

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

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Fall River, Massachusetts

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In the Bible, in the book of Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 16, verses 14-31, we read how the great Apostle Paul and his companion Silas were in the Greek city of Philippi preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We see that some of the crowds rose up against them and had them thrown into prison for no other reason than their preaching the Gospel. Paul and Silas were whipped and then imprisoned in chains in a jail cell with their feet fastened in stocks. At midnight, instead of feeling sorry for themselves, Paul and Silas began singing praises to God. We read:

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened.

- Acts 16:25-26

Paul and Silas were set free through God's intervention. Needless to say,

the prison guard, when he saw this, was quite impressed. He fell at Paul and Silas' feet and asked the most important question anyone can ask in life: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30)

Paul and Silas then gave them the most important answer: "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)

Today, I want to have a heart-to-heart talk with you about where you stand with God. Have you ever asked, "What must I do to be saved?" The Gospel of Jesus Christ has the answer to that question. But before that, you may even ask, "Why must I be saved anyway?" To answer that, let's go back to the very beginning of creation.

GOD'S ORIGINAL CREATION WAS GOOD

When we go back to the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis, Chapters 1 through 3, we see that God originally created everything good: "And God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

God had created the earth, the sun, moon, planets, fish, animals, and humans; He had created everything good. When God created man, He created man and woman in His own image and likeness. He gave humans the power of choice, free will. He gave humans dominion and authority over the earth. But He also gave them one command:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it, you shall surely die."

- Genesis 2:16-17

We know, of course, that the first man and woman failed the test and ate the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1-13). Man sinned. That day something in man's spirit died. The Apostle Paul tells us:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.

- Romans 5:12

Through Adam and Eve's sin, the whole human race became infected with sin. All descendants of our first parents, including you and me,

inherited the spiritual defect of being born with a sin nature. The power of sin infects and rules human nature. We all at some time or another break some part of the Ten Commandments (see Exodus, Chapter 20), the law God gave to Moses and which is written in every human heart. We don't have to doubt the reality of sin; we see its evidence every day. Read your daily newspaper. Watch your nightly news. We see crime, violence, murder, the rise of divorce, sexual sin, venereal disease, drug addictions, wars, lying, theft, dishonesty, economic injustice. You have sinned; I have sinned. We have all offended God and offended our fellow man. My friend, sin is very real; it is very evident in our world.

With sin, that part of us that was like God, our spirit, died. Furthermore, our sin separates us from a Holy God. God commands, "Be holy, for I am holy" in Leviticus 11:44. And the Bible tells us, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts" in Isaiah 6:3.

This holiness of God demands:

SIN MUST BE PUNISHED

God is a God of justice. He must be. God is the Enforcer of right and wrong; He established laws governing good and evil. In any notion of justice, sin and evil must be punished. If evil were not punished, then any commandments would just be a joke, for then "anything goes" and right and wrong don't really matter. But God is NOT a God Who says, "Anything goes." He is a God of justice. If, for example, a drug dealer comes up to a young mother who is pushing her baby in a carriage and demands her money and shoots her, God is not going to just overlook this and say, "Oh well, that's OK. It doesn't really matter."

No! No! God is a God of justice Who would hold that person accountable and *punish* the sin. We have human courts and laws to enforce justice; we have police who protect society and enforce laws. But above and beyond all our human courts of law, there is a much higher court that all human beings have to answer to: The Court of Justice of God the Father. Because of God's holy nature, *all* sin, *every* sin everyone commits demands punishment. The very concept of true justice also demands every sin be punished. The Bible is very direct: "For the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23)

SIN IS PUNISHED BY ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD IN A PLACE CALLED HELL

Spiritual death consists of separation from God in a place of torment

called Hell. Hell is a very real place. Our Lord Jesus talked a lot about Hell in the Gospels. I recently read that a current opinion poll revealed that about 75-80% of Americans don't believe in Hell anymore. My friend, don't be deceived. The Gospels tell us that Hell is a very real place, a place of tormenting fire and yet empty, lonely darkness. Individuals are tormented by loneliness, despair, a knowledge they have eternally failed. They are tormented by Satan and demons, or fallen angels, who were banished to Hell by God when they rebelled against Him (Matthew 25:41). There is constant weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Hell is a very real place and some people are in for a tragic surprise when they die. I blame the ministers, priests and rabbis who have not preached the true Word of God and taught about His holiness and justice. Some day they will have to face a very severe judgment for not giving people the true Word of God.

