The Purpose of Salvation

The true, biblical purpose of salvation is God-centered rather than man-centered. While benefits like freedom from suffering and reunion with loved ones in heaven are real, they are not the primary purpose of salvation.

By Chad Baggett

WHAT IS the purpose of salvation? I believe that is a very important question. In fact, whether we are sharing the gospel with someone or we are the person with whom the gospel is being shared, it is possibly the most important question. I say this because understanding the biblical purpose for salvation is critical to both the speaker and the hearer because if it is not understood biblically we can be in danger of offering a different gospel. To quote Paul, “not that there is another one” (Galatians 1:7, ESV).

Now you may be thinking how can someone misrepresent salvation if they are using the Bible to explain it. Well, let me give you an example. Let’s say you are given a promotion at work and along with this promotion you are given a great parking spot. The parking spot is a benefit not the purpose. The same

misunderstanding between benefits and purpose can be seen in people's understanding of salvation. You may have heard it said, when people who have suffered with disease or disability in life once they pass on, “they aren’t suffering now,” or “I believe they are dancing right now in heaven”. Then there are those who will speak about how the person who has passed away is now with some beloved relative or friend who had gone on before them.

To be fair, if the person they are speaking about is saved, what they are saying is biblically true. “And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, ESV). So, we will see those who are saved that have passed on before us. “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more,

neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4, ESV). There will also be no more death or suffering, but are these the reasons for salvation, are these the primary purpose for salvation or are they benefits?

What could be the harm in presenting salvation to people this way since these things are in fact biblical truths? Let me share a conversation I had with someone. As I was speaking about things such as discipleship and devotion, both personal and with the family, I was told something that someone they knew and who had passed on many years ago said, “All I need is enough Jesus to get me into Heaven.” They followed this quote by saying, “That’s all I need.” So, in presenting salvation to someone by speaking only or primarily about the benefits, we are then presenting a very self-centered view.

Biblically speaking, salvation is God-centered not man-centered. The Word states: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10, ESV). This verse informs us that the reason we are saved is to do “good works.” In fact, the Greek word used for walk here means a way to live. These good works should be our way of life.

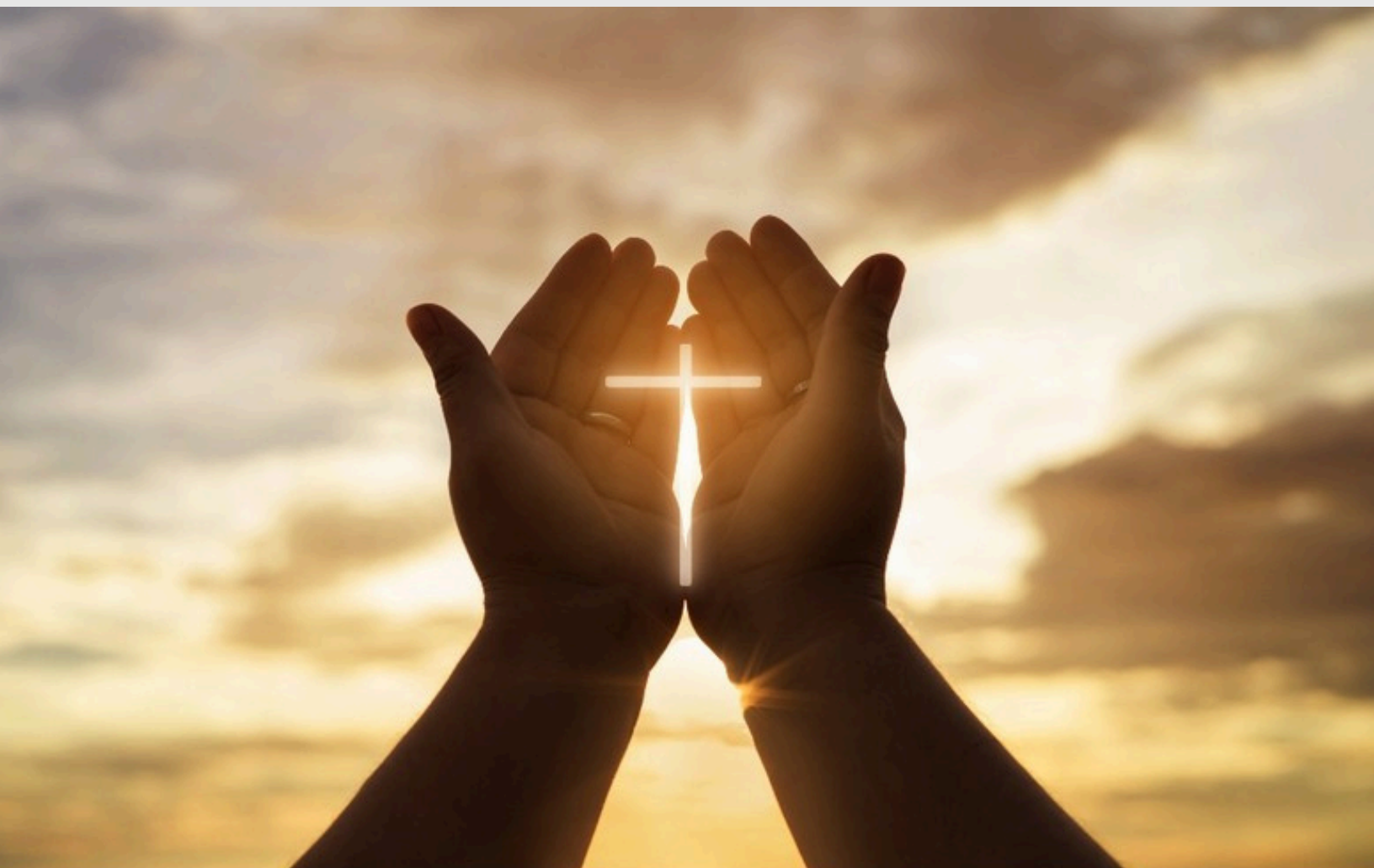
This is not the only place that we read this. The Word also states, “who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14, ESV). To be zealous means that when it comes to these good works we should be eagerly desirous to do them. We can also read, “The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people” (Titus 3:8, ESV). So, from reading these verses we can see that not only are we saved to do good works, but we are to be devoted as well as zealous to do them.

