

Working and Striving for Salvation

By Glen Bond

Well, I'm glad to be back with you this morning. I thank the Lord for his mercy and grace to me. And as I come here time and time again, I come to speak of Christ and of salvation. We have salvation held out to us; We have heaven and hell before us, and we have a choice to make. Are you going to just follow the world and go on to hell? Or, are you going to strive to enter in? Strive to enter heaven? There's a work to be done. If you don't make an effort, you won't make it to heaven. And my purpose is to tell you how to get to heaven. I can't make the effort for you. Nobody else can do it for you. You're going to have to do it yourself. And I want to, as best I can, as the Lord gives me grace, I want to tell you how to get to heaven. How to get there. We got a letter the other day from a man who said his preacher doesn't say hardly anything about how to get to heaven, and it made me think. It's a sad thought, because that's prevalent in our churches today, but it's not what I want to do. I want to warn you, I want to tell you there's a heaven to win and a hell to shun. Hell is real, it's a terrible place.

But I stand here and I speak and I want to tell you how to be saved, how you can enter heaven. And we always have to start off with the fact that man is a sinner. A totally depraved, lost, blind, deceived sinner. That's all that we are. And the problem is that we can't see it by nature. It's there, and God hates sin, and no sinner will ever make it to heaven apart from salvation. Your sin must be put away.

Brother Freddy was speaking in the Bible school about the false prophets, and it made me think. We like to think that times change and things are different now and we're a more enlightened age and all these things, but there's nothing changed. We have just as much deception today in our churches all around, with the false prophets, the false teaching, and all those things. There's nothing new. God's Word's not new. The deceitful prophets, the wicked prophets, all those things, it's just like it's always been. We just give different names to all the wickedness that goes on. It's still all the work of Satan. Still going on, day by day. Satan's still deceiving day by day.

If you want to get to heaven, you're going to have to seek the Lord. The Bible says salvation is of the Lord. If you want to be saved, you're going to have to come to Christ, come to God, the son of God. You're going to have to come and get that salvation from him. There's no other place to get it. He doesn't charge you for it, it's free, but you're required to come to him. You must come. If you won't come, you won't have salvation. It seems that salvation is so simple, just come to Christ. It's not available only to a certain class of people, to the rich, or to the elite, or anything like that. It's available to whoever will come.

The Bible tells us, John 3:16, and I think we should all know this one verse. That's one of the first verses that I ever remember recalling. It says, **God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.** Now this is the gospel in a nutshell. God loved the world and he gave his son so that you can be saved. So believe that you can be saved, and flee to Christ. Come to him. That way of salvation is made for everyone. He says, whosoever believeth, **whosoever believeth, should not perish.** It's not a hard thing. You must believe in Christ. Believe that he died for you. Believe that he's able to do what he said he'll do. And what did he say? You'll have everlasting life. He'll save to the uttermost.

Now the Bible goes on and says, except you repent, you shall all perish. Repentance is part of salvation. You'll have to repent. Faith is part of salvation. You have to believe. These two go together and you have to get both faith and repentance, from the Lord. You have to come to Christ for it. It all comes back to Christ. Come to Christ.

You want to be saved? Come to Christ. Don't say, oh, well, I haven't repented yet. I can't be saved. No, come to Christ. Don't say, "well, I can't believe", the Lord will give you faith. Come to Christ. These are gifts of God. The whole plan of salvation is God's gift for you. Repentance and faith are necessary, but they come from God. You're going to have to come to Christ. You can't get these things anywhere else, you must come to Christ. I want to tell you, whenever I think about the Bible times, the Old Testament times, with all the idols, Baal, the prophets of Baal, and all those false prophets, We think of them. We think, oh, well, those people were so deceived, blinded, they didn't realize they were worshiping an idol. What's the difference between then and now? Those people were going to hell worshiping

Baal. They were listening to those false prophets. Our people today are going to hell; they're listening to false prophets. It's the same thing. They're going to hell, listening to false prophets.

Now, I tell you all that, and I want to say, we speak the truth here, but the fact is, it's your duty to seek the Lord, to search the scriptures, to see if what I'm telling you is God's truth. If you go to another church, it's your duty to search the Scriptures to see if your preacher is telling you the truth. It's your duty.

Now, whenever we think about coming to Christ, seeking the Lord, wanting to be saved, we find the obstacles coming into life. And these obstacles come about because of man's wicked heart. The wickedness of every heart. That natural heart is wicked. The Bible says, strive, and the wicked heart says, "well isn't this enough? Aren't I doing enough? What else do you want me to do?" But you're going to have to strive. He says, **strive to enter in at the straight gate**. "*Strive*" to enter in at the straight gate, the difficult way, the unpopular way. Strive.

