

## What is Salvation?

It is interesting to note the debate that sometimes occurs in churches across America, and even the world, on the topic of salvation. I'm not sure that I care to enter the debate. While I must admit that I, just like many, enjoy debating, debating such a topic as eternal life.....well, that can be a bit scary. What if I'm wrong and I lose the debate? That frankly would be the good news, but what if I'm wrong and I win the debate? What if I fully convince you that my views on salvation are the ones you should listen to? What if I am so fully convincing, not only did I convince you and a thousand others, but I also convinced myself?

So does salvation depend upon how well you can debate? If so, this is pretty good news if you're a politician or an expert in history or language. But what if you're a janitor, a truck driver, a doctor, a house wife, a student or any honorable profession that leads to a productive life on earth? I guess your job is to judge the debate. So, if you really care about salvation and having eternal life, then you might start listening to the best debaters in the world and then judge them, and from that.....salvation. Those that judge differently from you, well.....they obviously lose their salvation because they have lost the debate.

It sounds ridiculous, but think about it, this is what we do. We debate all of the time many issues, including the one of salvation, and there are some really great people whom do not agree on this topic, so what does this mean? Does this mean that we all get to be right if we care enough to enter the debate? That concept is left open for debate, which brings us right back where we started.....it's one big debate, so who really has the answer to this?

Let me just state very clearly to you that I do not get to provide any answers concerning God, Christ, salvation or eternity. I am not the Christ, and therefore my words have little significance. So you and I are exactly the same; people and sinners who care enough to write this and read this. So where should you and I turn? Which expert should we ask? Who has the words that hold power and meaning or maybe better stated: where are the words that hold power and meaning? Don't ponder too deeply this statement, I am not Plato and while his words were clever, they do not bring life.

John 10:10 “.....*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*”

These are the words of Jesus Christ our Lord, the only begotten Son of God. He came to this world and gave His life for our sins.

Matthew 20:28 “....*just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*”

John 10: 9. *I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.*

Acts 4:10. *then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11. He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.'*

*12. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

*Romans 5:7. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10. For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

Many of us may recognize that following the Christ, the true Son of God may be the most important decision we can make in our lives. But the question remains, how to follow Him? In John chapter 14 Thomas asked a great question:

*John 14:5. Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" 6. Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."*

Jesus revealed the Father through His walk on earth. What a privilege it must have been to witness that, but what about us who cannot witness this? If Thomas did not know where to go and he was standing before the Christ, how will we know where to go?

One thing Thomas did do was ask? Let me encourage you to do the same....ask. One may ask, "if Christ is not here, how will I ask?"

First, I would say, pray:

*Luke 18:1. Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 4. "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5. yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" 6. And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?"*

*Acts 2:21. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'*

*Romans 10:12. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13. for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Second, I would say begin working in the Word or properly translated, the Bible.

Luke 11:28. *He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."*

James 1:21. *Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.*

In John chapter 1, it describes for us the significance of the word.

John 1:1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. He was with God in the beginning. 3. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

Notice I did say "I would..." Which is an indication that prayer first and then the Holy inspired Word is second, is a suggestion from a man and not from God, so you may want to study and then pray or study and pray, but be confident in what the Word does say.....STUDY and PRAY.

With that understood let's read a few scriptures that will pertain to salvation. If the book speaks of it, then we will read of it.

Matthew 1:20. *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23. "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" --which means, "God with us."*

It is very clear that the Son of God, called Immanuel, Jesus is the key to saving us from our sins.

Matthew 10:32. *"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.*

Acknowledgment is presented as an important aspect if we want to be acknowledged before God in heaven, therefore do not leave out the acknowledgment that Jesus Christ is the one true Son of God.

1 John 1:5. *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.*

Walking in the light, fellowshiping with one another in Christ and “getting” the blood of Jesus, his Son, which purifies us from all sin. One must contemplate fellowshiping and the blood of Jesus.

Confessing sins brings a faithful and just Lord who will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

*1 John 5:6. This is the one who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7. For there are three that testify: 8. the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. 9. We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. 10. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. 11. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

God's testimony of His Son as the true Savior is important to God. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. So belief is a critical part of what is going on here.

*Mark 16:16. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

*Acts 2:36. "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38. Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40. With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41. Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. 42. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

*1 Peter 3:18. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19. through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison 20. who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21. and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22. who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

Peter's words to those whom asked the question, "what must we do to be saved" are straight forward and precise. He says "repent and be baptized ..." And in 1 Peter, he says "...this water symbolizes baptism which now saves you..."

*John 3:15. that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. 16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*

Again, very powerful and direct words for those seeking to understand what needs to be done to be saved; "whoever believes in him shall not parish..." Belief is a repeating message in salvation.

*Acts 16:29. The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31. They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household." 32. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family.*

In these verses, the author (Luke) provides for us belief and baptism in the discussion of salvation. The word 'must' in Acts chapter 2 with Peter with regard to baptism, and the word 'must' in Acts 16 with Paul in regard to belief.

*Hebrews 10:39. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.*

*Romans 10:9. That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 12. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13. for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Paul, the author of Romans provides the words, confess and belief. This is a consistent message that coincides with other writers.

*Ephesians 2:4. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5. made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. 6. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7. in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8. For it is by grace you have been saved,*

*through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9. not by works, so that no one can boast.*

*Titus 3:4. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5. he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6. whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7. so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

*Acts 15:10. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? 11. No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."*

Can anyone deny that it is by the grace and mercy of the living God that we are saved? One so powerful as the Mighty Creator who gives life and can take life cannot be denied. His will is the only will.

With this recognition of grace and mercy as that which saves us, notice the "by faith..." aspect of salvation. This is apparently a critical piece and a conduit to reach out for the grace and mercy that the living God has made available.

Also notice the "washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit..." While we may not fully understand this as those seeking salvation, there appears to be a cleansing that is necessary for us to reach out to him.

*Hebrews 11:6. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Again, faith is an essential piece, for without it, it is "impossible" to please God.

*James 2:14. What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15. Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17. In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. 18. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. 19. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. 20. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless ?*

Not to confuse works with salvation, but let's take this for what it says, "faith without deeds is useless." If faith is useless, or some translations say "dead" then it appears that deeds are an important part of feeding and nurturing faith which is required to please God.

It will be necessary to continue this topic later, but be reassured, whatever the stance on faith versus works are.....no works leads to dead faith, and dead faith.....impossible to please God.

Finally, one must ask, if I did all these things that are mentioned in the Bible, would I be saved? Certainly no man can judge this, for this is left to God and for this all of us are thankful, for we know He is a fair and just God. It is apparent there is a need to continue in belief, faith, deeds and growth.

Matthew 24: 12. *Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,*  
13. *but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

So from this, what conclusion can I as a man whom is seeking salvation, draw? Let me list the words that the Word uses as a summary:

- always pray and not give up
- hear the word....accept the word
- acknowledge me before men (me being Jesus)
- confess our sins
- anyone who believes in the Son of God
- believes and is baptized
- repent and be baptized
- confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord
- God's grace and mercy
- for it is by grace you have been saved through faith
- and without faith it is impossible to please God
- faith without deeds is useless
- stands firm to the end

WILL BE SAVED

pray/study/acknowledge/believe/repent/confess/baptism/faith/deeds/stand firm

and without a doubt, it is by the great grace and mercy of the Lord, we have been saved.

So here is the real question.....which one of those will you leave out if you are seeking salvation?