

What Must I Do to be Saved – Part 1

This morning I would like to study with you the most interesting, and in my opinion, the most important subject that we could possibly study and experience. And one that not one in one hundred understands for himself. It's a subject that many in the past have tried to teach and understand and as a result of differing views, it's probably more misunderstood today than perhaps any time in the past.

But before we begin, let's ask for the Holy Spirit to be our Teacher: Loving Father in heaven, we humbly bow before You thanking You for Your Word, thanking You for the Holy Spirit that is given to us as our Helper and our Comforter. And the bring to our mind things that we need to say and do. And give us the power we need to reflect Your character fully. Thank You in the name of Jesus. Amen.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 – 11, the apostle Paul said, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" And then he goes on to say, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Those are wonderful words and powerful words, are they not? Only those who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb can truly appreciate what the apostle Paul says here. And I hope you have had and are having that experience.

First of all, we need to understand that we have all sinned and have fallen short of God's ideal for the human race. I don't think any rational Christian would disagree with that. When a person becomes involved in sin, they may not realize it, but they are denying Jesus Christ who is their righteousness. And the reason they fall when tempted is because the love of God is not being constantly cultivated.

If you've done any gardening in the past, you know what happens if you fail to cultivate the soil once the seeds have been sown. The weeds take over, don't they? And it doesn't take very long. And it's no different if we fail to spend quality time with God every day, or at least several times during a given week. And when I say quality time I'm not talking about five minutes reading a devotional with your hand on the door knob. I'm taking about digging deep in the Word of God so you know for yourself what the Bible teaches. And you know this may sound like a no-brainer, but if everyone would just do that there would be a lot less error and fanaticism and a lot more unity among God's people, don't you think?

If there was ever a time to study for yourself instead of believing everything that comes from the pulpit or from the multitude of sermon CDs being sent out by various ministries, it's today when there are more false doctrines being promoted than ever before. By the way, that's evidence that the end of all things is at hand, if you don't already know that.

If you get out in the garden every day and spend a little time hoeing and agitating the soil or going through it with your rototiller there's no way a weed can spring up. And by the same token, if we are constantly cultivating a relationship with God through Bible study and prayer, sin won't have a chance to spring up, either. The deep roots may still be there ready to pop up if we

become lax. And believe me, they will come up if you neglect your garden. But they will be kept at bay as long as we continue to cultivate the soil.

Without hesitation I can tell you that if you fail to spend time with God you will fall into sin. There's no question about it. And when you fall into sin, you are in a lost condition until, through repentance you confess your wrong.

If a person claims to be a Christian and spends no time with God or very little time with God, you can know for certain that they are fulfilling the desires of the fallen flesh. It can't be any other way, because their lifeline to God's power is not connected. And if you think you can remain justified without being connected, you're only fooling yourself.

Without a doubt the most costly thing in the world is sin. When we sin, it's at the expense of a pure conscience and the cost of losing the of God. And at last losing heaven. And I have to ask, is sin worth that much to you? Is the sin that so easily besets you, the sin that once committed, makes you feel so guilty afterward, is it worth losing eternal for? As Christians we say, No, of course not. And then we turn around and do it. How much sense does that make? None, right? So why do we fall? It's because our sinful nature demands satisfaction and we're too weak in our own strength to tell it No.

According to the Bible there is pleasure in sin. If there wasn't it would be easy to resist. Speaking of Moses, Hebrews 11:25 says he chose rather to suffer with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. And so our fallen flesh does find pleasure in sin. But that said, I have good news for you this morning. You cannot only be forgiven, but you can have the power to keep from repeating the same sin over and over again. By partaking of the divine nature and through the power of the Holy Spirit your weak points can become your strong ones. And perhaps we'll touch on how that can happen as we go along.

But when you compare eternal life with a few moments of sinful pleasure, the choice seems easy enough to make, doesn't it? But somehow the devil is able to blind our minds to the rational choice we ought to make and many times we follow Satan's suggestions instead of doing what's in our own best long-term interest. And the devil knows that if we continue to grieve the Holy Spirit by walking contrary to God's will, it will cost us the loss of our souls.

