

Salvation—Crystal Clear

By Jerry Mawhorr

And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, do thyself no harm, for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?¹

I would like to use the phrase, or statement, that the jailer made to Paul and Silas: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” to be the opening thought. There are many people in the world, and there may be some here, who have all kinds of different ideas about what you must do to be saved. There are people who believe if they follow certain church sacraments someday they’ll die and go straight to be with Jesus. There are others who believe in their heart that if they keep the Ten Commandments someday they’ll die and go on to heaven and be with Jesus. There are some who believe that baptism saves. There are some who believe simply asking Jesus into your heart saves. There are some who believe if you commit yourself to Jesus you can be saved. There are some who believe if you join the church you can be saved. And there are others who believe if you live a certain lifestyle you can be saved. And on, and on, and on it goes. But what is our answer to the question “What must I do to be saved?” There may be some who would like to know the answer to that question. I would like to lay it out as clear as I possibly can. I would like to lay it out to you on a shelf, and set that shelf way down so everyone can reach it.

What must I do to be saved?

The title of the message is this: Salvation—Crystal Clear. My heart, and my goal is, that after you leave there will be no question in your heart what you must do to be saved, and that I can say that my hands are free from the blood of all the men, women, and children who are here.

I would like to go through the sermon basically in order, in five simple segments. I would like to clearly present to you how to be saved.

The first segment I would like to look at, if you’re going to understand how to be saved crystal clear, is realizing the sinfulness of mankind. Now it’s often very difficult to convince men and women of their sinfulness. I’d like to show you how that, according to the Bible we are all sinners in the sight of God. *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*² I’d like to draw two things out of there that we can learn about the sinfulness of mankind. The first thing is this: the root of sin is selfishness. The Bible says: *All we like sheep have gone astray.* I don’t care what sin you want to call out to me; whether it’s murder, or adultery, or lust, or stealing, or gluttony, or covetousness, or envy, or jealousy. The root cause to every sin is selfishness. Basically you’re saying to God “I want my own way.” This is the problem with mankind; he is inherently selfish, he has turned to his own way.

I’d like you to notice the example of Jesus, Who was sinless. Jesus said, “I do always those things that please my Father.”³ Do you realize Jesus is the only Person, the only Man, Who walked this earth and could actually say He was sinless? The reason why He could say He was sinless was because He could say “Father I have always, at every time, done the things that please You. Never have I done what’s pleasing to Me.” Jesus was sinless. You see, Jesus never did anything selfish. Even in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus said “Not My will, Father, but Thine be done.” Jesus said in the book of John *I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me,*

¹ Acts 16:22-30

² Isaiah 52:5,6

³ John 8:29

*he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.*⁴ That's an amazing thing to me. Do you realize Jesus never spoke a single word that wasn't given to Him of His Father? Wouldn't that be wonderful if we could speak every word scripted from our Heavenly Father?

I wonder if there's anyone here who could stand up in our midst and claim before God "I have never, ever, been selfish." I would like to meet that person. Selfishness is the root of all sin. I want you to know something else. The Bible says *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way*⁵. Notice that this root of selfishness is in every one of us. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned *every one* to our own way. You see, it doesn't matter whether you were born and raised in a Hutterite Colony in South Dakota or Montana. It doesn't matter whether you were born and raised in an Amish home in Pennsylvania. It doesn't matter whether you were born in a worldly home like I was in Ohio. And it doesn't even matter if you were born in a crack house in the Bronx of New York. You are a sinner! It doesn't matter where you were born. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.*

You say to me "Brother Jerry, don't you realized there are people who have sinned more than I have?" Yes. I would agree with you. There are people who have sinned more than you have. And yes, you can look across the tent tonight and say "That brother over there, or that sister over there, they've sinned more than me!" I would agree with you. God would too.

