

BIBLETALK

A Correspondence Study

Becoming A Christian



There are two places where everyone will live forever. One is a place of reward and joy, called heaven. The other is a place of everlasting punishment and torment, called hell.

If you have not taken care of the sin problem in your life, then you will be lost eternally. *"For the wages of sin is death..."* (Romans 6:23a). However, it doesn't have to end that way. *"...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"*(Romans 6:23b). You can be forgiven of your sins, live your life as a faithful Christian and be saved eternally through the grace and mercy of God.

Do you remember what the Bible says about the cross? Jesus died so that you might live. He had no sin of His own to pay for, so He took upon Himself the sins of the whole world, shedding His blood for our redemption. But the whole world will not be saved. He died to give everyone the chance to be saved. What will separate the saved and the lost? Why will some go to heaven and others to hell?

This is where human choice comes in. Each person must decide for himself whether to respond to God's gracious offer of salvation. What does the Bible teach that a person must do to be saved? There are several verses to consider.

Hear the Word of God



"So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Our faith in God is developed through a knowledge of His will. This is how we realize that we are lost sinners in the first place. The Bible tells us that *"...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). Do you remember that the gospel of Christ is *"the power of God to salvation"* (Romans 1:16)? There is no other way for us to know what God expects us to obey.

Believe that Jesus is the Son of God

"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). Jesus said that. We must believe that He is the divine, only begotten Son of God. *"But 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"* (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus is the only way to God (**John 14:6**). We must accept Him as the Savior of the world.

Repent of Your Sins

This involves a change of mind and will.

You must turn away from serving sin to determining that, from this point on, you will obey God. Those sins that have separated us from God must be stopped. Repentance is the mental determination to quit doing those things. *“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).* All people must turn away from sin. *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).* God requires you to give up your sin.

Confess that Jesus is God’s Son

We must be willing to let others know of our faith in the Lord through a verbal confession of faith. *“That 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 to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).* We confess that Jesus is our Lord (**Romans 10:9**) and that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God (**Matthew 16:16**). We are saying that we will no longer live our way, but the way the Lord wants us to live.

Be Baptized

In Acts 2, when the people who had crucified Christ were convicted of their sin (verse 36), they asked this simple question, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do? (verse 37).* Notice the next verse. *“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of*

Faith and Works

Many have been confused about the relationship between faith and works in the Bible. The classic passage on this subject is James 2:14-26. James shows us that “faith without works is dead” (verses 17, 20, 26).

But, in other verses, the Bible says that works do not save us (see Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5 and 2 Timothy 1:9). These passages are teaching us that we cannot work hard enough or do enough good things to save ourselves, without the grace of God. Some people have a bookkeeping concept of salvation. If they have done four bad things, they have to do at least five good things to be saved. Such works of human righteousness will never save us.

But, clearly, we must obey God, do His will in order to be saved. See Matthew 7:21-23, John 14:15 and James 1:21-25. It is these works of obedience to God that James speaks of when he says, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (James 2:24).

the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). They had to turn from their sins (repent) and be baptized in order that their sins might be forgiven.

When Ananias taught the gospel to Saul of Tarsus, he said this: *“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).* He needed to be baptized in order that his sins might be forgiven.

Bible baptism is a burial in water, a complete immersion. The Bible says

nothing of the popular practices of sprinkling or pouring, only of total immersion. *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were*



baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as

Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). Baptism is a burial into the death of Jesus, where He shed His blood. We are immersed into His death, come in contact with His blood, are cleansed of sin and are raised a new person in Jesus Christ.

Today when people ask what to do to be saved, there are many answers given. “Invite Jesus to come into your heart.” “Accept Christ as your personal Savior.” “Recite the sinner’s prayer.” “Just trust in the Lord.”

But none of those statements can be found in the Bible. You can search from Genesis to Revelation and you will not find one case in which a lost sinner is told to do any of those things in order to be forgiven of his sins. What Jesus did say was this. *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).*

Take the time to read the account of the conversion of the Ethiopian treasurer. It is found in *Acts 8:26-40*. Notice that this government official heard the word of God (verse 35), believed the message (verse 37), repented of his sins (implied in verse 36), confessed His faith (verse 37), and was baptized (verse 38). Then he went on his

way rejoicing (verse 39), because he was a Christian, forgiven by God and saved from his sins.

Be Faithful Until Death

After one has become a Christian, he must remain faithful to the Lord. He must continue to study the Bible and do those things that are taught in it. Growing as a disciple of the Lord is a lifelong process. Notice these words of Paul as he neared the end of his life. *“For I am already being poured*



out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous

Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8). What a joy it will be to live forever in heaven in the presence of God.

Conclusion

This is what the Bible calls “obeying the gospel.” Those who do not obey will be lost eternally because of their sin. *“Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with*



His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2

How is a Person Saved?

What does the Bible say will save a lost sinner? The Bible teaches us that these things save us:

- Grace – Ephesians 2:8
- Faith – John 3:16
- The name of Christ – Acts 4:12
- The gospel – Romans 1:16
- Works – Philippians 2:12
- Obedience – Hebrews 5:9
- Baptism – 1 Peter 3:21

It takes all of these things to save a person. There are no shortcuts to heaven. No one thing alone is enough.

Thessalonians 1:6-9).

When Jesus returns, we will all be judged (*Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10*). Are you ready for that day of judgment?

Thank you for studying the Bible with us. We would like to assist you in becoming a New Testament Christian. We would like to extend to you a personal invitation to attend services at Expressway Church of Christ. You will be treated as our honored guest. We're looking forward to seeing you there.

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