

ANSWERS TO LIFE'S MOST
BASIC QUESTIONS:
How Can What Is Wrong Be Made Right?
Scripture: Acts 17:1-9
Dec. 5, 2010
Message 4

INTRO: We are on our fourth and last question. The first three were 1. Who am I? We said that I am a self, a person, created in the image of God. When I get to glory I will still have the same name. I will still be the same person. I am an individual. I cannot be divided up. I am the possessor of all the parts of my body, soul and spirit. 2. Why am I here? We said I am here for the glory of God. God wants to be glorified in me and through me. Everything I do is to be to the glory of God. 3. What is wrong with the world? Sinners who sin is what is wrong with the world. We said it is basically that through Adam's sin, we have all become partakers of a sin nature. We are corrupt. We are bent on sin. And when we are saved, still our tendency is towards sin.

This morning we are on the last question, "How can what is wrong be made right? What can I do to make it right?" Is there any hope in a world where everybody is a sinner? Well we have already mentioned that before God created anything He had a plan. That is clear from Scripture. Jesus Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And then, 4000 years into man's history, in the fullness of time; the Messiah, the deliverer, the Redeemer came to earth and entered human existence. The second Person of the Triune God, became man. He lived a sinless life and fulfilled all the demands of the law, and then was crucified at the hands of sinful man. He was buried and was in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, and then God gave Him a glorified body and He was raised from the dead.

Now all of that fulfilled the first three of Israel's feasts; Passover, Unleavened Bread and First-fruits. Fifty days after First-fruits He ascended into heaven. And with that, God had provided everything needed to make right what is wrong. The ball is in man's court, and we ask, "What can I do to make right that which is wrong?" That is our question this morning.

So man has been created, he has become corrupted, and now he is to be corrected. So the Scriptures tell us that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. I think it was Warren Wiersbe who said of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 something like this, "Doctrine is what is right. Reproof is that which is needed for what is not right. Correction shows us how to get right, and instruction in righteousness is how to stay right."

We had a passage read for us earlier, Acts 17:1-9. The Apostle Paul has been preaching Jesus to the people, that which we called the world in the last message. And they rose up against Paul and the Christians, and they said, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here also." You see, to sinful man, the Gospel turns the world upside down. To God, this is turning the world right side up.

IV. HOW CAN WHAT IS WRONG BE MADE RIGHT?

A. Justification - Get right

So, how can what is wrong be made right? The greatest need of the world, that vast number of unsaved people, is to get right with God. It is called justification in the Bible. This is where all of salvation begins. To be justified, two things have to happen; repentance from sin and faith towards God. The whole world is caught under sin. There is only one way out for them. No amount of good works will ever pay for one sin. Neither baptism nor church membership, not even giving money to the poor will help at all towards dealing with sin. Only one thing will satisfy for sin, the death of the sinner.

In Britain, years ago, when a man had committed an offense against the law worthy of death, he was executed or hung. And in the papers notice would be given that so and so was 'justified' at 10:00 a.m. Saturday or whatever the time was. He had paid for his crime with his life. He had been justified.

Now if God justified us by what we deserved we would die and we would never have an opportunity to get saved. But because God, loved man and desired to save man He found a solution to dealing with man's sin. He would take man's punishment and die in His place. And so, the second Person of the Trinity became man. He was born to a Jewish woman and became a human being. He then lived a sinless life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, for which they paid Him by nailing Him to the Roman cross. And there He bled and died on the sinner's behalf. There He accomplished God's part in atoning for man's sin.

However, in order for God's redemptive price to go into effect for the sinner, the sinner must do two things. Neither of these two has any merit. They do not earn anything. They simply qualify man for salvation. The two things man must do is repent from his sins and believe in the Lord Jesus. It is these two things that change man's life. This is the way, that what is wrong with the world can be made right. There is no other way. No repentance, no life; only death and hell. Second, He requires faith in His Son. These two bring about change in man and are the cause of the new birth.

