



What Must I Do to be Saved?

In many parts of the world there is a spiritual hunger and people are asking, "What must I do to be saved?"

Long ago a jailer asked a religious prisoner that same question. He received a concise answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

A Jewish lawyer approached the Lord Jesus Christ one day and asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" What shall I do to receive my allotment in the inheritance of God? What can I do to obtain God's kind of life?

The lawyer was asking an age-old question about eternal life. Is there a law that will give this kind of life? What can I do to obtain a dynamic, full, vivacious abundant life?

Jesus answered by asking a question, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" (Luke 10:26).

This highly intelligent religious student replied by quoting two verses from the Old Testament. Luke quotes his response in Luke 10:27. "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

You must love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul, and with *all* your strength, and with *all* your mind. You must not only love your neighbor, but you must love him as *yourself*.

Jesus responded by saying, "You have answered correctly" (v. 28). Then Jesus quoted Leviticus 18:5, "Do this, and you will live." You gave the right answer; now go and do it.

The religious student who was talking to Jesus became very uneasy with this response and tried to change the subject. Suddenly, he was overwhelmed with conviction that he did not live up to his own interpretation of the law. He realized he was a failure.

Just Do It!

If you would attain to eternal life by keeping the law, then keep the law. Just do it and live.

There is only one problem. Have you ever done it? Have you kept the whole law every day, every hour of your life without ever failing?

MAN'S PROBLEM

The LORD God is holy and righteous. He expects perfect holiness. 99.99% is failure in His holy eyes. James

The LORD God is holy and righteous. He expects perfect holiness. 99.99% is failure in His holy eyes. James 2:10 says, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all." We have all gotten an "F" on our spiritual report card. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). The Apostle Paul summarized the first two chapters of his indictment to all mankind with these words from the Psalmist, "There is none righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10).

Moreover, the Bible is clear when it says that to be saved by keeping the law requires that a person keep the whole law perfectly, all the time. No exception is allowed. The law must be kept, all of it, without any omission, or failures, or exceptions, all of the time, twenty-four hours a day, all of your life.

Only one person has ever kept the law perfectly. Jesus Christ the Son of God was without sin. He never personally experienced sin. His heavenly Father declared three times, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

No one is saved by law keeping

Romans 3:20 can not be any clearer. "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His [God's] sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin." Sinful man can not live up to the holy demands of God's law. No one is righteous in the eyes of God.

Again, Paul gives a summary statement when he writes, "There is no distinction; all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (3:22-23).

The purpose of the law was to reveal sin. "Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (v. 20). The law brings knowledge and conviction of sin. Paul adds, "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet'" (7:7). In another letter he wrote, "But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin" (Galatians 3:22). It locked us up in prison and threw the key away.

The law was never intended to be a means of salvation for anyone. Its purpose was to point out our weakness and failures and lead us to Christ so we would put our faith in Him to save us.

Everyone has sinned in God's sight. There are no exceptions. All are without merit in His presence. "There is no difference" between the immoral, the self-righteous or the religious person. Why? All have personally sinned because to break the law in even one small point is to "become guilty of all." If you have broken the law, ever so slightly, you have broken the law completely and are guilty. Therefore, all have fallen short of God's expectations.

The apostle Paul has taken pains to define and explain the fact of universal sin in Romans chapters one and two. Our personal sins give evidence to the fact that no one measures up to the righteousness of God. Everyone comes up short without the "glory of God." God's "glory" is the measure of His righteousness. We are lacking in divine righteousness, and are therefore, void of His glory.

Martin Luther said, "Men are altogether without any virtue in which they might glory." All mankind has universally fallen short of God's glory. Man lacks the righteousness that God demands and is qualified as sinful.

God's penalty for unrighteousness

God has revealed His wrath against all sinners. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). In fact, we are storing up the wrath of God on our part for judgment day (2:5). We can't blame God or anyone else because we are the ones who are guilty. God has given us up to fulfil our sinful pleasures (1:18-32). He has given us up to self-destruction. We are "worthy of death" (1:32). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). We "are without excuse" (2:1). We are all under sin (3:9, 23; 5:8), and are all guilty before God (3:19). We are accountable to God for our attitudes and actions.

It is a fair statement that we are all "enemies" of God (5:10). Man in his sinful state is hostile to God. He is a rebel at heart.

