

What Can a Sinner Do?

Sunday, February 25th, 1990

John Chapter 6: 28-29

“Then said they unto him, what shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

I’m going to be speaking to you today on the subject: “What Can a Sinner Do?” I’m reading for my text, John Chapter 6: verses 28 and 29. Listen to the Word: *“Then said they unto him, what shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”*

“What shall we do?” Jesus answered and said unto them, *“This is the work of God that you believe on Him who He hath sent.”* Now, that is my text: *“What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”*

I recognize that this station reaches many, many people. It reaches people all over West Virginia, Kentucky and Southern Ohio. When a man preaches the Word of God to this many people, there are always five classes of people in the audience. I want you to listen carefully.

First of all: They are all sinners. Everybody listening to my voice is a sinner. That is what the Word of God says. It doesn’t matter if you are in the pulpit, the pew, the church or in the world; you are a sinner. The Word of God says, *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.”* In Romans 3, it says; *“There are none good, no not one. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh God. They are altogether become unprofitable.”*

Sin is the common disease of all flesh. The scripture tells us, *“By one man, sin entered this world and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.”* So, that is true isn’t it? It doesn’t matter how old you are, or who you are; you are a sinner. A sinner is speaking to you right now.

Secondly: There are sinners out there who have faith in the Son of God. They believe the Word of God and they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They have assurance of that faith. There are people listening to me right now, and I believe I am one of them; I believe that I can say this, I have assurance and I have confidence of my interest in Christ, and so do many of you. You have a confidence of a saving interest in the Son of God.

You can say with Job, *“I know that my redeemer liveth.”* I know and I believe the Word of God. I know that I am a sinner and I believe that Christ died for my sins. I believe on Him and I trust Him. I know that I can say with the apostle Paul, *“I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.”* I can say with David, *“The Lord is my shepherd.”* I know I can say with that old blind man whom the Lord healed, *“I was blind and now I see.”*

Amazing grace how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now I'm found,
I was blind but now I see.

Many of you can say, and I believe that I can say, “I’m a sinner, saved by the grace of God. I am resting totally and completely on the person and work of Jesus Christ.”

I said that there were five classes of people. First, there are sinners. And then, there are some sinners who are saved and who know it (they have a confidence in Christ). And then thirdly, there are sinners out there who struggle, but do believe on the Son of God. They truly do. They can say, “I do believe the Bible. I do believe I am a sinner. I do believe Christ died for my sins. I do believe that.” But, these people struggle with the matter of assurance.

Sometimes, they have assurance and sometimes they don’t. Sometimes they feel like they have an interest in Christ and sometimes they don’t. John Newton wrote about this when he wrote that hymn:

Tis a point I long to know
Often it gives me anxious thought.
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His or am I not?

There are people out there who can say, “I do believe that the Bible is God’s Word. I do believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I do believe from my heart, that He died on the cross for sinners. I know that He is the only Saviour and I believe that. I trust Him, but I just don’t have assurance. I just don’t have that confidence that many people have. I struggle with doubts and fears about my interest in Christ. I have doubts about my relationship with the Son of God.” Many of you (like the apostle Paul) can say; *“O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from this body of death?”*

Now listen; this is true and I know what I am talking about. All are sinners. There are some sinners who have been saved by the grace of God, who have rest and peace, comfort and joy with their relationship with God. Then, there are others who do believe, but they don't have assurance. They don't have confidence. They are always troubled about their relationship with God.

Fourthly: There are people who claim to have salvation, who claim to have eternal life, who claim to know God. But, they don't really know God at all. They do not have salvation and they do not have eternal life. Christ spoke of them, *"Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father, which is in heaven. For many will say to Me in that day (in the Day of Judgment), Lord; we preached in Your name. We cast out devils in Your name. We did many wonderful works. Then will I profess to them, I never knew you."*

John wrote about these people. He said, *"They went out from us."* They quit. They served for a while, they came to church for a while, they witnessed for a while, they walked with the disciples for a while and then they left. John said, *"They went out; (they left us); they went out from us. They never were of us, because if they had been of us, they no doubt would have continued with us."*

