

#4. WHAT HAVE I DONE?

Charles and John Wesley were missionaries to America. On their trip across the Atlantic Ocean from England, they encountered storms that threatened to sink the ship. The Moravians on board seemed calm. On the Wesley's return to England, John Wesley studied with them and learned about justification by faith.

He became convinced that he must renounce all dependence upon his own works for salvation and must trust wholly to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' Wesley recognized that salvation was a free gift.

John continued his strict and self-denying life, but not now as the *ground*, but the *result* of faith; not the *root*, but the *fruit* of holiness. The grace of God in Christ is the foundation of our hope. Once grasped, that grace will be manifested in obedience. John and Charles devoted their life to preaching the great truths of justification through faith in the atoning blood of Christ, and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, bringing forth fruit in a life conformed to the example of Christ. Once we accept the gift of salvation through Christ, the Holy Spirit creates in us a new heart enabling us through His power to bring forth fruit in the life.

“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit.” Matthew 12:33

If the tree is good, the fruit will be good. The tree is known by its fruit. A good tree only produces good fruit.

“O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” Matthew 12:34,35

When the heart is made good, the life will be good also. The problem is that due to the fall of Adam and Eve, we are born with evil hearts and can only bring forth evil fruit. This is why we need a new heart. Only with a new heart can we bring forth good fruit. But where does this new heart come from?

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.” Ezekiel 36:25

God promises to give us a new heart which consists of new purposes, desires, and goals. The things we once loved, we now hate and the things we once hated we now love. When you surrender your life to Christ and commit to following Him by obeying His word, you are pardoned or justified. Your sins are forgiven and you stand before God just as if you'd never sinned.

Surrender takes place before justification since Jesus is not going to pardon you if you have not decided to follow Him. Once you do decide to follow Jesus, He creates in you a clean, new heart (new motives, desires, goals, etc) and gives you the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower you to obey the voice of Jesus in His Word.

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.” Ezekiel 36:26,27

How is the Holy Spirit given? How is a new heart & spirit given?

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet *for* this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do *it* for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.” Ezekiel 36:37

God wants you to ask for a new heart. Prayer is the secret of spiritual power. Prayer connects you with Heaven, claims the promises of God and receives power to follow Christ. You are to believe you receive what God has promised at the time you ask. Then God gives you His Holy Spirit through faith.

“That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Galatians 3:14

When you receive the Holy Spirit, what grace does He bring you?

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Romans 5:5

The Holy Spirit puts the love of God into your new heart and you express your gratitude and love by seeking to keep His commandments.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” John 14:15

Because you love Him and have surrendered your life to Him, love is the motivation for keeping His commandments.

“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” Galatians 5:6

It's not the amount or greatness of your work but the motivation with which you do it that God looks at.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” John 14:16-18

Christ lives in us by His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit imbues you with the motive of love, gives you power to obey and comforts you with the assurance of salvation.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:”
Romans 8:16

The Holy Spirit lets you know you are a child of God. You are a child of God by faith.

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:26

If you are a child of God, then you are an heir to His throne. You are a joint heir with Christ. Everything that Christ is to ‘inherit,’ you, as a child of God, will ‘inherit’ also.

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.” Romans 8:17

And since you are Christ’s, God has promised the Kingdom of Heaven to you.

“And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:29

The promise you are an heir to is the promise of eternal life.

“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.” 1 John 2:25

Jesus taught that without Him you have no power to bring forth good fruit.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” John 15:1,2

After receiving Christ, you are enabled to bring forth much good fruit. The pruning process may hurt but, in the long run, it stimulates fruit production.

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” John 15:3

You are clean/justified through Christ’s word enabling you to bear fruit

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” John 15:4

The secret to fruit bearing is a strong connection to the vine. You cannot bring forth fruit by just being a branch. You must be connected to the vine.

“I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” John 15:5

The nourishment of the vine flows to the branches. How abide in vine? By faith.

Christ abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and as long as you do this, Christ will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

Consecrate your heart, will, and all that you are to the service of Christ. Trust Him to be your strength and righteousness giving you power to obey.

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” Galatians 5:17,18

Though you will feel the pull of the flesh and be tempted to sin, beseech the power of the Holy Spirit and choose to say, ‘No!’ With the Holy Spirit placing the love of God in your heart, you will want to follow Him and not sin. Here is the list of the fruit of the Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Galatians 5:22,23

How can we keep the motive power of love strong?

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

By beholding Christ, the Holy Spirit will change you into the image of Christ. Look away from yourself and look only to Christ. Otherwise, it’s easy to become discouraged. Look to Christ as the author and finisher of your faith. Looking to Him you are safe. By His grace you can overcome every sin and every defect. He will show you what needs changing in your life and then give you the motivation and power to make the changes. The more you look to Christ, the more power you will have. The more you see your defects, the more you will cling to His

righteousness. The closer you come to Him the more defective you will see yourself to be and the less you will trust yourself.

None of the apostles and prophets ever claimed to be without sin. Men who have lived the nearest to God confessed the sinfulness of their nature. They claimed no righteousness of their own, but trusted wholly in the righteousness of Christ. You can do the same. The nearer you come to Jesus, the more clearly you will see how terrible sin is and the less you will feel like exalting yourself.

Even though you follow Christ as best as you know how, your good works can never pay the ransom for your soul. You must still trust wholly to the righteousness of Christ. Our good works do not add anything to His perfect robe of righteousness. Your obedience is simply carrying out the duties you were supposed to perform in the first place. There is no merit in your good works that helps purchase your salvation.

“But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” Luke 17:7-10

God rewards you for your works as if you were due it. It is because He is good that you'll receive a reward for your obedience. However, your works are not the cause of your salvation, simply the fruit of your salvation. You must rely on Christ's merits alone. All your faithful obedience must be laid upon the fire of Christ's righteousness to cleanse it from its earthly odor before it rises in a cloud of fragrant incense to the great Jehovah and is accepted as a sweet savor.

Our attendance at church, our prayers, praise, confession of sin ascend to God as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. Unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. Christ holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer your prayers, praise, and confessions, and adds His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned. Everything in obedience, penitence, praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ.

You will often see your weaknesses in contrast with Christ's strength, your defects in contrast with His perfection, and will be tempted to think you'll never make it. Satan magnifies this idea

and you can struggle under a cloud of despair. But God sympathizes with your distress. He sees what's in your heart and will comfort you with His Spirit.

Christ estimates you, not by the amount of work you do, but by the spirit in which you do the work. When He sees you lifting the burdens, trying to carry them in lowliness of mind, distrusting yourself and relying on Him, He adds to your work His perfection and sufficiency, and it is accepted of the Father. We are accepted in the beloved. Your defects are covered by the perfection and fullness of the Lord our righteousness. If with a sincere will and contrite heart, put forth humble efforts to follow the requirements of God, He looks upon you with pitying, tender love; He regards you as obedient children, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to you.

Jesus will never cover your sins but He does make up for your deficient abilities. As He sees you putting forth sincere efforts to obey, He covers your defects with His perfection. We are to hang helpless soul on Jesus.