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If you love me, keep my commandments. John 4:15

## Can We Go to Heaven Without Loving God?

By Pastor Reimar A. C. Schultze

***"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my neighbor?" Luke 10: 25-29.***

The famous story of the good Samaritan comes out of Jesus' encounter with a lawyer who asked the question, "*Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*"

Let us consider some background. Most of us live in a secular state, with man-made laws. Israel was a religious state, governed by religious laws based on the laws of Moses. This lawyer was a guardian of the laws of Moses. He heard many new teachings from Jesus. He heard about a new Kingdom and about a new World Order. It is no wonder that he suspected (as many Christians do today) that Jesus would also have a new answer to the question of eternal life: one that would certainly not come out of the Old Testament.

Now consider that this lawyer was also a theologian who struck at the very root of all theological matter: "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" Notice that the question *what must I do to inherit eternal life*" is not the same question as "*what must I do to be saved?*" There are no works to be done to be saved, but there's something you must do to inherit eternal life. When the Scriptures talk about salvation they mean forgiveness from sin and reconciliation to God. But the lawyer's question was not about starting but about finishing; it was about the future, about inheriting eternal life. It was about heaven, about "what does it take for me to live with the Messiah forever?"

Now let me ask, what you would answer if you were asked, "*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*" I know, some of you will say: **Believe in the Lord Jesus or believe in the Apostles Creed**. That might get you saved if your faith is genuine. But again the question is not about salvation it is about inheriting eternal life. **Be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**. Indeed baptism should accompany your salvation but it has nothing to do with your inheriting eternal life. The children of Israel were baptized in the Red Sea. They "*did all eat spiritual meat, and drank of that spiritual Rock which was Christ,*" but they did not inherit eternal life (1Cor. 10:1-5). They had it for a season but they did not

hold onto it to make it their inheritance. They started as believers but ended as unbelievers. "*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*" **You must be born again.** Friend, note this: a birth certificate does not get you to heaven any more than it gets you into law school. John said, "*As many as received him, to them gave he power [the right] to become the sons of God.*" (Jo. 1:12). When we are born again we receive unlimited potential! But we need more than potential to *inherit* eternal life. It is one thing to receive eternal life through the rebirth; it is another to inherit it when we see Jesus. Jesus said, "*not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*" (Mat. 7:21).

You may be saved but that does not mean you will inherit eternal life. This is the main point of the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25. Virginity means purity, purity through the blood of Jesus. If you're born again you have experienced the cleansing blood of Jesus. All the virgins were pure and all had light. When you're a Christian you have the light of the Holy Spirit. All the virgins were looking forward to seeing the bridegroom. **Yet, although all were saved, only five of them went in and inherited eternal life.** Jesus wants us to know that we can experience salvation and yet miss heaven. That is the whole point of the parable. So the lawyer's question was not about salvation. Are you getting the point? The question of the lawyer is bigger it is about eternal life, about actually getting there, and remaining there forever. Understand that in the world *birth* is the door to inheritance no matter how you live. Your birth certificate entitles you to inherit. But Jesus said *my kingdom is not of this world*. In His kingdom birth does not ensure inheritance. It is only the potential to inherit. In the kingdom of God it is not birth, it is doing the will of God. What counts is behavior: keeping your robe pure and loving God with all your heart. Don't be fooled. God grieves but He will cast His own children into hell. Jesus said, "*but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (Mat. 8:12).

So the lawyer asked his question. The most incredible process followed. Jesus did not have a new answer. Rather than pointing forward, He pointed backward to the Law of Moses "*What is written in the law?*" You may protest and say: what does the law have to do with my going to heaven? The answer is: Everything! The lawyer responded by quoting Deu. 6:5: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.*"

Again, the lawyer asked **what must I do?** Salvation is not about doing. It is about receiving. We are not saved by the works of the law. All of our finest works are filthy rags in the eyes of God. We come to Jesus filthy when we meet Him the first time, but when we come to Him the second time we must be clean or we will be cast into outer darkness (Mat. 22:11-14). Those who inherit eternal life are those who have "*washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*" (Rev. 7:14). The judgment parables all teach us that His *unprofitable* servants (born-again children of God) will be cast into outer darkness (Mat. 25). John 15:2 also tells us that if we no longer bear fruit, we shall be cast into the fire and burned. There is a final confirmation of this teaching in Revelations 2. Although Jesus commends the Ephesians for all their noble efforts, He chides them for their lack of perfect love by saying, "*Nevertheless I am against you, be-*

*cause you have left your first love. Remember therefore from whence you have fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto you quickly and will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent.*” Does all this remind you a little of 1 Corinthians 13? Everything we do must come out of *first love*. So there is performance out of duty that God will have none of. It must be a doing flowing freely like a river, out of a love relationship. The lawyer saw all this what a wise lawyer he was!

Eighteenth century John and Charles Wesley gave the church the greatest revival since Pentecost by founding the Methodist Church. When asked what a Methodist was John responded in line with this first century lawyer by saying this:

A Methodist is one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him: one who loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart and the desire of his soul. He is therefore happy in God... He cannot but rejoice, whenever he looks on the state wherein he now is; being justified freely, and having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Chris. He 'prays without ceasing'. Not that he is always in the house of prayer; though he neglects no opportunity of being there. Neither is he always on his knees though he often is. Nor yet is he always crying aloud to God, or calling on him in words. But his heart is always lifted up to God at all times and in all places. He is, therefore, happy in God. Whatever God has forbidden, he avoids; whatever God hath enjoined, he doeth; whether it be little or great, hard or easy, joyous or grievous to the flesh. And while he thus always exercises his love to God, by praying without ceasing, rejoicing evermore and in everything giving thanks, this commandment is written in his heart, *'That he who loveth God, love his brother also'*. Wesley's Works, Vol. VIII, 340-72

The lawyer's answer was, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."* How did Jesus respond? Here we come to a real defining moment in Christianity, to a dictum, a doctrine, a mandate, an absolute necessity. Jesus said to him, ***"this do and live."***

Oh, my friend what a sorry character is the Christian who thinks he deserves heaven without loving Jesus above all else? Do you love God with all your heart? God is a jealous God and He will not be content with a divided heart. He must be loved first and best, if we do less there will be a time when we will curse the day of our birth.

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