

# What Must I Do to Be Saved?

We all have our share of trouble and suffering. The root of all our misery is sin, because it separates us from God, the source and joy of life, and brings upon us His displeasure. Moreover, Judgement Day is approaching and sinners are in danger of everlasting fire in Hell.

Various religions promise deliverance and life. However, we are not interested in human opinions, because the Scripture warns us that “the world through wisdom did not know God.” Rather, we should seek God's message, recorded for us in His book, the Holy Bible. We are convinced that by the Scripture we can arrive at a sound knowledge of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).

This article briefly explains God's plan of salvation. Read it attentively and pray for illumination. Only the Lord Jesus is able to open your mind to understand His Word. Don't give rest to your soul before you are able to answer correctly this vital question: “What must I do to be saved?”

## OUR PROBLEM

Many people act as if they have no need of salvation. They seem satisfied as they are. This is utter folly. One may be healthy, good-looking, intelligent, and have wealth and friends. All these things come to an end. Your heart will not find rest before you come to know God personally. In Him alone is the fullness of joy. We all need to be saved for the simple reason that we are all sinners. Every one of us is burdened with a double-edged problem: a bad record, and a bad heart.

### A Bad Record

God is the Creator and Lord of all things. Since He created us and is keeping us alive, we are under obligation to love Him with all our hearts, to obey and worship Him. But from the beginning we have rebelled against His rule and acted according to our whims.

Offences such as lying and stealing are not directed merely against our fellow human beings. Above all, whenever we sin we defy God, saying, in effect: “Though I know what is right in Your sight, I willfully disregard You. I do whatever I want to do and I shall not submit to Your commandments!”

We tend to minimize sin and imagine that we aren't so bad after all. Ultimately, though, we cannot mock God. “In accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:5).

Please be honest with yourself before God. Are you concerned about your evil moral record? You are guilty of every lewd word, every blasphemy, the gossip and deceit that came out of your mouth. Aren't you ashamed to draw near the Holy One besmirched with immorality and filthiness? Search your conscience thoroughly; remember your past evil and the vices you continue to cherish in your heart. You are accountable for all you've done and said. You are held responsible, not by any mere human being, but by God, the Judge of the world.

The sword of justice is hanging over your head. When God so desires, you will be summoned to appear before His tribunal to give an account of all your actions.

And without His salvation, you will be condemned to everlasting punishment in Hell.

### A Bad Heart

Besides our sinful conduct, we have to face another problem: we have a bad heart. We are miserable because of what we are as well as what we do. Adam, the first man, was created righteous and holy, but as soon as he fell into sin, he became a sinner. And just as a seed from a bad tree sprouts into a similar bad tree, even so we, the descendants of Adam, are conceived in sin. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19).

The Lord Jesus referred to our corrupt heart. He said: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22). The human heart is the wellspring out of which is drawn out the filth that pollutes our world. Note well that Jesus didn't say: "For from without, from the pressures of society and from a defective upbringing, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, immorality and so forth." Modern psychology insists that man is basically good, but our Master pinpoints the human heart as the source of our evil. "For from within, out of the heart," come all sort of sins and iniquity.

We may congratulate ourselves for the "good" deeds that we do. But we need to realize that even the apparently noble actions of an unsaved person proceed from an evil heart. Scripture warns us: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9) What do you expect to come out of a corrupt heart? Good or bad deeds? Jesus answered: "Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?" Surely not!

Do not suppose then that you are able to please God. Do not imagine that you have the strength within yourself, if you will, to turn from your sin to obey God. Just as the earthworm hides away from the light and burrows deep in the darkness of the ground, even so the sinner flees 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) You will never come to Christ for salvation unless God draws you by His grace. "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44).

I won't be surprised if you reject these overwhelming truths. You may say, "I'm not that bad!" You may protest, "Admittedly, I make a few mistakes, but to say that I deserve Hell is ridiculous. Neither do I believe that I have a bad heart. I am a good person. If I will, I am able to obey God." Such language verifies the darkness and deception of the heart. Whoever speaks that way is not refuting a human opinion, but the judgement of God upon him.

Friend, what do you think about yourself? Are you guilty or not? Are you good or evil? I hope that God will give you the grace to be honest with yourself. You are completely dependent on God's free will to give you a new heart and to forgive you your debt, if He so desires.

### FALSE HOPES

The Gospel is good news for the sinner: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). But before we speak of Christ's redemption, we need to be warned about certain alleys that promise life, but in fact lead to perdition.

## Not by the Law

A good number of people expect to be saved because they do their utmost to obey God's commandments and perform good works. I have asked several persons the following question: "When you appear before God, why do you think He should allow you to enter Heaven?" In almost every case, I got basically the same answer: "Because I try to obey the commandments and help my neighbour. The important thing is that you live a good life."

