

November 13, 2011

Psalm 63:1-8 / Ezekiel 36:24-28 / Ephesians 3:7-21

What Must I Do Now That I Am Saved?

As I contemplated my sermon title this week I realized it should be slightly revised! Because instead of asking, "***What MUST I Do Now That I Am Saved?***" it would probably be better to ask: "***What Will I WANT To Do As a Result of Being Saved?***"

And in addressing this, D. L. Moody once preached a sermon entitled, "***The Seven I Will's of Christ.***" And in answering that question what I'd like to do today is preach a message called: "***The Seven I Will's of the Truly Saved Person.***" The 7 things which the truly converted or believing person will WANT to do (And I would ask you to see this as a self-evaluation)!

So without any further delay, what are the 7 things a person will WANT to do once they are converted, saved or born again? **FIRST**, they will want to get to know more intimately the God who has been so gracious and merciful as to save them from the power, the penalty, and consequences of their sin. Jesus said in His high priestly prayer, "***Now this is eternal life, to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.***"

In that sense, one of the most telling signs that a person has been saved is NOT immediate moral reformation / or a drastic change in their behavior / or a full grasp of Gospel truth.

But rather, the most telling sign that a person has truly experienced the saving influences of God in their life, is that they yearn to better know the God who saved them -- the Father who chose them / Jesus who redeemed them / and the Holy Spirit who gave them new birth.

Look at it this way: You discover a long buried treasure hidden deep within a secret chamber in a cave (a huge chest filled with gold coins and rubies and emeralds and diamonds and crowns). You would find it impossible to keep yourselves from digging down to see what lies beneath the surface! You would want to examine the entire treasure -- every piece of it -- all that the huge chest has in it!

Your sense of curiosity and excitement at discovering such an immense and valuable treasure would make it impossible for you to be content to simply gaze upon what lies on the surface. You would want to see it all!

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And so it is with our holy, loving, infinite and redeeming God. When He moves in grace upon your soul / and you taste and see that the Lord is good / and discover His presence is pleasurable beyond all description / you can NEVER BE CONTENT until you know MORE about him. / Until you experience more of His grace / and power / and presence / and love / and favor toward them.

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In fact, this is where the words of Moses in Exodus 33:13 are so insightful. There, after being called by God in the burning bush / and being given God's name / after receiving the Ten Commandments / and hearing God speak to him on many occasions / Moses says: ***"If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so that I may KNOW you..."***

And we'd probably be tempted to say: *"But he already does know Him!"* And that would be true. Yet that's the whole point! It was because he had already come to know Him that he yearned to know Him more! It was because he did know Him that he craved to know Him better! That's why he went on to ask for a greater display of God's glory.

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The same will be true of any truly saved person. Not without lapses / and not without regressions. / Not without occasional seasons of drought / or icy periods / when the soul feels cold toward God for a time.

But as A. W. Tozer points out: ***"To have found Him and still pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned by the too-easily-satisfied religionist, yet justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart."*** ***"It is a spurious logic,"*** he goes on to say, ***"which insists that if we have found Him we need seek Him no more."***

The truly converted will have their spiritual ups and downs / but in the end they will ultimately desire to know Him more. Always more.

In fact, we could justifiably say that if a person claims to know God, but has NO DESIRE WHATSOEVER to know Him more, it's probably an indication that they have not yet come to know Him or be saved.

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Then **SECONDLY**, the new believer WILL seek to know him more -- not in private isolation or hermit-like seclusion from all other believers -- but as they join with others who likewise strive to know God better / worship Him more fittingly / and serve Him more effectively.

As with the early church (in the Book of Acts) they will seek out, join with, and commit themselves to a local body of believers, where they can participate / do their part to further the cause of Christ / and encourage that entire body to ***"attain to the whole measure of fullness in Christ"*** (Eph. 4).

You see, there is not one 'good' evangelist I know of who does not encourage every new convert to seek out and join with a local body of believers. For they understand that in the Bible we are not called to make converts, but disciples -- and that conversion itself is not simply being joined to Jesus by faith / but also being grafted into the visible the Body of Christ on earth!

In conversion every new believer, says 1 Pet. 2:5, becomes a, ***"living stone built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood."*** / They become part of, ***"a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, so that [together] they might declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness and into His glorious light,"*** as he goes on to say in chapter 2, verses 9-10.

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God's intention was NEVER that the new believer start, or travel their life-journey with Jesus, alone, or in total isolation. Not at all! His declared will is that we be joined to a local body of believers!

