

September 8, 2019

## “Do I Have To?”

It is not uncommon, when parents instruct their children to carry out some chores, the children will respond by asking, “**do I have to.**” Likewise, when discussing various Bible topics with different individuals, mention is made of certain commandments which God set forth in His word, and people respond by asking “do I have to.”

“**Do I have to**” includes the word “**I;**” it is something personal, and “**have to**” implies requirement, necessity, or obligation. Viewed in another light, “have to” has to do with choice, and whether or not a person has a choice in the matter under consideration. With this in mind, we mention:

### Some Things All of Us Have To Do:

**1. All have to die!** “...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Solomon said “*the living know that they will die...*” (Eccl. 9:5). We have no choice. Unless the Lord comes first, we all have to die!

**2. All have to be raised from the dead!** Jesus said: “*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which **all** who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation*” (John 5:28-29). The grave is not the end! **All** the dead will be raised. They have no choice in this matter.

**3. All have to be judged in that last day!** “...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). The apostle Paul wrote, saying, “*we **must all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*” (2 Cor. 5:10). “*So then **each** of us shall give account of himself to God*” (Rom. 14:12). As it relates to the final judgment, we have no choice; the day of judgment is “*appointed*” (Heb. 9:27); we **will** be there, and we **will** be judged!

**4. After the judgment, all have to remain in their Christ-appointed eternal abode!** To those on the Lord’s right hand side in that last day Jesus will say “*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matt. 25:34). To those on the Lord’s left hand in that last day Jesus will say, “*Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41). The lost will “*go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life*” (Matt. 25:46). Once one’s eternal destiny is declared on that great day of judgment, he has no choice but to remain there forever! Of course, the righteous will not want to change locations; the wicked will want to, but they will not be able to! Once one’s eternal destiny is declared, he has no choice as to where he will “spend eternity.”

### There Are Many Things One Does Not Have To Do!

In referring to “many things one does not have to do,” we are referring to matters in which a person can **choose** to obey or to disobey. We might mention, however, that though we have a choice in such matters, we cannot choose the consequences of our choice. The

consequences of our choices are determined by God, not man! The apostle Paul expressed it in these words: “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap*” (Gal. 6:7). It does no good to sow wild oats and then pray to God for a crop failure! God’s law of sowing and reaping is immutable; we cannot not change it — however much we might (in some cases) want to! With this in mind, we now mention some things which:

### **One Does Not Have To Do**

**1. Hear the word of God.** Jesus said “*Blessed are those who **hear** the word of God and keep it*” (Luke 11:28). Jesus concluded the sermon on the mount by referring to two builders, one wise and the other foolish. He likened the one who “*hears*” His “*sayings*” and “*does them*” to a wise man who built his house on a rock, and even though it was subjected to the rains and winds it did not fall because it was “*founded on the rock,*” In contrast, the one who heard His sayings and did not keep them was likened to the “*foolish man*” who “*built his house on the sand.*” When “*the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house,*” it fell, “*and great was its fall*” (Matt. 7:24-27). Peter prefaced his great sermon on the day of Pentecost by saying, “*men of Israel, **hear** these words*” (Acts 2:22). Yes, repeatedly in the Scriptures we are commanded to hear the word of God. But the fact remains, we have a choice. Sadly, multitudes are like those who heard the word of God preached by Stephen, but who “*stopped their ears,*” refusing to hear and heed the word of God (Acts 7:57). We don’t have to hear the word of God, but in the day of judgment we will wish we had!

**2. Believe the gospel.** Jesus said “*He who **believes** and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*” (Mark 16:16). We must believe the word of God to be saved, but many are like the Jews mentioned in Acts 13:45; they heard the word proclaimed by the apostle Paul, but they “*were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming; they opposed the thing spoken by Paul,*” and thus judged themselves “*unworthy of everlasting life*” (Acts 13:46)! Indeed, we don’t have to believe the gospel; we can choose not to believe. But if we want to go to heaven we must believe!

**3. Repent of our sins.** Yes, “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23) and, yes, God “*now commands **all** men everywhere to repent*” (Acts 17:30). Jesus gave us a choice, it being to “*repent*” or “*perish*” (Luke 13:5). But one can choose not to repent, and in so doing he is in effect signing his own spiritual death warrant!

**4. Confess Jesus before men.** Jesus said “*whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven*” (Matt. 10:32). But the fact remains that we can choose whether to, or not to, confess Jesus. A refusal to confess Jesus is tantamount to denying Him, and Jesus also said “*whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven*” (Matt. 10:33).

**5. Be baptized.** Jesus said “*He who believes, **and is baptized** will be saved...*” (Mark 16:16), and Peter commanded the pricked in the heart believing Jews on Pentecost to “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...*” (Acts 2:38). But many today are like the Pharisees and lawyers who heard the preaching of John the Baptist; they “*rejected the will of God for themselves, **not having been baptized** by him*” (Luke 7:30).

**6. Attend the worship assemblies of the church.** Yes, we are commanded to not forsake “*the assembling of ourselves together*” (Heb. 10:25), and we are contextually informed that those who make it a habit to forsake the worship assemblies are depicted as trampling “*the Son of God underfoot,*” as “*counting the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing,*” and insulting “*the Spirit of grace*” (Heb. 10:26-29). But the fact remains that we,

like so many, can choose not to attend. But we cannot choose the consequences of such a foolish decision!

**7. To keep ourselves “unspotted from the world.”** Yes, James described “*pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father*” as this: “*to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world*” (Jas. 1:27). But the fact remains that we have a choice in how we live our lives. Sadly, many today who, through obedience unto the gospel, “*have escaped the pollutions of the world,*” but they again became “*entangled in them and overcome,*” resulting in the “*latter end*” being “*worse for them than the beginning,*” and thus being likened to dogs returning to their “*own vomit,*” and “*a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire*” (2 Peter 2:20-22).

**Conclusion:** There are many things which we are commanded to do, and which we must do if we want to go to heaven. But we are not robots; we are creatures of choice. We choose whether to hear and heed the word of God, but **God** determines the consequences of our choices! This reminds us of Deut. 11:26-27 wherein Moses instructed the Israelites, saying, “*Behold, I set before you today a **blessing** and a **curse**; the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I commanded you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.*” Sadly, they as a nation chose not to “*obey the commandments of the Lord,*” and began to serve “*other gods.*” In so doing, both as a nation and as individuals, they suffered the dire consequences. Regarding the commands of God, you may say “**do I have to,**” and the answer is “no, you don’t have to” (you can choose not to), but if you want to be happy in this life and in the life to come you **have to** obey God! And if you prefer “*a blessing*” rather than “*a curse*” you will surely choose to obey! —Bobby Witherington

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