

What Must I Do to Be Saved?



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In the Book of Acts, Chapter 16, we read of one extraordinary jailbreak. The Apostle Paul and his fellow minister, Silas, had been arrested in Philippi for preaching the Gospel. They were beaten and put into the stocks in the jail, but as the night hours passed, they began thinking of all that God had done in their lives. Perhaps talking about what they were suffering for Jesus' sake brought afresh to their minds what Jesus had suffered for them. At any rate, they began to praise God. They began to sing, and that so touched God—their singing while in stocks, with raw backs—that He reached down and shook that old jail.

All the doors swung open, and everyone's fetters fell off. When the jailer saw what had happened, he figured all the prisoners had run off, so he decided to fall upon his sword. He did not want to have to answer for the whole jail escaping. However, those hardened men had not run away! No doubt, in the past they had heard a lot of things out of their fellow prisoners—lots of cursing, perhaps some begging to be spared—but they had never heard fellow prisoners like this: men whose backs were laid open by the whip, rejoicing and praising God! Evidently, they crowded around Paul and Silas, wanting to see these extraordinary men, because Paul called out to the jailer, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." The jailer was astonished by these men and amazed at the power of God, which so filled the jail that loosened criminals did not leave. He sprang in, trembling, and cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

What must I do to be saved? Have you ever asked this question? The answer to this question is the most important thing you will ever learn! However, it is not the easiest thing you will ever learn. Nominal Christianity, who many suppose to have the answer, is a

mayhem of confusion about this question. Some say, "Join a church." Others say, "Be baptized." Still others say, "Shake the preacher's hand," or "Take our catechism class." Most say, "Just believe."

However, what does the Bible say? Let us look and see. Paul answered the jailer with these words: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Yes, *believe*, but what does believing involve? Is it merely acknowledging that Christ lived and died? Is it merely agreeing that He came to save the world? Is it even believing that His death atoned for our sins? Is it a matter only of *believing*? Friend, it takes in more than "just believing" as nominal religion sets forth believing today. It is more than a "head" matter. In John, Chapter 3, Jesus, in talking to Nicodemus, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." So believing *has* to include being born again. How could one believe on Jesus and then disregard His words here given?

Then, what is being born again? Jesus told us, in John 3:5, that it is being born of the Spirit. In John 1:11-13 we read: "He [Jesus] came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This Scripture text mentions believing, being born of God, and *receiving* Jesus Christ.

Therefore, believing includes not only being born again, but it also includes receiving Jesus. Receiving is not complicated. Yet, we read that "his own received him not." They rejected Him. There are two things we can do with Jesus. We can *reject* Him or we can *receive* Him. We have to do one or the other. In this Scripture only two choices are mentioned—receiving Him and receiving Him not. We *are* doing one or the other.

Again, what does being born again mean? The Prophet Ezekiel described what God does in people's lives when they are born again: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:25-27). These verses tell us exactly what happens when we are born again.

The phrase "sprinkle clean water upon you" refers to a ceremonial cleansing under the Law of Moses. The Jews, to whom Ezekiel was speaking, knew those ceremonies well. It was a reference they could relate to. The ceremonial rites of the Mosaic Law all pointed, as types, to what Jesus would do in people's lives. This does not refer to being sprinkled by a priest or a preacher with "holy" water, called baptism. This was a *real* cleansing that antityped the ceremonial cleansing of the Law. Water baptism cannot cleanse the soul and the spirit. It is simply a testimony that we have been so cleansed by Christ's blood.

What does this cleansing, the *real* cleansing, do for us? It *cleanses* us from all of our uncleanness. That is going pretty deep! Also, it includes a heart transplant. Jesus takes out the heart of stone (the heart hardened by sin) and gives you a soft, pliable heart, one that is tender toward Him. This new birth also gives one a new spirit. Ephesians 2:1-2 says this of one's life before salvation: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the . . . spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

There is a spirit of disobedience. That is the spirit He takes out. Then, He gives us His Spirit. He causes us to walk in His statutes. To summarize this text, God cleanses us from all sin according to 1 John 1:7; He takes out the sinful heart and spirit; and then He gives us the Holy Spirit within, who gives us the power to become sons of God. In other words, God's Spirit gives us the power to have God's nature and to be holy, as He is.

What must I do to be saved? Peter was asked the same question on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:37 says, "Now when they heard this [speaking of Peter's sermon], they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" What was Peter's reply? He said, "Repent, and be baptized" (verse 38). When Jesus started preaching, He also cried, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). So, to believe in Jesus, we must repent.

What is repentance? The Prophet Isaiah said, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). Here we read the words *forsake* and *return*. Repentance is a turning *from* what is wrong and a turning *to* God and what is right. The Apostle Paul spoke of repentance in 2 Corinthians 7:10. He said, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Godly sorrow is being sorry we have hurt God, being sorry we have sinned against Him. We are sorry our sins cost Jesus His life. We are so sorry that we *forsake* our way and turn to God. Oftentimes, when people get in trouble, they cry and say they are sorry, when in reality, they are just sorry they got caught. Paul called this kind of sorrow the sorrow of the world, and he said it works death. It fails to work real repentance, which brings life.

What must I do to be saved? You must forsake all sin and unrighteousness. You cannot *believe*, in the manner that saves, if you are not repentant. Isaiah said, "Let the wicked forsake . . . [and God] will abundantly pardon."

Real believing requires that we *confess*. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Proverbs 28:13 tells us, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Well, whom do we confess to? A priest? A preacher? Sometimes it helps to confess to others, if that helps them know how to counsel us better, but the only One we must confess to is God.

Nowhere in the Scriptures are we commanded or instructed to confess to a priest in order to receive forgiveness. In so many words, 1 John 1:9 says, "If *we* confess, *He* will forgive," speaking of God Himself. No one else is required in the equation to make it work. Certainly, God uses people to help others find their way to Him, but confession to any man is not a requirement to finding pardon. We must confess, but we must do it to God.

Why must we confess? Does not God already know everything we have done? Yes, He does; but to get us in the condition to receive pardon, we must stop "covering" our sins and acknowledge them, own them, and quit denying them. We must be *honest* before God about them. Doing so clears the way so that we can forsake them. That, coupled with faith, brings the promised redemption.

Coupled with faith? Here is where the believing lays hold of the blessing. We must believe Jesus when He says we must be born again; we must repent. We must believe Him when He says if we receive Him, He will give us power to become sons of God; when He says if we confess, He will pardon. We must believe that He will cleanse us from all our uncleanness, give us a new heart and a new spirit, put His very own Spirit within us, and cause us to walk in His ways.

Friend, if you will believe and do all that the Bible says you must do in order to be saved and if you

will believe that Jesus will do His part, *you shall be saved!*

What is your part? Confess and forsake all sin. Turn from your way to God's way. Stop rejecting Jesus and *receive* Him. *Be born again*. Turn from all that is wrong to all that is right. *Believe* that He will accept you when you do these things. *Believe* that He will cleanse and pardon you. *Believe* that He will put His Spirit within you and cause you to live victoriously. When you do your part, He will save you!

Friend, you now know what one must do to be saved. This is the most important thing you will ever learn. God has graciously carried you above the confusion on this subject and given you the answer. You can lay hold on the actual experience of being saved from sin! Will you, in genuine repentance while truly believing, receive Christ as your Lord and Savior? I urge you to do it now!

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