

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

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SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP	11:00 AM
SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP	7:00 PM
WEDNESDAY PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY	7:00 PM

VISITORS WARMLY INVITED!

[Transcript from a Sermon Delivered to the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas on February 5, 1978]

“And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved” ACTS 16:30

Life’s Greatest Question: What Must I Do To Be Saved? And the answer to that question is God’s available mercy and infinite grace: “Believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

The harshest, darkest fact I know in human life and in human history is this: that all humanity and all mankind is lost without God, all of it—all of it. Sin has entered all of our faculties. We are a fallen race, and a dying people. And however you choose to say it—philosophically, or academically, or sociologically, or psychologically, or theologically, the most sorrowful and tragic fact of human life is that we are a lost humanity, and are facing death and judgment. We are a lost and dying people.

Number two: nor can I save myself. I am helpless before the awful striking of death, inevitable, inexorable, and the judgment that is to come. I have the sentence of death written in my members. The color of my hair proclaims it. The lines that are in my face confirm it. And the years of my pilgrimage in this earth are affirmations of an inevitable and inexorable day.

The first verse of the second chapter of the Book of Ephesians says that we are dead in trespasses and in sins. And how can a dead corpse and a dead cadaver deliver itself and save itself? How can I save and deliver my soul when I am dead?

Who can save me? Dead cadavers. Dead corpses. Dead. Inevitably, inexorably dying. I cannot save myself. Sin carries with it the inevitable judgment of death. "The soul that sins shall die." "The wages of sin is death." I shall certainly die. How can I save myself?

My very thoughts condemn me. I can never achieve the likeness of God. And death hounds me to the grave, stalks me until I fall into the open pit itself. And however I entertain great and noble thoughts and give myself to the heroics of human life, I am cursed, and I am damned in my soul and in my spirit by the iniquity that drags me and by the hounds of death seek after me, and finally I go down into inevitable and inexorable defeat. However I try, whatever dreams I entertain, whatever achievements and reformation and advancement I made in which I may find success, inevitably that judgment falls upon me. As a sinner, I die, fall into the grave, and face the judgment day of Almighty God. We are a lost humanity. We are a dying people and we cannot deliver ourselves.

Then salvation and deliverance must come outside of ourselves, beyond ourselves. If I am a cadaver, somebody must speak life, for I cannot speak it to myself, and you cannot speak it for me. Somebody who is able, and mighty, and loving, and merciful must deliver me and

save me. I cannot save myself and you cannot save me for me, a dying people.

And that is the mercy, and the goodness, and the grace, and the loving kindness of God. Salvation is of him. All of it is of Him. Salvation is a display of the love and mercy of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus.

He does it. He does it. He does it and He alone does it. Salvation is of the Lord. It is a gift from His gracious hands.

Now, there are two things in it. Number one, God has to deal with the sin question. How does God overlook my sin? If God just forgets it and passes it by, then the whole moral universe collapses, for the law of God is that sin demands punishment, retribution, death.

“The soul that sins shall die.” “The wages of sin is death.” How can God overlook my sin? For sin carries a penalty inevitable, and the whole universe, in its moral structure, welds those two together: the sin and the penalty. There is no sin that does not carry its penalty.

How does God forgive my sin, overlook it, obviate its inevitable judgment? How can God save me? As Paul raises the question: how can God be just, and at the same time justify the ungodly? How can God be true to His character, and true to His law, and true to His moral universe, and at the same time I escape from the judgment of everlasting damnation and death? How can God do that?

That's the first thing God does. He deals with the sin question in my life. And this is the way in His goodness and grace God did it: God took all of my sins—all of them—and he laid them upon His only begotten Son. He took all of the debts that I owe Him, and He made them chargeable to the account of Jesus. And the death I should have died, He died in my stead. And the debts I couldn't pay, Jesus paid it all; and the Lord substitutes Jesus for me.

He paid the penalty of our sins; in His own body, He bore them on the tree. His death is the death of the judgment upon my sins. He died for me. That's first: how God dealt with the sin question. Jesus is my substitute; He died, paid the penalty in my stead.

Number two: how can God face the question of free moral agency. How can God save me and not violate my personality? For I am free. If God coerces me, I'm not free. If God forces me, and makes me, I'm not free. How can God save me, and at the same time leave me morally free, and not violate, destroy my own personality, my freedom of heart and choice?

This is the way God did it: God left it to me to make the choice in a free moral act. The Lord lays before me the whole story of the self-revelation of His heart. He loved me and gave His Son to die for me. His Spirit draws and makes appeal, and the gospel message tugs at the strings of my heart. And God, having opened wide the door, leaves the choice to me.

I can say “No” to God. I can. Even though I’m made of the dust of the ground, I can say “No” to God. I can double my fist, and shake it in the face of God. I can curse God. I can trample under my feet the blood of the covenant that sanctified Jesus. I can reject His every overture of love and mercy. I remain free.