The "wrath of God" is His settled opposition to all that is evil. "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." It is His very nature to be opposed to all evil. God abhors evil. He hates evil. God is opposed to sin. Sin separates God and man and causes enmity. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). However, the good news is that God's holy wrath against sin is satisfied by the sacrifice of Christ on the sinner's behalf.

Throughout recorded history man has tried to build bridges to God by means of good works. All of his bridges have ended in failure.

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?" becomes "How in the world can I do it?" I can't. All that sinful man can do is come and cast himself upon the mercy of God. "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

GOD'S PROVISION

"How can a man become righteous before God?" How righteous do I have to be to be good enough to please God? Am I righteous enough? As we have just seen in the opening chapters of Romans no one is righteous enough to please God. The Bible says there is only one way we can become righteous. God has to provide the righteousness He demands because we can not do it ourselves. God's requirement for obedience is so great that none of us can ever live up to it. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. The high cost of spiritual failure is death.

Our attempts to keep the law perfectly ourselves as a means of salvation has been entirely set aside because Another person has rendered this perfect obedience to the law on our behalf. God doesn't leave it to us to satisfy the law, because "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The Lord Jesus Christ saves us by keeping the law for us. The Lord Jesus has satisfied the law and kept it perfectly.

The good news is that perfect obedience that God requires has been obtained by Jesus Christ. In that sense, we are saved by obedience. "Through the obedience of the One, the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). The obedience to the Law that God requires setting us right with Him is the work that God Himself accepted in Christ on the cross. We stand right before God because of the perfect obedience that Jesus performed for us.

We can not supplement it, improve on it, or add anything to it. The work of salvation was completely finished once and for all by Jesus on the cross. God receives all sinners who repent and put their trust in Christ to save them. We are justified through faith, and not through any works or obedience on our part.

Even simple faith in Christ's work is not a work we perform. God creates that faith in our hearts.

To believe on Christ is to receive God's free gift of eternal life. You can not do anything to set your heart right with God. God has already done all that needs to be done in the perfect obedience of Christ.

All you can do is receive this salvation, or eternal life, by trusting God's message that you are accepted in Christ alone.

We are saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ. We are not saved by grace through obedience. We are not saved by grace through baptism, or church membership, or speaking in tongues, or any other religious thing. Faith is not something we do as if the emphasis was on a special kind of emotion. We are saved by trusting ourselves to what God has already done for us in Jesus Christ.

The believer can know he is a child of God because he is not resting on any righteousness of his own, but his righteousness is in Jesus Christ. God has put His righteousness to the account of the believer.

God's solution is His own imputed righteousness.

The Bible is clear that no one may gain a right standing before God through good works because sin contaminates all (Romans 3:19-20). When man stands before God he is neither righteous, nor able to perform righteous deeds that will satisfy God. "All our righteousness are like filthy rags" before the LORD God (Isaiah 64:6).

We deceive ourselves when we think we are good enough to please Him. "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). The apostle John was just as clear when he wrote, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10).

God provides a righteousness that pleases Him. It is "apart from the Law" (Romans 3:21). We do not get any help from the law. It only points its finger and says, "You are guilty. You are a failure. You can not live up to my righteous demands." All attempts to live up to the law only proves our repeated failures.

All acceptable righteousness is "apart from" the law. It is "separated from, or without making use of, or without connection to" the law. Man can not be made right with God by good works.

However, God has made it possible for man to be justified in His sight by faith in Jesus Christ (v. 21). "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe . . ." (vv. 21-22). God makes it possible for all people to be declared right before God by faith in Christ.

How does God's righteousness come to me? It is "by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Faith is a trusting in Christ, and what He has done on our behalf for our salvation.

Righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ

Is it a cheap righteousness? Definitely not. It is the most expensive righteousness ever conceived. It is pure and holy. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, obtained the righteousness for us through His death for our sins. It is the only kind of righteousness that God will accept. It is a righteous standing before God. It is God's gift to sinful man.

What the law could not do because it was weak God did through His Son Jesus Christ. He did it "apart from the law" (v. 21). It is without making use of the law. We need a righteousness totally outside of ourselves. We can not produce it within ourselves. It is out of our reach.

God imputes His righteousness as a gift to the believer.

Imputed righteousness is God's kind of righteousness and is fully compatible with His holy character. It is "a righteousness of God" —not man. God originates it; God provides it.

How does sinful man obtain it? God gives His righteousness to all who believe. God credits the righteousness of Jesus Christ to the account of the believer.

"Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe . . . being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus" (vv. 22, 24).