When I was in school when we took tests we had to make a 70 on the test to get a passing grade. When the teacher had graded the test, if my friend over here got a 4 on the test out of 100, and I got a 68, do you realize that my friend got an F, and I got an F too? Do you realize it didn't matter whether I got a 68 or a 4, I failed the test? You say "But wait a minute. You did better than him." You're right. But I failed. And did you know that God's grading system requires perfection? The Bible says *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*⁶ Can you say you're perfect in the sight of God? If you cannot say that, you've failed. Can anyone here in the tent stand up and say "I am perfect in the sight of God?" You say, "But ah, Brother Jerry, you don't know. I'm better than most!" Yes, but are you perfect? The Bible says *all we like sheep have gone astray.*

How many of you know Jay Vernon McGee? Jay Vernon McGee grew up in Santa Monica, California. He tells of the times when he was a young man, how he and his friends would go out to the pier on the Pacific Ocean, and they would have a little game they would call "Jumping to Catalina Island". One of the boys would run off the pier, and jump out as far as he could, to try reach Catalina Island. But you see, Catalina Island was around 20 miles off shore. The next little boy, he would take off running, and he would try as hard as he could to jump to Catalina Island. But they never could jump to Catalina Island. Now they got back up on the pier, and said, "Hey, I jumped farther than you did." They were right, but none of them ever came near to Catalina Island.

You might be awful holy in your own sight, but you're short of the glory of God. The Bible says *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*⁷ If you want to compare yourself with someone, the Bible says there is one Person you can compare yourself to. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*⁸ If you'd like to compare yourself with someone compare yourself with your Heavenly Father and see how you do. Do you realize if Jesus would walk through here there's not a single soul who would go to Jesus and say "I'm perfectly holy, like You"? The attitude God wants from every individual is this: "I am a wretched sinner."

Jesus teaches on attitudes toward self in Luke: *And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are. Notice the Pharisee is comparing himself to men. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house*

⁴ John 12:49

⁵ Isaiah 53:6

⁶ James 2:10

⁷ Romans 3:23

⁸ Matthew 5:48

*justified rather than the other.*⁹ You see, if you would look up into heaven, and begin comparing yourself with God, you would turn your face from heaven down to the ground and you'd say "God, be merciful unto me, a sinner."

There was an evangelist by the name of Eddy Martin in Bluefield, West Virginia. He preached a sermon one day much like I'm preaching tonight, and after the service an elderly woman came forward to get converted. Brother Eddy met her at the altar, and said to her "Ma'am, why have you come forward?" This woman looked at him and said "I've come forward to get saved." Brother Martin said to her, "Ma'am, do you believe you are a sinner?" The woman looked up to Brother Martin and said, "Sir, I'm not a sinner!" Brother Martin said to her "Ma'am, do you realize the Bible says if you don't see yourself as a sinner, that you cannot be saved?" This woman looked at Brother Martin and said, "Well Brother Martin, I may be a sinner, but I'm a good sinner." Brother Martin said to her "Listen, ma'am. Unless you see yourself a wretched sinner before God, you cannot be saved." The woman was distraught, and she went back to her seat. As he stood there, and watched her go back to her pew, she turned around and the Spirit of God got a hold of her heart. She walked up to Brother Martin, and looked him in the eyes and said "Brother Martin, I see it now. I am a wretched sinner." Brother Martin said "You're qualified to be saved." I would say to you, if you don't see yourself before God a wretched sinner, you're not qualified to be saved.

Secondly I would like to look at the doctrine of eternal judgment. In order to understand salvation crystal clear we must understand eternal judgment. Because the sinner, and we all are sinners, is on the road to destruction. Let us consider this evening the eternal resting place for every unforgiven sinner. I would like to give you all some sort of an idea tonight where the unforgiven sinner spends eternity.

*There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*¹⁰

Now I'd like to draw out five of the agonies of hell. There are actually seven here if you would look at it very closely, but I would like to talk about five of them. First of all I would like to draw your attention to the agony of what I call exploding fear. In verse number 23 the Bible says *And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.* Now consider with me if you died, and a moment after you die you lift up your eyes; you're in the pit of hell. The Bible says *Fear hath torment.*¹¹ Can you imagine the torment, the fear, which came upon the rich man as he opened up his eyes in hell, and saw where he was? The writer to the Hebrews said *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.*¹² Do you believe that?

Sinners on the verge of death often testify of what is coming for them on the other side. Listen to some of the testimonies of men who have one foot in this life and one foot in eternity. M. F. Rich, the famous atheist, as he was dying, said this: "I would rather lie on a stove and broil for a million years than go into eternity with the eternal horrors that hang over my soul. I have given my only mortality for gold, and its weight sinks me into an endless, hopeless, helpless hell." Sir Francis Newport, the head of an English infidel club said to those gathered around his death bed, "You need not tell me there is no God, for I know there is one, and that I am in His angry presence. You need not tell me there is no hell, for I know there is, for I already feel my soul slipping into the fire."