His will is that we become part of a spiritual family where we can be discipled / and challenged / and comforted / and mentored / and equipped for service. / Where we can find others who will pray for us / offer us godly counsel / and accountability / and lend us a helping hand during trying times / and help bear our burdens when the road becomes too rough or the load becomes too heavy. (Gal. 6:1-2)

It's His GIFT to us! Fellow believers who will **"rejoice when we rejoice, and weep when we weep."** / Who will celebrate our victories and stick by us when we fall / listen when we share our struggles / comfort us in our sorrows / support us by THEIR FAITH when OURS falters or is nowhere to be found.

People who will stand beside us in the rough times, rather than judge us when we go through them.

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THAT is God's will for every new spirit-birthed believer: That once converted, they join themselves to a group of committed Christ-followers whose goal is to seek Him and see His Kingdom come and His will be done on earth.

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THIRD, the new believer will begin to live differently, because God has made them different. They may not be able to put their finger on exactly what it is, but they know something is different. Something has changed. For you can't truly come to experience the salvation of God without that experience somehow making you different.

In both Jer. 31 and Ezek. 36, God tells us that through the New Covenant / mediated by Christ / and authenticated by His blood / He would do miraculous things in the hearts and minds of His people. He would effect saving changes in them. **"I will put my laws in their minds, and write them upon their hearts,"** says God in Jer. 31:33. **"I will cause them to know Me,"** He says in the next verse.

It's not something we do to ourselves. It's a miraculous change He makes within us, whereby the His law is no longer an external written code that leg-ally demands obedience from the outside and is met with resistance and rebellion, but something we find ourselves wanting to obey -- simply because He makes it part of who we are -- part of our renewed nature!

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**"I" (says God in Ezek. 36:25) "will cleanse you from all your impurities and your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit in you, and move you to follow my decrees and obey my laws."**

Those are the things God promises to do in us when He saves us! He will give us a new heart / a new spirit / and a new nature. One that prefers God over the idols this world has to offer. / He gives us new affections / and holy desires / and a tenderness toward God that replaces our stone-cold hardness toward God.

That's why Paul can say: **"If any man be in Christ, he has become a new creation, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new"** (II Cor. 5:17). / We who were once, **"slaves to sin,"** have become, **"slaves to righteousness"** (Rm. 6:19-22).

We who were once alienated from God because of our sin, have now received **"the Spirit of Adoption"** and **"by Him we cry out, Abba Father"** -- our hearts actually sense a new closeness and intimacy with God.

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And what does all that mean? It means the saved person will live a new life -- NOT because they now try harder / or managed by their efforts to beat their sinful will into submission / but because God, by His gracious mercy / changed their nature through the both the Gospel and the power of His Holy Spirit / and makes them WANT Him and WANT to obey Him!

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Last week, in ABH, I mentioned the story of D.L. Moody, who had a young girl come to him and say she couldn't come to Christ, because it would mean she would have to give up dancing.

And Moody, with a keen understanding and personal knowledge of the change GOD works in the soul in regeneration looked at her and said: **"Miss, if you come to Christ, you can dance all you want."**

Sometime later he met her again and she excitedly told him she had become a Christian. **"What about the dancing?"** Moody asked. / **"It's funny,"** she said, **"but I really don't desire to dance anymore."** / To which Moody responded: **"As I told you, come to Christ and dance all you WANT."**

That's what people fail to understand in their unconverted state. That change IS possible because it's God and not us who does the changing!

That's why we should never demand that people change in order to come to Christ, but rather, tell them they will change if they come to Him!

Because it's GOD and not us who washes and cleanses us of our idols. / It's GOD and not us who changes our sin-hardened hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. / It's GOD and not us who puts a new spirit in us (His Holy Spirit) and forgives all our sins. / And yes, it is GOD (says Ezekiel) and not us, who, "**moves us**" (and it means gives us the desire within) to obey His laws and keep His commands." It's HIM and not us!

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That's why even the most sin-hardened and sin-loving person can have hope! Because God promises He will give us the desire to obey Him and make us want to do what He wants us to do!

Not overnight by any means / but gradually over time -- a little here and a little there -- God will graciously take away (in the hearts of the truly redeemed) the desire to sin / and replaces it with desires for godliness.

As my professor Gordon Fee used to say (close approximation), "***In the new birth, God does not change us instantaneously. But rather, in regeneration, it's like He takes a hypodermic needle and injects us with the antidote of the Gospel, or the vaccination of the divine nature (or the Holy Spirit) and for the rest of our lives that injection slowly and gradually spreads throughout our entire being until we find that over time we are noticeably different people.***"

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Then **FOURTH** the new believer will find growing within themselves a grateful heart and a prayerful spirit and seeks to turn from all known sin (I Thess. 5:16-18 Acts 5:31 / Col. 3:1-5 / I John 1:8-10). / One that seeks to abide in Christ (II Pet. 3:18 / Jn. 15:1-5) and rest in His fully sufficient and finished work of redemption (John 19:30 / Heb. 4).

