

Questions People Ask-01 Questions and Answers

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald addresses common questions about sin and salvation, emphasizing the need for a biblical understanding of our condition before God.

Duration: 41:10

Scripture: Exodus 20:7-8, Exodus 20:12-13, Romans 2:6-10, Romans 4:4-5

Topics: "Question Answer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the topic of salvation and the questions that arise when discussing it. He reads Romans 4:4-5, which he considers to be two of the most wonderful verses concerning the gospel. The verses emphasize that salvation is not earned through works, but through faith in God who justifies the ungodly. The preacher also addresses the idea that good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell, explaining that this passage in Romans 2 is about the principles of judgment and not about salvation based on good deeds.

Transcript

The result is the same grace of God in times of sin, or whatever it might be. In fact, it's only when you go through it that you can really realize it. But I want to tell you it's real, and I do want to thank you very much.

Some of you might know we had surgery last Monday, and I've received far too much sympathy for it. I'd like to take up a little series the rest of this month on questions people ask, and I'm thinking particularly of the gospel. And this might be a good opportunity if some of you have friends and you'd like to get them under the sound of the gospel.

Why don't you work on them this month? There's nothing as good for an assembly as seeing people saved, seeing babies born into the family of God. And what I've tried to do is pick up some questions that people either ask or at least they think about when the whole subject of salvation comes up. First this morning, could we turn to some strategic verses in Romans chapter 4? I think they're two of the most wonderful verses concerning the gospel that are found in the whole Bible.

Romans 4, verses 4 and 5. Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as great, but as debt. But to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for

righteousness. I'm going to read it again.

Now to him who works, the wages are not reckoned as great, but as debt. But to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. We'll be coming back to that portion as we go on.

Here's the first question, and those of you who are Christians, maybe you could be thinking in your mind, how would I answer that if somebody said it to me? Why do you always make me feel guilty because of my sins? Don't you want me to have a good self-image? Well, we hear a lot about self-image today, about self-esteem and how important it is, but what we have to go to is not modern psychology, but the Bible. It's what the Bible says that really counts, and what does the Bible say about unsaved man's self-image? Well, Jeremiah 17.9 says, "...the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? And then in Romans 7.18, Paul says, "...I know that in me that is in my flesh dwells no good thing." So, it's interesting to hear supposed ministers of religion today trying to give unconverted men a good self-image. God doesn't want them to have a good self-image.

God wants them to have a bad self-image. God wants man to see himself as he God sees him, and that'll make him desperate for salvation. Here's a man, and he's drowning.

He's gurgling in the water. And I say, well, really, you've been a pretty nice fellow all your life. Try and give him a good self-image.

He doesn't want a good self-image. He wants to get saved, doesn't he? It's so ridiculous when you stop to think about it. It's the undertaker.

He takes the dead body, and he puts rouge and coloring on the face, and the friends all parade by and say, doesn't he look well? What difference does it make? He's dead! That's true of the unbeliever. He's dead in trespasses and in sin, and he needs light. He needs divinity.

He doesn't need a good self-image. And yet, I heard one of the popular preachers of this, one of these prophets of psychotherapy, I heard him giving a seminar once, and he said, he said, if you're talking to somebody... He was pointing the finger with a Shakespearean flourish. He said, if you're talking to somebody and you make him feel guilty because of his sins, you have sinned.

How can you ever lead a person like that, for the Lord? That's what's going on today. Anyway, modern psychology is working against the Holy Spirit of God. Do you want to know the truth? Because the Holy Spirit of God is seeking to convict men and women of their sins, under their desperate condition before God.

And modern psychology is telling them, you know, self-esteem, the new Reformation, that it's so much garbage. It's not only garbage, it's really hellish, because it's telling men and women they have a good self-image, and they're on their way to hell. That's bad, isn't it? What in the world's benefit is good self-esteem to a person on the way to hell? That is a condition of a person outside of Jesus Christ.

So, I would try to explain this in a loving way to a person. The surgeon has to cut his weight and heal, and so does the surgeon of souls. He has to cut right down to the whole subject of sin, to seek to get men to see themselves as God sees them, as people who are desperately wretched of all things who can know it.

I think that's why Paul Lvarco said one time, I wish I could find a sinner. I haven't met this person. So hard finding a sinner today, isn't it, huh? Believe it or not, this will sound strange to some of you younger ones.

When I was a kid, it was not uncommon to come across people who felt they were too bad to be saved. I don't meet anybody like that today, do you? Thanks to modern psychology, that species is gone. The people are still here.