That's the church down there that nobody likes. He preaches the hard message. He steps on your toes. He calls sin, sin.

Strive; Sure, we want to go to the popular church down the road, that's got the big crowd and the big brass band and the charismatic preacher telling a bunch of jokes and making everybody feel good. But that's not the way of salvation, it's not.

It's the straight gate, the straight way, the difficult way, the hard way (that leads to salvation). You're going to have to strive. That's what Christ told us.

Whenever we think of salvation, the Bible many times relates it to planting a seed and obtaining fruit. Now, I think almost everybody here from the oldest to the youngest can understand planting a seed, watching it grow. It's not foreign to us. It's common everyday life. It goes on all around us every day, and I believe the Lord used this comparison to show us. And it holds very true, very accurate.

In Hosea 10:12, he says, sow to yourselves in righteousness. Sow, that's part of planting. He says, reap in mercy, gather in the fruit. He says, break up your fallow ground for it's time to seek the Lord till he come and reign righteousness upon you. To sow is to work. Now we all know that the Bible plainly says that you're not saved by your works. Your works won't save you, but your works are required.

Not that they'll save you, but they're a means to an end. He says to sow, work, put forth effort. If we sow in righteousness, then we are putting forth an effort that we might gain from it; we are putting forth an effort, a righteous effort.

Seek the Lord, reap in mercy. If we sow in righteousness, we can expect to find mercy. But the main thing here, he says, break up your fallow ground. Break up that hard ground, that ground that's full of weeds, that's been left for a long time. You've went a long time in your life and you haven't done anything to break up that fallow ground. You haven't done anything to seek the Lord. You've let all manner of habits come about in your life. Your spiritual life has grown hard, full of weeds and briars, and it's completely unsuitable for planting the Word of Life, and it will not grow there. It's grown over. It's hard, full of weeds and briars. It shows neglect.

He says, break up that fallow ground. Cleanse your heart from your corrupt affections and lust, which are the weeds and thorns, and humble yourself before the Lord. Put away your sins. Be of a broken and contrite spirit. Acknowledge what you are before the Lord. You're nothing but a sinner, let sorrow and shame fill your heart at the thought and remembrance of your sin, and prepare your heart to receive the gospel. Prepare it by prayer and meditation on the Lord and on the word. And just like the ground that is plowed and is made ready to receive seed, that old hard heart will be broken up, the weeds will be cleared out and made ready to receive the word of the Lord. There's work to be done. You're going to have to make an effort. Maybe one time you were concerned about your soul. And you sought the Lord, and you made effort, and you began to break up that hard ground, and that hard heart, and clear out the weeds, and turn from your wicked ways, and you did those things, but then something came up, and you forsook it, and went back to the world, and now that heart is hard again, the weeds and the briars have all come back, and you're no better for it.

But it's time to call on the Lord, to seek the Lord, to turn from your wicked ways and begin to seek the Lord. It's time to break up the fallow ground. It's time to plow, it's time to put forth effort, it's time to strive to enter in. If you won't strive, you won't make it. The Bible says, now, today, is the day of salvation. Today! If you want to be saved, you must act like Today is your only opportunity. You're going to have to put forth effort. You're going to have to plow and plant and

water and pull weeds and all those things. There's a lot of work to be done in, planting and raising a garden. There's a lot of work, your work, and you're going to have to do it. You want a garden? You're going to have to do it. You want to be saved? You're going to have to do it. You're going to have to go about it as if it's only your efforts, yours alone, that will make any difference. Don't be like the man that came by and says, your garden's looking full of weeds. Your garden's terrible. Don't you ever do anything in your garden? It's easy to look at somebody else's garden and point out the problems. But what about your garden? It's easy to point out problems in somebody else's life. But what about the problems in your life? What about them?

You're going to have to seek the Lord yourself; Put forth the effort yourself. You've been idle long enough, distracted long enough, taken up with something else long enough. It's time to seek the Lord NOW!

Christ said in John 6:27, **Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you.** He'll give that meat that endures to everlasting life. He says, labor for it. Labor for it; not for the meat that perishes, but for the meat that endures, we're instructed to labor, put forth effort; effort, to get that meat of salvation. We must work to an expected end. Work, put forth effort, because we expect something from that work. We expect to receive something for it. You come to Christ, you expect the Lord to save you. Not that you expect Him to save you for what you've done.