Don't be deceived! There is a very real place called Hell! Hell is so real and God's justice is so real that it took the Son of God, Jesus Christ, coming to earth to die on a cross to pay the price for sin so that you and I could escape Hell by Jesus' paying the price for our sins. A good God would not have sent His Son to go through the shame and torture of the cross if there was an easier way to save us. But sin is so real, God's justice is so real, His holiness so real, and Hell is so real, that God sent His Son, because

GOD IS ALSO A GOD OF LOVE WHO STILL LOVES MANKIND

The Bible tells us: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Even though God is a God of justice, He is also a God of mercy and love. Justice is when you get what you deserve; mercy is when you get better than you deserve. Although God must punish sin, His love caused Him to find a way to show mercy to mankind. This became possible when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born, lived a perfectly sinless and obedient life, suffered and died on a cross at the hands of sinful men. He offered His death as the Innocent Sinless One to be payment for the punishment for our sins.

Jesus never sinned, and He deserved no punishment. But He offered His death and suffering as willing payment for our sins. God the Father accepted this sacrifice and in fact poured His wrath upon the sinless, obedient Jesus while He was on the cross, and then Jesus' sacrifice was accepted by the Father as payment for the sins of the world. This made it possible for

both justice and mercy to be fulfilled. Sin was paid for; justice could be satisfied. Anyone coming to God through His Son Jesus Christ would be forgiven their sins and be reconciled to God because of what Jesus did on the cross. The Bible tells us:

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them... He (God the Father) made him (Jesus Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21

In other words, God could now forgive us our sins because Jesus paid the price for them. If we come to God on the basis of what Jesus did for us, we will not only be forgiven, but our spirit, which was dead in sin because of our old sin nature, will be brought to life. Our dead spirit will be reborn into a union with God that man originally had before the first sin. We will be “born again” as Jesus said we must be (John 3:3; John 3:5-7). With this new birth, with this forgiveness, will also come a NEW POWER TO LIVE A LIFE PLEASING TO GOD. It is the power of Jesus Christ Himself coming to live in your heart.

Let me ask you now: How do you stand with God? I pray that the Holy Spirit will make this message real to you. Let me ask you again that most important question:

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

1. YOU MUST COME TO JESUS CHRIST— You must believe He is the Son of God and that He rose from the dead. Come to Him *now, just as you are*, sin and all. You can’t impress God with your own goodness, for you are a sinner. But through Jesus, through faith in Him, you will be justified before God the Father. The Bible tells us:

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

- Romans 10:9-10

Jesus Himself claimed *He* was the way to salvation, the way to

forgiveness of sins. This is why the Gospel is preached so that people can hear the message of salvation and make a choice to believe in Jesus. The Bible tells us:

You shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.

- Matthew 1:21

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

- John 14:6

The Apostle Peter said, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

- Acts 4:12

2. ADMIT TO GOD YOU ARE A SINNER AND REPENT— All are sinners. You are a sinner. I am a sinner. The Apostle Paul wrote: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Repentance means "to have a change of heart," "to come to your senses," "to turn around and go in a new direction." It means to turn from sin, to desire to live a life pleasing to God. Be truly sorry for your sins.

3. ASK JESUS' FORGIVENESS, ACCEPT WHAT HE DID ON THE CROSS FOR YOU, AND ASK HIM TO COME LIVE IN YOUR HEART— You can't pay the price for your sins. I can't pay the price for mine. We'd have to go to Hell for all eternity to even try to begin payment. But Jesus did pay the price. He wants to give that forgiveness to us as a free gift. The Bible tells us:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- 1 John 1:9

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in

Christ Jesus Our Lord.

- Romans 6:23

As you accept what Jesus did on the cross for you, also ask Him to live in your heart. It is His presence within us that brings our spirit to life as we are “born again.” It is His presence in our heart and spirit that cleanses us, transforms us into a new person, and gives us the power to live a new life pleasing to God.

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things come.

- 2 Corinthians 5:17

But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God, even to those who believe on His name.

- John 1:12

4. MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT TO OTHERS THAT YOU HAVE ACCEPTED JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOR—Jesus died publicly for you. You are to live publicly for Him. The Bible tells us:

For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

- Romans 10:10

What about you today? Have you seriously, prayerfully considered this message? Are you ready to make the most important decision you’ll ever make in your life? Will you pray the following prayer with me and *mean it from your heart?*:

“Lord Jesus Christ, I believe You are the Son of God and that You died on the cross for my sins and that You rose again. Jesus, I’m sorry for my sins; I turn from them. Forgive me. I accept what you did for me on the cross as your gift to me. Come live in my heart, Lord. I want new life, I want You. I want to serve You the rest of my life. I ask this in Your name, Jesus. Amen.”

If you prayed that prayer and meant it, I want to welcome you into the family of God. For you now have found that most important answer to the most important question in life.

Take care and God bless you.

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We invite you to send any prayer requests you might have for prayer at our chapel prayer meetings. Send to:

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Also write to be put on our mailing list to receive periodic letters. Let us know specifically if you'd like to receive the Daily Devotional.