

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

By Justin Morton

The greatest question one can ever ask involves eternal salvation. The problem with asking such a question is the inquirer will be given different answers. In truth, all that really matters is what the Bible teaches. So, what does God say about eternal life?

The Bible teaches salvation is not earned but is a “free” gift from God, given by grace, because of one’s faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Thus, many claim all one needs to do is believe and he will be saved. But is this all the Bible teaches about eternal life?

Although salvation is a “free” gift that is never earned, man must do something in order to receive this gift. Consider how God gave Israel the Promised Land. This land was a gift and not something they deserved or earned. However, even though it was a gift, the Israelites still had to go in and “take possession” of the land (Jos. 21:43). Had Israel not complied with the commands of God about obtaining the land, they never would have been able to enjoy the “free” gift God offered them.

To receive eternal salvation, we still must take possession of this gift God is freely offering. How? The Bible teaches by believing in Christ Jesus (Jn. 8:24), repenting of our sins (Lk. 13:3), confessing our faith (Matt. 10:32-33), and being baptized into Christ (Mk. 16:16).

Many do not have a problem with the believing, repenting and confessing part of salvation; their problem lies with baptism. They would argue baptism is a work of man, thus, not a necessary part of salvation. However, baptism is not a work of man but a work of God. Baptism is the point at which God forgives man of his sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16). This is why it is so important for us to submit to the Lord’s command of baptism. Without baptism, there is no forgiveness of sins and without forgiveness of sins, there is no eternal salvation.

Just look at the book of Acts, which shows numerous accounts of conversions and each one includes baptism (Acts 2:37-42; 8:9-13; 8:35-39; 9:1-18; 10:34-48). Why would this be the case unless baptism leads to forgiveness and salvation?

The conversion story many “faith only” believers promote involved the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:26-40). He asked this all-important question about salvation and notice what happened:

1. First, Paul and Silas told him that he needed to believe (v. 31). If he didn’t believe nothing after this point mattered.
2. Next, they spoke the Word of the Lord to him and his household (v. 32).
3. Finally the jailer and his entire household were baptized that same hour of the night (v. 33).

If the jailer only needed to believe in the Lord Jesus for salvation, then consider the following:

1. Why did Paul and Silas begin to teach his household the Word of the Lord? Why didn't they just stop and leave it at believing in the Lord?
2. What did they teach the jailer and his household? Apparently, Paul and Silas taught them about baptism. Otherwise, how else would they have known?
3. If baptism was not important, why was the jailer's entire household baptized that same hour of the night? It sure wasn't a convenient time for such an event. Apparently the household believed baptism was necessary for their salvation, so they went right away.

If all a person does is believe in God, he or she is no different than the demons, for even they believe and tremble (Jam. 2:19). Faith alone will not save anyone; no matter how many people say it will (Jam. 2:24). A person's only hope of eternal life is by being united with Christ through baptism (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). There is no other way (John 14:6). Thank God He has provided a means for the undeserving to enjoy the wonderful gift of His grace.