

JOHN

I. Jesus speaks truth to the crowd about themselves and about Himself

- A. **John 6:26-36** . . . Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. [27] Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, [who is] God, has set His seal." [28] Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" [29] Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." [30] So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? [31] Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'" [32] Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. [33] For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." [34] Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." [35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. [36] But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.

B. Pray

II. Jesus responds to the crowds who seek Him for earthly benefits

- A. **John 6:27** . . . Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, [who is] God, has set His seal."
1. We looked at the first half of this verse last Sunday, and today we will look at the second half before moving on to the next few verses.
 2. **The first thing** I want to point out from vs 27, is that Jesus speaks of eternal life **as if** it has two sides – a work side and a gift side.
 - a. He speaks of the work side as our side, and tells us to work for the food that endures to eternal life. He speaks of the gift side as His side, and says He gives eternal life to those who work for the food which endures to eternal life.
 - b. To keep these two sides in their proper perspective, I find it helpful to think of them as two sides of the same coin. Neither

side stands alone, because neither side, on its own, represents the full value of the coin. Both sides must be unified for the coin to have its true value.

- c. Paul speaks of these two sides – the work side and the gift side – in **Romans 6:12-13, 22-23**, “[12] Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, [13] and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. [22] But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome eternal life. [23] For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God (*not the wages of righteousness, though righteousness is required*) is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- 3. Now you may be wondering why it matters that Jesus presents the work side and the gift side of eternal life as a unified whole.
 - a. One of the reasons it matters is because most of the Jews in Jesus day diligently did the works side of salvation, and because of that, along with their lineage, they believed God owed them eternal life.
 - b. But here in **vs 27**, Jesus is saying that eternal life is given by Him, as if it were a gift, not a payment for something earned.
 - (1) In **Romans 6:23**, Paul writes what Jesus taught by stating that eternal death is earned by living a life of sin, while eternal life is a gift from God.
 - (2) My point here is that eternal life has always been and will always be a gift given to repentant sinners by a gracious, merciful God. The logic or reasoning goes like this –
 - (a) The penalty or payment for sin is death – in the form of eternal separation from God. And because we all have sinned, we all owe this debt.
 - (b) Now the form of this debt is such that we cannot buy our way out of this debt with silver, gold, acts of kindness, deeds of righteousness, or any other such thing that might be offered to God as payment for what we owe.
 - (c) Therefore, there are only two ways this debt can be paid. We either pay it ourselves by spending eternity in hell, or a sinless person voluntarily takes our place and pays our debt himself. And as you know, the only one who can and the only one who has done this is Jesus Christ.

- (3) Now I want to make it very clear that no one – including God and His son, Jesus Christ – no one owes us eternal life. If we obtain eternal life, it is only because it has been given to us as a gift by the one who paid our debt on our behalf.
 - (4) Therefore, the Jews of Jesus day and sinners in our day have no justifiable cause to believe God owes them eternal life.
- c. There is another reason why it matters that Jesus unites the work side with the gift side of eternal life, and that reason applies to us today. Many in the Protestant world today trust in Jesus for the gift side of salvation, but neglect **and even discredit as anti-grace and faith**, the work side. It is as if the gift side is all that matters.
- (1) Though the apostle Paul often speaks of the gift side of salvation, He also speaks of the work side. For example, we read in **Romans 8:12-13**, “So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die (*eternal damnation*); but if by the Spirit **you are putting to death** the deeds of the body, you will live.”
 - (2) In addition to Paul, the writer of Hebrews speaks of the work side of salvation when he says, “**Pursue** peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (**Hebrews 12:14**).
 - (3) Peter (**2Peter 1:3-11**), James (**James 2:14-26**), and John (**1 John 3:3**) – all speak about the work side of salvation.
 - (4) And the OT speaks about this as well. For example, David wrote about this in **Psalm 15:1-5a**, “O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? [2] He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. [3] He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; [4] in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; he swears to his own hurt and does not change; [5] he does not put out his money at interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.”
- d. The point here is that the OT, Jesus, Paul, Peter, James, and John all speak of eternal salvation as having two sides – our side in working for the food that endures to eternal life, and Jesus side in giving those who do this kind of work a gift, the gift of eternal life. Therefore, the faith that saves is a faith that faithfully does

the work of eternal life while trusting in Jesus for the gift of eternal life.

4. **The second thing** I want to point out from **vs 27** is that God has set His seal on Jesus. This is a vital truth, and especially for those who believe in the existence of God but find it hard to believe, or choose not to believe, in the deity of Jesus Christ. Those in this group include the Jews of Jesus day and today, the Jehovah Witnesses, the Mormons, the followers of most Eastern religions, animists, and others who see Jesus as a good person, but not God in human flesh.
 - a. In saying that God has set His seal on Jesus, that is, that God has verified that Jesus is His son, Jesus is presenting us with an argument from logic which goes like this:
 - (1) If you believe in God
 - (2) And if God says that Jesus is His son, and the Messiah, and Immanuel – which is God with us,
 - (3) Then only reasonable conclusion left to us is that Jesus is God.
 - b. John spoke to this issue in his first epistle, where we read –
 - (1) Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also (**1 John 2:23**).
 - (2) We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. [15] Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God (**1 John 4:14-15**).