B. Sanctification - Live right

But, there is another great need in order to make right what is wrong. It is the sanctification of the believer. The person who is saved now needs to be conformed to the image of Christ. Without the process of sanctification taking place in the believer, the lost world will never get justified. So, when a person is justified, and Christ's death, burial and resurrection is applied to his life through repentance and faith, that person is taken out of the 'world' and transferred into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Colossians 1:14 says, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of Son of His love." The justified sinner has become a saint and is no longer OF the world, though he is still IN the world. And to make right what is wrong in the world, the saints must be sanctified and the process of being conformed to the image of God's Son must be happening. Without this, what is wrong in the world of the lost will never happen.

I do not want to go into detail with this doctrine, but let me briefly illustrate what sanctification is. Justification is to be declared righteous. Sanctification is the process of actually becoming righteous in life. Justification is the work of a moment. Sanctification is the work of a life-time. Let me give it to you in picture from a little story I gave a good number of years ago that had taken place a few years prior to that. Our family had an invitation to spend a week on the Queen Charlotte Islands. One of the things we enjoyed was spending time beachcombing. Beachcombing is walking along the beaches in search of either things that have washed ashore or looking for rocks. One day we traveled 70 miles on the beach. I was told that there were jasper stones as well as the agates we were finding. Now jasper is a reddish stone and I picked up a number of rocks I thought might be jasper. Now there are various qualities of stones. The stones we were looking for are called semi precious. The difference between precious stones and ordinary stones is that they can be polished. The believer's life is pictured like a precious stone. The Apostle Peter speaks of this in 1 Peter 2.

There is a method by which semi or precious stones can be polished. Our third daughter always loved being outside and finding things. She had various kinds of collections, one of those being rocks. So one Christmas we bought a small rock tumbler for her. After we came back from the Queen Charlotte Islands we pulled out her rock tumbler and proceeded to learn how to polish rocks. When you polish rocks, the first stage uses rough grit. The rocks are put in the tumbler container then several tablespoons of rough grit, something like pieces of iron filings are put in along with water. Then the lid is secured and you place the tumbler in its brackets and plug in the electric motor that turns the tumbler. The rough grit takes all the sharp edges off and wears the bulk of the rock to make a smooth rounded surface. The tumbler makes some 80 revolutions a minute. That is 4800 times an hour which adds up to 115,200 times a day. This is done for 6-8 days. That is 691,200 to 921,600 revolutions before the first stage is done.

After the rocks are rough finished the second size finer grit is put in with water and the rocks begin a whole new cycle. The first cycle makes a big difference visibly. The rocks are ground down considerably in size. But the second cycle does not make nearly as big a difference and the appearance of the rock does not change nearly as much. When you come to the pre-polish stage then the rocks begin to take on a shine. This is where a precious stone differs from an ordinary stone. Ordinary rocks will not take on such a nice shine. Now when you come to the final stage you put in some polish grit with water and the rocks, and again you tumble them for several days. This time, when you open the polisher everything looks yukky and muddy, but when you run clean water over the rocks you can only say, "Wow!" They have taken on a shiny luster of rare beauty.

Now I recommend to you that that is a picture of God's method of sanctification. It is a process. In the initial process of sanctification God tumbles us in the rough grit and he begins to remove all the clearly ugly lumps of our pre-saved life. Big things are removed from our lives. In this stage God seeks to remove from us such things as smoking, lying, cheating, stealing, fowl language, pornography, foul language, telling dirty jokes and mistreating our wives or families or workers. In this stage of sanctification the visible changes are big and easy to see.

When God is done with the rough grit then He puts us in the finer grit. Here God seeks to remove from our lives things not so readily apparent. Maybe little white lies. Maybe exaggerations. Maybe a greater obedience to the laws of our land. Maybe God begins to touch on things to which you say, "But everybody else is doing it." But God says, "But you may not." And maybe the changes are of such a nature that after a few years you have hardly noticed much change. And maybe others have not noticed much change. But God is working in your life.

