

What Must I Do to Be Saved? (Part 2)

In [Part 1](#) we concluded from the Scriptures that salvation is not by repenting of sins, but by belief – faith alone. Furthermore, one does not become saved by praying or walking an aisle or asking Jesus into the heart, or crying out for help, or making a public profession in church. Nor is salvation by any other work. Salvation is not by doing (and that includes repenting); it is by believing!

However, in order for a person to believe, he must be convinced by the Holy Spirit of his need, prompting a change of mind.

The Spirit Convinces of the Facts of the Gospel

On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples about the Holy Spirit's ministry in the world.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.
John 16:8-11

The Holy Spirit reproves (i.e., convinces) lost people of the facts of the gospel so they have a basis for getting saved. This is essentially the same message preached by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:1-4:

I declare unto you the gospel ... by which also ye are saved ... how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

In John 16 we are told the Spirit of God convinces lost people of three things, with the intent of changing their mind about these three things.

First, He convinces of sin. Take a woman who never before thought of herself as a sinner until you came along and shared the gospel with her. You show her verses about her sinful state:

Romans 3:10, There is none righteous, no, not one.

Romans 3:23, For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

The Spirit takes the Word and, through your witness, convinces the woman she is a sinner. Then, you tell her of Christ's righteousness – how Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God died and shed His precious blood to pay the price for her sin – and how His righteousness can become her righteousness.

Romans 5:8-10, But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

2 Cor. 5:21, For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The fact that Jesus has ascended to the Father (John 16:10) is evidence of His righteous life, His vindication by God, resulting in His resurrection from the dead, and His exaltation. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father, a place of authority over sin, death, hell, and Satan.

Finally, you tell the lost woman about judgment – how she is under a sentence of condemnation apart from receiving the atonement of Christ. The only way she can receive the gift of eternal life is by faith alone.

Rev. 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Romans 6:23, For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

That is the message of the Gospel in a nutshell, which the Spirit of God uses as the basis to convince sinners of their need for a Savior. Apart from the Spirit-filled witness of a Christian sharing the gospel and apart from the Spirit convincing, the woman mentioned above will never be saved. But when those two powerful dynamics come together, the woman will have her eyes opened to truth, so that the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ can shine in. At that point, her thinking is changed, but she is still not saved. She must believe, that is, depend on the blood atonement of Jesus for forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Of Sin, Because They Believe Not

The wording of John 16:9 is critically important, "Of sin, because they believe not on me." The Holy Spirit convinces of sin because of the lost person's unbelief. Lost people do not believe on Jesus Christ, in the sense

that they do not depend on Him for salvation. That is their great sin.

I find it instructive that Jesus does not say, “of sin, because they are drunkards and thieves and liars and adulterers, etc,” although they are. He does not say, “of sin, because they have broken the ten commandments,” although they have. The clear emphasis of the Spirit’s accusation is on sin, because they believe not on me. The essence of every sin is unbelief, which is a rejection of Jesus Christ.

How should this teaching of Jesus instruct our gospel presentation? We should never tell lost man he must repent of his sins in order to be saved. Rather, we should tell him he must believe on the blood atonement of Jesus Christ to be delivered from eternal condemnation and pass from death unto life. Our message must be consistent with the Spirit’s conviction.

How then does a lost person become saved? When the Spirit of God convinces a sinner of his sinfulness, so that he sees himself as condemned before a holy God, then his thinking about himself has been changed. When the sinner sees that Jesus – the crucified, resurrected Savior – is the answer to his need, then his thinking about Jesus has been changed. All that is necessary for salvation is belief. In other words, when a lost person has a Spirit-prompted change of mind, he is a candidate for salvation, but he is not yet saved. He must believe on Jesus to save, based on what he knows to be true. It’s that simple.

He might pray at the time or he might not pray; that doesn’t matter. What matters is if his heart of unbelief changes to a heart of belief. When it does, that one is instantaneously saved to the uttermost! He passes from death unto life. He is justified by Jesus, reconciled with God, regenerated, born again. From that day forward, the new believer is equipped to repent of individual sins, as the indwelling Holy Spirit reveals them through the Word, working toward the goal of making Christ Lord of his life.

The Error of Lordship Salvation

Our Calvinist brethren insist that repentance – in the sense of turning from sin or sins – is required for salvation, along with belief. But I believe this negates belief by combining faith with works. This error inevitably leads to “Lordship salvation,” if one is consistent in applying this definition of repentance. Lordship salvation is a perversion of the doctrine of repentance, for it essentially teaches that in order for one to be saved, he must make Christ Lord of his life. It sounds good, except they define “making Christ Lord” as forsaking all known sins. To suggest that an unbeliever must make Christ Lord of his life in order to be saved is to suggest the impossible and implies a works-based gospel.

