

# MY GOD CAN SAVE!

We live among lots of forces that actively discourage discovering spirituality in the resurrected Jesus Christ. First, we live among voices that constantly say, "You don't want to be spiritual! You don't want to go in that direction! Think about all you can't do and all you can't have!" Second, if we get past those voices, we encounter all kinds of ungodly powers that discourage us. Third, if we refuse to let ungodly powers control us, we endure all the discouragement that occur when Christians oppose Christians. Fourth, if we get past those discouragement, we deepen our discovery of evil within ourselves. Fifth, when we move to the depths of spirituality in Christ, we discover our total unworthiness.

That is quite a journey! It is especially quite a journey for many American Christians! As a people, we are not deeply familiar with true humility, or repentance, or dependence, or unworthiness. One of the hardest things we must confront on our journey to spirituality is our personal nothingness and God's deserved worthiness.

## I. **When our faith leads us to total surrender to the resurrected Jesus, two incredible things happen to us--both as acts of God.**

A. First, I ask you to read with me as we consider Acts 2:37-40.

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

1. If we do not note the context of Peter's words in this sermon, we will miss a critical point.
  - a. Peter spoke to a Jewish audience in the holy city of Jerusalem--those listening to him were either born Jews or were converted to Judaism.
  - b. He is not speaking to people who are ignorant of God or ignorant of righteousness.
  - c. These people knew what God did when He led their ancestors from Egypt, when He spoke through Moses, when He gave their ancestors Canaan, when He ruled through David, when He challenged Israel through the prophets.

2. The heart of the sermon Peter just shared with these people focused on Jesus.
    - a. He is God's promised Christ.
    - b. He is the keeping of God's promise.
    - c. He is the resurrected Christ or Messiah.
  3. If they really believed Jesus was the Christ, if they really believed that Jesus' execution was a rejection of God, they would respond in two ways.
    - a. They would repent.
      - i. That was far more than being sorry for their mistake of rejecting Jesus and opposing God.
      - ii. That was redirecting their lives, that was working with God in Christ instead of opposing Christ and thereby opposing God.
      - iii. Their repentance would be obvious; it would be reflected in the way they lived.
    - b. They would be baptized.
      - i. This was far more than just a ritual, just a requirement.
      - ii. It was their commitment to God who committed to them in Jesus' death.
      - iii. It was their statement that they did believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and that they were committed to redirecting their lives.
  4. If they had the kind of faith that would lead them to repentance and baptism, two things assuredly would happen by an act of God.
    - a. God would forgive them. *Even of being guilty of encouraging Jesus' execution, God would forgive them!*
    - b. God would give them as a gift the Holy Spirit.
  5. This promise was not just to them, but to their children, and to those who were far off.
- B. Expressing faith in repentance and baptism is just the beginning, not the conclusion.
1. Life still has to be directed.
  2. The person still has to learn how to cooperate with God's presence in him/her instead of frustrating God's presence in him/her.
  3. The focus of the person's life still has to change.
  4. He or she has made the commitment to change, but now he or she has to carry through by changing the way he or she lives.
  5. He or she was alone, without God, before faith moved him or her to commit.

6. Now he or she must understand how to cooperate with God in his or her life.

**II. What should occur in the lives of the men and women whose faith in Jesus Christ moved them to redirect their lives and be baptized into Christ?**

- A. I invite you to read with me from Romans 8:18-30.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

- B. In the first part of Romans 8, Paul described the great war that is ongoing in the lives of Christians.

1. As a Christian, there are two powerful influences pulling on us in opposite directions.
  - a. The first powerful influence is the evil influence that challenges us to be people who are concerned only about the physical.
  - b. The second powerful influence is the righteous influence that challenges us to keep the focus of our lives on God.

2. These two influences are constantly pulling at the Christian to the point of tearing us apart.
  - a. Every day we have to decide again who we are.
  - b. Every day we have to decide again what the purpose of our life is.
  - c. Every day we have to decide again our focus.
- C. The chapter ends with an emphasis on the incredible things God does for us as we wage this war.
  1. God is always for the person in Christ.
  2. God justifies the person in Christ.
  3. God gives the victory to the person who is in Christ.
- D. The statements we just read couple together the experience of fighting the inner war and trusting God's incredible help.
  1. First, Paul said I want you to realize beyond doubt that the sufferings caused by the war are worth the pain caused by the war.
  2. Second, Paul said I want you to understand that it is not just you struggling--evil's perversion places the whole creation in sorrow and pain.
  3. Third, Paul said I want you to understand that your placing yourself in Christ just started a process that will not be completed until you live with God.
  4. Four, Paul said I never want you to feel abandoned because the Spirit God gave you as a gift when you were baptized will pray for you in God's language when you are so weak you do not even know what to ask--and the Spirit will pray for you with a perfect awareness of your needs.
- E. Then Paul said the most astounding thing!
  1. "Nothing can happen in your life that God cannot use for your salvation."
  2. The ultimate good that can occur in you is for you to live eternally with God.
  3. No matter what happens to you in this physical existence, no matter what suffering Satan causes you to endure, God can use every bit of it to draw you closer and closer to Him.
- F. When our faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ by God moves us to repent and be baptized, that sets in motion an unbelievable process for every person who enters Christ.
  1. God in his foreknowledge has determined that He will assist that person to be more and more like Jesus.
  2. As that person matures in faith, God will intentionally make that person more and more like His son.

3. God will constantly call that person closer and closer to Him.
4. God will justify that person--He will continually make that person's mistakes meaningless.
5. And the end result will be that God will glorify that person.

**III. If you are a Christian, I hope you will mature in your understanding of how incredible God is.**

- A. You are caught in the middle of a war, but you are never on your own!
- B. When you were baptized into Christ, God gave you a gift.
  1. That gift is His Spirit.
  2. That gift is God's mark of possession--you belong to Him!
  3. That gift will pray for you when you are too weak to pray for yourself.
- C. Because of all God does for us, there is no reason for us to fail.
  1. We do not succeed because we are so wonderful, successful, and adequate.
  2. We succeed for one reason alone--what God makes happen.

For us to succeed as Christians, two things are required of us. We must love God. Our lives must be focused on God's purposes. We cannot do what God does for us--God does not ask us to do what we cannot do. God asks us as Christians to do what we can do: love Him, and focus our lives on His purposes.