Zane Hodge reminds us, "Through justification we acquire the very *righteousness* of God, which is credited to us on the basis of faith alone (Romans 3:21, 22). Through regeneration we acquire the very *life* of God, which is imparted to us likewise on the basis of faith alone. Therefore, in a moment of time we obtain both perfect acceptance before the bar of God's justice as well as full membership in His family."

In his letter to the Philippian church Paul contrast his attempt through law keeping, which ended in failure, and "that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (3:9). If anyone could have attained a righteousness from keeping the law it was the Jewish rabbi Saul of Tarsus. Clearly, no one has ever received imputed righteousness by fulfilling the law. Imputed righteousness comes by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

The only righteousness that satisfies God's holy demands is imputed righteousness. It is "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe." It is "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (v. 24).

The very God whom we offended has Himself provided the Substitute for us. He has set forth His own Son as the propitiation for our sins. He has born our sin and our guilt. Jesus was at the same time the Sacrifice for our sins and the Great High Priest who offered Himself for the sinner.

Moreover, note carefully that this sacrifice of Christ does not automatically cover everyone. It only applies to the sinner who has faith in Christ.

We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith" (Romans 3:24-25).

The death of Jesus Christ is the means whereby the wrath of God has been turned back from sinful man. His blood means a sacrificial death has taken place. His life has been poured out as a sacrifice for sin. His shed blood is positive proof that a death has taken place. It is a life given up in the place of another. See Romans 3:25; 8:32; Hebrews 9:12; 10:19; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5; 5:5; Matthew 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:7; John 1:29.

God is the offended person who propitiates Himself by the sacrifice of Christ. D. M. Lloyd-Jones well said, "The very God whom we have offended has Himself provided the way whereby the offence has been dealt with. His anger, His wrath against sin and the sinner, has been satisfied, appeased and He therefore can now

with. His anger, His wrath against sin and the sinner, has been satisfied, appeased and He therefore can now thus reconcile man unto Himself."

It is the blood of Jesus that secures everything. He is a "propitiation through faith in His blood." This is the only reason why the apostle Paul can say, "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Faith is the means whereby we receive or appropriate the blood atonement of Christ.

God demands a perfect righteousness. Nothing less will be accepted. The very moment sinful man attempts to add one touch to the righteousness of Christ he spoils it. The touch of sinful man contaminates the righteousness of God. Therefore, it must be accepted by faith in Christ and not anything sinful man contributes.

It is by faith alone in Christ alone that the sinner takes refuge in Christ. The "Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Galatians 3:22). "The Law became "our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith" (v. 24). "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 26). You can't get any clearer than Galatians 2:16 where Paul writes, "a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."

Faith is the instrument to appropriate Christ's work and merit. It is based upon the finished work of Christ's death for our sins and resurrection.

Abraham is the superior example Paul chooses to illustrate saving faith. "Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. . . So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. . . Now that no one is justified by the law before God is evident; for "The righteous man shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:6, 9, 11).

We are justified by faith, or through faith, or upon faith (Romans 1:17; 3:22, 25-28, 30; 4:3, 5, 16, 24; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:8, 9; 5:4, 5; Philippians 3:9).

The individual who has faith is no longer looking at himself, and no longer looking to himself. He no longer looks at anything he once was, or what he is now, or is going to become as the result of his own efforts. He looks entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work. The Christian believer rests on that alone or salvation.

The object of saving faith is Christ alone.

The apostle Peter declared it is through Jesus Christ who was crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in whom "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).

We are not saved by random access faith, but faith that is focused on Christ. Even faith in God does not save us. It is faith in the death of Jesus Christ who died for our sins and rose from the dead. God gives eternal life to those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Let's suppose for a moment that you died today and stood before God. What would you say if He asked to you, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" What do you think you would say?

How would you fill in the blank? Christ plus _____ = eternal life. Christ plus good works? Christ plus my virtue? Christ plus my church membership? Christ plus my faithfulness to the church? Christ plus my trying to live a good Christian life? Christ plus what? Christ plus my baptism by immersion? Christ plus speaking in tongues?

It is none of these. It is faith in Christ's work alone. The moment you add anything thing to the completed work of Christ before, during or after faith in Christ you are saying Christ's work on the Cross was imperfect. Let us be emphatically clear, Christ's work on the cross on our behalf was all-sufficient in the eyes of a righteous God.

