

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH “What Must I Do to Stay Saved?”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

One of the most encouraging passages in Scripture is found in Acts 8:39. After the Ethiopian eunuch had obeyed God in baptism, the Bible says that he “went on his way rejoicing.” Here is a man who had found the joy of salvation, and it had filled his whole life. That ought to be the motivation for every Christian, but today I want to ask, “What can we do to **keep** that attitude? What must we do to **stay saved**, and to have the peace, joy, and happiness that can come only from salvation?” In our series of lessons on “Be Faithful Unto Death,” I want to point out today some things from the Scriptures that each child of God can do to make sure that he is walking down the straight and narrow, and to make sure that he is living the best life in a saved state in God’s eyes.

If a person is going to stay saved, that person must realize every day that he is in a battle for his immortal soul. To be what God wants us to be, and to overcome the devil, we have to realize that we are fighting daily for our souls. There **is** an adversary. The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Yes, we are in a battle. And yes, we have a very fearful adversary—the devil himself. Think back to the time of Job. Let this picture settle in your mind regarding the devil and his activity against men. The devil appeared before God. God then asked him, “Where have you been?” The devil said, “I have been going to and fro, back and forth, upon the earth.” What was Satan doing? He was searching for people whom he could tempt to sin so that they would lose their immortal souls. We are in a battle. Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter? Think about how active Satan is. In Luke 22:31-32 Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail.” But look at what Satan was seeking. He wanted to sift Simon “as wheat.” He wanted to separate the chaff from the good heads of wheat. That is what the devil wants to do. We learn from 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 that we are in a battle. It is not a carnal battle fought with weapons of physical warfare. Rather, we are in a battle for our souls, and we must commit every thought to Christ, and live the way that God wants us to live. In Ephesians 6:10-11 Paul said, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” The Bible teaches us not to be unaware of the wiles of the devil. He is a wily and conniving individual. He knows our weaknesses, and he will do everything possible to tempt us. So we must realize that as we face live, we are in a battle for our souls.

But the good news is that we have been given a victory plan. In reality, the battle has already been won. We simply have to stay on the right side. Here is the victory plan. In Revelation 12:11 we read, “And they overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” These Christians overcome Satan through the sacrifice of Jesus. His death defeated Satan. They overcame Satan by “the word of their testimony.” What was that? It was the preaching of the Gospel.

It was the revelation of God's will to mankind. It is the Scriptures. How can we overcome the devil? By the blood of Jesus, by obeying the Gospel, and by living our lives according to the Gospel. Notice that third one—"and they did not love their lives to the death." The sacrifice of Christ, the Scriptures, and self-sacrifice represent the way we overcome temptation. These are the things we need to win the battle. The Bible says in 1 John 4:4, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." We are already on the winning side. God is greater than the devil, and already has defeated him. Our victory is "even our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4). "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). We must have faith in God, and we must realize that every day we have to commit ourselves to live faithfully before Jesus in order to win the battle. What can we do to stay saved? We must not take a flippant approach to life. We must not have a lackadaisical attitude toward Christianity. We must realize that we are in a serious battle. The devil will do everything he can to cause us to sin. We must be sober and alert. We must do everything we can, with God's help, to win the battle.

To stay saved, a person also must—more than anything else in this life—determine to go to Heaven. Do you realize that going to Heaven is a decision that each of us makes? Yes, it is by God's grace and mercy. And without those, there would be no possibility of any of us going to Heaven. But going to Heaven is a decision. We must determine—more than anything else in this life—to go there. Why was Paul so faithful? It was because he had determined, more than anything else, to go to Heaven. In Philippians 1:21 he wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul's attitude was that he wanted to stay here to do God's will, but more than he wanted to go be with God. More than anything else, he was determined to go to Heaven. We need to have the same attitude if we are going to stay faithful. If we will make up our minds, and determine that more than riches, more than lust, more than pleasure, and more even than our happiness, we want to go to Heaven, then we will be well on the way to staying saved. We need to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Mt. 6:33). We need to realize that we have "a home not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" waiting on us (2 Cor. 5:1-2). We need to realize that Jesus told Christians that even if they were thrown into prison for a period of ten days, "Be faithful unto death, and you will receive a crown of life." Today we need to realize that, in our determination to go to Heaven, there is nothing more valuable in all the world than a person's soul and his desire to go to Heaven. Think about the rhetorical question that Jesus asked in Mark 8:36-37—"What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" What is the most important possession you have? It is not your home, car, or bank account. It is your immortal soul—which is why I want to encourage you today to realize that the Scriptures teach us to go to Heaven.

