

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

offended God's holiness, only true "godly sorrow" "produces repentance leading to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). Repentance means "that we should no longer be slaves of *sin*" (Romans 6:6), that we "*reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom 6:11), that we do not let "*sin reign*" in our life (Romans 6:12), and do not let "*sin...have dominion*" over us (Romans 6:14).

4. **Concave.** Another key belief-based action is confession. God does not ask us to confess our sins before the world, but to confess His Son. Jesus said, "whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33) Paul tells us this confession is an absolute requirement for salvation, "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," (Romans 10:9-10) We don't have to wonder concerning the form of this confession for the Bible gives us a clear example. In Acts chapter 8, Philip "preached Jesus" to the Ethiopian treasurer (v. 35). As Philip and the treasurer travelled along, the treasurer asked Philip, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36) Philip answered him, "if you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, he/she must verbally confess that great truth before others because "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

5. **Baptism** Another key belief-based action is baptism. Many deny baptism is necessary for salvation; but the Bible unequivocally says otherwise! Peter writes, “even *baptism doth also now save us*” (1 Peter 3:21). In the Great Commission Jesus told the apostles, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved...” (Mark 16:15-16) On the Day of Pentecost those who believed Peter’s words that Jesus of Nazareth was now “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36); asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) How did Peter answer this vital question? “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). What did these new and repentant believers do? “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.” (v. 41)

These new repentant believers were gladly baptized. Through baptism the "*Lord added*" them to something. Christ added them to His church (Acts 2:47). Christ built only one church (Matthew 16:18). His church (1:22-23; 4:4) and the saved are found only in "*His body*," in Christ's church (Colossians 1:24; Ephesians 5:23).

In Acts, Luke records that Jesus sent a man (Ananias) to Saul of Tarsus to tell him what he “*must do*” (Acts 9:6). Ananias found Saul “*proying*” (Acts 9:11), yet Ananias, instructed Saul that he “*must be*” “*Arise and be baptized, and wait away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16). Prayer did not wash away Saul’s sins. Forgiveness of Saul’s sins was accomplished through baptism! Some claim baptism can’t save because it is a “work.” The Bible admits baptism is a “work,” but not a “work” of man. It is a “work” of God! Paul says we are “*buried with him in baptism, in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead*.” (Colossians 2:12) God does the “work” in baptism, not man! In baptism, we submit to God’s command through faith (cf. Luke 6:46; 2 John 2:3-5). Thus, baptism is a belief-based action on our part. In baptism, God promises the “*remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38) and He delivers it.

Paul tells us, "*salvation...is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 2:10). Tell us Paul, "How does one get *in Christ Jesus*"? By being "*baptized into Christ*" (Galatians 3:27). Through baptism we also "*put on Christ*" (Galatians 3:27). If one can be saved without baptism, one can be saved without being "*in Christ Jesus*" and without putting on Christ! In Romans 6 Paul gives his great inspired treatise on baptism. Our baptism re-enacts the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul says the penitent believer is "*united together in the likeness of His death*" (Romans 6:5). Jesus shed His blood in death. If one can be saved without baptism, one can be saved without the blood of Christ. Does that make any sense? None at all! Ephesians 1:7

6. ***Faithfulness:*** Finally, God calls on us to remain faithful and grow in our faith (e.g., 2 Peter 1:3-17). Paul eloquently describes this in Colossians 1:21-23, “*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight — if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard,...*” We are incapable of sinless perfection even when we become a Christian. Hence, God also provides us the opportunity for forgiveness from the sins we commit after becoming a Christian. We must simply confess those sins to God (1 John 1:9), repent of them (Acts 8:22), and rely on His strengthening power to help us do them no more (Philippians 4:13). Many falsely believe and teach a Christian cannot sin so as to be eternally lost. Such teaching is not found in the Bible (e.g., Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 10:26-39). As Christians we must “*be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:10-11).

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The most important question you will ever ask is: What must I do to be saved? Unfortunately, most do not have a clue why this question is so vitally important, or even what it means. We urge you to read on so you will understand the question and its only appropriate answer.

The Sin Problem

God made man "according to Our [i.e., God's] likeness," (Genesis 1:26). God, our Creator, is perfect in all His attributes and possesses those attributes to an infinite degree. God made man with many divine attributes. A very important attribute of God is His holiness. One psalmist said, "Exalt the LORD our God...the LORD our God is holy," (Psalm 99:9). Holiness simultaneously expresses the ideas of being morally blameless and separate from sin. God is good (Psalm 145:9). God is love (1 John 4:7-8). God does not commit sin (1 John 3:5). This makes Him morally blameless and separates Him from all sinners. God created man morally blameless. Solomon wrote, "Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright..." (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

Due to His holiness, God cannot tolerate sin. David said, *"For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You."* Similarly, through Isaiah the prophet God said, *"...your [i.e., man's] iniquities [i.e., sins] have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."* (Isaiah 59:2)

The Bible describes sin as *"the transgression of the law"* (1 John 3:4). What law? Who's law? God's law! As our Creator, God has the right and authority to determine what human behavior is right and what is wrong. But, we can always rest assured following God's law is in our best interest (1 John 5:3; Proverbs 3:1-18). However, from the beginning man has rebelled against God's laws. Genesis 2 records the one simple law, or rule, God gave Adam and Eve: *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"* Genesis 3 tells us Satan deceived Eve and she ate of the *"tree of the knowledge of good and evil..."* She *"also gave to her husband with her, and he ate"* (Genesis 3:6). By this act sin entered and shattered a perfect world (3:16-24). By this sin Adam and Eve died that very day as their sin separated them from fellowship with God. Also, through Adam's sin physical death entered the world.