They still need to be saved, just as much as ever. But really, Jesus used to say that. Ah, there's no hope for me.

God could never save a person like me. I'd be so glad to hear somebody say that today. So glad.

I wish I could find a sinner. I have good news for you. So, that's our first question.

Why do you always make me feel guilty because of my sins? Don't you want me to have a good self-image? No, I don't. And God doesn't either. You're lost, and you're way to hell.

You get saved, and we can do something about the self-image. And then it won't be you any longer. It'll be Christ in you.

That's a good self-image, isn't it? No longer I, but Christ living in me. What a wonderful thing it is to have that new self-image. In Christ.

That's it, in the beloved. In Christ, complete. That's what we really need.

Here's a good one. If good people go to heaven, and bad people go to hell, then what do I have to worry about? That's the way people talk. If good people go to heaven, and bad people go to hell, then what do I have to worry about? And, of course, in the end, I'm good.

Therefore, I'm going to heaven. First of all, the premise is wrong, and because the premise is wrong, the conclusion is wrong, too. The premise is wrong.

It is not true that good people go to heaven. That's a shocker, isn't it? It's not true that good people go to heaven. What would it mean? Where'd they go? Haven't found any yet.

There aren't any, as far as the Word of God is concerned. As far as God is concerned, all have been and come short of the glory of God. And if only good people went to heaven, there'd only be three persons there, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Or perhaps some black angel. So, the premise is wrong. The premise is faulty.

Good people come, but the only type of person who goes to heaven is a sinner saved by the grace of God. Heaven is going to be populated with sinners, and some of them were pretty desperate sinners, too, before God got a hold of them and transformed their lives. That's marvelous, isn't it? And that's why heaven is going to be swelling with praises and singing for all eternity.

I'm telling you, sinners, lost, dead, helpless, hopeless, are going to be singing from the very depths of their heart. Why? It should make it easier to avoid and enter wildest dreams. While thousands made a wretched choice, they'd rather starve than hunger.

That will be the wonder of eternity, won't it? Why am I there, saved by the grace of God? The premise is wrong. Good people don't go to heaven. There are no good people.

It says in Ecclesiastes 7.12, Listen to this. That's pretty strong language, isn't it? And you know that. Not only the Bible teaches it, but personal experience teaches it.

You know it's true in your own life. If you're willing to look inside for a minute. And you know it's true in the lives of everyone you've ever met.

Why? Because the better you get to know them, the more you see their warts and wrinkles. None of us bears too close inspection. We've all been affected by the fall in ways we don't even realize.

You know, husbands and wives have had an argument. He says, um, this is the way it was. And you say, no, no, no, no, no.

This is the way it was. And there's a battle of memories there as to how it happened. Right? That never happened to you? Why is that? Why is there that difference? You were both there at the same time when it happened, and you can't agree as to what happened.

Because sin has affected us, that's why. And our memories are sometimes fallible. Our knowledge is fallible.

And our tongues are slippery. We say things that we shouldn't say. Not a just man upon earth.

Sin is not in him. The Jew is good and sin is not. And then Romans 3, 12 says, There is none who does good.

No, not one. So, the conclusion is wrong. The premise was, only good people go to heaven.

I'm good, therefore I'm going to heaven. No. I have nothing to worry about.

You've got plenty to worry about. If you've never bowed the knee in repentance toward God and in faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, you've got a lot to worry about. I want to send you to the serious thing, to faith, God, and eternity.

And I think that accounts for a lot of the pinchiness of modern life. People want to keep busy so they won't think about these things. But sometimes when you lay to the side on a bed and you can only look up, there's nothing else you can think about.

Suppose this happens, you know. Where will I be? Good question. You should face that question.

I'm going to tell you, it's either heaven or hell for all eternity. Now, there is a passage of Scripture that seems to contradict this. Right here in Romans.

If you'll turn back to Romans, chapter 2, verses 6 through 11. And I just like to read these verses, because it seems to say that good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. Seems to say that.

Verse 6. Who will render to each one according to his deeds eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality, but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation, and anguish on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who

works what is good to the Jew first and also to the Greek for there's no partiality with God. Doesn't that say good people are saved? Bad people aren't? No, it doesn't say that. This chapter gives you the principles of judgment.

This looks forward to the time when man will stand before God. Put it. And there should be no surprise then because it's all here in the words.