That's why Calvin could say: "***The primary fruit of grace is faith, and the primary fruit of faith is prayer.***" The knowledge of my acceptance by God, through faith in Christ, makes me want to pray! So much so that Richard Baxter could say: "***If you are not a praying person, you are not a Christian.***"

WHY? Because prayer is the Christians life-line to God! And thus, the one who ignores or neglect it, quenches the life of God in the soul. And I'm not talking about prayer as something we do simply to be able to say we did it or get it over with so we can check it off the daily list.

By prayer I mean a running, ongoing, unceasing dialogue which takes place between us and the divine as we consciously commune with Him and bear our soul to Him and speak to Him about EVERYTHING!

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It's in prayer that I still my soul to worship / and offer up my praise / gratitude / petitions / and adoration. / It's in prayer that I offer Him the song of my heart / and hallow His name / and declare His great worth.

In prayer I serve others / and help bear their burdens / and walk humbly with my God / and seek to understand His will / and cast my cares upon the One who cares for me.

It's in prayer that I lay hold of His promises by faith / and confess and repent and turn from my sin and receive forgiveness and cleansing.

In prayer -- more than any other place -- I lay hold of His grace / wrestle through my doubts / express my confusion for the painful things He permits / unburden my heavy heart / expose to Him the hidden things of my soul / find my strength renewed / my joy fed / and my spirit revived.

Baxter is right: The saved person will find himself becoming a person of prayer or find to his great dismay that he has probably not yet been saved.

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**FIFTH**, the new believer will soon discover that "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." That is, they will find within themselves an appetite for God's Word, and even a craving the meat of God's Word. A desire to study, learn, internalize, obey, and ultimately, share it with others. Because it's through the Word that we are transformed as its truth renews our minds (Rom. 12:1-3).

And since the Word of God is the "Sword of the Spirit" / and the Spirit is called "the Spirit of Truth" / they will ALSO find themselves seeking to live by the Spirit / be led by the Spirit / keep in step with the Spirit / and be continually be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:17-18).

Because the Spirit never moves in power to save and heal and transform or revive the soul apart from His sword or the Word of God. They ALWAYS go together.

The power of God / lies in the Word of God / applied by the Spirit of God / to the souls of the people of God. You will never find a true move of God in saving or reviving souls where one is powerfully active apart from the other. The Holy Spirit never engages in spiritual battle without His sword!

Which means the "saved person" will be both a student of the Word / and a temple of the Holy Spirit. / One who knows their Bible and is utterly dependent upon the power and presence and fullness of the Holy Spirit for everything.

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**SIXTH**, the truly saved person will grow to love Jesus MORE than anything or anyone else. They will consider all things loss, for the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord (Phil. 3:7-8) and will offer their bodies as a living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1-2). With Paul they will admit that this is their ***"reasonable service of worship."***

They will come to understand they no longer belong to themselves / but were bought at the price of Christ's blood / and will thus seek to live their lives to the glory God (I Cor. 6:19-20).

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And **SEVENTH**, the new believer (along with all His fellow believers) will join to pray for the power to understand how wide and deep and high and long is the love of Christ / A love which surpasses all knowledge and can never be taken from us (Eph. 3:14-21 / Jn. 10:28-30 / Rom. 8:28-39).

And then with that love strengthening their inner person and filling them to the whole measure of the fullness of God, they will go forth to live a life of love and share the good news of God's love with others both near and far (Acts 1:8 / Romans 10:1-17).

You see, few things are as important to our growth of godly character as reflecting upon the unfathomable depths of the love God has for you / and the fact that He promises it can never be taken from you!

NOTHING will do more to cultivate endurance / and wholehearted commitment to Christ / and the growth of godly fruit / than to begin each day focused on the truth that you are loved with an everlasting love / accepted in Christ / and adopted into God's family - never to be kicked out!

We must internalize the truth that God delights in you as His child / and cherishes you as one of His redeemed ones / and rejoices over you with singing -- and that none of it is dependent upon your performance, but is yours because the merits of Jesus were credited to you by faith. That will change you forever!

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Simply to KNOW DEEP DOWN IN YOUR SOUL that God foreknew / and predestined / and redeemed / and called us... / That He raised us to life / and filled us with His Spirit / and washed us / and justified us...

And that He will "***complete the good work He began in us,***" by sanctifying and glorifying us (and allowing nothing in all creation to keep it from happening) / knowing that and reflecting upon and believing and being confident of that will change you forever!