

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED ?

Harvest Inspiration Discoveries

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Many are asking the same question as did the multitude on the day of Pentecost. After they were convicted of sin, they cried out; "What shall we do?" Peter answered and declared; "Repent" Acts 2:37-38.

There are many who fail to understand what repentance is. Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned and even make an outward reformation because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not genuine repentance in the Bible sense. They lament the possible suffering rather than the sin.

The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before they can heed the invitation of Christ to "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ which leads to genuine repentance. Peter made this clear in his statement to the Israelites when he said, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" Acts 5:31. We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken our conscience than we can be pardoned without the blood of Christ.

Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only One who can plant in our hearts a hatred of sin. Every desire you have for truth and purity, every conviction of your own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon your heart.

When the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of the foundation of God's government in heaven and earth--which is His holy law. The "Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," illuminates the secret chambers of the soul, and the hidden things of darkness are made manifest (see John 1:9). Conviction takes hold upon the mind and heart. The sinner obtains a sense of the righteousness of God and feels the terror of appearing, in their own guilt and uncleanness, before this Searcher of hearts. He also beholds the love of God, the beauty of holiness, the joy of purity; he longs to be cleansed and to be restored to communion with Heaven.

Jesus stated; "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" John 12:32. Christ must be revealed to you as the Saviour who died for your sins as well as for the sins of the world; and as you behold the Lamb of God upon the cross of Calvary, the mystery of redemption will begin to unfold to your understanding and the goodness of God will lead you to repentance. In dying for sinners, Christ manifested an infinite love; and as you behold this love, it will soften the heart, impress the mind, and inspire contrition in your soul.

You may resist this love and may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if you do not resist, you will be drawn directly to Jesus. And as you behold the Saviour upon Calvary's cross, you may wonder and ask; "Why did this man have to die?" The answer is; because of sin. Sin is the reason why Christ had to die. But what is sin? The transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Which law? God's ten commandments.

As these 10 commandments are examined, it becomes plain that no one has kept them perfectly, and thus all have committed sin and deserve death (Romans 3:23, 6:23). But in examining the perfect life of Christ, it is discovered that He kept all of His Father's commandments and did not sin, so why did He have to die on the cross? Because the Father sent Jesus down to save sinners from the penalty of death.

The sinner then begins to realize the tremendous love that God the Father has toward him in sending His only-begotten Son to be the substitute for sin's penalty, and that Jesus must love him tremendously also to willingly endure the crucifixion. It also begins to dawn that if no one had ever broken God's law, then Christ need not have died.

The sinner also begins to understand that because he chose to sin, he is basically guilty of putting the Saviour on the cross and killing Him. At this realization his heart becomes broken, and that without forgiveness of his sins he is lost. Thus the whole plan of redemption--Christ as our Redeemer, Substitute, and High Priest before God for the remission of sins--begins to open before his eyes. He sees that Christ is his only hope of salvation, the connecting link between God and man, the only One that can bridge the gulf which sin has made and bring him back into communion and harmony with God and His law once again (1 John 1:9).

Thus out of love for God and Christ, a choice is made not to break God's law anymore. But how, you may wonder? "How can I not sin anymore?" How did Christ, while on earth, resist temptation at every step? It was by faith that Christ received the strength and grace from His Father to be able to overcome all temptation and resist sin. Christ resisted all Satan's advances by having God's law written in His heart and then being a doer of God's will (Psalms 40:8, 119:11). Thus each sinner, by exercising the same faith in God as Christ did, will have God's law written in their hearts and will be given the grace and strength from God through Christ to be able to overcome all temptation and resist all of Satan's advances because they follow and are a doer of God's will.

Thus it is out of love for God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, that the sinner determines to keep God's law and becomes a doer of His will. And the righteousness of Christ becomes his by faith, God becomes his Father and they His children (2 Corin 6:14-18). So the realization becomes clear that the law of God is a transcript of His character, and that Christ is the glory and righteousness of that law.

If you long for something better than this world can ever give, recognize this longing as the voice of God to your soul. Ask Him to give you true repentance, to reveal Christ to you in His infinite love and perfect purity. In the Saviour's life the principles of God's law--supreme love to God and love to our fellow men--were perfectly exemplified. Benevolence and unselfish love was the basis for His every action. It is only as we behold Christ and allow the light from our Saviour to fall upon us, that we can see the sinfulness of our own hearts and long for Christ to cleanse and fill us with His sweet Spirit.

You may have thought that your life has been mostly good and your moral character correct, and think that you need not humble your heart before God like the common sinner: but when the light from Christ shines into your soul, you will see that sin has defiled every act of life. Then you will know that your own righteousness is indeed as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), and that the blood of Christ can alone cleanse you from the defilement of sin, and renew your heart into His own likeness.

One ray of the glory of God, one gleam of the purity of Christ, penetrating the soul, makes every spot of defilement painfully distinct, and lays bare the deformity and defects of the human character. It makes apparent the unhallowed desires, the infidelity of the heart, the impurity of the lips. Not a sin committed can be hid, but will stand against us in the judgment unless we repent and have it covered by the blood of Christ. All the acts of disloyalty in breaking the Law of God cannot be hid, but will be exposed to the sinner under the searching influence of the Spirit of God. Under this conviction, his spirit is stricken, and he loathes himself as he views the pure, spotless character of Christ.