And here's a man standing before God, and God says to him, what do you have to do? What do you have to say for yourself? Well, I lived a pretty good life. I don't know if you don't mind my saying so. I lived a pretty decent life.

This will be the determining thing. Did you by patient continuance in doing good not just doing, not just giving to the community fund, but by patient continuance in doing good, keep for glory, honor, and immortality. And if he's honest, he has to say, no, that wasn't exactly what characterized my life.

I was only happy when I could forget God and only sad when I remembered him. And he will be good. You know, this passage describes the ideal, but nobody can achieve the ideal by his own strength.

That's the point. This passage says what we should be, but nobody can do that. The only way you can meet this standard is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I think it's so important. People talk about good work, and we'll be saying more about this. It's so important to see that.

The first good work that any man, woman, boy, or girl can ever do as far as God is concerned is receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In John chapter six, they came to Jesus and they said to him, what good work must we do that we might work the work of God and Jesus said, this is the work of God that ye believe on him whom you have sent. If they wanted to be saved by good work, well, do this good work.

Take your place as a lost sinner and accept the Lord Jesus as your substitute on Calvary's cross. That's the pathway of good work opening up before you there. Let me say that again.

If you're thinking about good work, just remember this. As far as God is concerned, the first good work that you can do in the sight of God is receiving Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Then good work will follow that, but that's the first one.

So, this passage in Romans 2 is kind of an ideal. That's like the Ten Commandments, and we'll be speaking about that too. The Ten Commandments set forth the ideal.

You can meet the ideal. That's the problem. Well, here's another question that's somewhat related to it.

Do you mean to say I'm as bad as a lot of other people I know? That's interesting, and this is what we do. We compare ourselves with others. Let me say this.

From your own standpoint, or from the standpoint of your relatives and friends, you might not be as bad as a lot of other people, but that's not the question. It's not their standpoint or your standpoint that counts. It's God's standpoint that counts, isn't it? Sure, you can compare yourself with the mafia.

Well, I don't do a lot of the things they do. But someday you're going to stand naked before God, and what's it going to be then? The Bible says that those who compare themselves by themselves are not

wise. That is not the measuring stick.

Myself or you. The Lord Jesus Christ. How do I rate when I stand next to the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, I just scribble in the dust if you want to know the truth.

I don't have a leg to stand on when I stand in his presence and in the light of his glory. So, it's God's standpoint that counts. What is God's standpoint? Let me read it to you.

Romans 3, 10 to 18. There is none righteous. No, not one.

There is none who understands. There is none who seeks after God. Isn't that true? Really, if the Holy Spirit didn't work in our lives, we would never seek after God.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to what? His own way. That's what we want.

We want our own way. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. There is none who does good.

No, not one. Their throat is an open tomb. True.

Pretty strong thinking, Paul. Yes, it's true, too. With their tongues they have practiced deceit.

The poison of ants is under their lips. His mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood.

Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Interesting to read the paper.

Listen to the news. But his terrible oil spill up in Alaska. It's bad, isn't it? I hate to see those little otters.

And yet they're going to die because of that oil that they're ingesting. And the fowls and the fish life and all that. And I want to tell you, we mobilize millions of dollars to clean up that waste in Alaska.

Fine. Listen. But what about the millions of unborn babies that are being murdered every year by abortion? That makes sense.

Why is an otter more valuable than an unborn baby? You can tell me. The heart of man. And dear friend, you and I are just the same.

As faith answers to faith in water, so the heart of man's a man. And apart from the grace of God, we just see a part of that multitude today. That's terrible.

Really terrible. There is no difference, God's Word says. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

I came across this quotation from Darby and I thought it was very, very good. Listen. He said, It comforts and quiets the depraved heart of man if he can only find someone worse than himself.

He thinks the greater sin of another excuses himself. And while accusing and vehemently blaming another, he forgets his own evil. He thus rejoices in iniquity.

Is that true? If I can look around and see somebody worse than myself, I'm not so bad, you know. Then I take comfort from the fact there's somebody worse than I am. God sees me as I am.

And I'm going to stand alone before Him someday. And unless I'm clothed in His righteousness and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I'll be doomed and jammed for all eternity. That's the way it is.

So, when somebody says to me, Do you mean to say I'm as bad as a lot of other people I know? My answer is, it doesn't make any difference what I say. The question is, what does the Bible say? The Bible says you're a sinner. All have sinned.

You need a Savior. Christ is the Savior you need. Come to Him and trust Him as your Lord.