To stay saved, a person also must make the determination to live for Jesus Christ every day of his life. Christianity is not a once-a-week, twice-a-week, or three-times-a-week event. It is not like going to the dentist or the doctor—something that a person does every once in a while for a check-up. Christianity is living for Jesus every day. We must decide to do that if we are going to stay saved. Does Jesus actually require that of us? In Luke 9:23 He said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Christianity is something that we do each and every day. It is not something that we "put on" or "take off." It is our life! We need to view Christianity the way that the Scriptures teach us to view it. Paul said, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We are not our own. When we came out of the waters of baptism, life was not about "us" any longer. We were bought with the high price of the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 2:24). In view of the price that Christ paid, and in view of the

commitment that we have made, our bodies and spirits now belong to God. We must commit every day to live for Him. In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." We must realize that the old man was crucified. Thus, the life that we now live, we must live for Jesus every day. Paul urged us to present our bodies as "a living sacrifice." Have you decided—more than anything—to go to Heaven? Have you committed to living for Jesus every day? That is it what it means to "stay saved."

But a person also must realize that in order to stay saved, he must avoid sin at all cost. There is no doubt that there is a passing pleasure to sin (Heb. 11:25). But that pleasure is fleeting, will not last, and will not satisfy our deepest needs. Joseph was tempted to commit fornication with Potiphar's wife. She even grabbed his garment. But he ran out of the house and left it her hand. His attitude was, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Paul commanded us to "flee youthful lusts." That is the mentality we need to have. If we have to leave a situation, we need to flee sin. We need to run from it. We must not have anything to do with sin. Here's the reason why. The Bible says in Proverbs 13:15, "The way of the transgressor is hard." We must avoid sin at all costs because if we have sin our lives, we will know it, our friends will know it, and God will know it. We will never be as faithful as we need to be if we remain in sin. This means that we must avoid things like adultery and other lusts of the flesh. In 1 Peter 2:11 Peter said, "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." We need to avoid things like profanity and things of that nature. In Ephesians 4:29 Paul said, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth." In Colossians 3:8 we are told not to speak in an ungodly way. In our lives we must do our best—at all costs—to avoid sin, even if we have to run from it. Here's the reason. If we get involved in sin, it will cost us our immortal souls. The Bible says that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Revelation 21:8 says, "The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." If we get involved in sin, we cannot stay saved. In fact, if we do that, we will perish in the fires of Hell, and no one wants that to happen.

Another thing that can help us stay saved is for us to commit ourselves to serious Bible study. I'm not talking about reading the Bible every once in a while, or opening the Bible when you go to Bible study or worship. We must be committed to Bible study in a serious, daily fashion. In Matthew 5:6 we see Jesus' mentality: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." We must have an unquenchable appetite for the Word of God. The psalmist said, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:101). How men and women need to have the same burning desire that Jeremiah had! He had been slapped in the face by an evil king. He had been ridiculed for preaching God's Word. He got depressed and discouraged, and said, "I'm not going to preach it any more." But God's Word was in his heart like a burning fire. It was "shut up in his bones," and he had grown weary of trying to hold it in (and could not!). Jeremiah had an unquenchable fire in his heart that was caused by the Word of God. How we today need that, too. The Bible says that we are to study. That is a continual process. We are to "study to show ourselves approved unto God." Peter said that we should "be ready always to give an answer" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Think about an example of a scribe in the Old Testament. If there was anyone in the Bible who was committed to serious study and proclamation of God's Word, it was the great scribe Ezra. What made him such a great man—a promoter of true restoration among God's people? Ezra 7:10 says, "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord,

and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Ezra determined more than anything that he wanted to go to Heaven. He was committed to living for God, and to seeking, doing, and teaching the law and statutes of the Lord in Israel. How we need people today who, if they want to be committed to staying saved, will seek regularly what God says in His Word regarding His will for their lives.