You come to Christ, He'll save you. It's simple. He says, the Son of Man will give it to you. Christ will give you that everlasting life. He tells us to labor for it. This means physical work, mental work. It means to put forth effort, that you might gain that which endures unto everlasting life. Put forth effort and don't think that your efforts will save you. Your efforts won't save you. Your efforts won't cause God to save you. There's a fine line there., and we need to understand what we are by nature and what God is. And the fact is, what every one of us is by nature, God will not have. He won't have any part of it. The only way you can ever enter into heaven is by the blood of Christ. Come to Christ, be washed in the blood, have your sins put away, and then when God looks at you, He sees you through the blood, and He doesn't see any sin.

Now you have to put forth effort, just like a farmer. He puts forth effort and he plows the field. He breaks up that hard ground, loosens the dirt, then he goes back and he plants the seeds. Carefully, he goes back and covers the seed. He waters the ground. He keeps the weeds away. Do you ever think about what a farmer does? All the work that he does, preparing the fields, planting, plowing, watering. Now just imagine if the farmer said, well, I've got my seed here. But this year, I don't think I'm going to plow and I'm not going to plant them. I'm going to just sit them there on a shelf and they can grow from there. What kind of garden do you think he'd have? What kind of crop would he get? Would those seeds grow sitting on a shelf? Would they?

Let me ask you another question. Who can make a seed grow? Now if you could make a seed grow, you wouldn't need to plant it. You can just make it grow sitting on a shelf. But you can't make that seed grow. You can't do it. Just like you can't save yourself, you can't do it. And the Lord gave us this analogy of a garden, planting, these things, to show us the way of salvation. And if you want to be saved, if you want to have fruit from your garden, you're going to have to plow. You're going to have to plant. You're going to have to water. You're going to have to keep the weeds out. You're going to have to do all those things. And when you've done all that, then you'll have the harvest. But let me ask you, when that farmer goes back after his crop has grown up and produced fruit, did he make those plants grow? Did he? No, He had no part in that plant growing. At the same time, that plant would have never grown if he didn't put his work into it. If he didn't plow and plant and prepare and make everything right, that plant wouldn't have come to fruition like it did. And it's the same way with salvation. If you won't make the effort to seek the Lord, to pray and to study and to call on the Lord and repent, turn from your wicked ways, if you won't do it, you'll never be saved.

Now you can't save yourself, but you're going to have to make an effort to get to Christ. The Lord gave us this wonderful illustration showing us a relationship between our efforts and the Lord's efforts. In some kind of way, in some strange way unknown to me, the Lord has linked it all together. If you want to be saved, you're going to have to make an effort. The Bible tells us there in 1 Corinthians 3:7, it says, **Then neither is he that planteth anything, and neither is he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.** You see, you can plant and plow, and water, and do all those things, but if God doesn't bless the seed, it won't grow. It

won't. It's God that gives the increase. You must do the work. You must plow. You must plant. You must call on the Lord, you must plead with the Lord, and seek his face. You must also keep in mind that that's not salvation. It does not obligate God to save you. You can't make a seed to grow, but God can. You can't work yourself into heaven, but Christ can bring you there. He's able. Your business is to seek the Lord, meditate on his word, plead with him; call on him, repent of your evil ways, beg the Lord. That's like plowing and planting and watering. If you want a garden, you've got to do these things. If you want to be saved, you've got to do these things. You might try and cut corners and get around it. And in growing a garden, the Lord has blessed the ground. He has blessed the water. He has blessed the seed and all those things to the point where you can cut a lot of corners and still get a little something. You can get a little bit. But whenever you cut corners with the Lord in salvation, you're not going to get anything. You're going to have to call on him. You're going to have to plead with him. You're going to have to put forth effort. And it's just like your garden. You plow. You plant. You water. You care for it. You do all that you can do, and just like a garden, when you've done all that you can do, and the Lord blesses it, then it springs up and produces a nice crop. And I want to tell you, it's the same way with salvation. You go and you do all that you can do. You seek the Lord, you study, you search the Scriptures, you plead with Him, you call on Him, you beg Him. And I guarantee you the Lord will save you. He'll save you. Just as sure as your crop will grow when you plant it, the Lord will save you when you seek Him. It'll happen. But, you're going to have to put forth effort.