But I also can accept. I can trust. I can look. I can believe. I can be washed. I can be saved. Thus God has done for me. O, the depths of His love, and the heights of His grace, and the breadth of His immeasurable kindness to us lost and dying sinners! ... And God speaks life and deliverance to that man who bows in humble hope, expectancy, belief, for a gift of life from His gracious hands.

That’s God! That’s salvation. That’s deliverance. God does it, and He does it out of the love and mercy and grace of His heart.

*Come ye sinners, poor and needy
Lost and ruined by the fall.
If you tarry till you’re better,
You will never come at all.*

*I will arise and go to Jesus.
He will embrace me in His arms.
In the arms of my dear Savior;
O, there are ten thousand charms.*

*I heard the voice of Jesus say:
Come unto Me and rest.
Lay down, thou weary one,
Lay down thy head upon My breast.*

*I came to Jesus as I was.
Weary and worn and sad
I found in Him a resting place.
And He hath made me glad.*

[“Come Ye Sinners,” Joseph Hart]

Welcome! Welcome. God has forgiven us. God has pardoned us. In Christ, God is reconciled to us. The judgment is passed. The storm is over. Death is vanquished. The grave is conquered. Nothing remains but life everlasting, eternal—His presence now, His blessing tomorrow, and the golden days of a new and heavenly home in eternity. Thus has God done for us. And it is ours in a great moral act. I look and I live. I wash and I'm clean. I believe, I trust, and I'm saved.

Will you? The Holy Spirit invites you to come. The church, washed in the blood of the Lamb, bids you come. The congregation, praying, hoping, expectant, bids you come. The angels of heaven encourage you to come.

Today, You can say, "I have heard his voice. I'm answering with my life. I confess to God I am a poor sinner, deserving of judgment, and in need of His rich mercy. I yield my life to God. I renounce the life of Godlessness and self-servitude and I embrace the payment made for my sin by Christ on the cross. I want God to save me and to change me for His glory!"

Additional Scriptures

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*

Romans 3:10 *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.*

Isaiah 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Romans 5:12 *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

Romans 3:19 *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin*

Romans 3:28 *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,*

John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

2 Thessalonians 1:7 *And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

1 Corinthians 6:9 *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Colossians 1:19 *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. 21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled 22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight*

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*

1 Timothy 1:15 *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

Ephesians 2:1 *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

Hebrews 10:27 *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

Romans 14:10 *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God*

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Ezekiel 18:20 *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

Revelation 20:15 *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Psalms 51:1 *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. 9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*

Now That I'm Saved?

Have you come to an understanding:

- That you are by nature sinful before God and part of a fallen race called humanity?
- That you have offended God greatly by repeatedly breaking His laws and refusing to acknowledge Him?
- That you are separated from God?
- That you are an object of God's almighty wrath and judgment?
- That you are accountable to God and will someday stand before him in judgment?
- That God loves you so much that he came to earth and took upon himself a human body? He lived a completely sinless life? He laid his life down to be violently beaten to death for you?
- That God, in the person of Jesus Christ, shed His innocent blood to provide cleansing and forgiveness of your sin?
- That there is nothing you can do to save yourself?
- That God freely extends to you the gift of salvation?
- That God is able and willing to save you?

- That you must enter into a transaction with God, whereby you express to him a genuine desire to leave your previous path of life and begin on the new path that He has for you?
- That you must express to God your desire to receive His gift of salvation and believe that He has given it to you?

If you have reached this understanding and acted on it, according to the Scripture you are saved once and for all. Never will you be unsaved again.

So what do you do now?

The answer is found in Matthew Chapter 28 and verses 19-20

1. Publicly Identify with Christ

Scripture teaches that one of the major evidences of a genuine salvation experience is the willingness to confess Christ before men.

The way to do this is to follow the Lord in believer's baptism.

With very few exceptions; a person who declines to do so has never genuinely experienced salvation.

Baptism is a picture that portrays the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

It also portrays being dead of your "old life" of sin, being buried, and being raised to walk in newness of life.

2. Become a Follower of Jesus Christ

It is important to begin developing a relationship with God, your Savior. Like any relationship, this can be done by getting to know God and spending time with Him on a daily basis. By learning of His ways and following them.

This involves reading and growing in your knowledge of the Bible. It also means establishing and cultivating a prayer life.

All relationships are built on communication. Communication has often been referred to as "a two-way street." Opening your heart to the Bible enables God to speak to you. Time spent in prayer enables you to express yourself to God.

Both prayer and personal bible study are enhanced by being part of a good church.

At church you can enjoy the benefit of assembling with others who have also been saved. Those who have been saved for a considerable length of time can help you in your walk with Christ.

It is vitally important that you faithfully attend a church that diligently teaches and preaches the Bible! This means that week by week you are being taken line upon line through the Word of God.

God commands everyone that He saves to be part of a Bible-Teaching, Local Church.