If you see your sinfulness, do not wait to make yourself better. Many believe they are not good enough to come to Christ, and decide to wait until they do better. But you cannot expect to become better through your own efforts (see Jeremiah 13:23). There is help for you only in God. Do not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. You can do nothing of yourself. You must come to Christ just as you are.

But do not wait too long! Do not deceive yourself with the thought that God, in His great love and mercy, will yet save even the rejecters of His grace. The exceeding sinfulness of sin can be estimated only in the light of the cross. When men urge that God is too good to cast off the sinner, let them look to Calvary. It was because there was no other way in which man could be saved that Christ volunteered to die on Calvary. Without this infinite sacrifice it was impossible for the human race to escape from the defiling power of sin and be restored to communion with holy beings; it was impossible for them to become partakers of a spiritual life. It was because of this fact that Christ took upon Himself the guilt of the disobedient and suffered in the sinner's place. The love, suffering, and death of the Son of God testify to the

terrible enormity of sin and declares that there is no escape from it's power, no hope of a better and higher life, but only through the submission of the soul to Christ.

Adam and Eve persuaded themselves that in so small a matter as eating of the forbidden fruit there could not result such terrible consequences as God had declared. But this small matter was the transgression of God's immutable and holy law, and it separated them from God and opened the floodgates of death and untold woe upon our world. Heaven itself has felt the effects of rebellion against God. Calvary stands as a memorial of the amazing sacrifice required to atone for man's transgression of the divine law. Let us not regard sin as a trivial thing. Sin cost the infinite price of the life of God's Son in order to redeem humanity from it.

Many accept an intellectual religion, a form of godliness, when the heart is not cleansed. Let it be your prayer for God to "Create in me a clean heart...and renew a right spirit within me" Psalm 51:10. Deal truly with your own soul. Be as earnest, as persistent, as you would be if your mortal life were at stake--because it is! This is a matter to be settled between God and you. A supposed hope, and nothing more, will prove your eternal ruin.

Study God's word prayerfully. That word presents before you, in the law of God and the life of Christ, the great principles of holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord" Hebrews 12:14. It convinces of sin; it plainly reveals the way of salvation. Give heed to it as the voice of God speaking to your soul and as you obey it you will be cleansed and set free from the power of sin through the power and working of God in your life.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." Psalms 119:9.

"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2:12-13.

As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. We have not to reconcile God to us, but--O wondrous love!--God in Christ is "reconciling the world unto himself" 2 Corinthians 5:19. He is wooing by His tender love the hearts of His erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of his children as is God with those whom He seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor. No human lips ever poured out more tender entreaties to the wanderer than does He. All His promises, His warnings, are but the breathing of unutterable love.

When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner and that it is no use to try and serve God, look up to your Redeemer and see His light and talk of His merits. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" and that you can be saved by His matchless love (see 1 Timothy 1:15). We have indeed been great sinners, but Christ died that we might be completely forgiven. The merits of His sacrifice are sufficient to present to the Father on our behalf. Those to whom He has forgiven most will love Him most, and will stand nearest to His throne to praise Him for His great love and infinite sacrifice. It is when we most fully comprehend the love of God that we best realize the sinfulness of sin. When we see the length of chain that was let down from heaven for us, when we understand something of the infinite sacrifice that Christ made in our behalf, the heart is melted with tenderness and contrition.

Repentance of our sins is necessary (see Proverbs 29:1; Luke 13:2-5; Revelation 2:5), but if we advance no farther than repentance for sin, it will avail nothing. We must "bring forth...fruits worthy of repentance" Luke 3:8. In other words, we must forsake and put away our sins (see Proverbs 28:13; Ephesians 4:17-32). But let us not put off the work of forsaking our sins and seeking purity of heart through Jesus, because sin, however small it may be viewed, can be indulged in only at the peril of your soul. What we do not overcome will overcome us and work out our destruction. If we choose to sin, we are servants of sin and in bondage to its creator--the Devil (see John 8:34; Romans 6:16; 2 Peter 2:19; 1 John 3:8). And the wages which the Devil pays his servants is not sufficient to live on--"for the wages of sin is death" (Romans

6:23). But if we choose instead to serve God, then we are set free from sin through Christ. And what Christ gives to His faithful followers is sufficient to live on--for the "gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" Romans 6:23.

But every act of transgression, every neglect or rejection of the grace of Christ, is reacting upon yourself; it is hardening the heart, depraving the will, benumbing the understanding, and not only making you less inclined to yield, but less capable of yielding, to the tender pleading of God's Holy Spirit.

Even one wrong trait of character or sinful desire persistently cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel. Every sinful indulgence strengthens the soul's aversion to God. Those who manifest contempt for God or His word of truth, will reap the harvest of that which they sow. In all the Bible there is not a more fearful warning against trifling with evil than that the sinner "shall be holden with the cords of his sins" Proverbs 5:22.

Christ is ready to set you free from sin, but He will not force your will; and if by persistent transgression your will is wholly bent on evil, and there is no desire to be set free and you will not accept His grace, what more can He do? You have ultimately destroyed yourself by your determined rejection of His love. But this terrible fate does not need to be your destiny.

"...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." 1 Timothy 1:15; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7-8.