

“The “Musts” of Christianity”

Is Christianity optional, or are there some things that we must do to serve God. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders; and this is a Bible study, “In Search of the Lord's Way.” Today we're going to examine the word “must” as it's used in Scripture. So stay with us.

Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and we're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Way. The Lord God speaks to us today through His written word; and the Bible says in John 3, verses 35 and 6 that, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” The idea that faith alone is sufficient to maintain a right relationship with God is simply not found in Scripture; obedience to God is also necessary. In fact, it's a must. The phrase “does not obey” in verse 36 is not the same word as the one that means one does not believe. It translates a word that means one is not persuaded and so will not comply with God's will. When a person will not obey, he faces the wrath of God and cannot have eternal life. This is how important God's teaching is, and why we teach it with love. We want everyone to obey the Lord. Oh, thanks for taking time with us today. We hope that you'll join us each week.

The word “must” is out of step with most people today. It seems politically incorrect to suggest people must obey God's teaching. Our culture is more inclined to make up their own faith or religion or to select what they wish to obey rather than to follow all the teaching that's revealed in the Bible. Most people want choices, and the word “must” means they have no choice. “Must” is a verb that describes an obligation, a requirement, or a moral necessity. “Must” removes every other option. If we want to please God and have eternal life, there are some things that we must do. And, this really isn't strange, because even Jesus had some things that he must do. My friend, so do you!

Today we're studying about the things that we must do, and we're offering a free printed copy or CD of our study, so mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song; we'll read from Mark 10, verses 42 to 45, and we'll examine the “musts” of Christianity.

Our reading today comes from the Gospel According to Mark, chapter 10, verses 42 to 45. “Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, ‘You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’ ” That's a reading from God's Holy Word. Let's pray together. O Father, we are so grateful that our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be a servant. Help us also to be good servants and to follow in His steps. This is our prayer in His name, Amen!

We generally think of God as so far above mankind that He has nothing that He must do, but God's character and love for mankind led Him to send Jesus into this world. Love cannot exist without obligation and commitment. So, Jesus knew that He must do His Father's will. Jesus said in John 9 and

verse 4, "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work." While on earth Jesus lived within time constraints, and so must we. We must now do God's will.

Jesus knew that He had to die on the cross. Now, He prophesied His death and resurrection. Matthew 16, verses 21 to 23 says, "From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'" Now, though Peter didn't want Him to die, Jesus knew that He must die in order to fulfill God's plan of redemption.

When the crowd came to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus and bring Him in to try Him, Matthew 26, verses 51 to 54 records what happened, "And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out a sword, and he struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?'" You see, the Lord Jesus knew that He must die in order to fulfill the eternal plan of God. Now, He could have stopped it, but it was necessary for Him to fulfill the Scriptures.

Jesus was utterly obedient to the Father, even when the Father demanded everything from Him. When the Father commanded His Son Jesus to go to the cross, the Lord Jesus obeyed. Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane. Now, Jesus told them in Matthew 26 and verse 38, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." I can only imagine the pain that He felt then. The Lord Jesus fell on his face on the ground. And Luke 22, verse 44 says, "And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground." But the persistent prayer of Jesus found in Matthew 26:42 was this, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

The example of Jesus is vital to us. We've got to follow in His steps. Hebrews 5, verses 7 to 9 says, "In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. (And) although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." The Father heard His prayer. Now, many think the prayer of Jesus was just to remove the cup, and that's certainly what He wanted. But the ultimate prayer of Jesus was "your will be done," and God heard that prayer. Jesus was perfect in His obedience to the Father and that opened the way for us. He became the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. We must believe, but we must also obey!

Now, some say, "Why, you don't have to do anything to be saved. God has done it all." Now, I realize that we're saved by grace through faith; and the Scripture clearly says salvation is a gift in Romans 6 and verse 23; and Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9 make this point as well. But we must also realize that gifts often have conditions or obligations to fulfill. You know, meeting a condition doesn't earn the gift, but that doesn't mean conditions don't obligate the person who will receive the gift. For instance, in John chapter nine Jesus healed a blind man by anointing the man's eyes with some mud that He made with his saliva. And then Jesus told the man, " 'You go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent)." So according to verse seven, the man went and washed and came back seeing.

Now, the Lord Jesus gave that man his sight; and no one would ever suggest that by washing in the pool the man healed himself or earned something so precious as his sight; but that doesn't mean that he still did not have to meet the condition of washing before he enjoyed the healing! You see, the blind man didn't argue with Jesus; he simply went to the pool and washed.