When you seek him with your whole heart, when you've done all that he's commanded you, and you continue on until the harvest, and you'll find that the Holy Spirit will have completed his work in you, and Christ will be made known to you. It isn't like the average church where they say, you want to be saved? Oh, well, good; *Come on down here and say this little prayer and believe in your heart and you're saved.* Does that sound like what the Bible tells us? Does it? You're going to have to take the whole Bible, not just a few verses here and there. You've got to take the whole thing, all of it, and it's all got to come together and square itself with your salvation. And if it doesn't, then you're not saved. You're not. John the Baptist said, **bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.** He says, if you're saved, act like it.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, **He says, if my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven.** You see, this is a whole list of effort. You see what it says? Humble yourself, pray, seek my face, turn from your wicked ways. These are things that you have to do. He says, **then will I hear from heaven and will forgive your sin and heal your land.** Are you saved? Are you saved this morning? How were you saved? Did you say a little prayer and believe and that's all there is to it? Did you join a church? Do you think joining the church saves you? Do you? Did you give your heart to Jesus?

There's many, many, false prophets scattered abroad in the land. Many preachers leading astray many people. The Bible tells us what God requires. You want to be saved? You're going to have to read your Bible. You're going to have to study it. And it'd be real helpful to you if you had a true God-fearing preacher to speak to you; it would. Not some false prophet preaching and teaching what he thinks, trying to get a big crowd, trying to increase his givers, and bring in more money.

The Bible tells you, bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. Stop your wickedness, stop your drunkardness, stop your doping, stop your lying and cheating and stealing. Turn from those things. You say, well, I don't do all of those things. Well, if you're not doing those things, you're not seeking the Lord either. So, you're going to end up in the same hell with them. You live a good life, you don't do the drinking and drugs and all those things, but you're going to be in hell with them. The same hell, right there, because you wouldn't seek the Lord, you wouldn't call on Him, you wouldn't put forth effort to seek the Lord.

What difference will it make? Surely you're looked on in this life as a good person. *"Oh, he doesn't drink, and he isn't a dopehead, and all those things. He's a good guy. He's a nice neighbor"*, and all those things. But I'm going to tell you something, Hell is going to be full of good people; full of good people, people that don't drink, don't do dope don't lie, cheat, and steal; don't run around on their wives. They don't do those things. Hell's going to be full of those people. Why? Because they thought that doing good, their works, would get them into heaven, and your works will not get you into heaven. They won't. You're going to have to work; you're going to have to work; you're going to have to work every day here. You're going to have to work to earn a living. You're going to have to work at your

job, doing those things you're required to do, and if you're ever saved, you're going to have to put forth effort to get to Christ, every day, every day.

And then once the Lord saves you, you're going to still put forth effort, begging and pleading with the Lord not to leave you. Plead with the Lord - Forgive me, Lord, for what I've done.

The Bible tells us, I think back there in Genesis where he cursed the ground, that you're going to have to work, you're going to have to work all your life. The Bible never made any provision for retirement. You're going to have to work all your life. No exceptions, no excuses.

Do you want to be saved? Do you? Do you believe what I'm telling you? Do you think, *"oh, well, that's some hard preaching, and I don't believe all that"*. Well, you get your Bible, and you study it, and you see what the Bible says. I'm not telling you what I think. I'm telling you what God has said, and I'm trying to explain it to you, tell you what it means. God's word never changes. God gave us this, many years ago, to tell us how to be saved. He says, **are there few that be saved?** And the question implies, "yes", there's just a few that'll be saved. Why is there just a few that'll be saved? Because he also says, **ye will not come to me that you might have life**. You just don't want it, won't have it, won't accept it, won't do it, won't put forth the effort to get to Christ. **Ye will not come**. There's few that be saved.

We look across the land today and we see all across the land, the churches, especially these big churches with thousands of members, they all believe they're going to heaven, but they don't know they're on the road to hell. They don't know. They're deceived, they're blind. They don't have the salvation that's laid out in God's Word. They don't have Christ for a Redeemer. They don't have their sins put away, they have said a simple prayer, and they've give their heart to Jesus, so to speak, or they've joined a church or whatever they've done, but they've done works for salvation. They're believing in their works, *"Well, I did this and I said the prayer and I came to church and I was baptized and I did all this. Doesn't that mean I'm saved? Won't the Lord let me into heaven? I've done those things and I go to church every Sunday. Isn't that enough?"*

That's not salvation. You'll never see heaven. Lord, help us. I only want to see you make it to heaven. That's all I want. That's why I come here. Lord, help us today.

Our Father, I thank you for this time. Lord, I thank you for thy word. Thank you for making it plain to us how to get to Christ, what to do, and Lord, I thank you that you've not made it hard. All we have to do is to call on thy name, to come to Christ, to seek thy face. Lord, help us, give us grace to do these things. Bless us, Lord. Go with us now through the day and bring us back here tonight and I ask it all in Christ's name and for his sake. Amen.