What a scene will be presented when the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened to testify to the salvation or loss of every human being. And you know what? It's a decision that Jesus will have to make. The One who has lived in humanity and given His life for humanity Who will give the reward of eternal life to the loyal and true or meet out punishment to the disobedient and the disloyal.

Jesus is entrusted with the complete measurement of every individual's action and responsibility. To those who have chosen to continue in sin and have acted against God's will it will be the most solemn scene they've ever experienced, as you can imagine. And for the righteous, it will also be a solemn scene. But their reward will be entirely different in a good way, in a very good way.

But before we go any further I would like to read something from a couple short statements by God's last day prophet. And by the way, if you don't know that the Bible predicted that someone would receive the gift of prophecy at the time of the end, then please ask for two CDs titled "God's True Church" Parts 1 & 2.

The Bible makes it crystal clear that the gift of prophecy didn't end two thousand years ago with the last Bible writer. Because Ephesians 4:11-13 tells us that all the gifts of the Spirit will be in the church until we come into the unity of the faith. And certainly that has not yet happened.

The first statement is from a book called, *Faith and Works*, page 18: "The danger has been presented to me again and again of entertaining, as a people, false ideas of justification by faith. I have been shown for years that Satan would work in a special manner to confuse the mind on this point."

What point? Justification by faith. And let me tell you, millions of God's professed people are very confused on this point today.

The second statement is from an article from a paper called the *Review and Herald*, Sept. 3, 1889. And this is also in the context of the subject of justification by faith. "There is not one in one hundred who understands for himself the Bible truth on this subject that is so necessary to our present and eternal welfare. When light begins to shine forth to make clear the plan of redemption to the people, the enemy works with all diligence that the light may be shut away from the hearts of men. If we come to the word of God with a teachable, humble spirit, the rubbish of error will be swept away, and gems of truth, long hidden from our eyes, will be discovered.

"There is great need that Christ should be preached as the only hope and salvation."

And then it goes on to say that when the doctrine of justification by faith is understood it comes to many as water comes to a thirsty traveler.

The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought! And it is a precious thought, isn't it? Not only is it a precious thought, but it's also a precious experience. And it's only those who have had this experience that can appreciate this wonderful truth.

And so, based on this statement, you can know without question that the enemy will do everything in his power to see to it that you come away from this study today not having a clear understanding of what you must do to be saved.

I can tell you first hand that there are many people today that think themselves Christians but don't understand the plan of salvation and what true conversion is. In fact, they need to be converted and don't even know it. The Bible teaches that if you have been baptized, then you are to give evidence that you have been converted. Does that make sense?

But let me just say this lest you get the wrong ideas about putting forth human effort in an attempt to save yourself. There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly,

repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in your mind this morning than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works, because salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Wherever this question of faith and works is discussed, it's amazing to me to see how many Christians have mistaken ideas. And it becomes evident after a little while that they really don't understand the mystery of godliness. And most don't realize it, but it's only a new conversion that can change them and cause them to give up their false ideas. But too many times they choose rather to cling to their false ideas as a drowning man clings to a life preserver.

In John chapter 3, Jesus said, You must be born again, else you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. And so if we must be born again, that tells me that our first birth is not sufficient. We've all had a physical birth, but we also need a spiritual birth and that's what Jesus is talking about. When the born-again experience comes home to the heart of the hungering, thirsting soul who is longing to come into the assurance of hope and faith and perfect trust in God, then and only then will they have the peace and assurance of eternal life that only the Lord can give.

And so friends, our soul salvation is at stake here and we need to understand that it's not possible to bring about a positive result in our own standing before God, or in the gift of God to us through creature merit. If faith plus works could purchase the gift of salvation for anyone then the Creator would be under obligation to the creature. And there are many today that are fooled by this falsehood. If anyone could merit salvation by something they can do then they are in the same position as the Catholic to do penance for their sins.

If we cannot, by any of our own good works, merit salvation then it must be wholly of grace to be received by the sinner, because he simply receives and believes in Jesus. It has to be wholly a free gift and the sooner we grasp this truth, the sooner we will be happy in Jesus.

