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# WHAT MUST I DO?

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“WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?” The reader will find this question in Acts 16:30. A man subject to like passions as we are, is there reported to have asked it. An answer was immediately returned to the question by those who were the best qualified to give it. It was forthwith acted on by him who asked it, and he was saved. Innumerable others have made the same inquiry, have acted in compliance with the same answer, and have themselves been saved. “And yet there is room.” The propitiation is not exhausted. The intercession has not ceased. The Holy Spirit has not fulfilled the whole of his commission, and returned to heaven. And his office is the same as when he first undertook it: to convince the world of sin, and to take of the things of Christ and show them unto men. There is hope for thee, fellow-sinner. Thou hast encouragement to inquire and to act.

Here is a question; and it has well been called “THE GREAT QUESTION.” There are many questions which men concern themselves to ask. “What shall I eat?” asks one. “What shall I drink?” inquires another; and there be *many* that say, “Who will show us any good?” But these are not great questions; much less is any one of them *the* great question. The great question concerns the soul, thy immortal nature, and inquires respecting a provision for it, in view of what it *is*, and *has done*, and *is to meet* at the judgment, on its way thither, and far and for ever beyond it. It asks what is to be done in consideration of its depravity, its guilt, its responsibility, its trials here, and its destiny for the world to come. This is the great question. In comparison with others, not only is it the greatest question, but other questions have no magnitude. It is *the great* question.

It is a question of *universal* concern. Its importance is as general as it is great. Every man has equal occasion to ask it. Every man needs to be saved. “All have sinned

and come short of the glory of God. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. Judgment has come upon all men to condemnation. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The whole world lieth in wickedness." *Does not every man need to be saved? No man needs any thing so much as to be saved. No man needs any thing in comparison with it. All else is nothing. This alone is every thing. It is the desideratum of the race—not merely needful, most needful, but the "one thing needful."*

This question should be the *first*, as it is the great question. No man can ask it too *early*. The inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" *was* never, never can be premature. As soon as one can understand its import, there is necessity to ask it. Even children ought to make the inquiry, for they are sinners; and to be a sinner is to be lost. We want salvation now more than we want any thing else. We want it if we live. We want it if we die. Childhood, youth, manhood, old age—every season and stage of life wants it. And every condition of life wants it. Prosperity wants it. Adversity wants it. To-day we need it, both for to-day's exigencies, and because to us there may be no to-morrow. If we do not ask the question early, we may never have opportunity to ask it, or we may ask it in vain. Such is human life, that the most important inquiry ought to be made first, and the most important work first done. Now this is not merely the most important, but the only work of any importance, in case of being overtaken by death. You may leave other things undone, and dying feel no regret; but dying, and leaving this undone, though every thing else may have been done, you can feel no complacency in looking back, and nothing but despair in looking forward. Wherefore it should be with every one the *first* question. He is mad who defers asking it, under any circumstances, however engrossing; or for any period, however brief the period may be. "Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness. *To-day* if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Behold, *now* is the day of salvation."

Some have asked this question, and *have acted* appropriately on the answer to it. They have done what was necessary to be done, and now each asks, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do" farther?

Others, having asked it, and obtained the answer, are *hesitating*. They know what they must do, but they have not done it. The Holy Spirit has convinced them of sin, but there his work has stopped. Why has he not gone on? There must be some counteraction. This is a *critical* condition. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." It is *unreasonable*. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" It is *dangerous*. Death may intervene. The Spirit may depart. We are not saved by asking the question, but by acting conformably to the answer. It is also an *unnecessary* state to be in. There is no need of lingering there. The case of the jailer proves this. Neither is there any *advantage* in it. Your doing what is required is not promoted by delaying to do it, but rather impeded. There is no getting ready to do it: certainly, no *long* preparation necessary. The jailer's case proves this. Reader, are you hesitating? Hesitate no longer, but do what Paul and Silas said: "Believe in Christ."

Some, having been concerned for their salvation, have asked the question; and having heard the answer, have declined doing the thing, as *not liking* what is to be done. And they have relapsed into carelessness; or are vainly imagining to find a substitute which will be accepted; or they have concluded to defer the thing, in the hope that it will be more easily done hereafter, though they know at the same time that it will not be, and it is not difficult to convince them that it cannot become more easy, but must daily become less so. Some have *never* asked the question; or have asked it only in a spirit of curiosity, without any intention of doing, though desirous to know what is to be done. Some, again, are so taken up with other questions, such as, "What shall we eat? Who will show us any good?" that they plead they have no time for the great question.

