

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE SAVED?

Acts 16:30-31:” the jailer said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.’”

When the jailer asked Paul and Silas what he had to do to be saved, the answer was short and sweet. All the jailer and his household had to do was believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This passage in the book of Acts tells us they explained more to him and his household. The text also tells us the jailer, and his household did believe. Although I will dig into this a little deeper, **I want you to recognize the simplicity of the Gospel.** You do not have to be a theologian to go to heaven. You only need Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

I believe a good place to start this discussion is to see what the words “saved” and “salvation” actually mean.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 10th Edition

“Saved 1. a: to deliver from sin **b:** to rescue or deliver from danger or harm **c:** to preserve or guard from injury, destruction or loss”

“Salvation 1. a: deliverance from the power and effects of sin.”

“Salvation:Deliverance from the power of sin; redemption.”

Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary (all underline emphasis mine):

“In the Old Testament, the word salvation sometimes refers to deliverance from danger, deliverance of the weak from an oppressor, the healing of sickness, and deliverance from blood guilt and its consequences. It may also refer to national deliverance from military threat or release from captivity. But salvation finds its deepest meaning in the spiritual realm of life. Man's universal need for salvation is one of the clearest teachings of the Bible.”

The terms “saved” and “salvation” means that we are rescued and delivered. So, a logical question would be rescued and delivered from what? **When we turn to Christ we are saved from receiving God's wrath.**

Romans 5:8-9: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."

John 3:36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

1Thessalonians 1:9-10: “For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

God is a loving God, but he is also a God of justice. Because He is Holy by nature He hates sin. His justice demands that His wrath is poured out on sin. The Bible tells us “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). We, are also told that "there is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood" (Hebrews 9:22).

The good news is the only man that was good enough to pay the price of our sins was Jesus, and He did this for us on the cross (Colossians 2:13-14). **All we must do is repent and accept Jesus and His payment for our sins;** it is as simple as that. The Lord allows us to have our free will, He will not force Himself on us, yet He loves us so much that He suffered terribly and died on our behalf. Considering what He did for us, is it too much to ask for us to just accept Him?

It is a common belief in the world today that good people will go to heaven. Certainly, they do not deserve to go to Hell, do they? Let’s look to see what the Bible really has to say about this.

Isaiah 64:6:"For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away

"All of our righteous deeds are like "a filthy garment". This means that even the good things that we do are like a stained garment or rag before the Lord. This certainly does not sound good, does it?

Psalm 39:5 verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." (KJV)

Now, you may be thinking that this must be describing mankind as a whole but what about the few who really are good? Consider what Jesus said in the next passage.

Luke 18:18-19:"And a certain ruler questioned Him, saying, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? **No one is good except God alone.**'"

The problem is that we say that a person is good because we compare them to other people. Compared to other people there are some very good people. However, the Bible does not use man as the standard for good. The Bible uses God as the standard of good. Jesus said, "only God is good" (Luke 18:19).

Since God is the standard of good in the Bible, compared to Him we are all extremely bad. It is a little easier for us to accept that we are not good when we realize man is not the standard. So, you might say, "Okay, compared to God I am not good, but compared to other people I am a good person. Certainly, I do not deserve to be thrown into Hell just because I am not as good as God himself." What does Jesus say?

Matthew 5:20-22:"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell."

The scribes and Pharisees were very religious. Many individuals were regarded as "good people," however, Jesus emphasized the necessity of surpassing even that standard. Even by calling someone else a fool you become guilty enough to be cast into Hell. How many people do you know who never even called somebody a fool? In Matthew 5:28, we are told that if a man even looks at a woman with lust in his heart, he is guilty. You must live perfectly in both actions and thoughts throughout your entire life. Any person who does not measure up to this standard is in danger of being cast into Hell.

The Bible tells us that no man is that good. Romans 3:23: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God".

I John 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Without the rest of the Gospel message, this paints a very unpleasant picture for all of mankind. The questions every person must answer are, "Will you accept Jesus and His payment for your sins?" Or "Will you, instead, turn your back on Him and choose the same destination as the devil and his angels?" Whether you believe this or not, these are the only two choices. Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matthew 12:30).

Before a person accepts Jesus as Lord, he is spiritually dead. The Apostle Paul writing to the Christians in Ephesus said they were dead in their trespasses and sins and were by nature children of wrath before they accepted Jesus as their Lord (Ephesians 2:1-3). Jesus, when talking to Nicodemus, said, "**unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" (John 3:3-10). The person who was spiritually dead becomes spiritually born. This is what it means to be born again. You were first born physically and when you receive this spiritual birth, you are born again.

By turning to the Lord, you are also turning away from sin. Jesus preached and said "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**" (Matthew 4:17).

Peter included repentance in the wiping away of sin.

Acts 3:18-20 says: "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you."

Let's look at what it means to repent.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 10th Edition (all underline emphasis mine):

“Repent: 1: to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life

a: to feel regret or contrition **b:** to change one's mind.”

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary:

“Repentance: A turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion and a turning back to God. In a more general sense, repentance means a change of mind or a feeling of remorse or regret for past conduct. True repentance is a ‘godly sorrow’ for sin, an act of turning around and going in the opposite direction. This type of repentance leads to a fundamental change in a person's relationship to God.”

We can see repenting means more than just feeling bad about something. True repentance involves a change of direction in one's life. To really turn to the Lord, you must also turn away from that which He hates, sin. We have seen that we are all sinners, and it is the sinners that Jesus came to save (Matthew 9:11-13).

We are all spiritually dead until we are convicted of our sin, repent, and turn to the Lord. Once we do this, we receive a spiritual birth and are born again. This does not mean all your troubles will go away; in fact, we are promised we will have troubles, but Jesus will be with us through them (John.16:33, Matthew 28:20).

This also does not mean that you will become sinless — the Apostle Paul himself struggled with this (Romans 7:14-25). As we see in the next text, we are to confess our sins, and he will forgive us.

1 John 1:7-10 “if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us

Once we are born again it does mean we will change. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, " if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

We also see in 1 John 3:9: “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

This change that takes place in a true Christian will continue through their whole life.

Philippians 1:6: “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Often, after addressing the question of what it means to be saved. The next discussion becomes **Grace vs Works**, in other words are we saved by our good deeds or grace alone? That will be in our next study.