⁹ Luke 18:9-14

¹⁰ Luke 16:19-26

¹¹ 1 John 4:18

¹² Hebrews 10:31

Secondly I would like you to notice the agony of unquenchable fire. *And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*¹³ Twenty-one times in the New Testament Jesus talked about the fires of hell. In Luke chapter 3 He called it the unquenchable fire. In Matthew 5 He called it hell-fire. In Matthew 18 He called it everlasting fire. And in Matthew 13 Jesus describes it very graphically. He calls it “a furnace of fire.” Consider that with me. Hell is a place of fire. The teaching of hell-fire has faced a lot of opposition in recent years, has it not? More and more people that I meet try to convince me that there is no fire in hell. Some question how a man’s body could remain in hell and burn forever and ever and ever. Let me ask you this: How do you think Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego went into a fiery furnace and their flesh was not touched? Don’t you think God has the wisdom to send men to hell and allow their bodies to be burned and tormented forever without them being burned up? Some have argued the body goes to hell only, and the soul is annihilated, and is no more. But Jesus refutes that when He says “Fear not them that can kill the body. But fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell.”

Thirdly I’d like you to see the agony of a condemning conscience. *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime.*¹⁴ You see, this verse is telling us that when the rich man went to hell, he took his memory with him. The rich man is in hell, and he has a memory, he has a conscience. Perhaps he remembers his mother’s prayers for his salvation. Perhaps he remembered his lost opportunities to be saved. Perhaps he remembered the many times he passed by Lazarus, and he looked down upon Lazarus with contempt, and didn’t help him. Perhaps he remembers the ingratitude he had before God, having been heaped upon with all his riches. Perhaps he remembers the adulterous relationship he was enjoying. Or perhaps he remembers his excess of banquetings, and riotings.

Let me ask you this: What is in your memory? Are you willing to take it to hell? They say men in jail cells all across this country in penitentiaries have time to think. Because they have time to think they take sheets, cut the sheets in strips, and tie those sheets together. Then they tie one end of the sheet on the ceiling, and get up on a bed or something high. They put the other end of the sheet around their neck, and hang themselves. Many times guards will come in the morning and they’ll see a prisoner hanged in his cell. Do you know why many times they do that? It’s because they can’t live with the memory of the sin they have in their mind.

There was a man by the name of Judas Iscariot who betrayed the Lord Jesus. He took the thirty pieces of silver, because his conscience was bothering him, and went back to the chief priests and the elders, and threw those thirty pieces of silver down before their feet. They said “We don’t want this. It’s the price of blood.” Judas Iscariot’s memory and conscience were destroying him. The Bible says he left there, and went out, and ran. And he ran, and he ran, and he ran, to try to get rid of the memory of betraying the Son of God. We read in the Bible that he found a tree, took a rope, and tied one end to the tree. He got up in the tree, put the other end around his neck, and hanged himself, because he couldn’t live with a conscience which was condemning him.

This evening some of your consciences, some of your memories, may be condemning you. What’s in your memory? Have you defrauded your brother? Have you hit your wife? Are you committing incest with your daughters? Have you cheated on your taxes? Are you sleeping with another man, and he doesn’t know it? Is your conscience silent, or is it crying out against you?

Here Jesus again speaks of hell, but He says something very interesting I’d like you to see. *And if thy hand offend, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*¹⁵ I would like you to notice something unusual there. The Bible does not say in those passages “where *the* worm dieth not.” It actually tells us “where *their* worm dieth not.” I wonder, what is Jesus trying to say?

¹³ Luke 16:24

¹⁴ Luke 16:25

¹⁵ Mark 9:43-48

What is this worm that is in hell, which never dies? If you read it in the Greek New Testament it says this: the worm that is their own never dies. I believe what Jesus is saying to us, is that worm is our memory, our conscience. When a lost man like this rich man dies and goes to hell, he takes his memory and his conscience with him to hell. Hell is a place where they remember, and they remember, and they remember. That worm of memory never dies.