Is it my faith that saves me? No, it is not even our faith that saves us. It is believing on Christ that saves us. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." If you say that your faith saves you, your faith has become a work, and you have something of which to boast. Faith does not save us. It is through faith in Christ that we are saved. Faith is only the instrument; it is not the cause of our justification. It is the link to the object of saving faith that is Christ and His saving work. Jesus is the righteousness that saves us.

The cause of our justification is the Lord Jesus Christ and all that He has done. We must never put anything, not even faith, in that place. Faith is only the channel through which the righteousness of God becomes mine.

"[God] made Him [Jesus Christ] who new no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This righteousness of God is "for all those who believe." God doesn't wait until after we die before deciding whether He is going to save us or not. He doesn't wait until after we have lived this life and then decide whether we have had enough faith, or done enough good works, or were "good enough" to save us. God gives His righteousness to all the very moment they believe on Christ as their Savior. "The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe" (Romans 3:22). It is God's gift by grace through Jesus Christ.

There are no exceptions because we are all sinners (3:23). The immoral, the self righteous and the devoutly religious person are all saved the same way. The righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ is for all who believe. There is no difference because we all need it. The good news of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ "is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes" (Romans 1:16). God doesn't justify good people, self righteous or even devoutly religious people. He saves sinners. He justifies people who have fallen short of His glory! He justifies failures.

Paul is not even concerned about the "proof" or genuineness of a believer's salvation. He leaves that up to God. The emphasis in Romans is justification by faith alone. "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:3). "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (v. 5). "God reckons righteousness apart form works" (v. 6).

Faith rests entirely and exclusively upon the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done. Some anonymous poet has written:

I rest my faith on Him and Him alone
Who died for my transgressions to atone.

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Who died for my transgressions to atone.

Our placing our faith in Christ is like the priest in the Old Testament laying his hands on the head of the sacrificial animal symbolizing the laying the sins of the people on the animal by faith and saying,

I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God.

The merit of every work is groundless because faith alone is the means by which a lost sinner receives justification and reconciliation to God. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Good works will naturally follow because God works it in the believer from within his new nature. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (v. 10).

Justification does not mean to make righteous, or good, or holy, or upright. The Holy Spirit begins to do this in regeneration and He carries it on in the work of sanctification. He will perfect it in glorification. However, justification does not refer to this renewing and sanctifying grace of God. Justification is simply a declaration or pronouncement respecting the relation of the person to the law.

We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (v. 24).

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* says, "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

God declares the believing sinner that he has been made forever right and acceptable to God. This is the sinner's new position before the LORD God. It has been accomplished by God's grace.

Justification "does not simply mean 'just as if I'd never sinned.' That doesn't go far enough! Neither does it mean that God makes me righteous so that I never sin again. It means to be 'declared righteous.' Justification is God's merciful act, whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner while he is still in his sinning state. He sees us in our need, wallowing around in the swamp of our sin. He sees us looking to Jesus Christ and trusting Him completely by faith, to cleanse us from our sin. And though we come to Him with all of our needs and in all of our darkness, God says to us, 'Declared righteous! Forgiven! Pardoned!'" (Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life*. p. 238).

Justification is a legal standing with God based upon Christ's death and resurrection and our faith in Him. We are declared to be righteous by God. Therefore, justification is the legal and formal acquittal from guilt by God who is Judge. God pronounces the sinner as righteous, who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Justified" means to declare a person righteous. It is to stand before the bar of God and receive His acquittal based upon faith in Christ alone. Those whom God justifies by faith He freely declares righteous. It is God's gift to the sinner. It is without payment of any kind. It is by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. It is free to us because it is by His grace. That does not mean it is cheap. It is the most expensive gift heaven could give. God gave His Son on our behalf. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross" (1 Peter 2:24). The blood of Jesus is precious blood. It is of great value to God the Father. It is held as of a great price, the most precious thing to God. That blood redeems us. "You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Since it is that precious in God's sight

lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Since it is that precious in God's sight why in the world, do I want to add anything to it? Why would I want to demean it by touching it with my sinful hands? Imputed righteousness is free because it is by His grace. But it is not cheap! The Lord has done it all on our behalf because we could not do it ourselves.

Because the Lord has done all the work on our behalf He can therefore pronounce righteous all who believe on Him. The moment you place your faith in Christ as your savior He declares you righteous. He pronounces the believing sinner "not guilty!" If God therefore pronounces the believing sinner acquitted up front then this imputed righteousness had nothing to do with works before, during or after that moment of faith in Christ for salvation. God justifies us freely through faith the very moment we believe on Christ.