And so a proper understanding of justification by faith places this subject beyond controversy. If there is any controversy it's all ended as soon as this matter is settled, that the merits of fallen man in his good works can never gain for him eternal life.

This important subject should be without a question in your mind this morning. Justification is wholly of grace and not procured by any works that fallen man can do. Period.

Think of it this way: If a rich man has money and possessions and he makes a large offering to the Lord, should the idea come into his mind to spoil the offering by the thought that he has merited the favor of God, and that the Lord is under obligation to bless him with special favors because of his gift? No. Why? Because the Lord has lent him His own goods in trust to begin with and requires that a portion of it be handed back to Him when His cause has needs to be met.

After all, didn't the Lord give him his intellect? Yes. He also gave him his health and the ability to make money. He created the things of the earth. He gave the sun, and the clouds, and the showers of rain to cause things to grow. And as God's employed servants we're suppose to

gather in His harvest and use what we need in an economical way and then hold the balance for the Lord when He calls for it.

In 1 Chronicles 29:14, King David said, “for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”

So, the satisfaction of creature merit isn't in returning to the Lord His own, for it has always been His own to begin with. We can't give the Lord anything, except a broken and contrite heart.

According to the first few chapters in Genesis, by rebellion and apostasy, mankind forfeited the favor of God. And this point must be fully understood in order to fully understand the plan of salvation. In the beginning, Adam and Eve forfeited the privileges that God in His mercy presented to them as a free gift. And the moment they refused obedience to the law of His kingdom, that very moment they became disloyal to the government of God and made themselves entirely unworthy of all the blessings that God originally gave them. And because of this, this became the position of the whole human race.

And the reason why mankind wasn't immediately annihilated was because God so loved them that He gave the gift of the sacrifice of Jesus to suffer the penalty for their transgression. Christ became man's substitute that man, through the grace of God should have another trial – a second chance. Aren't you thankful for that? Without it there'd be no hope.

After our first parents broke God's law He gave us new and fresh promises that were made on a different basis. Because of the sacrifice of Christ all blessings must now come through a mediator and because of that every member of the human family is given wholly into the hands of Christ because He is that Mediator. And whatever we possess, whether it's the gift of money, of houses, of lands, or reasoning powers, of physical strength, or of intellectual talents, all are placed in our possession as God's treasures to be faithfully expended in the way He directs. Every gift is stamped with the cross and bears the image and inscription of Jesus Christ. And since all things come from God, from the smallest to the largest blessing, all flows through one channel – a mediation sprinkled with the blood of Christ.

And so you see, not one soul can give God anything that's not already His. No work of man can merit for himself the pardoning love of God. We possess nothing, can offer nothing of value in work or in faith which we have not first received from God.

Over the years, I've heard people from various walks of life and from different religious backgrounds strenuously advocating a creature merit. But I can tell you, based upon the word of God, that they are misrepresenting the truth as it is in Jesus and they don't even know it. It's like they're in a fog of confusion. And what they need is the love of God which is represented by gold tried in the fire, and the white raiment of Christ's pure character, and the heavenly eyesalve that they might discern the utter worthlessness of creature merit to earn eternal life.

It's possible for a person to be full of good works and noble achievement and have a humble demeanor, but at the same time be totally ignorant of the fact that not one particle of whatever good traits they possess were given them from God. And instead be fooled into thinking that

they have these things because of some good in themselves. These false ideas are very tricky and dangerous when it comes to a saving knowledge of the truth.

I wish I could somehow present this matter as it really is, this morning, because we desperately need to understand that Jesus imparts all the powers, all the grace, all the penitence, all the inclination to do right, and all the pardon of sins to be received by faith. And even faith is the gift of God.

If you could gather together everything that is good and holy and noble and lovely in man and then present it to the holy angels of God as acting a part in the salvation of the human soul or in merit, what do you think they would think? I'll tell you what they would think. They would think it was treason. These holy beings stand in the very presence of God and look upon the unsurpassed glory that enshrouds His person. And so what is all our filthy rags compared to that? As they look upon the Lamb of God who have His life for the sins of men and was rejected and despised and crucified that they might have life, would they not think it a betrayal of Christ to offer to God whatever good fallen man might think is in himself?