So, there are people who have religion. They belong to the church. They make a great profession of faith but they really do not know the Lord. They do not know Christ. They do not have life. Eventually, they will quit. Eventually, they will drop along the wayside. The apostle Peter said, *"The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."*

Then, there is a fifth class of people listening to my voice today: There are those who make no profession of faith in Christ at all. They make no claim to a hope of eternal life. They have never confessed Christ. They have never claimed to be a Christian. They have never laid any claim at all to being a child of God. Perhaps, they may have never seriously faced the matters of sin, death, judgment and eternity. Maybe they never have, and maybe they will today. Perhaps they will. Perhaps, the Spirit of God will kindle an interest in their hearts and regenerate them. Maybe the Spirit of God will bring them to have an interest in Christ.

Is there a message; is there a word for all these people who are listening to this message and to other preachers who are preaching the gospel and the Word of God? Is there a word for sinners? Is there a word for sinners saved? Is there a word for sinners saved, with no assurance? Is there a word for sinners who think they are saved but are not? Is

there a word for those who have no saving interest in Christ or no profession? Yes, there is!

That is what I am going to deal with today. This is the answer to the question, “What can a sinner do?” All sorts of people have asked this question. You are not the first one who has asked this question. It is asked several times in the Word of God. I looked through the scriptures and I found, in John 6; *“They came to the Lord and said, Lord, what shall we do? What can we do that we might work the works of God?”* In Mark, Chapter 10, a rich young ruler came to Christ and said; *“ Good Master, what shall I do? What can I do to inherit eternal life?”* What can a sinner do?

In Acts 2:37, after the apostle Peter had preached on Pentecost and had rebuked them for crucifying the Lord of glory, he charged them, saying; *“Having wicked hands you have crucified the Son of God.”* They replied, “Men and brethren; what shall we do?” What can we do? What is the way out of the mess we are in? In Acts 16:30, God had sent the earthquake, shook the prison and released the fetters and chains from the hands and arms and legs of the apostle Paul and Silas. The jailor came in trembling and fell on his knees in front of Paul and said, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* What can a sinner do?

I intend to answer that question. I want to lay this foundation first. It doesn't matter who you are, because *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* Whatever state you are in, you need to hear these Words.

First of all: Before I answer the question, “What can a sinner do?” Let me say this, No man deserves God's mercy. My friends, we are mercy beggars. No man deserves God's grace. We certainly are not going to receive grace because we deserve it. Grace is undeserved favor and unmerited favor. Mercy is free.

No man can obligate God. God is not obligated to us. He is not obligated at all except to deal with us in justice. Whether He saves us or damns us, He is going to deal with us in justice. If He deals with us in mercy, that justice will fall on Christ. If He deals with us in condemnation and judgment, the judgment will fall on us. He is going to deal with us as a just God. No man can obligate God. We just can't do it.

No man in the flesh can please God. Now, we have to understand that. Even people who are saved, people who know God, and people who are redeemed, cannot please God in the flesh alone. *“Your righteousnesses are filthy rags.”* It is Christ that makes your prayers acceptable. It is Christ that makes your gifts acceptable. It is Christ that makes your works acceptable. He is our great High Priest.

Nothing is acceptable in itself, which you and I do. To be accepted, it must be perfect. We don't do anything perfectly. We never have done anything perfectly. We have never said, thought or done anything perfectly. So, *"No man in the flesh can please God. In the flesh dwelleth no good thing."* No man by searching or by natural wisdom can find God. Job said, *"Why, it is higher than heaven; what can you know? It is deeper than hell; what can you find out?"* It is broader than the sea. Oh the depths of the riches, the wonders of the glories, the mysteries of the gospel of the Son of God. No man by natural wisdom or searching can find God.

He has to be revealed unto us by the Spirit of His Word. *"No man can come to God except the Spirit draw him."* That is just so! Our sinful condition is a helpless and hopeless state. What can a sinner do? Preachers, what can a sinner do? If you are addressing, a bonified, genuine, self-confessed sinner; tell me, "What can a sinner do?" Will you listen?

First of all: He can take his place before God as a sinner. He can do that, can he not? All who received His mercy in the New Testament (when Christ walked this earth in the flesh), came to Him as sinners. Those who were healed by Him, redeemed by Him and visited in mercy by Him came to Him as sinners, those who did not come as sinners were turned away.