In a little town in Georgia a number of years ago there was a man who was driving a busload of children home from school. On the way home he came to a railroad track. He looked to his left and there was no one coming. He looked to his right, and he noticed there was a train coming down the track. He didn't see how quickly it was coming, he misjudged. A little boy on the bus that day would later testify that the bus driver said underneath his breath "I think I can make it." He went out on the tracks, and unfortunately for all who were in the bus, it stalled in the middle of the track. As this man was frantically trying to get the bus started, the locomotive came barreling down upon the bus. It hit the bus with all the force of a many hundred ton locomotive. The bus was demolished, and bodies went everywhere.

It was one of the greatest tragedies the little town ever faced. Many of the children on the bus that day died. Many of them were mangled for life. But one of the other tragedies that happened that day was the fact that the bus driver lived. He walks the streets of that little city a zombie, because he can't live with the memory of the awful day when he took a busload of children out in the middle of the railroad track, and sent many of them into eternity. I wonder, can you live with your memory forever, and ever? Young people and older people alike, if there's one reason I would beg you to come down this aisle and repent of your sin, and to cry out to the Lord Jesus, is because the Bible says "Son, remember that thou, in thy lifetime."

Fourthly, *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*¹⁶ Do you see what Jesus is telling us about hell? As the rich man opened up his eyes and looked, he saw a huge chasm, a huge gulf, and he realized there would be no escaping. Abraham says to him, "Son, listen. No one can come from there to us, neither can we send anyone from us to you." I see in that verse the agony of no escape. According to the scriptures hell is a place where every door is locked, every gate is sealed, and every window is shut. There are no exit signs in hell, my friend, none. There is no possibility of escape.

About three miles west of San Francisco, in the San Francisco Bay, there is a rock which comes up out of the water. It's called Alcatraz. There, back in 1931, the United States government decided to build a prison. They nick-named the prison "The Inescapable Prison." The walls were impregnable. Barbed wire, twenty or thirty feet up, surrounded the prison. There were guards posted everywhere in towers with guns. If you managed to get by that, you had to jump from a cliff into the Pacific Ocean, where there was swirling waters all around the island. If you managed to survive that you then had a three mile swim in 51 degree water to get to San Francisco. As far as they know there is no one living who ever escaped, and lived to tell about it. When I thought about this verse, considering what man can do, a prison which man can make, and then consider the infinite wisdom of God, and how God can make a penitentiary for the damned which is inescapable. According to the Bible, this rich man looked out, and there was no possibility of escape. Listen to me, my friend. Would you please look before you leap into a place from which no man has ever returned, a place from which they that go there come not out, forever?

Fifthly, I would like you to see the agony of an endless eternity. Jesus spoke often of the eternalness of hell. In Matthew 25:46 Jesus said *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.* In Matthew 18:8 Jesus called it *everlasting fire.* I say also, if you believe in an everlasting eternal heaven, then you must believe in an everlasting, eternal hell. Would you ponder eternity with me?

Are you prepared for eternity? Our minds don't often like to think of eternity, do they? A number of weeks ago, there was a TWA jet that took off from Long Island, New York, and began to climb to around 12,000 feet. Around 8 or 10 minutes after it took off, all of a sudden, without any warning, the jet exploded in midair. Over 200 people died in that explosion, and fell to the ocean. As I thought about it I considered the reality that on the plane that night there were

¹⁶ Luke 16:25

probably mothers who were cuddling babies. And there were fathers who were reading a newspaper. Maybe they were reading about their favorite sports team. There were young men and young women on the plane that night. Maybe they were talking one to another. Maybe they were talking about a boyfriend or a girlfriend, and without any warning at all, in the next two seconds, they are standing in eternity. Have you ever considered that God's death arrows fly invisibly, and who knows whether or not one may some day, all of a sudden just take you? Consider eternity.

The infidel Marabou lay dying on his bed, and said to the doctor, "Doctor, give me more opium, that I may not think of eternity." Ponder eternity: forever, and ever, and ever. The rich man has been there for over 2000 years, and he hasn't even begun to suffer in eternity. I don't know how to describe eternity.