Now let me suggest to you the elements God uses to change our lives. I believe He uses the grit of the circumstances of life. Nothing will grind and wear away the rough edges like the circumstances of life.

Permit me to take you to a very difficult passage of Scripture (1 Tim. 2:15). This passage tells us that a woman will be saved in childbearing. Now that is a difficult text. Now let me explain something. Salvation has three tenses: past, present and future. In the past tense I was saved at such and such a time. That is the time of justification. But then I am also being saved at this present time. This is sanctification. I am being delivered from many and various kinds of sins. But then some day in the future, I will be ultimately and finally saved. That is glorification. Now I believe that 1 Timothy 2:15 speaks of present tense salvation. I know from Scripture that a woman is not justified by bearing children. And so, in general, in the lives of women God will use the circumstances of childbearing to wear away the rough edges. God will conform the woman to the image of Christ by the means He has chosen for her: childbearing.

The man or husband will be saved in earning a livelihood for his family. That is why God told the woman in Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve sinned, "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children..." That is why God said to the man, "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground..."

An amazing wonder begins to happen when a Christian is immersed in the grit of life's circumstances. But in polishing rocks, another element besides grit is used. It is water. Maybe it is for this reason as well as its cleansing power, that the Bible likens the Word of God to water (Eph. 5:26; John 15:3). In order to polish rocks one must use water. As a matter of fact the biggest percentage of things used is water.

Apply that to the procedure of sanctification. In order for life's circumstances to achieve their God designed end there must be a constant use of the Word of God. Maybe you are here at this service and already you do not have a steady diet of God's Word.

Or maybe you do not attend church regularly. Maybe you do not attend Sunday School when you can or Wednesday night Bible study and prayer meeting or whatever services your church offers. It is highly unlikely that the circumstances of life are achieving what God intended for them if this is so.

Consider again God's procedure of sanctification; God's procedure of delivering us from the power of sin. In the midst of life's trying circumstances and a healthy and regular dosage of the Word of God He is making something beautiful of our lives.

The third thing needed to polish rocks is other rocks. When you polish rocks you need to put in at least several rocks. The three elements that will eventually make a beautiful gem out of a rough rock are grit, water and other rocks. I think these other rocks can be likened to other believers around us. Some of our ugliest lumps are knocked off as we rub against each other. Turn with me to Philipppians 4:2 to see how believers rub against each other. Maybe you are here tonight and there are those believers that you are at odds with. Here is a real test of sanctification. It is an interesting thing that in rock polishing that the smoother the rocks become the less they wear away.

Maybe you are at this service and you wish to be used of God. You long for Him to use you in some form of ministry. God can use us in any stage of our development but I think for ministry, God uses those from whom the big ugly rough spots have already been removed. When you check the requirements for ministry you find that God uses, in our illustration, smooth stones.

Now let me tell you what life is like in the rock polisher. When we first get saved, it is a wonderful experience, especially if you are a little older and you are delivered from some big things. But by and by, your feet hit the ground and God puts us into the rock tumbler of sanctification. And round and round we go and it is trial after trial and one difficulty upon another. And by and by we begin to wonder about this 'wonderful' Christian life. And out of some of

these difficulties a number of Christians throw it all away.

Let me ask you, how is it this morning for you? Do you want out of the tumbler? Is Egypt, or what the Bible calls the 'world', the land where you came from, starting to look better all the time? Are you saying, "Lord, stop this machine, I want out?"

Peter says in 1 Peter 1:6-9, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of *your* souls."

You see, it says the trying of our faith, that is the process of sanctification, being made holy; is much more precious than gold that perishes. We do anything for worldly wealth. Will we do anything to be conformed to the image of God's Son? To be sanctified? And I ask you, how many revolutions in the rock tumbler does it take to conform us to the image of Christ?

