

WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

Rev. B. Elshout

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Salvation of our Children: A Matter of Utmost Importance

1. Our children are living on the threshold of eternity!
2. The salvation of our (grand)children: The highest priority of our (grand)parenting

B. Christ's Pressing Directive: "Suffer little children to come to Me, and forbid them not" (Luke 18:16).

1. Suffer(!): An imperative—not a suggestion
2. Our explicit obligation: To encourage our children to come (!) to Christ
3. An important addition: "...and forbid (hinder) them not."

C. How Do We Balance God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility When Instructing Our Children?

1. A biblical truth: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3)
2. Another biblical truth: "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17).
3. A weighty matter: How do we avoid either fostering presumption or false passivity?

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH SCRIPTURE ADDRESSES SINNERS—AND OUR CHILDREN

A. Ezekiel 33:11— Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

1. A significant point: God is directing Ezekiel how to address wicked and unrepentant Israelites.
2. God states what pleases Him: When the wicked (our sinful children!) turn to Him—when they repent
3. What God does NOT say: Tell them that they cannot repent and that they must wait till I give them the grace of repentance.
4. Bottom line: We must plead with our children to turn to the God who has no pleasure in their death!

B. Mark 1:14-15—Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

1. **A significant point: The Son of God, the Living Word, begins His public ministry with the imperative of the gospel: repent and believe**
2. **An obvious conclusion: Christ addresses sinners as responsible men and women—boys and girls**
3. **Bottom line: As we instruct our children, we must echo the words of Christ!**

C. Luke 24:47—And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

1. **Christ concludes His ministry by directing His disciples how they are to proclaim His Word to a lost world**
2. **The two foundational components of that message: repentance and the remission of sins**
3. **Bottom line: Sinners (& our children) must be called upon to repent and believe the gospel—and the promise of the remission of sins**

D. Acts 2:37-38— Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

1. **Peter's response to the urgent question, "What must we do?": Repent and believe the gospel**
2. **What Peter did NOT say:**
 - **There is nothing you can do**
 - **Pray as much as you can**
 - **Use the means as diligently as you can**
 - **Pray for a new heart**
 - **Wait until the Spirit draws you**
3. **Bottom line: We must respond to this question with biblical directives rather than directives of our own making.**

E. Acts 16:30-31— And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

1. **The question of the jailor: The classic question posed by troubled and seeking souls**
2. **Paul's unhesitating response: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!**

3. **Bottom line: To give any other answer would be to be guilty of spiritual malpractice**

F. Acts 20:20-21— And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. **Paul summarizes his entire gospel ministry as consisting of: a) repentance toward God, and b) faith in Christ.**
2. **Important point: This was Paul's message in public and in the home**
3. **Paul's consistent conclusion in Athens: "God...now commandeth all men every where to repent!" (Acts 17:30).**

G. 2 Corinthians 5:11— Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

1. **The Greek and Dutch text: We persuade men to believe!**
2. **The reason for his persuasive (!) preaching: "Knowing the terror of the Lord..."**
3. **Bottom line: Our message must be Paul's inspired message if we are to be pure from the blood of our children!**

H. 2 Corinthians 5:20— Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

1. **Our calling: To speak on Christ's behalf to our children—as His ambassadors!**
2. **The only pathway to reconciliation: repentance and faith in Christ!**
3. **Bottom line: The God who beseeches our children in the gospel is the God of Ezekiel 33:11—the God who has no pleasure in their death.**

III. THE IMPLICATIONS OF INSTRUCTING OUR CHILDREN TO PRAY FOR A NEW HEART

A. The Well-Intended Exhortation to Ask for a New Heart Is Not Consistent with Scripture

1. **Neither the prophets, Christ, nor the apostles ever exhorted their hearers to pray for a new heart**

2. **The unintended peril: It fails to impress upon the child that God (!) demands repentance and faith**

Acts 17:30 God...now commandeth all men every where to repent:

1 John 3:23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ

B. We Unwittingly Teach Our Children that They Have Fulfilled their Obligation Toward God

1. Teaching our children to pray for a new heart makes them passive toward the imperatives of the gospel
2. The fostering of such passivity creates an environment in which they can be comfortably unconverted.
3. It can foster a fatalistic attitude toward the salvation of their soul

C. Most Importantly: We Will Be Making the Word of God of None Effect

1. It shifts the focus to getting a new heart rather than being reconciled with God!
2. It furnishes them with an excuse not to repent and believe
3. Worst of all, it will enable them to keep God and His Word at bay until they receive a new heart.

IV. BIBLICAL AND PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS IN INSTRUCTING OUR CHILDREN TO SEEK THE LORD

A. In Light of Their Covenant Privileges, God Has a Right to Demand Repentance and Faith

1. Our children need to understand that they cannot be neutral toward God and His Word
2. **Isaiah 55:6-8: The urgent and sincere invitation of the God in whose Triune Named they have been baptized**
Isa 55:6-8 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

B. As Did the Mothers, We Must Lead Them to the Feet of Christ

1. We must urge them to flee to Christ in prayer for the salvation of their souls
2. We must urge them to plead the promises of the gospel—especially that Christ will in no wise cast them out.
3. We must repeatedly reenforce the fundamental message of the gospel

4. **Bottom line: We must teach them to respond to God's Word and take His callings and gospel invitations seriously.**

5. **Our encouragement: God's promise that a seed will serve Him!**
Psa 22:30-31 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. 31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.