I don't like borrowing things from other preachers, but there was a man two and half centuries ago who I think described eternity well. His name was Jonathan Edwards. Let me read to you what he said. "It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment, but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages-millions and millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty, merciless vengeance. Then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble representation of it. It is inexpressible and inconceivable, for 'who knows the power of God's anger?'"¹⁷

Consider eternity. I know we as mortal human beings don't like to think about it. But if you're lost, and you've never been born again, consider eternal damnation: forever, and ever, and ever. So we see every one of us are sinners. We have gone astray. We also see you and I are on the road to eternal damnation unless we get forgiven. I'd like you to think before I go on, that if you die in your sins, the story I just read to you about the rich man will be your home forever. Consider that. You look at those pages and you say, "I don't want to go there." But the Bible says if you die unforgiven, you will be there forever, and ever, and ever.

Thirdly I would like to say to you that in order to understand salvation crystal clear we must understand the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. I think we can all see we are sinners before God. We are not perfect. We have all gone astray and because of that we're on a road to eternal damnation. Jesus speaks and says these words: *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*¹⁸

Now for every one of us who has been washed in the blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is our comforter. Amen for that. But look here: *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.* Do you see that the responsibility of the Holy Spirit of God is to convict your heart of your sin, and of the judgment to come? That is His responsibility. If you have been truly born again, you can testify that before you came to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God wrought a work of conviction in your heart. You ought to be able to testify to that. If a man, woman, or child is not brought to conviction by the Holy Ghost, then that individual has not been a candidate at that time for salvation. Here's why I say that. Jesus said, *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*¹⁹ Do you realize if any one of you is not saved, the only way you can be saved is if the Spirit of the Living God would come down, settle upon your heart, bring conviction, and draw you to Jesus Christ? That's what we pray for.

¹⁷ "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" by Jonathon Edwards. Preached in Enfield, Connecticut, on July 8, 1741

¹⁸ John 16:4-7

¹⁹ John 6:44

I'd like you to notice something interesting about that verse. That word draw, it's the Greek word "helko"²⁰. It literally means to drag. "No man can come unto Me except the Father which has sent Me drag him." There's only one definition in Strong's Concordance: to drag. You see, in reality, the Spirit of the Living God is trying to drag you to Jesus. I'll give you one usage of that word. If you'll remember, in John 21 Jesus was sitting on the shore, preparing a meal for the disciples. Peter was coming to shore. The Bible says he had a multitude of fishes, and he was dragging them to shore. That's the word "helko". That's what the Spirit of God need to do to us; drag us to Jesus.

You see, the Bible says *All we like sheep have gone astray*.²¹ We are running from God from the womb. The Bible says *And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God*.²² So you realize, as sinners, we are running from God. Apart from the convicting work of the Spirit of God, we would have no chance of salvation. Consider that. The natural reaction of all sinful mankind is to run from God. The Bible says *There is none that seeketh after God*.²³ If man were left to his own estate, he would never seek after God. Do you realize if there were no convicting work of the Spirit of God, there would not be a single one of you saved? Because man will never seek God on his own. Jesus said *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him*.²⁴ We praise God for the sweet convicting presence of the Holy Ghost. We are truly saved by the grace of God.

But let me also say, and warn you, God's Spirit will not always seek to drag you to Jesus. There may be some who have the Spirit of God striving upon your heart. I'd like you to know the Bible says, *My Spirit shall not always strive with man*.²⁵ ---to try to drag him to Jesus.

Many of you know Aaron Burr, the man who was convicted of treason by the United States. Aaron Burr's granddaughter tells an interesting story. One day she was at a meeting much like this, and she was converted to Jesus. She came home, and said to her grandfather, Aaron Burr, "Grandpa, wouldn't you like to be saved, and become a Christian?"

Aaron Burr looked down at her, and said, "Sweetheart, many years ago I was sitting in a revival meeting. I felt the Spirit of God striving against my heart. After that meeting I went outside the building, looked up to heaven, and said 'God, if you will leave me alone, I will leave you alone' and I meant it with all my heart." Aaron Burr said this to his granddaughter: "Sweetheart, I keep my part of the deal, and God has kept his."

