

First Things First

As a minister of God, I'm told in II Timothy 4:2, *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.* Why am I to do that as a minister of the Lord? Verse 3 says, *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.*

I am exhorted, myself, and I am told by God that I am to preach the Word of God, that I am to stand upon the Word of God. And as such, when I give out the Word of God, one of those things I am to do is to exhort. I'm to exhort people, and I would like to exhort you today to listen to the Word of God and to do first things first. And I believe that is what God has called each of us to do, is to put first things first in our lives.

I'd like to call to your attention Matthew 23:25-26. It says, *²⁵Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. ²⁶Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

I believe one of the first things that we need to do, first things first, is that people need to get saved. You need to get saved today if you've never trusted Jesus as your Savior. Cleaning yourself up doesn't work. Turning over a new leaf doesn't work. Self-reformation doesn't work. You must be clean inside, according to the verses we read in Matthew 23. You must be clean on the inside. The real you must receive Jesus as Savior. In Matthew 6:33, it says, *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his*

righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

And then in Mark 8:35-38, the bible says, *³⁵For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. [Now listen carefully to verse 36.] ³⁶For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? ³⁷Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

Many people read within those last verses, Mark 8:35-38, that this is speaking to a saved person. They say, "Well, if that saved person is ashamed of Jesus, well, when Jesus comes back He's going to be ashamed of him or her." But that's not what this verse is teaching. These verses are not teaching that Jesus is going to be ashamed of that saved person, because Jesus is not ashamed of a person who has trusted Him as Savior. He would never be ashamed of that person.

What Jesus will be ashamed of is the fact that people of this world have never come to a saving knowledge of Him, when He comes back, those people who are here who have never trusted Him as Savior, He will say to them, "Depart from me. I never knew you." And at that point, He is ashamed of that person who has never said, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart."

First things first, get saved. Receive Jesus Christ as your Savior. Don't look at other people and say, "I'm as good as that person. If

they're going to Heaven, I'm going to Heaven. I'm as good as them." You can't look upon the outside. You can't say to that person you're looking at and say, "If that person is saved, I'm as good as that person." You can't say that to Jesus. You must say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart. I receive You as my Savior."

You must clean up on the inside. Just simply by saying, "I'm going to do better. I'm going to do this, or I'm going to do that" won't save you. You must say, "Lord, come into my heart. I receive You as my Savior. I know I'm lost. I know I need You as my Savior. I'm not going to Heaven without You. So, therefore, I ask you to come in and cleanse me on the inside. Cleanse the real person, not simply on the outside, but cleanse me, Lord. Clean me up on the inside."

First things first, you need to get saved. And then I see that first after salvation you need to be assured of salvation. Have confidence in Christ. First Corinthians 15:1-4 says this, *¹Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ²By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. ³For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*

It doesn't mean that once you're saved you can be lost, according to these Scriptures. What it's saying is this. After you've been cleaned up on the inside, after you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you're saved because you've believed in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. But if you believe in vain, in other words, if you believe that you can do it on your own, you're lost. Paul the apostle is saying here that he delivered, first of all, the Gospel, and

that's what a person needs to do, is receive Jesus Christ as Savior, and once you've done that, he says you can be assured that you're saved because you have believed the Gospel.

In I Corinthians 1:17, it says, *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.*

Then Romans 1:9, it says, *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.*

And then in Romans 1:15-16, Paul says, *¹⁵So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. To everyone, Paul says. It's not only to a select few but it's to everyone.*

The first thing you need to do is get saved, and then you need to understand that you're saved forever. You need to have that confidence because you can't believe that you yourself have saved you. You must believe that Jesus has saved you, and once you believe in the Gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, once you've asked Him to come into your heart and to save you, you need to realize He is the One who saved You and He is the One who keeps you saved. It's not of works lest any man should boast, but it's by God's grace, not of works. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast,* Ephesians 2:8-9.

First of all, you need to get saved, and then after you're saved, you need to have the confidence that God gives you through Christ, the One who has saved you. Have the

confidence in Him to take you and make you what He wants to make you as a Christian.

And then I see first, after the assurance of salvation, you're to give the Gospel to others. Luke 10:2 says, *Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*

First, you pray for laborers, according to that verse, and then you give the Gospel to others. Why? In I Corinthians 3:9, it says, *For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.* We're to give the Gospel because we're laborers with God. In II Timothy 2:6 there's, *The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.*

First, you pray for laborers, and then you go into the harvest because you are a laborer. The first fruit of the Spirit is this, according to Galatians 5:22, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith....* And verse 23 says, *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.* We give out the Gospel because of the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit leads us and helps us to understand that we are to give out the Gospel, that we are to tell other people about the saving grace of God.

And then, I see that we're to make sure as a Christian things are right in our spiritual life before we try to help others with their spiritual life. Matthew 5:24 says, *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

We're not to hold grudges against our brothers and sisters in Christ. In Luke 6:42, it says, *Either how canst thou say to thy brother,*

Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

Get things right in your spiritual life as a saved person, and then you can help your brothers and sisters in Christ with their spiritual problems. Help a brother or sister in Christ who has strayed from walking with the Lord. Galatians 6:1 says, *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

We're to help others, help our brothers and sisters in Christ. Don't stomp them down. Don't hold them down, but help them. Get things right in your spiritual life and then you can help others. First things first.

I want you to know this. In II Corinthians 8:5, it says, *And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.* The people Paul is talking about here sent offerings to help, and they did this through the Spirit of the Lord. And Paul said the first thing they did, they gave themselves. And I want you to know this today that money doesn't get you points with God. God wants you. God wants you. He doesn't want your money. He wants you, and He wants you to live for Him.

Next, we see that we're to think of others before we think of ourselves. In I Timothy 2:1 says, *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.*

First, you're to give yourself and then we see that we're to exhort others. We're, first of all, to make supplications for others. Don't think of

yourself first. Think of that other person and pray for that other person.

And then, we're to study God's Word. God does not respect one person over another. Acts 10:34, *Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.*

Knowing the Scriptures, the Bible is for all the saved people of this world. One person does not have a monopoly in interpreting the Word of God. Christ said to Simon Peter this in Matthew 16:17, *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

If you've never trusted Jesus as your Savior, you need to do that right now. You need to realize that God sent His Son to die for you on the cross, and He wants to save you right now. Ask Him to come into your heart and He will save you, because the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin.

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