The Publican in the temple beat upon his chest and cried, *"God be merciful to me the sinner."* He came to Christ as a sinner. The harlot, who came and bathed His feet with her tears, in the home of the Pharisee, came as a sinner. She knelt at His feet and wept. She dried His feet with the hair of her head and kissed His feet. That is a humble sinner. The thief on the cross came as a sinner. He said, "Lord, I am getting what I deserve. You have done nothing amiss. Remember me when you come into your kingdom." The Canaanite woman came unto Him and Christ said, *"It is not right to give the children's bread to dogs."* She said, *"That is true; I am a dog."*

You can do that can't you? You can take your place before God as a sinner. You see, *"Christ came into the world to save sinners."* When the angels announced His birth to Joseph, they said, *"Call His name Jesus; He will save His people from their sins."* In First Timothy 1:15, Paul said, *"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."* In Luke 19:10, he said, *"The Son of man is come to seek and to save the lost."* In Romans 5, Paul said; *"God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners; Christ died for us."* He came to save sinners.

If He did not come to save sinners, why did He die as a sacrifice? Christ's sacrifice is for sin. Blood is to cover sins. A mercy seat is for sinners. Christ Jesus came to save the chief of sinners. That is what Paul says, "*He came to save sinners of whom I am the chief.* I say this to you; your sins will not keep you from Christ. He came to save sinners, the chief of sinners and the greatest of sinners. "*He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him.*"

Your sins won't keep you from Christ, but your goodness will. Your righteousness will keep you from Christ and your religion will. You see, salvation is all of grace; it is free. Therefore, it is for those who have nothing to pay. Salvation, redemption and forgiveness are not for innocent people; it is for guilty people. Mercy is for miserable people. Salvation is for sinners.

One day, our Lord was eating with the Publicans and sinners. The religious Pharisees said, "Why is He associating with those people?" Our Lord said to them, "*They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*"

I think that we are straying away from this present day religion. Everybody in the church claims to be good. Everyone claims to be pure, holier than thou, or claim to be without sin. God has nothing for those kinds of people. "*Christ died for the ungodly.*" Christ died for sinners. He came to save sinners. He said, "*I didn't come to call the righteous; I came to call sinners.*"

So, that is what you can do if you are interested in the mercy of God, if you are interested in the grace of God or the saving relationship with God. You have to take your place as a sinner at His feet. What can a sinner do? He can take his place at the feet of Christ as a sinner.

Secondly: He can seek the Lord. The Word of God commands men to seek the Lord. It condemns men who do not seek the Lord. "*Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near.*" "You shall seek Me and find Me, He said, when you search for Me with all your heart." The Bible does not say that men cannot seek the Lord. The Bible says, "They will not seek the Lord." It says, "They won't, and they don't. "*There is none that seek after God.*" They should. If they would, they could find Him.

The Eunuch was seeking the Lord, was he not? I'm talking about that Ethiopian Eunuch who had charge of the queen's treasury. He had gone all the way to Jerusalem in a

chariot to enquire after the Lord. When he came back, he hadn't learned anything from those religious fellows there. God sent him a preacher who knew the gospel, named Phillip. Phillip taught him the gospel. He was seeking the Lord and reading the Word of God. Cornelius was seeking the Lord. He was a devout man, a troubled man and a sincere man. God sent Peter to him to preach the gospel to him.

The woman with the issue of blood was seeking Christ. Don't you remember? She had spent everything she had on physicians. For twelve years, I believe, she had been hemorrhaging. Finally, she said; "If I can get to Jesus of Nazareth, *"if I can but touch His garment; I will be made whole."* Now, that is seeking the Lord. She came crawling on her hands and knees and finally reached out and touched Him. She was made whole. She was seeking the Lord.

The Greeks were seeking the Lord. They came to the disciples and they said to them, *"Sirs; we would see Jesus."* They were implying that they weren't interested in speaking to disciples; they wanted to hear Him. They wanted to see Him.

You might ask, "Preacher, how do you suggest that I seek the Lord?" Well, let me give you some suggestions: First of all, seek Him. Don't seek an experience or a feeling.

Feelings come and feelings go
And feelings are deceiving.
I trust the Word of God
Nothing else is worth believing.