Do you ever wonder why the Lord Jesus looked at the Pharisees, who had just blasphemed the Spirit of God, and said, "Men, you don't know what you're doing. He that shall blaspheme the Holy Ghost has never forgiveness."²⁶ Do you realize what Jesus was saying to them? He was saying to them, "Your only chance of salvation is the Holy Spirit, and His conviction, and His dragging you to Me. You are cutting off the only lifeline you have to salvation." There we need to be careful with the sweet Spirit of the Living God. That goes for us as Christians too, doesn't it? After Stephen preached the sermon in Acts chapter 7, he looked upon those who were striving against God, and said *Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost*.²⁷ I wonder if there is anyone here whom we could say the same to. How long does the Holy Ghost have to strive with you? How long does the Holy Ghost have to try drag you to Jesus? Don't resist the Holy Ghost. If you feel the Holy Spirit convicting your heart don't strive against Him. Break your heart underneath it.

So we see every one of us are sinners. Every one of us is on our way to eternal damnation. Maybe God's Spirit is striving with you, to bring you to Jesus Christ. You say "Yes, Brother Jerry, I feel the conviction of the Spirit of God upon my heart. I feel it right now. What must I do to be saved?"

In order to understand salvation crystal clear we must understand repentance. You who are under conviction, the first thing you ought to do is repent. Do you know the Spirit of God

²⁰ Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament number 1670

²¹ Isaiah 53:6

²² Genesis 3:8

²³ Romans 3:11

²⁴ John 6:44

²⁵ Genesis 6:3

²⁶ Mark 3:29 paraphrased

²⁷ Acts 7:51

works repentance? The Bible says *Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation.*²⁸ The Spirit of God comes to your heart, and begins to weigh it down, and tell you that you're a sinner, you're on your way to hell, and you begin to have godly sorrow. That godly sorrow turns you to repentance, and that repentance turns you to salvation. Jesus said *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*²⁹ Peter said *The Lord. . .is longsuffering. . .not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*³⁰ Consider with me what true, Biblical repentance is.

I'd like to share with you what you really need to do to be saved. You realize you're a sinner. You realize you're on your way to eternal destruction. You realize the Spirit of God is speaking to your heart. How do I repent? Again, these are the words of the Lord Jesus. *Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*³¹ Notice our context. Jesus is talking about sinners repenting, and then he moves to a beautiful story. Many of you know this story, the story of the prodigal son. *And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country,—that's you and I, in our sinful state. We want to get as far away from God as we can—and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*³²

I would like you to see there are three things here in this story that Jesus teaches us regarding true, biblical repentance. The first one can be found in verse number 16. *And when he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.* I want you to notice here first of all, repentance that is true and genuine makes a man or woman willing to forsake his or her sin. You see this man that Jesus was talking about, this prodigal son, was willing to say "I need to get up and get out of this mess that I'm in. And I need to go back to my Heavenly Father." He was willing, first of all, to give up his sin. John the Baptist came preaching the gospel of repentance. Do you know what he said? He said to the tax collector "You want to repent? Stop taking more from people than that which is right." He looked at the soldiers and said, "Men, if you want to repent, stop doing violence to any man, and be content with your wages." He looked at the rich man and said "If you want to repent, go and take those two coats that you have, and sell them, and give them to the poor, or sell one." As I was thinking about that, I wondered if John the Baptist could come to our closets and say "If you want to repent, maybe you want to take one or two of those dresses, and sell them. Maybe you ought to take those two coats that you have, and give one to the poor." That is true repentance. Repentance produces a willingness to forsake sin. When Jesus was on the road to Jericho one day He stopped, and there was a man up in a tree. The man's name was Zacchaeus, and Zacchaeus wanted to repent. Do you remember the response Zacchaeus gave to the Lord Jesus? He said this, *Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold*³³. Here was a man whose heart was willing to forsake his sin. I ask you, are you willing to forsake your sin?

Secondly, I would like you to see in verse number 18 the second thing that establishes true repentance is this: a willingness to confess. Coming and showing your deeds, and confessing your sin before God. *Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some*

²⁸ 2 Corinthians 7:10

²⁹ Luke 13:3

³⁰ 2 Peter 3:9

³¹ Luke 15:10

³² Luke 15:11-19

³³ Luke 19:8

*men they follow after.*³⁴ You have a choice to make. There are some men in this tent, and some women, whose sins have already gone to heaven. They've gone before them. But there are still many men, women, and children whose sins are still with you, and they will follow you to judgment. Confess your sins to God now, send them on ahead of you, lest you die and the weight of your sins sinks you into hell. Confess your sins and let them go before you into judgment. Are you willing to confess your sin to God and men? That is the second requirement. This prodigal son, he left the pig's pen. He was willing to forsake his sin. He came, and confessed his sin to God.