Critical to understanding the gospel is the teaching of Jesus in John 16:9 – “of sin, because they believe not on me.” Jesus is emphasizing that the Holy Spirit indicts sinners, not by listing all of their individual sins and calling for repentance on each point, as Lordship salvation implies, but rather by convincing of the all-encompassing sin of unbelief. Thus, in our presentation of the Gospel, we should take the same approach. In one short

verse (John 16:9), Jesus wipes out the tenets of Lordship salvation and provides a biblical understanding of salvation by faith alone.

One of the things Satan delights to do is muddy the waters on the gospel, and he does that anyway he possibly can. He injects works into the gospel in myriads of ways. Perhaps the most subtle way he has done this is by creating the two traditional theological systems: Arminianism and Calvinism and their views of perseverance. Oddly enough, while Arminianism and Calvinism are typically described as being polar opposites, they are actually very closely related. While Satan has successfully kept these two systems of theology arguing with one another for more than four centuries, as to which one is right about the gospel, the subtle irony is that neither is right about the gospel. They have a common thread of error.

Eternally Secure

As already stated in a previous chapter, Arminianism says that in order to stay saved your behavior must be consistent with the gospel and, if it is not, you can lose your salvation. Calvinism says that in order to be saved, one must repent of his sins – and by that is meant a turning from individual sins. Furthermore, Calvinism teaches that if a person who claims to be saved does not consistently live according to the gospel, he was never saved in the first place.

There is theological error in both Arminianism and Calvinism. Both systems perpetuate doubt about salvation, by making eternal security conditioned on present behavior. That is unbiblical and robs saints of assurance. But in the Scriptures, eternal security is never conditioned on present behavior. It is conditioned on Christ's finished work. Both of these theological grids lead to constant doubt – "am I saved, or not?" Here's how: both systems pervert the gospel by combining the doctrines of progressive sanctification and justification, making them mutually inclusive. Doing so forces a theology upon the Scriptures that is not found in the Bible and thereby leads people astray.

God's will is not for His children to doubt their salvation. To that end, God has given us numerous assurances of our eternal security, and it has nothing to do with us, nothing to do with our behavior.

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

John 6:38-40 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 10:27-30 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.

Non-Calvinists Marching to the Beat

In our day we also find many non-Calvinist dispensationalists who are insisting on repentance as part of salvation, that is, repentance defined as turning from sin or sins. Why are they doing this? Because they are weary of Christians who don't live and act like Christians. We certainly appreciate their frustration. Nevertheless, the answer to the problem is not to resort to unbiblical doctrines regarding the gospel. That only compounds the problem.

What is happening, as a result, is that evangelists are coming into our churches and Bible colleges and preaching that if you are not regularly seeing victory in your Christian life or if you don't have a desire to be holy, then you are not saved, and you need to get saved. Then they manipulate the wording of their sermons and their invitations to convince many non-victorious Christians to get "saved" again – and sometimes again and again.

Oh the confusion and error they are perpetuating in the minds of Christians! The next time that saint struggles in his Christian walk, he will have the tendency to doubt his salvation and think he never was saved in the first place. The "get lost" evangelists, as I prefer to call them, prey on those folks, and the end result is that Christians never get the help they need. This is devastating for Christianity. What non-victorious, carnal saints need is not to somehow get saved again, as if that were even possible! They need to learn the Christ-life for victory, and it's so simple.

Those who are convinced of Calvinism's "perseverance" doctrine tend to accuse faith-alone preachers of teaching easy-believism and antinomianism (licentious living). But consider the following:

- If pastors and evangelists will preach the clear gospel message by faith alone, and ...
- If they will explain salvation, not as walking an aisle or making a profession or praying a prayer, but rather as dependence on Christ alone, and ...
- If they will refuse to undermine assurance of salvation but rather undergird it by right theology, and ...
- If they will teach believers the Christ-life for victory, and ...
- If they will warn of the saints' coming appointment at the Judgment Seat ...
- Then the biblical gospel will be upheld, saints will be confident in their salvation, holiness of life will be promoted, the church of Jesus Christ will be victorious and prepared for the coming kingdom of Christ.

The problem today is that these things are largely absent from our so-called

Bible-preaching churches!