And so, LEM would say, "Unpack your bags. This is life." So you want to move elsewhere? Well, there are times for that, but if we are opting out of the rock tumbler, that other place will discover the same problems in us. So James writes, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

When David used his sling and a stone to kill a giant, do you know what kind of a stone he chose? A smooth stone. One that had a lot of wear. And do you know where he went for the stone? In a brook. And there you have all the ingredients to make smooth stones; grit, water and other stones.

Do you want to be used to make right what is wrong? Do not ask God to stop the tumbler. Do not choose to jump out. Count it all joy, and keep going. If you do, God will use you to make right what is wrong in this world.

C. Evangelization - Reach out

What is wrong WITH this world? Sinners with a sin nature! How can that be fixed? Well, the very first thing is that which God has fully provided for, justification before God with regard to sin. That is salvation in Christ! What is wrong IN the world? A church, that is many times worldly and powerless! How can that be fixed? Sanctification, the process of becoming holy. And during this process of becoming holy God has a job for the Church. Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He outlined the major task He left for the Church to do in His physical absence. This task outlines for us how what is wrong can be made right. Turn with me to Matthew 28 (read 16-20). So evangelism is crucial in making right what is wrong.

Now in verse 19 we have this matter of justification in a nutshell. In verse 20, we have sanctification, "...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." Now the Apostles through various motivations from the Lord set out to do what they had been commanded. The majority of their lives ended in martyrdom.

[So, let me add a little note on martyrdom. I wonder if you know where the word 'martyr' comes from? Turn with me to Acts 1:8 (read). Did you see the word from which we get the word martyr in this verse? No, you cannot get the connection in English. Look at the word 'witnesses'. It is the word 'martus'. We get our English word from this idea of one who dies for bearing witness. Paul says that all that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. And that, very often happens through witnessing to a lost world.]

How can what is wrong be made right? By bringing the news of the Gospel to the lost so that they can be justified and then sanctified and then help with the

evangelization of the world. So let me now take you back to Acts 17 (read 1-6). Now note the words, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too." When what is wrong is made right, to the world, their world is turned upside down. But what happens when to the world, its world is turned upside down, what has really happened is that it has been turned right side up. What is wrong is being made right.

In the 1870's a preacher by name of A.G. Upham told the story of a young man about to die. This young man had only been a Christian for a month, and there was one fact that saddened him deeply. He said, "I am not afraid to die; Jesus saves me now. But must I go empty handed?" When Charles C. Luther heard this story he was moved to put it to poetry. George C. Stebbins then put these words to song in 1878, and you are all familiar with it. Let me read it for you:

"Must I go, and empty handed,"
Thus my dear Redeemer meet?
Not one day of service give Him,
Lay no trophy at His feet?

Not at death I shrink or falter,
For my Savior saves me now;
But to meet Him empty handed,
Thought of that now clouds my brow.

O the years in sinning wasted,
Could I but recall them now,
I would give them to my Savior,
To His will I'd gladly bow.

O ye saints, arouse, be earnest,
Up and work while yet 'tis day;
Ere the night of death o'ertake thee,
Strive for souls while still you may.

Chorus:

"Must I go, and empty handed?"
Must I meet my Savior so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him,
Must I empty handed go?

CONCL: So we conclude by asking this question: How can what is wrong be made right? First, the sinner must be justified before God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The sinner must repent and believe in Christ. Second, the Christian must constantly be in the process of becoming like Jesus. The Christian should experience daily growth. Our Christianity should show up in every aspect of our lives; in our work, in our homes and in our church life.

And then the Christian should be a visible and verbal witness to Jesus Christ. And I ask you, if you died today, and you have been given, not only a day but possibly years already, do you have some trophy to lay at Jesus' feet? Would you say, "I have not one soul with which to greet Him?" Today everybody wants a mentor. They have gone to church for years and they want a mentor. They would be mentored a lot more if they would begin to mentor others. I challenge us as a church to begin a greater effort to reach out. It is not more mentoring or discipling many of us need. It is to lay aside our fear and be obedient!