To stay saved, we also must be able to utilize the power of prayer in our fight against the devil. God has not left us without tools in our arsenals to use to stay saved. He has given us things—like the Word of God, prayer, and Christian fellowship—that will help us in our battle against the devil and in our attempts to stay saved. The greatest thing in our fight against the devil is the power of prayer. In James 5:16 we are told, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Do you want to overcome sin and win your battle against the devil? Do you want to stay saved? Then you need to make prayer a regular part of your life. Paul said, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). The idea is not that everything we do in life is a prayer. Rather, the idea is that there should never be a moment when we cannot bow down, ask God for help, and plead before His throne for grace and mercy in times of need (Heb. 4:16). In Luke 18:1 Jesus offered an encouraging thought when He said, “Men always ought to pray, and not lose heart.” Do you ever get discouraged? Do you ever think, “I just want to throw in the towel”? Does life sometimes seem to get so hard that you just do not think you can face it? Jesus taught people that “men always ought to pray, and not lose heart.” The power of prayer can encourage us to “keep on keeping on” when we are tempted to give up. We can approach the Creator of the Universe Who sent His Son to die for us, Who loves us, and Who will hear our prayers if we are living correctly and pray according to His will. We can know that God is willing to bless and help us. Why do you think that Jesus stayed as faithful as He did? Mark 1:35 gives us some insight when it says, “In the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, Jesus went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Jesus began every day by asking God for His help. We need to do the same thing today. Think about Daniel. In Daniel 6 we see how Daniel is told that a certain decree had been made that at a certain time all people had to bow down before an image, or else there would be a severe punishment. What did Daniel do? Daniel 6:10 says,

“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.”

Daniel was in the habit of praying to God regularly, which, I believe, is what helped and encouraged him. We need to cry unto God daily (Ps. 86:3). We need to ask for God’s help. Jesus even realized the power of prayer. In Matthew 26:39 Jesus prayed to the Father, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” We must realize that if we are going to stay saved, we must use the tools that God has given us.

To stay saved, we must stay busy in the kingdom of God. People who get discouraged and who fall by the wayside, oftentimes are those who are not busy in the kingdom of God. If we are busy working, and are concerned about promoting God’s will, living faithfully, helping others who are in need, and reaching the lost, it will be difficult for us to concentrate on the trials and tribulations in our lives because we are so busy trying to do the will of God. Christians ought to always be busy working in the kingdom. In John 9:4 Jesus said that we “must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.” The point is that now is the time of opportunity, so let’s be busy working in the kingdom. In Revelation 14:13 we read that the dead in Christ “rest from their labors,

and their works follow them.” In Matthew 20:1 Jesus likened the kingdom to a vineyard. We all realize that a vineyard is a place of work. We need to be busy working in the kingdom of God. One passage that gives us a great insight into working in the kingdom of God, and how it promotes faithfulness, is Proverbs 16:3—“Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established.” Think about that for a moment. Where does sin begin? Does it not begin in the mind with things like lust and evil thoughts? If we “commit our works to the Lord so that our thoughts will be established,” then we can concentrate on godly things. That passage teaches us that we will stay busy doing what God wants us to do, then we will be thinking about those things and focusing on them, so that we will not get caught up with feeling sorry for ourselves, or giving in to the temptation to sin. In 1 Corinthians 15:58 Paul provided the following encouragement for Christians: “Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” We need to be steadfast and working in the kingdom. That is the labor that really matters in this life.

But to stay saved, we also must realize that we have to turn our trials into triumphs. As I’ve already suggested, the devil is doing everything possible to tempt and try us in order to cause us to sin. If we focus on those trials, and they are all we are able to see, then they might cause us to fall by the wayside. But if we want to, we can turn those trials into triumphs. James wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (Jas. 1:2-3). “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life” (Jas. 1:12). There can be joys and blessings in trials because they can help make us better people. In Psalm 119, verses 67 and 71, we find two encouraging passages. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.... It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.” What did affliction, trial, and persecution do for the psalmist? They caused him to realize what really mattered in life. His affliction caused him to ask, “What is life really all about? Why am I here? If there is so much trouble, how can I find a source of help?” We need to realize that the same holds true for us today. We must turn trials into triumphs. Even the most-despairing trial (including death) does not have to be viewed as a bad thing. What is the best thing in this world that can happen to a faithful child of God? The best thing is that he dies in a faithful state and goes to Heaven. Can you think of anything greater than that? Psalm 116:15 says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” In God’s eyes, the death of the faithful is something beautiful and admirable. We need to realize that death does not have to be a bad thing. We can receive help to deal with our trials, and those trials can help us go to Heaven.