The idea of the Bible is that for our sakes Christ became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. And so, how could any works that man can render to God be of any value? Anything that we can offer would be far less than nothingness. A peeled zero. The idea of doing anything to merit God's grace and pardon is fallacy from beginning to end. We hear so many things preached today in regard to the conversion of the soul that is just not true.

Earlier I mentioned repentance, which is sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. It's like a person is going one way and then they turn around and start heading in the opposite direction in a spiritual sense. So the question is: Can man repent of himself? The answer is: No. You can't repent of your sins anymore than you can pardon yourself for sinning. Acts 5:31 makes it clear that God gives repentance and forgiveness of sins.

And so again, where is the merit in man to earn his salvation? Or to place before God something that is valuable and excellent? What can we do to place ourselves on the deserving list? Nothing. Nothing.

Now let's talk about faith for a minute because there is danger even here regarding justification by faith as placing merit on faith. You remember what it says in Ephesians 2:8? It says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." When we take the righteousness of Christ as a free gift, we are justified freely because Christ purchased our redemption on the cross, and not because we can earn it somehow.

But where does faith come from in the first place? That's right, it's also a gift from God, just like every other good thing. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." God is the One who gives us understanding. He's the One who moves upon the heart. And He's the One who first drew our mind to view Christ hanging on the cross.

Romans 12:3 tells us that God has dealt to man a measure of faith. Now it's true that we can cultivate the faith we've been given so it grows to meet whatever emergency that confronts us

on our spiritual journey, but it's God Himself Who planted the seed of faith in our hearts in the first place so we can have the capacity to respond to the wooing of the Holy Spirit. God draws and we respond. That's our part. God's part is immeasurably large and our part is immeasurably small, but never forget it. It takes our small part to make the work of salvation a success.

When we learn that we cannot earn righteousness by our own good works and we look with firm reliance upon Jesus Christ as our only hope, then there will not be so much of self and so little of Jesus. There are many people today that think that Jesus will do some of the saving and they must do the rest. But what they need to see by that measure of faith is the righteousness of Christ as their only hope of salvation.

Now, let's talk a little bit more about the work that God has given for man to do. God has given man the faculties of the mind and certain other capabilities as we've already discussed. Then God works and cooperates with us through those gifts and we by being a partaker of the divine nature, can then be overcomers and win eternal life.

And so the Lord does not do the work He has given us the power to do. We must do our part. 1 Corinthians 3:9 says that we are to be laborers together with God. We are to recognize that God is the all-controlling power and that the gifts that He gives us we must receive and then act by the power of His grace.

Also we must recognize that there are conditions to receiving forgiveness and holiness and the righteousness of Christ. God's Word is clear that good works will not save even one soul. Yet it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works. Why? you ask. Well, it's because the fruit we bear will determine if Jesus truly dwells within. Didn't Jesus say you shall know them by their fruits?

If we have accepted Jesus as our Saviour, He will work through us to produce good works. But the good works do not save us. They just tell Who we belong to. I wish I had better words to make this crystal clear in your mind because this very point is where people get all confused about the gospel. God saves us under a law, that we must if we would receive, seek if we would find, and knock if the door would be opened to us.

And so there are some things for us to do if we would have eternal life. The apostle Paul said we must fight the good fight of faith. This implies effort on our part. But the effort isn't for the purpose of thinking that we are saving ourselves somehow. And so we can access God's treasure house of blessings that are waiting for all who will take the time to go after them.

1 Corinthians 3:9 also says we are God's building. That means that we cannot build ourselves. There is a power outside of ourselves that must do the building. But again, He always uses the gifts that He has given to us in order to accomplish the work.

But you know what? Christ has to find a home in the building if it's going to be built according to His plan. And we are that building. And so God works and we work as we use God's gifts in a cooperative way.

