

What must I do to be saved?

Why should we concern ourselves with this questions? Why do we need to be 'saved' in the first place?

We can try to fill our lives with all sort of stuff without ever satisfying the deepest aspirations of our soul. We can only find meaning and satisfaction in a living relationship with God, our Maker.

Why is it then that many people do not experience this joy? The short answer is sin. Sin separates us from God, the source and delight of life, and brings upon us his displeasure. Thankfully we can be saved from sin and be reconciled to God. He himself reaches out to us with his amazing grace and forgiveness.

But how can we know God and receive his love? We should not waste our time exploring human religions because the Bible warns us that 'the world through its wisdom did not know God.' Rather, we should seek God's message for us recorded in his book, the Holy Bible.

This article briefly explains God's plan of salvation. Please read it attentively and prayerfully. May the Lord Jesus help you understand the gospel message. Don't give rest to your soul before you know God's answer to the most pressing question: 'What must I do to be saved?'

Our Problem

We need to be saved because we have sinned against God.

We are under obligation to love, obey and worship God our Creator. Instead we have rebelled against his rule and acted according to our whims. We have broken every one of his commandments. Whenever we sin we defy God, saying, in effect: 'Though I know what is right in your sight, I choose to disregard you. I will do whatever I want. I will not submit to your rule!' Even so, we are accountable to God, and one day we will appear before him for judgment. Jesus has warned us that sinners will be cast into Hell.

Our bad conduct is symptomatic of a deeper problem - a bad heart. Just as the earthworm hides away from the light and burrows deep in the darkness of the ground, even so we naturally flee from the brightness of the glory of God's majesty. 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God' (Romans 3:10, 11). Our heart is so bad that we will never come to Christ for salvation unless God draws us by his grace. 'No one can come to me,' said Jesus, 'unless the Father who sent me draws him' (John 6:44).

These truths are overwhelming. One may object, 'I'm not that bad! I made a few mistakes, but to say that I deserve Hell is ridiculous. I do not have a bad heart. I am a good person.' However it is dangerous to take that attitude, for in so doing we would be contradicting God's verdict. When we agree with God and admit our sinfulness and guilt is the first step to freedom.

False Hopes

The Bible warns us that salvation cannot be obtained by our efforts or through anyone other than Jesus Christ.

Not by the Law

When we stand before God, why should he allow us into Heaven? Will he accept us because we had tried to obey his commandments and live a reasonably good life?

No, the commandments cannot save us because we did not obey them as we should. 'For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin' (Romans 3:20). Like a mirror the law exposes the spiritual filth in our heart, but it cannot clean us. We need mercy and grace because justice, by itself, would be our damnation. Freedom cannot be obtained from Mount Sinai; forgiveness can only be found at Calvary.

No Other Name

The apostle Peter says that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour: 'Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by whom we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). Yet some people also call the name of Mary, and by so doing they show that they are not fully satisfied with Christ as their Saviour.

We dare not speak a single word against Mary, the blessed mother of the Lord. If we truly respect her, we should not attribute to her a role that belongs to Christ alone. She is not the mediator of our salvation. Mary did not die on the cross to make satisfaction for our sins. Jesus alone did. 'For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all' (1 Timothy 2:5, 6). Thus we cannot invoke the name of Mary along with the name of Jesus. We should call on his name, and he will most certainly save us.

Our Saviour

So, back to our original question, 'What must I do to be saved?' The Bible answers plainly: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved' (Acts 16:30-31). Christ Jesus invites us, 'Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28). But who is Jesus, and what has he done that we should entrust ourselves to him? The Scripture gives several compelling reasons.

Jesus is the Appointed Saviour

We should trust in Jesus because he is 'the Christ' – the one appointed by God the Father to be the Saviour of the world. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies about the promised Saviour written in the Old Testament. Moreover Jesus performed countless miracles. He healed all sorts of diseases, restoring the sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, strength to the paralytic. He even called the dead back to life. When asked if he were the Christ, Jesus responded: 'The works which the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me' (John 5:36).

Jesus is the Eternal Son of God

Jesus, the son of Mary, is not merely human. He is the eternal Son of God. Everything was made by him and he upholds the universe by his power. Jesus has absolute authority over all creation and is the author of life. Jesus knows all things and is everywhere present. Jesus is God. On one occasion Jesus confessed: 'I and my Father are one.' His hearers understood the implications of such a statement. They retorted, 'You, being a man, make yourself God' (John 10:29-39). They supposed he was blaspheming and accordingly they wanted to kill him; others believed his claims and worshiped him.