Don't seek a feeling because you might find one. Don't seek an experience. There is a good possibility that you may find one. Don't seek the right church. Seek Him. Christ said, *"You shall seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all of your heart."* *Come unto Me and I will give you rest."*

That is one of the biggest problems today. People are going to the front. They are going to the pool. They are going to the church. They are going to the preacher. They are going to the soul-winners and they are going to the law. They are going everywhere but to Christ.

Seek Him in His Word. Listen to those who preach the Word of God, those who really and truly preach the Word of God. Don't even follow them. Do like the Bereans; listen and then go home and *"search the scriptures to see if these things be so."*

That is what I would recommend that you do. Do not follow a man. If one fellow can talk you into a profession, then another one can talk you out of it. If one man can talk you into a religious position, then another man can talk you out of it. You'll even talk yourself out of it or someone else will. Our Lord said, "*No man can come to Me except My Father which sent Me draw him and they shall all be taught of God. He that hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me.*"

So, seek Him in His Word and seek Him among those who give evidence that they know Him. Don't play the game. Don't go somewhere because they have good activities. Don't go to a church because it is a pretty building. Congregate with people who give evidence that they know God.

Seek Him with a sincere heart. If you have to drive a hundred miles, drive it. If you have to quit your job and go somewhere else, do it. Find the gospel with a sincere heart. Do not play the game. Yes sir, that is what a sinner can do; he can seek the Lord. What can a sinner do? He can take his place before God as a sinner. He better, because those are the folks that Christ came to save. Then, he can seek the Lord as a sinner.

Thirdly: He can ask for mercy. Isn't that so and isn't that simple? Just ask for mercy. Ask for salvation. Our Lord said, "*Ask and it shall be given to you.*" James said, "*You have not because you ask not.*" Christ said, "*Seek and you'll find; knock and it shall be opened.*" I've always found it to be true, that if a man or woman really desires something badly enough, and they are in the presence of someone who can give it; they will ask for it. Is that not true? If a person wants something enough and really needs it enough and they are in the presence of someone who can give it and willing to give it; they will ask for it.

When my children were growing up, they never hesitated to ask me for things that they needed. They would say, "Dad, I need a new book; Dad, I need a pair of shoes." They would just ask for it. They generally got it.

In Matthew Chapter 8, when our Lord came down from the mountain, a leper met him. You know what a leper is. A leper is someone incurably, helplessly covered with disease. He came to our Lord and said, "*Lord, if You will; You can make me clean.*" Bartimaeus cried out and they tried to make him hush. He wouldn't hush. He kept crying out, "*Lord, have mercy on me.*" The thief on the cross, asked; He said, "Lord, You are coming into a kingdom; remember me and think on me." The Publican asked, "*Have mercy on me the sinner.*"

Don't walk another isle. Don't raise your hand another time. Don't ask another preacher to pray for you. Don't sign another card and don't join another church. Don't be baptized again; *"Seek the Lord."* Ask Him for mercy and quit asking people. They can't supply your need. They can't supply their own need. They can't meet their own needs. They can't save their own souls. They can't put away their own guilt. What can they do for you?

These preachers don't have magic in their hands. Ask the Lord. *"Ask and it shall be given to you."* Fall on your face before God, before Christ. Be like the harlot at His feet. Be like the leper at His feet. Be like Mary at His feet. Be like the thief and call upon the Lord as sinners have always done. Ask Him to show you mercy.

Listen to this, Jacob wrestled with the Lord. He wasn't wrestling with a soul-winner or an evangelist or a preacher. He was wrestling with the Lord God in the dead of night. The morning began to dawn and Jacob got a tighter grip on Him and he said, *"I will not let you go until You bless me."* Jacob is saying that he has to have mercy, he has to have grace, he has to have help and must have Christ. My Lord said to him, *"What is your name?"* He said, *"My name is Jacob,"* (that means cheat or supplanter). The Lord said, *"Your name will no longer be Jacob; your name is Israel, (a prince with God)."*

What can a sinner do? I'll tell you fourthly: He can walk in the light that God has given him, and if he will walk in that light, God will give him more. Why don't you walk in the light of what you have heard this very day and God will give you more light. I challenge you!