Thirdly, and perhaps this is where we make our mistake, he had a willingness to serve. This dear man comes to his father and says these words: *And I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.* Do you know how I can tell when a man is truly repenting? When a man is truly under the conviction of the Spirit of God, when a man is ready to be born again, the Bible says he will come, he will be willing to confess his sin, he will be willing to forsake his sin, and he will come with a heart that says "Lord Jesus, I want to serve You. I want to serve You. I don't want my way anymore. Lord Jesus, make me a servant." You see, true repentance produces a broken heart, and a willingness to serve. Our society and the churches are becoming so perverted about this concept of repentance, even going so far as to claim that you can be saved without a willingness to be a servant of Christ. But listen to the words of Malachi. *Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*³⁵

There was a time when a rich man came to Jesus, and asked for eternal life. Jesus said "go and sell all that you have, and come, and be My servant. Follow Me!" But the rich man didn't have a repentant heart. The Bible says the rich man went away sorrowful. Jesus turned to His disciples, and Peter looked up to Him and said, "Lord, we have forsaken all to follow Thee." I would ask you, have you and I truly repented? Have you truly repented? Was there a time in your life when you realized you were a sinner, when you realized you were under the judgment of God on your way to hell? You felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Did you come to the Lord Jesus and confess your sin? Did you forsake your sin? And did you say, "Lord, I want to be Your servant"? That is true, biblical repentance. You are following the steps of the example Jesus gave of the prodigal son. I wonder where your heart is on that subject. Have you truly repented? Jesus said, *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*³⁶

From my background people are coming by the thousands down aisles, and kneeling at an altar. There they are being told if they pray and ask Jesus to come into their heart—that's all they need to do. They get up from that altar, and go back to their seat, and they're just as much lost as when they got up and came down to the altar. Because the Lord Jesus said, *Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.*³⁷ Have you truly repented? True repentance consists of a willingness to forsake sin, a willingness to confess, and a willingness to serve Jesus. I ask you again, consider that with me. Have you truly repented? If not, Jesus would say "You haven't repented; you shall perish." If God grants you repentance, you will do these very things.

Finally, in order to understand salvation crystal clear, we must understand belief. Jesus came into the land of Judea preaching the gospel of repentance and belief. Repent, and believe the gospel. If you realize you're a sinner, you realize you're on your way to hell, the conviction of the Spirit of God is upon your heart, and you are willing to repent, the Lord Jesus asks you to come, and believe. Come believing. I have good news for you if you're under the conviction of the Spirit of God. It's called the gospel.

There was a Man by the name of Jesus Christ. He was God in the flesh. He came to the earth. Men, wicked men, put Him upon a cross. You and I are the wicked men. There He suffered. He bled and died. They took Him down from the cross, and buried Him in a grave. Three days and three nights later He rose from the grave. Now He is sitting on the right hand of God the Father, and He's looking at every one of us. He is waiting for anyone who is willing to come to Jesus with a repentant heart, believing. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I have preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which*

³⁴ 1 Timothy 5:24

³⁵ Malachi 3:18

³⁶ Luke 14:33

³⁷ Luke 13:3

also ye are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye had believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.³⁸

These are some of my favorite verses because about 18 years ago I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and was saved. *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*³⁹ Oh, those are wonderful verses to me.

When I was 19 years old I was working at a golf course. I was given the responsibility of closing down the shop. One night, July 15, 1978, I was closing down the shop at Pebble Creek golf course in Lexington Ohio. For some reason, praise be to God, my heart was so weighed down with the conviction of the Spirit of God, I really felt that if I would have died that night I would have split hell wide open. Just before closing the golf shop that night, for the first time in my life—I had worked there for many, many months—I saw there was a tract rack on the wall. I went over to it, praise be to God, picked up a tract, and read about the wonderful news of the Lord Jesus Christ. How the Lord Jesus wanted me to repent, believe on Him, and call upon His name for salvation. I was excited, because I believed it. I remember closing up the shop that night, and hurriedly going to my car, a 1977 Buick Regal, red, with a white landau top. I began to drive away from the golf course, and I began to pray and cry. I prayed, and I cried. In about 5 or 10 minutes I can testify to you the Lord Jesus saved my soul. I knew I was a child of God! Do you realize if you understand you're a sinner, and you're on your way to eternal judgment, and you need to repent, confess, and forsake your sin, and say "Lord Jesus I want to be Your servant" the convicting power of the Spirit of God is working in your heart? Do you understand if you come down this aisle, and believe the wonderful news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and call upon the Lord Jesus, you can be saved right now?