Here's another one. If I keep the Ten Commandments and do the best I can, isn't that enough? Now, it's funny how people cling to the Ten Commandments, and yet if you ask them to quote the Ten Commandments, they couldn't do it. They're depending for salvation on something that they really don't know.

So, I think it's good for us to spend a little time on that this morning. First of all, you should realize what the Ten Commandments require. They require that you have no other God but the one true God in Heaven.

That means you must not worship money. You must not worship sex. You must not worship power.

You must not worship self. Who's on the throne today, self or God? No other God before me. The Ten Commandments says no idol.

You say, boy, I get out of that one good. I don't bow to icons or to graven images of any kind. No.

Are you sure? An automobile can be an idol, can't it? A motorcycle can be an idol. Yeah, come on. Listen.

You know that's true. Not too many years ago, a young fellow got killed on a motorcycle in San Francisco. And he was buried with the motorcycle.

And as they lowered both into the grave, as Mother says, it was his life. No graven image. Your house can be a graven image that keeps you from the will of God.

The wife, your children, all of these things can be idols in your life. The Third Commandment says don't take the name of the Lord in vain. How's your speech been lately? Profanity.

Street language. Private cursing. When nobody else is listening.

Nobody but God. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

I confess that as Christians we do not keep the Sabbath day, but I believe the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, is set aside in a special way in the New Testament. Do you set it apart in a special way for the worship and service of Jesus Christ? Honor your father and your mother. Maybe we'd better skip that one kind of quickly, shouldn't we? Do you think fathers and mothers are honored today the way they should be honored? Some of them are scorned.

Some of them are driven out, as we heard last week. Some of them are sassed. Some children steal from their parents.

They're not honored. So the Bible says, honor your father and your mother. This day may be long upon the earth.

This is the first commandment of the promise. Don't kill. Oh, you say, I'm feeling comfortable.

Keep going, brother. Emphasize that one. Don't kill.

Jesus said, anger is murder in embryo. In that moment of anger, in your heart, you've already killed. When you said, damn you, it meant, I wish you were in hell.

What is that? A murder. At the very worst time. Don't commit adultery.

And once again, the Lord Jesus said, the lustful look. The one who does that has already committed adultery in his heart. To say nothing of the widespread adultery that is practiced today.

As I said before, if the Lord Jesus were speaking in the average church today, he'd probably point the congregation and remind somebody that the man you're living with is not your husband. Kind of solemn, isn't it? There's proof of the same. This is what the law requires.

The law says, don't steal. Well, I don't steal. Yes, you do.

You steal service, worship, honor, praise from the God who made you. If you're not saved by his grace, and turn your life over to him, you're stealing from God who made you, your creator. And there may be other ways, too, when income tax comes around, too.

Isn't that the extent of it? It's a terrible temptation to fudge. Get out and cut corners. Save a little more of the money from yourself.

And the Ten Commandments don't covet, and that has to do with your thought life. By the way, how has your thought life been lately? I think that's one of the most damaging of all the Ten Commandments. I really do.

This is the one that slew the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul was already dispelled. I mean, he was jealous, and he was contending for what he believed was the true faith.

And then, one day, the law came home to him in power, Thou shalt not covet. Wow! If that's what the law requires, I'm lost, and I need to be saved. And if you're here today and say, you might think about that.

The law says that the Ten Commandments, if you're trusting in for salvation, they say to you, don't covet. And coveting takes place in the mind. It means have a clean thought life.

Say, I'm not doing too well. Well, they came to Jesus one day, and they said, well, instead of just going over the Ten Commandments and listening them all, why don't you just summarize them for us? And Jesus said, all right. Well, he said, you shall love the Lord your God with all your soul, mind, and strength.

With all your heart, soul, mind, and strength in your neighborhood and yourself. That's what the law says. It says, I don't know a single person, unsaved person, who does that.

I've never known an unsaved person who does that. There never has been an unsaved person who does that. Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your affectionate powers, with all your soul, with all your emotional powers, with all your mind, with all your intellectual powers, and with all your strength, with all your physical powers.

It means in the totality of your being, love God. That's what it means. You do that? Come on.

That's what the law requires. Then it goes beyond that, and it says, in your neighbor as yourself. We had a fire, two houses from Fairhaven recently.

Actually, the house was destroyed. And a lot of the Fairhaven Christians come out there, you know, and you watch the fire. And nobody said it, thank God.

But it's so easy to think in your mind, I'm glad it wasn't our building. If we loved, if you loved our neighbor as ourselves, We would have said, poor Clara, that it didn't happen to me instead of to her. We don't talk like that, do we? The law exposes the heart of man for what it is.