But if we are going to stay saved, we must have a firm trust that God is going to help us in this life. God has not left us alone to fend for ourselves. If we plan to stay saved, we need to know that there is a God Who has promised to help us, and Who has not left us alone. One passage that offers encouragement to the child of God is Hebrews 13:5-6—“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” The God of Heaven will help us in this life. He offers encouragement through His Word. He gives us strength through prayer. He gives us the fellowship of other Christians to encourage and exhort us. He will not leave us alone. In 1 Peter 5:7 we are told, “Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” We need to know that God cares for us, and that He will not leave any of His children to fend for themselves in the battle for their souls in a world of sin. In Matthew 28:20 Jesus said, “Lo, I am with you to the end of the age.” Jesus offers us encouragement through His example, through the life He lived, and through the words He spoke. We, then, must have a firm trust in God’s ability to help us in this life.

If you are not a child of God, in view of all these things, why would you **not** want to become one? Look at all the things that God has given us. He has given us everything we need to stay saved. If you are not a child of God, become one today. It is the best life you could ever live. What must a person do to **be** saved? He must hear the Word of God, as Romans 10:17 says: "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Having heard the Word, and having realized that it is our only authority for salvation, a person then must be willing to believe that Jesus is God's Son. When the Ethiopian eunuch asked, "Here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?," Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may" (Acts 8:36-37). Once a person has believed in Jesus, he then must be willing to repent of his sins. Peter preached, "Repent, and turn again" (Acts 3:19). Having stopped the sin in his life, a person then must be willing to confess Jesus as the Son of God. Romans 10:10 says, "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Then a person must be willing what God has to say regarding baptism. Here is what Jesus said in such a simple, plain manner: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). If you do not believe, you are not a candidate for baptism. But if a person does believe, then Jesus said that that person had to be baptized in order to be saved. Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, and a multitude of other passages teach that very thing.

If you are a child of God, and you have fallen by the wayside, our plea to you today is to get your life right. You can stay saved, overcome Satan, and win the battle. But if you remain in sin, you will be lost. So please be encouraged today to be faithful unto death. Know that you **can** stay saved. God has given you everything you need. More than anything, let's make a commitment to go to Heaven.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “WHAT MUST I DO TO STAY SAVED?”

1. According to Acts 8:39, after the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized and forgiven of his sins, what did he then do?
2. What does 1 Peter 5:8 teach us about Satan?
3. According to 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, in what are we daily engaged?
4. In Ephesians 6:10-11, what did the apostle Paul urge Christians to do?
5. According to the last part of Ephesians 6:11, why did Paul issue the instructions he did in Ephesians 6:10-11?
6. According to Revelation 12:11, early Christians did three things in order to overcome Satan. What were those three things?
7. What is the important message for Christians today from 1 John 4:4?
8. According to 1 John 5:4, what gives us the victory over Satan and sin?
9. According to Romans 10:17, what is the source of our faith?
10. According to Matthew 6:33, what should be a Christian's first priority in life?
11. In 2 Corinthians 5:1-2 Paul gave Christians a very good reason for remaining faithful and strong. What was that reason?
12. What, according to Mark 8:36-37, is a person's most important possession?
13. According to Galatians 2:20, what is one good reason for a person to remain faithful after becoming a Christian?
14. What does Proverbs 13:15 teach us?
15. What key to living a faithful life is found in Psalm 119:101?
16. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, what makes a human soul so valuable?
17. What key to living a faithful life is found in Ezra 7:10?
18. What key to living a faithful life is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:17?
19. What encouragement for Christians is found in 1 Corinthians 15:58?
20. According to Hebrews 4:16, what tool is constantly available to Christians that can help them succeed in their spiritual lives?
21. What important message is contained in 1 Peter 5:7?