Biblically speaking, then, we are saved to be a people that not only belong to the Lord, but a people that desire to do good works. That leads us to consider the purpose of these good works. The Word says, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, ESV). This verse tells us the purpose of these good works, they are to glorify God. Jesus spoke of this, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” (John 15:8).

Fruit is the product of good works and this is what glorifies God. In fact, this is a trait not a choice of those who are saved. “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, ESV). When Jesus says, “Whoever abides in me and I in him” He is speaking of those who are saved. So, the purpose of salvation is to do the good works that produce fruit that glorifies God.

The purpose of salvation is not that we get the “golden ticket” to the chocolate factory.

That would be a man-centered view of salvation. A man-centered view is what caused the fall in Genesis 3, it is the pride that is at the very center of sin. Salvation is not the better option for ourselves. In fact, salvation is death to self. We must, as the Word tells us, put off the old man and put on the new. The life of the lost is self-centered, whereas the life of the saved is God-centered. A desire for just enough Jesus to get into Heaven may sound like humility, but it is the idea of someone who is most likely lost and merely seeking their own best interests.



EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS

JESUS TURNS WATER INTO WINE (JOHN 2:1-11)

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had

drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.”

THESE VERSES recount a miracle that should always hold a special place in the heart of every true Christian. It is the first—in chronological order—of the many mighty works that Jesus did during His earthly ministry. We are specifically told, “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee” (John 2:11). Like all the other miracles that John was inspired to relate, it is recorded with great attention to detail. And, like every other miracle in John’s Gospel, it is full of spiritual lessons.

First, these verses teach us how highly Christ honors the institution of marriage. One of the very first public acts of His earthly ministry was attending a wedding.

Marriage is not a sacrament, as claimed by the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, it is a divinely ordained state of life, established for the good of humanity. Yet it is a state that should never be treated lightly or viewed with disrespect. The Prayer Book beautifully describes marriage as “an honorable estate, instituted by God at the time of man’s innocency, and signifying unto us the mystical union that is between Christ and His Church.” A society cannot be truly healthy, nor can genuine religion thrive, where the marriage bond is taken lightly. Those who treat it with disregard do not share the mind of Christ. The One who honored marriage by His presence and performed His first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee is unchanging in His view. As the Holy Spirit declares through the Apostle Paul, “Marriage is to be honored by all” (Hebrews 13:4 CSB).

However, one important truth must never be overlooked: marriage is a step that deeply impacts both the earthly happiness and eternal well-being of two immortal souls. Therefore, it should never be entered into “unadvisedly, lightly, wantonly, or without due consideration.” For it to bring true and lasting happiness, it must be approached “reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God.” Christ’s presence and blessing are essential to a joyful and enduring union. A marriage where there is no room for Christ and His disciples is not one that can rightly expect to flourish.

Secondly, these verses teach us that there are appropriate times for joy and celebration. Our Lord affirmed this by attending a wedding feast Himself;

He did not decline the invitation to “a wedding at Cana in Galilee” (John 2:1). As Scripture says, “A feast is prepared for laughter, and wine makes life happy” (Ecclesiastes 10:19 CSB). In our focal passage, Christ clearly endorses both the occasion of the feast and the use of wine, showing that rejoicing, when well-ordered, is not contrary to godliness.

True religion was never intended to make people sad or depressed. On the contrary, it is meant to deepen genuine joy and promote lasting happiness. While the servant of Christ should rightly avoid worldly amusements—such as races, balls, and theaters—that encourage frivolity, self-indulgence, or even sin, he is under no obligation to surrender wholesome recreation and family fellowship to the world and the devil. A Christian who isolates himself from others and goes about with a perpetually downcast face—as if always attending a funeral—does a disservice to the Gospel. A warm, cheerful spirit is a powerful testimony. It is truly unfortunate when a believer is unable to smile. A joyful heart and a willingness to share in innocent laughter are priceless gifts. They help to break down prejudice, remove stumbling blocks, and open hearts to Christ and His Gospel.