That's why God gave the law. That's exactly why. God never intended the law, the Ten Commandments, to be a way of salvation.

He never did. He didn't give it for that purpose. He gave it to reveal sin in the human heart.

Let me read you some things. Acts 13, 39. By him, everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Romans 3, 20. Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his eyes. God is speaking, and God says that by keeping the law, nobody will ever be saved.

You say, something the matter with the law? No, the law is holy. The trouble is with the human heart, not with the law. The law is a holy expression of the righteousness and protection of God, and it was intended to show me up for all that I am.

Galatians 2, 16. By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Galatians 2, 21.

I like this. If righteousness comes by the law, then Christ died in vain. What does that mean? It means if you could be saved by keeping the law, then the Lord Jesus threw his life away on Calvary's cross.

What does that mean? It means the reason he died on the cross as a substitute for you is because you couldn't be saved in any other way. Give God credit. If he could have achieved the result in some less costly way, he would have done it.

If he could have saved you in some other way than by his perfect Son coming and dying in your place, he would have done it. If he could have saved you by law keeping, he would have done it. If righteousness had come by the law, then Christ died in vain.

The reason the Lord Jesus died was because there was no other way of salvation. Galatians 3, 11. But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith.

That's beautiful. Not by law keeping. Not by doing the best you can.

By faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of the law is to reveal sin. I think the crucial verse there is Romans 3, 20.

It says, By the law is the knowledge of sin. Not the knowledge of salvation. The knowledge of sin.

Romans 5, 20. Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound. That's why the law was given.

That sin might be seen in all its extreme sinfulness. I wish those who are seeking salvation by keeping the Ten Commandments would study the Ten Commandments. Read them.

Let the Spirit of God reveal to their hearts just what the Ten Commandments are saying, and they would abandon any hope of ever saving themselves. Paul says in Romans 7, 7, I would not have known sin except through the law. That doesn't mean that Paul wasn't aware of failures in his life, but as far as the convicting power of the Holy Spirit coming into his life, it was when that Ten Commandments came to him.

Thou shalt not covet. Up until then, sin had been kind of like a sleeping dog in his life, but that commandment came on wild German shepherds alone. Paul became convicted of his sin and hustled to the side of the Satan.

Galatians 3, 19a. What purpose, then, does the law serve? It was added because of transgression. Not in order to produce transgression, but to show transgression, to show sin as violation of God's holy law.

So, the question is, if I keep the Ten Commandments and do the best I can, isn't that enough? And the answer is, it's enough to damn your soul and to see to tell. There's only one way of salvation. That's the blood-sprinkled way.

Saying, Lord, you're right, I'm no good. I repent, and I do believe the Lord Jesus died for me there on the cross of Calvary, and the best way I know how, I receive him as my Lord and Savior. And I want to tell you, the moment you do that, God saves you by this marvelous truth.

I was listening to James Boyce earlier this morning, and the radio was good. He made a nice statement. He said, grace is not withheld because of sin.

Grace is not withheld because of sin. Now, there is God who doesn't say, well, pick up your life, you know, and then I'll show you some grace. That isn't what grace is like.

Grace goes out to the unworthy. It goes out to the sinner. And I'm so glad it does.

Grace is not withheld. You know, a parent withholds grace under sin. When the child is disobedient, he doesn't get that epitomized.

You obey me, and you'll get some of that candy in the jar of the police. But that isn't the way it is with God. God just showers his grace on the unworthy where sin abounded.

Grace should much more abound. If you're here today, maybe you have some question. And I haven't hit it yet.

Well, I'm going to hit a few more in the weeks to follow, Lord willing. But if I haven't hit your question, you'd like to come forward afterwards, you feel free to do so. And see if we can help you from the word of God.

And don't forget, it isn't what Jill McDonald says, or what anybody else at Sun Valley says, what God says in his words. You want to base your doctrine on the word of God, because your soul is at stake, shall we pray? Father, we do thank you for your word. We thank you for the gospel.

How unlike the complex ways of man, your easy, artless, unencumbered plan. So simple, Lord, that men stumble over it. And yet we think of the Savior today without stretched hands, saying to men and women everywhere, Come, come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, for I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. And you shall find rest in your souls. We pray, Lord, that there might be somebody here who's seeking rest for his or her soul.

And that in meeting the Lord Jesus, that person might find the desired rest. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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