Some think they must be a long time asking it before they proceed any farther. Why? Is the answer long deferred? Why ask a question a second time, when, on the first asking, it has been satisfactorily answered?

Some ask the question seriously, and with a degree of concern, but the judgment is convinced rather than the heart affected. They *believe* that they are lost, and need salvation, but they do not *feel* it. Their conviction requires to be more thorough, more deep, more of the heart. Con-



scious that they are sinners, they infer that they are lost ; but they have not such a view of the evil of sin, and of the extent of their own depravity, as to acknowledge the entire justice of their condemnation, and to seize with avidity on a scheme of salvation by the merest grace. Yet even these I would not advise to wait for deeper conviction. That may come afterwards. They may never know the depth of the disease till the cure has been commenced. "To the cross—to the cross," I would say to these, go, as well for deeper conviction as for salvation. There, looking on that, you shall learn not only what a Saviour you have, but what a sinner you are.

But I proceed to the import of the question. The end proposed in it is SALVATION. The inquirer would know what he must do *to be saved*. And what is it to be saved ? It is to be delivered from sin and from suffering ; to be made holy and happy ; to be recovered from the condemnation and corruption brought upon the soul by transgression ; to be restored to the favor and image of God. It includes being pardoned, justified, adopted and made an heir of God, as well as being renewed and sanctified. Salvation comprehends both grace and glory. It commences in time ; it is continued through eternity. Peace that passeth understanding, hope that maketh not ashamed, joy unspeakable and full of glory, and everlasting consolation, belong to this salvation. These begin to be realized here ; and beyond the grave, a crown unfading, a throne exalted, a kingdom that cannot be moved, and an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, are reserved for the happy and glorified subject of this salvation. He shall want no more, suffer, fear, weep, sin, die no more—no more for ever. And the positive good that God has prepared for him, sense cannot discern, and imagination cannot conceive. It is an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Now, the sinner asks what he must do in order to gain this salvation. Not to *merit* it, nor to *earn* it. That the awakened sinner knows he cannot do. But to *have* it—to come into possession of it. Nothing which he is capable of doing would avail to this, had not others undertaken and done for him. Before I tell him what *he* must do to be saved, let me tell him *what others have done* that he might be saved.

“*God* so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This Son, whom his Father spared not though he was his only-begotten and well-beloved, the *Lord Jesus*, though rich, became poor for our sakes; took upon him the form of a servant; humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Yes, for us he condescended, and came down; lived in earthly circumstances; moved in human society; was subject to all our ills; was insulted and despised; wanted, wept, bled, and died. This is what he did for our sakes, and in our stead. It was the hardest of doing. It was *suffering*. For the same object he is *doing* now in heaven; and for this God in providence is ever doing; and *the Holy Spirit* is doing within us; and angels are waiting to do; and men are doing—ministers preaching, and Christians praying.

In the midst of all this doing for him, the sinner asks what he must do for himself. “What must *I* do to be saved?” And it is true, he must do something, after all that has been done by others, or never be saved. *He* must act. His coöperation is indispensable. He cannot be the subject of salvation without being an agent in it. That about which he inquires is not merely permitted, but required. It is not what he *may* do, but what he *must* do—not what he ought to do, or had better do, but what it is indispensable he should do. Salvation includes a work done *for* us, *in* us, and *by* us. The question is about this last; which is as essential in its place as was the death of Christ in its place, or as is the influence of the Holy Spirit. I would have this truth grounded and settled in your mind. Every sinner must *do* in order to be saved. His salvation can no more be without his action, than it could be without the action of God. *Not doing* destroys, but it does not save. Men may perish by omission, but to their salvation action is necessary. “*He that believeth shall be saved. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Strive to enter in at the strait gate.*”

But *what* is it? He asks *what* he must do to be saved. I will answer. And here let me pass to the method of direct address, for it is your case, my fellow-sinner, for which I am going to prescribe. What you must do has imme-



diate respect to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not any exercise of which sin is the object, that saves the soul. Our sins have ruined us. It is no looking at *them* that can save us. Neither are we saved by any exercise of which God, absolutely considered, is the object. The words whereby we may be saved are about Jesus. He is the object of the saving act. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

But you ask, and very properly, "*Who is Christ?* How stands he connected with my salvation? Why am I directed to him?" That the act may be intelligently done, it is necessary these questions should be satisfactorily answered. Faith presupposes knowledge. I reply, that Christ is God, and that he became man, and so was "God manifest in the flesh;" was made under the law for sinners, in which capacity he obeyed for them the precept they broke, and suffered for them the penalty they had incurred—and as he was delivered for their offences, so he rose again for their justification, and ascended to heaven, where he ever liveth to make intercession. Now, in him, in consequence of this undertaking, work, and passion, there is salvation. There is redemption through his blood. It cleanses from all sin. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; so that God can be just, and yet justify such; for by his obedience they are made righteous. "Neither is there salvation in any other." You see, then, why you are directed to him.