This is undoubtedly a challenging and sensitive subject. Few areas of Christian living require more careful discernment than distinguishing between what is lawful and unlawful—what is right and what is wrong. It is no small task to be both joyful and wise. Elated spirits can quickly slip into irreverence. Accepting frequent invitations to feasts may soon result in wasted time and spiritual dryness. Regularly dining at other people’s tables can subtly erode a Christian’s spiritual focus. Frequent socializing places a real strain on the inner life of the soul. In this area, perhaps more than any other, God’s children must remain cautious. Each believer must

understand their own strengths and natural inclinations, and act accordingly. What is safe for one may be dangerous for another. Blessed is the one who can exercise Christian freedom without falling into excess. It is entirely possible to suffer intense spiritual harm even at joyful occasions such as weddings or friendly gatherings.

There is one golden rule that can wisely guide us in this matter and spare us a lot of trouble: let us be sure to attend any feast or gathering in the spirit of our Divine Master, and never go where He would not have gone. Like Him, may we always be “about [our] Father’s business” (Luke 2:49 KJV). Like Him, let us gladly encourage joy and celebration—but let it be joy free from sin, and whenever possible, joy in the Lord. Let us aim to bring the seasoning of grace into every situation, and speak appropriately to every soul we encounter (cf. Colossians 4:6). A whole lot of good can be done in social situations simply by guiding conversation in a wholesome direction. Let us never be ashamed to show where our loyalties lie, making it clear to all whose we are and whom we serve. Truly, we may say, “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Corinthians 2:16)—but if Christ attended a wedding feast in Cana, surely there is a way for Christians to participate in such occasions as well. Let them only remember: if they go where their Master went, they must go in their Master’s Spirit.

Finally, these verses teach us the almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ. We read of the miracle He performed at the wedding feast when the wine ran out. By a simple act of His divine will, He turned water into wine, providing for the needs of all the guests.

The way in which this miracle was performed is especially noteworthy. We are given no account of any outward or visible action preceding or accom-

panying it. There is no mention of Jesus touching the waterpots, no recorded command for the water to change, and no prayer offered to His Father in Heaven. He simply willed the transformation—and it happened. Nowhere in Scripture do we find a prophet or apostle performing a miracle in this manner. The One who could accomplish such a mighty act by His will alone could be none other than truly God, Himself.

It is a comforting thought that the same almighty will our Lord displayed at Cana is still at work on behalf of His believing people. They do not need His physical presence to be secure. They have no reason to be discouraged because they cannot see Him with their eyes or touch Him with their hands for assurance. If He wills their salvation and the daily provision of their spiritual needs, they are just as safe and cared for as if He stood visibly beside them. Christ’s will is as powerful and effective as His actions. The will of the One who prayed, “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am” (John 17:24), is a will that holds all authority in heaven and on earth—and it cannot fail.

Blessed are those who, like the disciples, put their faith in the One who performed this miracle. A far greater wedding feast awaits—a day when Christ Himself will be the Bridegroom and all believers His Bride. A greater glory will be revealed when Jesus takes up His great power and reigns in majesty. “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9).

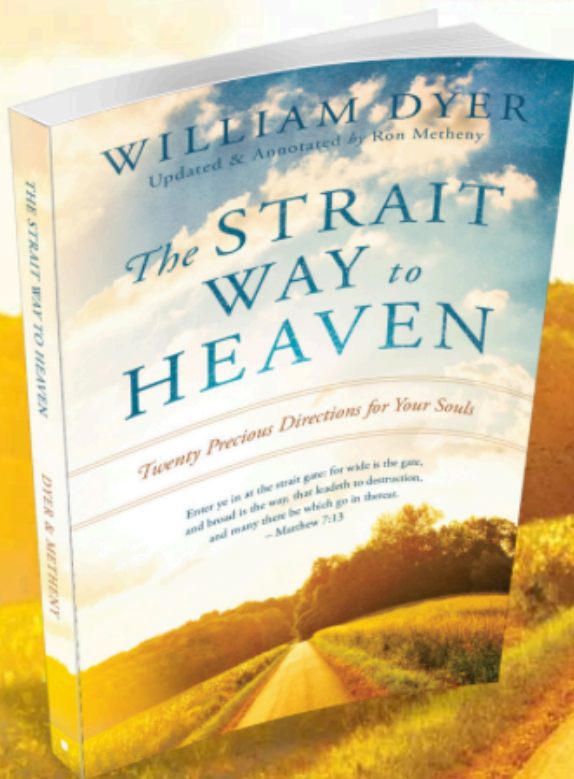
—J.C. Ryle

[Updated by] Ron Metheny, Editor

Twenty Precious Directions for Your Souls

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate,
and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction,
and many there be which go in thereat.

– Matthew 7:13



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