If it were possible for us to be saved by our own efforts, why did Christ come into the world? Why did He suffer and die? If it were possible for us to become righteous by our personal obedience to God's Law, then Christ died in vain!

The commandments cannot save us for the simple reason that we do not obey them as we should. On the contrary, the broken commandments testify against us that we are guilty sinners. Scripture warns that nobody will be accounted as righteous in God's sight by the deeds of the Law. The Law only makes us aware of our sinfulness (Galatians 3:21-22). Like a mirror, the Law reveals the dirty face, but it cannot clean it. If you desire cleansing from your sins, you must look elsewhere. Redemption cannot be obtained from Mount Sinai; forgiveness is only found on Calvary.

## Not by Works

Our good works cannot qualify us for salvation. We cannot make amends for our evil-doing by trying to balance it with good deeds. Our moral debt cannot be paid by doing good works, by penances or by performing religious rituals. Scripture teaches that the wages of sin is death; without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:22).

Besides, Scripture states that the children of God are saved by His grace and not by their own good deeds. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8).

Many people entertain wrong ideas about the grace of God. They think that they merit grace by something they do. Now, if we can obtain salvation by the merit of our own moral attainments, God would be indebted to us, for "to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt" (Romans 4:4). But God is indebted to nobody. God saves the sinner, not on account of human merit, but simply because He chooses to be good and kind. Salvation is a free gift. If you had to pay for a gift, it would not be a gift at all. Thank God, salvation is a gift of grace, and the Christian is always boasting about the goodness of God.

I often encounter this objection: "If this is so, then I need not do any good and I can be saved just the same." But such reasoning is fallacious. It only shows that the Gospel is not yet understood as it should be. The children of the heavenly kingdom are saved, as the apostle Paul explains in Ephesians 2:8-10, "not by works," but "for good works." Good works are the purpose, and not the cause, of salvation. God first saves a person and gives him a new heart in order to produce much fruit for His glory.

To illustrate, let's say two men give ten dollars for charity. Outwardly, it appears that both did the same deed; but their motives may be totally different. The first did so, thinking he would obtain merit for salvation. The second, knowing how much God loves him, willingly and joyfully helps others. The first one is a Pharisee; the second one is a child of God.

## No Other Name

Without hesitation the apostle Peter claims that Jesus Christ is the only Savior: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Sadly, many Catholics behave as if they are not content with Christ alone as their all-sufficient saviour. They also call upon the name of Mary or one of the saints. Now Mary is the mother of our Lord according to the flesh, and all generations call her blessed. But Mary 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).

I appeal to all the devotees of Mary to take heed to the Word of God. You cannot invoke the name of Jesus and the name of Mary for your soul's salvation. There is only one name through which we may be saved: the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly we are meant to follow Mary's example, and trust in the Lord God for our salvation, just as she did. Then we will be able to sing with her: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47).

## THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

“What must I do to be saved?” Scripture gives this answer: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:30-31). Christ invites sinners, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)

Who is Jesus? What special work has He accomplished so that I should entrust myself to Him for my salvation? Why should the sinner rest in Him? Scripture gives us a number of valid reasons.

### Come to Jesus: He Is the Christ

When man rebelled against the Creator, God promised him the Deliverer (the Messiah, or the Christ), and at the appointed time, God sent His only-begotten Son to this earth. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies that were written about Him centuries before His birth. He came from the lineage of Abraham and king David; He was born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem; at His crucifixion, His hands and feet were pierced; He was buried in a rich man's grave; and He was resurrected from the dead. To confirm His mission, Jesus performed countless miracles. He healed all types of diseases. He restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and strength to paralytics. 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 of Nazareth is definitely and doubtlessly the Christ, the Savior sent by God from Heaven.

### Come to Jesus: He Is the Eternal Son of God, the Lord of Glory

He was with the Father and the Holy Spirit from all eternity, and like the other two persons of the Trinity, Jesus has all authority, knows all things, is everywhere present, and gives life to whom He desires. Everything was made by Him, and He holds all things by His powerful word. The Lord Jesus rules over all creation as Lord of lords, and King of kings.

When He walked among us, Jesus confessed: "I and My Father are one." His hearers understood Him perfectly. They retorted, "You, being a Man, make Yourself God" (John 10:29-39) They supposed He was blaspheming and accordingly pursued Him to His death. Others believed Him and worshiped Him. His followers live and die for Him, the eternal Son of God. Come to Him, then, to adore and obey Him forever.

Come to Jesus: He Is the Lamb of God Who Takes Away the Sin of the World

For long centuries God taught His people that the way of reconciliation is bespattered with blood. The thousands and thousands of animals slain during the Old Testament are a vivid testimony that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.

Obviously the sacrifices of lambs and calves were a picture of Christ, the Lamb of God, who for us, and for our salvation, became man by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary. He came to give His life as a ransom for many, to rescue them from sin and death. Jesus became personally responsible for the sins of His people. He paid for their sins once for all on the cross of Calvary.