Now, here is the object. Observe, it is with him you have to do—with him *immediately*. You need no daysman between you and the Mediator. We come to God *by him*—but *to* Christ without any medium. And it is only one thing you are directed to do with respect to him. It is to *believe* on him. It is true, the exercise is sometimes expressed by other terms, and it is also true that believing includes or draws after it other exercises. It implies confidence. It works by love. It is the principle of all evangelical obedience; and the eye that looks to Jesus, believing, is always moistened with the tears of ingenuous repentance for all sin. But it is faith that saves the soul—or rather, that brings the soul to Christ, that he may save it.

The connection between believing and being saved is certain and infallible. Believe, and thou *shalt* be saved.

There is no peradventure here. Thou *shalt* be saved. Depend upon it. Doubt it not. Thou *shalt* be saved—and that, whoever you be, whatever your age, how many soever and great your sins, *thou shalt* be saved. Yes, *thou*. “Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out.” *Only believe*. If all the sins of all men met on you, yet, believing, you should be saved from them all.

But what is it to *believe*? It is to give credit to the testimony of God. This supposes that you *understand* it—that you give credit to it *as his*, and *for his sake*—and that you *feel* and *act* suitably to it. To believe a *command*, is to obey it. To believe a *threatening*, is to be awed by it. To believe an *admonition*, is to take heed to what it recommends. To believe a *promise*, is to rely on it, and plead it; and to give credit to an *invitation*, is to comply with the terms of it.

But what, in particular, is believing *in Christ*? It is to give credit to what is testified of him as a Saviour; and to exercise implicit, unbounded confidence in him as such. It is to receive him—to look to him—to commit the soul to him; and this not merely that he may be its Priest, but also its King and Lord, its Master and Teacher too. Is Christ divided, that one can receive him in one of his offices and not in all? Does he say, “Come unto me?” in the same breath he adds, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.” It is all one invitation; and in the compliance the parts cannot be separated.

But do you ask *how* you are to believe? Faith is a *moral exercise*. “*With the heart* man believeth unto righteousness.” Do you ask how you may know if you have believed? “By their fruits ye shall know them.” Faith works by love. The heart is purified by faith. And “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” These are among its achievements. It is a holy and heroic principle. Read a record of its exploits in Hebrews 11.

Now your question is answered. Act upon it. I have done my part. Do you yours. Practise upon your knowledge. If you know this thing, happy are you if you do it. Believe, since that is the thing you *must* do. Believe on Christ, and be saved. Believe without delay. It is a present duty. Believe, while it is your privilege. To-day. Now.

Not believing, you remain not saved ; and “ how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ? ” Not saved—and soon the harvest will be past, the summer ended, and you not saved—not saved, and never to be saved. O sinner, act immediately and with thy might. Be instant. Be in earnest. The Saviour looks towards thee. He calls to thee. He comes after thee. His arms are extended ; his heart is open. By the love that was stronger than death, he pleads with thee to let him save thee.

But perhaps you say, “ I hear all this, and I approve it, and I do make the attempt to believe. But it is all in vain. I experience no relief, no change. ” Renew the attempt. There is no alternative. There is no second thing you are to be directed to do, in case the first does not succeed.

“ But may I not pray, and read my Bible, and break off my evil habits, and attend on the means of grace ? ” Most assuredly you may ; and if you are in earnest you will do it, whoever says nay. Salvation includes a work *for* you. Read about it. Think about it. Hear about it—the incarnation, the agony, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the intercession. Be grateful for it. It includes also a work *in* you, done by another. For that pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to do it in *you*. But do not on that account neglect the work that is to be done *by* you. And remember that that which is to be done by you, is more than reading about the work of Christ, and praying for the work of the Spirit. Propitiation was the work of Christ. Regeneration is the work of the Spirit. To repent and believe is thine. “ Study to do *thy own* business. ” And then thou shalt not only have to praise Christ for having done his work, but thou shalt bless the Spirit too for having accomplished his. And to the divine Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, shall be due, and shall be rendered by thee, the glad subject of the salvation, and by the general assembly of the redeemed, and by the whole fraternity of angels, the praise, all the praise, and the praise for ever, *that thou art saved*.