Let me read a short statement from the book I mentioned earlier, because it does a much better job than I can do. *Faith and Works*, page 26 “The soul temple is to be sacred, holy, pure, and undefiled. There must be a copartnership in which all the power is of God and all the glory belongs to God. The responsibility rests with us. We must receive in thoughts and in feelings, to give in expression. The law of the human and the divine action makes the receiver a laborer together with God. It brings man where he can, united with divinity, work the works of God. Humanity touches humanity. Divine power and the human agency combined will be a complete success, for Christ's righteousness accomplishes everything.” Everything!

I think one of the main reasons we fail to be successful laborers together with God in our own character development, is because we act as though God depended upon us, instead of us depending on Him. If we lay aside His supernatural power we're going to fail to do a supernatural work, it's just that simple. But with humanity and divinity combined we can accomplish a work that will endure for eternity.

Well, you shouldn't have any question in your mind by now that eternal life is a divine gift, and because it's a gift it's placed outside the possibility of our earning it. We have to get this in our heads. I have to get this in my head. And the kind of faith we've been talking about this morning will never lead anyone into fanaticism of any kind. But the bewitching power of Satan will.

And so, here's the bottom line. Satan leads us to look to ourselves in place of looking to Jesus. That's his goal. And however he can accomplish this he will have accomplished his hellish desire, because he knows where it will ultimately lead us – to the ruin of our souls.

If you'll do a little research you'll find that nearly every false religion is based upon the same principle. You see, the devil doesn't have much of an imagination, he just tweaks the same old falsehoods as he has need. Nearly every false religion teaches that man can depend upon his own efforts for salvation, and then those who believe this, if they fail to make you a convert by their false teaching, they will use force. This is especially true of Islam and Catholicism. As can be plainly seen today, this is the attitude of Islam and this has been the attitude of Catholicism in the past and will be once again in the not-too-distant future as the papacy and apostate Protestantism unite with spiritualism to try to destroy those who are determined, through the power of the Holy Spirit to keep all ten of God's commandments.

By the way, spiritualism was first practiced in the Garden of Eden when the serpent convinced Eve that she could disobey God and still have life; that she could sin and not surely die.

In fact, let me digress for just a moment because there's something happening right now in the world that you need to be aware of. In previous studies we've discovered that the first beast mentioned in Revelation 13 represents the papacy. If you need proof of this, let me know and I'll send you some information. And in verse 3 of Revelation 13, the apostle John prophesied that all the world would wonder after the beast. Now tell me, has there ever been a time when this could be truer than today? Especially since a new pope has been chosen.

And by the way, have you heard that this new pope is the first pope to be elected being a Jesuit? You say, so what. What difference does that make? Well, I'll tell you what difference it makes. The Jesuits are the militant religious order of the Roman Catholic church. And it's their job to infiltrate other religions and to defend their faith against all heretics by any means possible. And it would be foolish for us to think that they have not infiltrated every single protestant denomination since that has been their goal for the past 500 years. Just as they have leading positions in the government today, they have leading in the various denominations.

Now since we've used up most of our time this morning, I can't go into much detail, but let me just read you the oath that every Jesuit takes to become a part of this militant order. And there's much more than this, but you can look up the rest for yourself on the internet. Here's part of the oath that Saint Francis the first, took to become a Jesuit. "I furthermore promise and declare that I will, when opportunity present, make and wage relentless war, secretly or openly, against all heretics, protestants, and liberals, as I am directed to do to extirpate and exterminate them from the face of the whole earth, and that I will spare neither age, sex, or condition. And that I will hang, waste, boil, flay, strangle, and bury alive, these infamous heretics, rip up the stomachs and wombs of their women and crush their infants' heads against the walls in order to annihilate forever their execrable race. That when the same cannot be done openly, I will secretly use the poisoned cup, the strangulating cord, the steel of the poniard or the leaden bullet. Regardless of the honor, rank, dignity, or authority of the person or persons, whatever may be their condition in life, either public or private, as I, at any time, may be directed so to do by an agent of the pope, or superior of the brotherhood of the holy faith of the society of Jesus."

Friends, does that sound like the society of Jesus to you? Does it sound like a holy faith? Of course not. And by the way, Catholicism is the biggest pusher of a salvation by works religion that there is. And if they fail to do the proper good works during their lifetime, if their good works don't outweigh the bad, they can learn to merit salvation while in purgatory after they die. Because, you see, according to them, the sacrifice of Jesus is not sufficient for certain sins. And they think more of the Virgin Mary than they do of Jesus.

