

# What Wilt Thou Have Me to Do?-What Shall We Do?-What Must I Do?

by W.J. Erdman

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of asking questions in the right way, believing on God, and doing His will, as exemplified by the virtuous woman in Proverbs.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 31:10, John 6:29, Acts 16:31, 1 Timothy 5:10, James 3:10

**Topics:** "Repentance And Faith", "Gods Will"

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## Description

W.J. Erdman preaches about the importance of asking the question 'What shall I do?' in the right way, emphasizing the need for repentance and belief in Jesus as the work of God. He highlights the necessity of being cleansed by God before engaging in any work for Him, using the analogy of Dr. Livingstone and the African woman. Erdman encourages believers to seek God's will first and be willing for Him to work in and through them, pointing to examples in the Bible of individuals who did great works for God by following His commands.

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## Transcript

What shall I do?--What must I do?--What shall we do? are questions recorded in the Bible, and often asked still.

Now there is a right time for asking such questions as well as a wrong time, and because they are often asked in a wrong way is no reason why they should be laid aside and never asked at all. Because men have preached repentance in a wrong place as a preparation to be gone through before coming to Christ, is that any reason why we should preach a Gospel without repentance in it? Because good works are not the price of our salvation, are we at liberty to abstain from preaching that they necessarily follow salvation?

So we will take this question, What must we do that we may work the works of God? and hear our Lord's own answer to the unbelieving Jews who asked it, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent," John vi. 29. In Acts xvi. 31, we have the jailer's question answered by the Apostle in the same way; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, (as Saviour, Messiah, Lord) and thou shalt be save." To the unforgiven sinner this is the only answer. No uncleaned hands can do acceptable work for the Lord.

An African woman, in the fulness of her pity, once invited Dr. Livingstone to rest in her hut, and then brought him her best--a carefully prepared pudding of crushed green corn. He was faint and hungry, but

as he took the dish from her hands he saw they were covered with leprosy, and turned away with loathing.

So till we get the cleansing, God can only loathe the work done by defiled hands. Rather, He wants us to cease from our own, works, and hear Him ask us, What wilt thou that I do for thee? We must be willing for Him to do great things for us first of all. Then the question, What shall I do? has its right and natural place. "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" was Paul's question when he recognized Him whom he had been persecuting and blaspheming. We can find an answer to this question in Bible words again, in Mary's direction to the servants at the marriage feast in Cana, "Whatsoever He saith unto you do it." (Is it not strange we do so little for such a Master; sometimes it seems as if we answered the Psalmist's question, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits," in this way--Nothing!!) Do you ask what does He say to me as a woman? We find a very complete answer in 1 Timothy v. 10, St. Paul's description of a model Christian woman. "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." Brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord her own children or orphans, lodged strangers as Lydia did,--when the Lord opened her heart she did not wait for any one to tell her what to do, she opened her house,-- washed the saints' feet, (don't spiritualize this; we may spiritualize the life out of the Bible Precepts.)

What picture do you think Paul had in his mind's eye as he wrote this, or when he greeted by name, so gratefully, that "Mary who bestowed much labor upon us." Was it such a scene as may have occurred in Lystra after the mob had stoned Paul and tell him for dead, when he rose up and dragged his aching limbs to the shelter of some friendly house. How the women would minister to him, bathe his beet, anoint the bruises, bind up the wounds, wash and mend the soiled and rent garment or replace it with a new one, woven and sewed and lined soft with woman's grateful, tender, pitying Christian love. Don't be afraid of washing the saints' feet. It is not always the same to pay some one else for doing it; you cannot depute any one to do your own proper work; you do not know what you will miss if you try to do it.

We may find some very practical teaching as our duty as. Christians in the last chapter of Proverbs; you may have taken these verses about a virtuous woman as a kind of plaything; looking out the verse that corresponded with your birthday. If you have only used it thus you know little of its value. Did you ever wonder why the Song of Solomon should be so full of Christ and His Church, and Proverbs have so little of Him? I wondered till I found out that Proverbs is as full of Christ as the Song is, only it does not lay so much on the surface. May we not find in Proverbs xxxi., the Bride of Canticles at work at home. We have a glimpse of her in garden work in Canticles ii., among buds and blossoms with the bridegroom, but in Prov. xxxi., she is apparently working for him rather than with Him.

v. 11. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil." Did you ever think of Christ trusting His Church, trusting her to represent Him in His absence, to do His work.

v. 12. "She will do him good and not evil." Is this true of every Christian woman here to-day, are you doing Christ good; so living that people will speak well of Him for your sake?

vs. 13 and 19. "Seeketh wool and flax." (Has to receive the materials for her work.) Worketh willingly with spindle and distaff, Is that like people who have no gift for work and a great gift for idleness?

v. 14, "She bringeth her food from afar." Tis not in earth's fields that our sustenance grows.

v.15, She cares fur her household. "Giveth meat (the food from afar) to her household."

v. 21, Clothes them so warmly and suitably that she is not afraid of cold for them.

v. 27, Teaches them to work, "and eateth not the bread of idleness " herself.

vs. 16 and 24, Increases the wealth of her husband; like the faithful servant in Matthew xxv.

v. 18, Looks after his affairs, 'so that whether she buy or sell the goods may be genuine; examined by the light of the "candle" even though all is dim around her.

vs. 17 and 25, Increases her strength in labor.

v. 20, "Stretcheth forth her hands to the needy." Not only cares for those of the household of faith, but for those outside who are ready to perish. Are we ready for this? In our churches there are doubtless many needy, but in China, in India, in Africa, thousands, MILLIONS are dying without the knowledge of Christ because His bride has been slow to stretch out her hand to the needy. The Bible speaks of folded hands, and hands kept hid in the bosom, as well as of hands opened and hands stretched out; which are ours?,

vs. 22 and 25, While laboring for the good of others, what a portion is preparing for herself, coverings of silk and tapestry, "raiment of needlework, wrought gold," Ps. 45; "Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come."

v. 23, Her husband honored through her.

v. 28 Unites in her praise with her children.

v. 29, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

v. 31, Finally points to her own works as her surest memorial.

One verse we have not noticed, it relates to her speech. In Cant. iv. 11, we have her lips dropping like honeycomb; honey and milk under her tongue; now she has gained courage and strength, for "she openeth her mouth with wisdom (implying deliberate, thoughtful speech) and in her tongue is the law of kindness," not a kind word dropped occasionally, not "blessing and cursing," as we have in James iii. but the law in the tongue (steady and constant) of kindness.

Have we not here a complete answer to the question, What wilt thou have me to do? one which will take our lives to fulfil.

Not a complete answer perhaps, for part of the Lord's answer to Paul was, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My sake." He would not dwell on this, only add that if His will can only be fulfilled through suffering still, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

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