Jesus Takes Away Sin

Since we are guilty of breaking God's law, we deserve punishment and death. Jesus became a man to suffer and die in the place of his people. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon him.' Jesus, the sinless one, suffered and died for the sins of his people. 'The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah 53:5-6). He took their punishment so that they can be reconciled to God.

Jesus is Alive

If Jesus were a fake and a liar, death would have sealed his doom. But Jesus rose from the dead, hallelujah! The apostles and many others testified that they saw him alive after his passion. The Holy Spirit confirmed their witness by granting them the power to perform signs and wonders, as recorded in the pages of the New Testament. Everything he had taught is true: he is the Christ, the Deliverer sent from Heaven, the Son of God, equal with the Father. He who died, now lives forever and ever. The Bible does not call us to believe merely in an ideal, a philosophical system or a religion. God's Word invites us to come to a living Saviour.

Jesus is Kind

When Jesus lived among us, he welcomed all people. Children and old people, leaders and ordinary folks, the sick and poor, as well as 'sinners' all came to him, and he didn't turn anyone away. Millions of people still come to him and they gladly testify that the Lord Jesus has embraced them in his loving arms. His promise is true to us as well: 'The one who comes to me I will by no means cast out' (John 6:37).

Jesus is Coming Again

In his first advent, Jesus came in humility, poverty and weakness. A day is coming when he Lord will come back in power and glory. What will he be to me when he returns? Will he be the Judge who condemns and casts me away from him to suffer everlasting punishment in Hell? Or will he be my Saviour and everlasting joy? It all depends on how I respond to him in this life.

Come to Christ

To receive forgiveness and eternal life from the Lord Jesus, we must repent and trust in him. It would be vain to simply admit our guilt if we do not repent. Again, it would be pointless to know about the love and power of Christ if we do not rely on him for our salvation. The message of the gospel is 'repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 20:21).

Genuine repentance is conceived in a broken heart. We have every reason to be sorrowful considering how often we have challenged God by our sinful deeds. We ought to admit before God that he is right to condemn you, and that we deserve the punishment of Hell. Yet repentance is much more than sorrow. We repent when we turn our back on sin and return to the Lord. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon' (Isaiah 55:7).

Moreover we must believe in him. True faith is a complete trust in the Lord Jesus. We ought to take heart and go to him. We should not attempt to present our merits but simply go just

the way we are, with all our guilt and shame. We should call on his name and ask for mercy and forgiveness, believing that the blood he shed on the cross is able to cleanse us from all sin. 'Save me Lord. I have no confidence in myself, in anyone or in anything else. In you alone I trust the salvation of my soul.'

Jesus is calling, 'Come to me!'

Many years ago I came to Christ and entrusted my soul to his care. I was thirsty, now my soul is fully satisfied in Jesus. That is why I encourage you to come to the Saviour too. Come with a repentant heart, confidently trusting in him. You will find rest for your soul.

A Personal Word

Friend, you may still have doubts and questions about the way of salvation. I encourage you to keep praying and searching the Scriptures. I am willing to help you, so please don't hesitate to write and discuss any questions and concerns you might have.

Perhaps, you now understand the gospel and the Lord has granted you repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. You do not depend anymore on anything you do, your own goodness, any saint or religion. Now you rely by faith on the Lord Jesus Christ alone. I rejoice with you and praise God for his wonderful grace. This is the beginning of an exciting journey -- the end is even better, Heaven! As a Christian, you desire to follow the Lord and to please him in all things. The Christian life is not a bed of roses. The Lord gives us joy unspeakable, but his wise providence also leads us through much sorrow and pain. That is the way we grow and mature.

I encourage you to read the Bible every day with an attitude of reverence. God is speaking to you -- listen well! Go daily to a private place, and open your heart to God, our heavenly Father. Thank and praise him; confess your sins and pray for yourself and others.

As a member of the body of Christ, the church, it is your privilege to join a local Christian assembly. We need one another. The Lord wants you to be baptized in the name the Triune God, and thereafter to partake of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of his sacrifice for us. Moreover, the teaching and preaching of the Word is invaluable for every Christian to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

The Lord bless you and keep you.