And so of course these things are a falsehood, but this is what they believe—that salvation comes through faith plus their own good works. And this is what the apostle Paul called "another gospel" in Galatians chapter 1. And this is the main reason for the protestant reformation.

Anyway, what we've been discussing for the most part today is justification by faith. And perhaps next time we'll talk more about sanctification. But before we close let me just say this about these two aspects of salvation: Justification is forgiveness and pardon for past sins, and of course includes the new birth experience. And sanctification is holiness—the process whereby we remain justified. In other words you can't be sanctified without first being justified, and you can't remain justified without being sanctified.

Let me read you something from the Bible Echo, July 2, 1894 "God can be just, and yet be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. He will accept you just as you are; for there is no hope of your becoming better until—" Notice the word "until." There is no hope of you becoming better until your habits will change, but you won't until—

“you come to Jesus for pardon and sanctification.” Or for forgiveness and holiness. Notice, Jesus has them both.

“Mourning and weeping will not purify you. You may mourn your life away in unbelief and in bitterness of soul; but the power to cleanse the vilest sinner is vested wholly in Him who can save unto the uttermost.”

And so it’s nothing that we can work up. When we are pardoned and sanctified, faith and works will go together. Believing and doing will be blended, but we should never forget that the power is vested wholly in Him who can save to the uttermost.

Hebrews 12:2 says, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;” and we should never lose sight of that. If we do we will surely be doing things for the wrong reason and with the wrong motive.

Our own works will be as effective as were Adam & Eve’s when they sewed fig leaves together to hide the results of their sin. And that’s why we need to be clothed instead with the garment of Christ’s righteousness.

In *Selected Messages*, Book 1, pg. 396, it says we do have a wonderful Saviour and thanks to Him every soul who seeks salvation may say, "By His perfect obedience He has satisfied the claims of the law, and my only hope is found in looking to Him as my substitute and surety, who obeyed the law perfectly for me. By faith in His merits I am free from the condemnation of the law. He clothes me with His righteousness, which answers all the demands of the law. I am complete in Him who brings in everlasting righteousness. He presents me to God in the spotless garment of which no thread was woven by any human agent. . . ."

Now, before you get to thinking that because Jesus perfectly obeyed the law for you and that therefore you don’t need to, let me just that we’ve only been discussing the first half of the gospel this morning and there’s another half to follow.

Justification is ours to claim immediately when we come to Christ and accept His sacrifice in our behalf. That’s what we’ve been talking about this morning. However, we must also learn to continue in a forgiven state once this happens, or we will lose our soul in the end.

This second half of the gospel is sanctification or simply holiness. And holiness is wholeness for God. You see, Jesus doesn’t forgive us and cleanse us and then leave us to work out our own salvation on our own, nor does He forgive us and then give us license to sin because we’re saved – past tense. He continues to empower us to continuous victory as long as we realize our weakness and stay surrendered to Him and abide in Him.

If we are willing to do God will, we will receive large blessings as God’s free gift – not because of any merit in us because this is of no value. But because God so loved the world that **He** gave.

Let’s pray. Loving Father in Heaven, Lord, this morning as this subject of justification by faith has been presented, I pray that it has been presented in a balanced way and in a way that

people can understand and grasp. We realize that we cannot save ourselves—not in the beginning, not in the end, and not anywhere along the way without full surrender to You. And allowing Jesus to abide within that good works might be produced without. Lord, thank You for the Holy Spirit. Thank You that we can be empowered to victory. Help us to tend our garden this week, to continually agitate the soil, to cultivate the soil through Bible study and prayer, that the weeds of sin do not spring up in our life. We know that human probation is soon to close and when Jesus says, “It is done” we will have to live without a Mediator in heaven. And so we pray that while there is opportunity our characters would be developed in righteousness so that when You come in the clouds of glory we can go home with You. Help us to be Your witnesses that our friends, and our loved ones, and our acquaintances will be there with us, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.