Let me give you an illustration. Perhaps you can imagine for a moment that you were in debt for 25 million dollars. You were very anxious and concerned because if the debt was not paid the people who you owed it to were going to end your life. Even now they're in the progress of hunting you down. You're on the run. A friend contacts you by phone and tells you some wonderful news. A very wealthy man has heard of your dilemma, and has volunteered to pay off your entire debt. The documents for proof of payment are in the mail. Now let me ask you a question. If you believe your friend, what do you do? "Glory!" Don't you do that? "Glory to God! I'm free!"

I have wonderful news for you this evening. Friend, sinner friend, I'm here to tell you a very, very wealthy and compassionate man has paid off your debt of sin. His name is Jesus. I also have the proof of payment. The document is right here in my hand. Friend, if you came down this aisle to the altar, under the conviction of the Spirit of God, and you were willing to repent, do you realize if you believe the gospel and called out to Jesus Who is sitting on the right hand of God even now, that the Lord Jesus would save your soul if you believed Him? Will you come and wash away your sins, calling upon the name of the Lord? There has been no more soul searching thing said than what Pilate said unto the multitudes *What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?*⁴⁰ You have a choice. What will **you** do with Jesus which is called Christ? What you do with the Lord Jesus will determine where you are in a million years. What you do with God's Son will determine your eternal destiny and your eternal inheritance.

I love this story, I love to tell it. You've heard it before, but I'll tell it again. An aged man, a very wealthy man, had amassed a tremendous collection of expensive art. This man had one son. Sometime during this young son's life, this aged man decided to have his son's portrait painted, which he did. Shortly after having the portrait of the son painted, the son died unexpectedly. It crushed the aged man's heart. Shortly after the death of the son, the aged man also died himself. But before he died, he made out a will. In the will he said "I would like to have

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

³⁹ Romans 10:9-13

⁴⁰ Matthew 27:22

all my art collection that I have amassed over these many years, the many millions of dollars worth of art, sold at an auction after my death.”

So they had an auction one day. This vast collection was gathered together. Many people from all over the world came to look at this wonderful collection of art, and to take part in this auction. The auctioneer stood up before everyone and said, “Listen, there are two stipulations in the auction which were laid out by this gentleman who passed away. The first stipulation is this: the first painting to go up for auction is the painting of his son.” So they brought the painting of this man’s son up. The auctioneer began the bidding. All across the crowd there wasn’t a single bid. The auctioneer waited, and waited, and waited. Finally a Negro man who knew and loved the son, reached down in his pocket, and he pulled out three quarters. He raised them up in the air and said “I’ll give 75 cents for the picture of the son.” The auctioneer looked around, and waited a few more minutes. There was silence. Everyone else was out looking at the other portraits, and finally the auctioneer said “Sold!” 75 cents. Then to the shock of everyone, the auctioneer said “The sale is over. Because the second stipulation in this man’s will was this: that whoever purchases the portrait of my beloved son receives everything else for free.”

Do you realize the Negro man went away that day a very wealthy man? Because he loved the son. I say this to you, if you love the Lord Jesus, and you’re willing to come down and purchase the Lord Jesus, calling upon the Lord Jesus, you can have everything! The Bible says if we’re in Christ we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and heirs of God. What do you think of Jesus? If you get Jesus, you get everything. What will you do with Jesus, which is called Christ? If you want to know the answer to the question “What must I do to be saved?” here it is: accept the fact that you’re a sinner. Accept the fact you are heading for eternal judgment. Don’t resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit when He calls. Be willing to leave your sin. Be willing to confess your sin. Be willing to follow Jesus. Then come, believing the gospel, calling upon the name of the Lord. You can come tonight. The promise is open. *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*⁴¹ That includes me. And that includes you.

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⁴¹ Romans 10:13