- B. **John 6:28 . . .** Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?"
 1. Or in other words, what works God approves of so that we can be sure to do them and therefore be assured of eternal life. This question has been asked numerous times by a variety of people. For example –
 2. The rich young ruler used different words, yet he asked the same thing when he said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (**Luke 18:18**)
 3. And the Philippian jailer asked it this way, "What must I do to be saved?" (**Acts 16:30**)
- C. **John 6:29 . . .** Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."
 1. This response by Jesus fits neatly into today's theology which teaches that we are saved from the penalty of sin by grace, through faith, plus nothing. And current evangelism is built on the foundation of believing in Jesus in order to receive the gift of eternal life.

- a. And why not? After all, we read in **Ephesians 2:8-9**, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; [9] not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
 - b. And we read in **1 Peter 1:8-9**, “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, [9] obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”
- 2. However, “believing in Jesus” is not the only statement Jesus makes about obtaining or inheriting or receiving eternal life.
 - a. But before looking at the other things Jesus says, I want to make it clear that I am not bringing this up to confuse you or discredit believing in Jesus for eternal life.
 - b. Rather, my intent is to show you that Jesus had more than one answer to the question about what we must do to receive eternal life, and it appears His answers were based on the person or group of people with whom He was talking.
 - c. In other words, Jesus did not give the same explanation of what a person must do in order to be saved from the penalty of sin and receive the gift of eternal life. And it is my opinion that there is a good reason for this.
- 3. For example:
 - a. Here in **vs 28**, Jesus is talking to Jews whose hesitation or resistance to receiving eternal life from Him was that they did not believe He had been sent by God, or that He was the promised Messiah, or that God was His father.
 - (1) Therefore, for them to receive eternal life from God, they needed to **replace** their unbelief regarding who Jesus was with faith that Jesus was the Son of God, sent by God into our world to save us from our sin.
 - (2) Beyond **vs 28**, Jesus is recorded as using this same language in **John 3:14-16**, **John 5:24**, and **John 6:40**.
 - b. However, in **John 6:53-54**, Jesus says nothing about believing in Him, but rather He told those listening that unless they ate His flesh and drank His blood, they would have no life in themselves. And then He said that it is those who eat His flesh and drink His blood who have eternal life and who He will raise on the last day. This is a significantly different requirement from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

- c. In **John 17:3**, Jesus says that eternal life is knowing God and the One whom God sent. The important point here is that Jesus makes no mention of believing in Him or eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Instead, He relates receiving eternal life to knowing the Father and the Son. And the kind of knowing He is speaking of goes way beyond knowing about God or knowing about Jesus to knowing them in a very personal and intimate way – as a husband knows his wife or parents know their children.
- d. According to **Matthew 19:16-21**, Jesus said that obedience to the commandments was required to receive eternal life. Listen as I read this story, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” with these words, “If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” The questioner than asked “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not commit murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; [19] honor your father and mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The one asking the questions responded with, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?” And Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”
- e. Jesus responded in a similar way when a (religious) lawyer put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you (*Jesus did not tell the lawyer the answer, He asked the lawyer what he knew*)?” The lawyer answered, “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.” Jesus said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live” (**Luke 10:25-28**).
- f. In talking with His disciples, Jesus said, “If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter [eternal] life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter [eternal] life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell” (**Matthew 18:8-9**). In other words, if you want eternal life, stop sinning, even if it requires a great cost to your physical well-being.

- g. According to **Matthew 25:31-46**, those who feed the hungry, cloth the naked, show hospitality to the homeless, and visit the sick and the prisoners will receive eternal life, while those who turn their back on the needy are sent to eternal punishment in hell. Here again, faith in Jesus is not mentioned as a requirement for receiving eternal life, but rather loving your neighbor as yourself.
 - h. And finally, in **John 12:25** Jesus said, “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.”
- 4. So what is my point? Do these scriptures I just referred to do away with salvation by grace through faith? Absolutely not. But they show us that even though salvation is a gracious gift from God through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, is it a gift that has conditions.
 - a. Without question, we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and the savior of the world.
 - b. But to receive the gift of eternal life, we must also repent of our sinful past, put away sin – even at great cost to our physical and earthly well-being, lose our life – or as we might also say, die to self, humble ourselves, live a godly life – which includes keeping the commandments, love God supremely, love others as we love ourselves, and care for the needy – whoever, and wherever they may be.

III. Conclusion

- A. With this in mind, let me give you a scenario. There is child who has been raised in the church and taught from his or her youth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world. This child has also been taught stories from the OT, the 10 Commandments, the Lord’s prayer, and numerous other truths from the NT. And this child knows that believing in Jesus for salvation is required.
- B. However, the problem is not believing in Jesus, but sinful rebellion, self-rule, selfishness, and willful disobedience to the word and will of God. Now you meet them in their latter teen years and you are talking to them about salvation. What would you say to them? What would Jesus say to them?
- C. Would He tell them they need to believe in Him in order to be saved? Or would He talk to them about stopping their rebellion and keeping the commandments – even if it required sacrificing part of their physical or earthly well-being in order to live a godly life?