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In Romans 5:12 the apostle Paul writes, *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned..."*

Remember the words of Solomon? He wrote, *"Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright..."* The latter part of that passage goes on to add: *"But they have sought out many schemes."* (Ecclesiastes 7:29) Man does not have to sin, but unfortunately, once we come to an age where we recognize 'right' and 'wrong'; we all chose to do wrong. To sin! That's why Paul wrote, *"...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."* (Romans 3:23). When you and I sin, just like Adam and Eve, our sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2). This is so because God's holiness cannot tolerate sin. God's holiness demands He stay separate from sin. Adam's sin also brought physical death into the world, thus, you and I have an unavoidable appointment with death (Hebrews 9:27). Adam's sin separated Him from fellowship with God and he lost access to God's tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24). Likewise, our sin brings spiritual death upon us (Romans 6:23) and severs our fellowship with our Creator. If unforgiven, sin dooms us to an eternity in hell (Mark 9:42-48; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:15).

Thankfully, God loves man! (John 3:16) God has made a provision to take away our sin while maintaining His attribute of justice. Very soon after Adam and Eve sinned, God proclaimed His very first prophecy that would ultimately provide a way of salvation (forgiveness) from sin. God told Satan *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."* (Genesis 3:15) In other words, someone *"born of woman"* (Galatians 4:4) would give Satan a fatal wound. He would destroy Satan's power. In the process the woman's *"Seed"* would suffer only a minor wound, a bruised heel.

This passage (Genesis 3:15) is the first pronouncement of God's plan for redeeming, or saving, man from his own sin. The rest of the Bible is the unfolding of this grand plan over the centuries. The bulk of the Old Testament chronicles the history of the nation of Israel. God chose Israel to preserve the lineage of the one *"born of a woman,"* the *"Seed"* of Genesis 3:15; who would destroy Satan's power and rescue mankind from sin.

God gave Israel the *"Law of Moses."* In this law a multitude of animal sacrifices were offered in a vain attempt to take away sin. The Bible tells us blood represents life, because *"the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have*

given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul," (Leviticus 17:11). The forgiveness of sin always requires the shedding of innocent blood (Hebrews 9:22). However, the shedding of the innocent blood of animals does not fully have the power to take away sin. The book of Hebrews tells us *"it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins."* (Hebrews 10:4) Importantly, the Old Testament sacrifices taught the world something much stronger was needed to take away our sin. The purpose of the Law of Moses is described in Galatians chapter 3: *"What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made...Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith,"* (Galatians 3:19-24)

Sin is so terrible only a perfect, sinless, human sacrifice could atone for it. Thankfully, God stepped in and gave the perfect sacrifice: *"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him,"* (Romans 5:8-9) Jesus Christ was able to provide this perfect sacrifice because He lived as a man and was tempted just like you and me, but did so *"without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). The writer of Hebrews states: *"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."* (Hebrew 2:14-15)

God promises to take away our sin and give us the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2) if we will express our faith by believing in and trusting His Son, Jesus Christ. It is written, *"God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."* The very night before His crucifixion, Jesus said His blood was the *"blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins,"* (Matthew 26:28)

The apostle Paul tells us all the blessings of the forgiveness of sin, salvation, the hope of eternal life, etc. are found only *"in Christ"* (Ephesians 1:3) He writes, *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins..."* (Ephesians 1:7) The question we must answer is: What must I do to be saved? In other words, *"What must I do to get 'in Christ'?"* *"What must I do to have Christ's blood wash away my sins?"*

False Answers

It is most unfortunate there are many false answers to these vital questions. Some religious organizations proclaim all you must do is believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and you receive salvation. Others might also call on you to pray what is sometimes called *"The Sinner's Prayer"* and you will be saved.

However, we are not interested in what men have to say about what is needed for salvation. We are only interested in what God

has to say. The only place we can find out what God requires for salvation is the book where He reveals His will: The Holy Bible.

God's Answers

In God's book, the Bible, we find men were declared righteous, their sins were forgiven and they received the hope of eternal life when they did six simple things:

1. ***Hear God's Word:*** Jesus said, *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."* (John 6:44-45) The Bible further states, *"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 diligently seek Him."* Saving faith only comes to us through one avenue, God's Word: *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Romans 10:17). God has placed the power of salvation in His Word, the gospel (Romans 1:16-17). God uses the gospel as His only "drawing card" to inform men of salvation in Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). It is critical for us to hear only His gospel without it being mixed with the creeds, catechisms, and doctrines of men.

2. ***Believe:*** Jesus puts it very starkly, *"If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."* (John 8:24). We must believe the testimony given in God's Word that Jesus is the one and only Son of God who John the Baptist described as: *"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29) Many false teachers say belief in Jesus alone will save you, but the Bible says something quite different. Concerning belief in Jesus, James says, *"Even the demons believe — and tremble!"* Are the demons saved? Absolutely not! They are *"reserved in everlasting chains...for judgment of the great day"* (Jude 6). Something beyond simple belief (i.e., beyond mental consent) is required. That's why James said, *"a man is justified by works, and not by faith only...faith without works is dead also."* (James 2:24, 26) God requires our belief to be boxed in actions.

3. ***Repent of sin:*** A key belief-based action is repentance. When one repents he actively turns away from his sin with a deep commitment to live no longer as a sinner. For example, those who heard the first gospel sermon asked the apostles, *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* Essentially, they asked, *"What must we do to be saved?"* The apostle *"Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...'"* (Acts 2:38) Repentance involves *"godly sorrow"* over the fact we've deeply