But He was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities;  
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,  
And by His stripes we are healed.  
All we like sheep have gone astray;  
We have turned, every one, to his own way;  
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:5-6).

Can you claim with conviction that "Christ died for me"? It would be nonsense to say that Christ died for your benefit and at the same time continue in bondage to a sinful lifestyle. Again, it would be illogical to say that Christ died for your salvation and at the same time not to trust your soul in Him alone. Jesus came to give His life for His sheep, that is, for those who hear His voice and follow Him. He died for their sake; to them alone He grants eternal life.

Come to Jesus: He Is the High Priest Appointed by God

During the Old Testament, the Jewish people had the temple in their midst, yet they were not allowed to come into the holy presence of God. They were in need of the priests who served as intermediaries between them and God.

This also is a picture of spiritual truth. God does not dwell in temples made with hands; His throne is in Heaven. Neither can a human priest, who is himself a sinner, intercede for us before God. But Christ is the perfect Priest who entered Heaven to intercede for His people on the merits of His shed blood.

"But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:24-25).

Again, Christ does not intercede for all and sundry. Christ prays only for those given to Him by the Father. "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours" (John 17:9). I do not point this out to discourage you, but to have you surrender every false hope. Come to God through this unique Priest; then you can be sure that you have an Advocate before the Father in Heaven.

Come to Jesus: He, Who Once Humbled Himself unto Death, Is Now Risen and Exalted

If He were a fake and a liar, death would have sealed His doom. But Christ rose from the grave, victorious over Satan, sin and death. The apostles and many others testify 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 down from Heaven, the Son of God, equal with the Father. The redemption wrought on Calvary is complete and finished; His sacrifice is accepted by God the Father.

Christ died once, and now He lives forever and ever. I am not urging you to believe in an ideal, a philosophical system or a religion. I'm extending an earnest invitation: "Come to a living Savior!"

Come To Jesus: He Is Good and Merciful

When He lived among us, He welcomed all who came to Him -- children, old men, women, the rich and poor, the wise and the ignorant. He warmly received notorious sinners, the outcast of society. They all came to Him, and He didn't turn them away. The thrilling story, which began to be written in the Gospel, continues to this day. Millions still come to Him and they testify that the Lord Jesus embraced them in His loving arms. His promise is true to you as well: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37).

Come to Jesus: He Is Coming Again

The first time He came in humility, in poverty and weakness. Christ will one day come back to earth in power and great glory. When He is revealed from Heaven, what will He be for you? Will He be the angry Judge to condemn you and cast you away from Him to suffer everlasting punishment in Hell? Or will He be your Savior and your everlasting joy? It all depends on whether you had responded to His call to turn to Him.

COME TO CHRIST

To receive forgiveness and eternal life from the Lord Jesus, you need to repent and trust in Him. It would be vain to simply admit your guilt if you do not repent. Again, it would be pointless to know about the love and power of Christ if you do not rely on Him. 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. You have every reason to be sorrowful considering how often you have challenged God by your sinful deeds. You ought to admit before Him that He is right to condemn you, and that you deserve the punishment of Hell. Yet repentance is much more than sorrow. Repentance is forsaking your sinful will and committing yourself to follow Christ as your Lord. The prodigal son arose and abandoned his reckless, sinful life. He wended his way back to his father. Like him, come back home to serve the Lord God all the days of your life. "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).

Repent, and believe in Christ. True faith is a wholehearted trust in the Lord Jesus. Take heart and go to Him, now. Don't try to present your own merits. Instead, go to Him just as you are, with all your guilt and shame. Call upon His

name and ask for mercy. Ask Him to forgive you on account of the blood that He shed on the cross. If you genuinely trust in Him, you will be able to pray: "Lord Jesus, you, and you alone, are my Savior. I have no faith in myself, no confidence in anyone else. You alone are my only hope."

Are you burdened by your sins? Do you realize that you can never find deliverance by your own strength? Abandon, then, all hope in yourself; but do not turn away from the God of mercy. Come to Christ. Come with a repentant heart, trusting in Him exclusively. As you do so, you will find rest for your soul. Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart any more.

Jesus is calling you, "Come to Me!"

#### A PERSONAL WORD TO THE READER

Dear friend, you may still have doubts and questions about the way of salvation. I encourage you to keep praying and searching the Scriptures. We are willing to help you the best way we can. So please don't hesitate to write and discuss any questions with us.

Perhaps, you now understand the Gospel and the Lord has granted you repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. Now you don't depend on anything you do, your own goodness, any saint or religion. Now you rely by faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; He is your one and only Saviour. 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! You now desire is to follow the Lord and to please Him in all things. The Christian life is not a bed of roses. He gives joy unspeakable, but His wise providence will also lead you 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. The Lord makes His face shine upon you and give you peace.

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