So while we are saved by grace, God's grace is conditional. The Scriptures plainly teach that there are things that we must do in order to please God; they're not optional. First, we must come to Jesus. Acts 4 and verse 12 says, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." You know, if one is to be saved at all, he must come to the Lord Jesus; no one else can save him. The Lord Jesus said in John 12 and verse 26 that, "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." My friend, we must follow Jesus.

Second, we must believe in God. Hebrews 11 and verse 6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." Now, faith in God means believing what He says and that He will keep His promises. It's absurd to claim that we believe in God, if we are unwilling to believe what He teaches. Now, in a conversation with the Jews about whether Jesus was from God and the Son of God, the Lord Jesus said in John 8 and verse 24, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." Faith in Christ means believing that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Lord of all. Believing in Him means taking what He teaches seriously. You know, the Lord must be heartbroken that some people are Christians in name only, and they profess to believe in Christ, but follow after the ways of man.

Third, we must repent of our sins. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 13, verse 3 that "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Repentance is not an option for anyone who wishes to live with God. Romans 6 and verse 11 describes what repentance does. Paul said, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Repentance means stopping our old sinful ways and living for God. Romans 8 and verses 12 and 13 makes it even more clear. Paul, by inspiration of God, said, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." You see, to live with God, we must repent.

Fourth, we must be baptized. In John 3, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. And, the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, verses 5 to 7, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you (that), 'You must be born again.'" Now, this birth of water and the Spirit refers to baptism, just as every early Christian testified. One must be baptized in order to enter God's kingdom. When Saul of Tarsus was blinded on the road to Damascus, the Lord Jesus Himself told Saul in Acts 9 and verse 6, "get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." Well, Saul entered the city; he prayed and fasted for three days; yet he was not saved. Eventually Ananias came to Saul and told him in Acts 22 and verse 16, "(And) now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." God didn't wash away Saul's sins until he was baptized into Christ. We must be baptized!

Fifth, we must worship in spirit and in truth. The Lord Jesus said in John 4, verses 23 to 24, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Now, many today have confused worship with various forms of

entertainment. True worship differs from pretense or man-made worship, as well. Jesus defines that difference in two things. First of all, is their worship genuinely from their spirit or heart? And, is their worship authentically what God teaches in His Word? If it differs, it isn't true worship. Now, according to Matthew 15, verses 8 to 9, if their practices come from the traditions of men, then their worship is in vain.

Sixth, we must pay close attention to God's teaching. Hebrews 2, verses 1 through 3 says, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Now, some think that God ought to be satisfied with just whatever we offer Him, but the Scriptures demand that we pay attention and keep His commandments carefully. We must not add to or subtract from God's teaching. We have no right to rewrite God's teaching to suit ourselves or to satisfy the whims of our culture.

Seventh, we must obey God first. When the apostles appeared before the Sanhedrin, the high priest said in Acts 5 and verse 28, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and (you) intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Well, in verse 29, Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men." We must stand up for our God and our faith above all else. We must never suppose that God is content to be one voice among many. God is God, and He demands to be obeyed.

Eighth, we must help the weak. Paul said in Acts 20, verse 35, "In everything (he says) I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Now, Christians must stand ready to help those who are in need, to provide what they can for those who cannot provide for themselves. Christians give of themselves, just as Christ gave.

Now, why does all of this matter? Because there's one more "must." We must appear before God in judgment. Second Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." On judgment day, you will be there; you cannot escape this appointment. The Lord Jesus will judge righteously, saving His followers and condemning those who don't believe or won't obey Him. My friend, you and I must appear before Him. Will you be ready to face God? Let's pray together. Father, we are thankful that You were willing to give so much for our salvation. Help us to do those things that please You and help us to feel in our hearts that obligation. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen!

In Matthew 25 the Lord tells the parable of the ten virgins. Five wisely prepared, and the other five foolishly remained unprepared to greet their master at the wedding feast. Matthew 25, verses 7 to 11 says, "Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. And later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour."

Now, while Jesus offers His gift of salvation to everybody, sadly not everyone is prepared to meet the Master when He comes. Just as the virgin needed oil, so you and I must not wait until the

Lord comes to get right with God. We don't know the day nor the hour when the Lord will return, so we must be prepared at all times.

Have you met the conditions that God demands in order to enjoy His grace? Do you believe? Have you repented? Have you confessed Jesus as the Christ? Have you been baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? Have you remained watchful and ready to meet Him? Please don't waste another day unprepared. Get right with God today. Accept His offer of grace by doing what He commands. You'll never regret doing what is right, but you'll always regret being unprepared.

We hope that today's study of the word "must" has stirred your heart. We offer a free printed copy or a CD of this message; so mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

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