No condemnation!

The result of this imputed righteousness is peace with God. "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). We have been "reconciled to God" (v. 10). Since we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son, "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). Moreover, our justification can not possibly be a partial justification. It is complete. We stand righteous in the sight of God. God always does a perfect job. I don't need to add anything to it —no works, no baptism, no church membership, no obedience. You can not improve on what God has finished. God did everything that He required to give us a right standing in His sight. Since there is "now no condemnation," there is absolute justification. This is the believer's new standing before God. No wonder there is "peace with God." We are reconciled to God. We are no longer enemies with God (5:10). We are no longer at war with Him. We have His peace.

One perfect person stands between God and us. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). He reconciles us to God by His death. The wrath of God has forever been removed. We no longer stand in fear of His judgment. He has acquitted and forgiven us of all sin forever.

The apostle Paul can ask the most difficult question, "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (Romans 8:33). Who can bring a charge against the believer? What prosecuting attorney can make it stick? No one. Not even Satan himself. God has already declared us acquitted. Is He going to go against His word? Of course not, all our sins are under the blood of Jesus. Every one of them. Christ died and rose again to cover every sin a Christian commits. He is eternally acquitted and justified. God imputes the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ to the believer.

Our future glorification

F. F. Bruce helps us see where God is going with us in the future. Our future is certain because "the difference between sanctification and glory is one of degree only, not one of kind. Sanctification is progressive conformity to the image of Christ here and now (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:10); glory is perfect conformity to the image of Christ there and then. Sanctification is glory begun; glory is sanctification completed."

You can have eternal life right now.

Let's suppose for a moment that I died tonight and stood before the LORD God who is the Supreme Judge of the Universe. No doubt He would ask me, "Wil Pounds, why should I let you into my heaven? You are a guilty sinner. How do you plead?"

My response would be, "I plead guilty, Your Honor."

My advocate, Jesus Christ, who is standing there beside me speaks up for me. He says, "Your Honor. It is true that Wil Pounds is grievous sinner. He is guilty. He deserves eternal punishment for his sinfulness. However, Father, I died for him on the cross and rose from the dead. Wil Pounds has put his faith and trust in Me and all that I have done for him on the Cross. He is a believer. I died for him, and he has accepted Me as his substitute."

The Lord God turns to me and says, "Is that true?"

I will respond to Him, "Yes sir! That is the truth. I am claiming the shed blood of Jesus Christ alone to cleanse me of all my sins. I have put my faith in Jesus to save me for all eternity. This is what You have promised in Your word. Jesus said, 'For God so loved the world (and this includes Wil Pounds), that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

The Lord God responds: "Acquitted! By order of this court, I demand that you be set free. The price has been paid by My Son."

The truth is we all "fall short" in our effort to attain a relationship with the holy God. We need someone to rescue us and set us free. That person has to be a substitute for us because sin requires the death penalty. We need someone who is holy and just in the eyes of the LORD God. Only Jesus Christ can satisfy the holy eyes of God. God in His rich mercy toward us sinners provided someone as our substitute. The moment you believe that Jesus died for your sins, you receive an absolutely free gift. All of your sins are completely forgiven and you are eternally justified. God imputes His perfect righteousness to your account. What you need is God's kind of righteousness, not self righteousness. He credits your spiritual account with His perfect righteousness.

All that is required of you this day to receive the free gift of eternal life is *believe* on Christ as your personal Savior. Only by believing can a person appropriate the gift of God. Ask Him to save you right now. Believe on Him and you shall be saved.

To believe on Jesus Christ is to be aware of the truth that Christ died for your sins and to accept that truth and commit yourself to it. There is the element of trust, committal, obedience and abandonment to what you believe.

In faith we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation. Faith is to trust in a person, the person of Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the lost. Faith is not something that merits favor with God. The essence of faith is to bring the lost sinner, dead in his trespasses and sins into direct personal contact with the Savior, Jesus Christ. It is not faith that saves, but *Christ* that saves through faith. Faith unites us to Christ. Christ saves us. If you will believe on Him you shall be saved today.

Just as I am without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God I come.

You can also find a short summary of these key ideas in [A Free gift for You](#).

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This message was preached by Wil Pounds at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas.

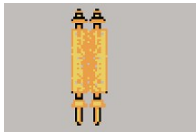
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