

## What Must I Do To Be Saved?

This question was asked to one of the followers of Jesus Christ nearly 2000 years ago and is still just as important and relevant of a question for you today.

Have you ever thought about this question?

Do you know the answer to the question?

I would like you to seriously consider this question today because your response will determine how you will live your life and where you will spend eternity after you die. So please, read this page carefully in its entirety.

Here is how the follower of Jesus answered the question:

### **“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).**

It is a simple response, but what exactly does it mean to “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ”? And from what do you need to be “saved”?

#### Saved From What?

The Bible, which claims to be the inspired word of God ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)) and entirely truthful ([John 17:17](#); [Psalm 119:160](#)), gives a straightforward answer to what you need to be saved from: you need to be saved **from God Himself**.

The Bible says that God created and sustains everything in the universe ([Genesis 1:1](#); [Job 38:1-41](#)) ... including you ([Psalm 139:13-16](#)). It is He who established the unchanging laws of nature and morality. It is He who has ultimate authority over His creation. It is He who desires for you to be in a right relationship with Him ([1 Timothy 2:3-4](#)).

In addition to being the Creator, God has another title — Judge. He has established good and righteous laws for our benefit, but sadly you (and I and everyone else) have disobeyed His laws in one way or another: by lying, lust, gossiping, slandering, envying, coveting, stealing, cheating, using God’s or Jesus’ name as a curse word, or loving someone or something more than God. Some of God’s laws that we’ve broken are listed in [Exodus 20:1-17](#) (The 10 Commandments) or in Matthew 5 (Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount). If your violations of God’s laws aren’t resolved on His terms, you will stand before Him as Judge someday.

There will be no injustice in God’s court; **no one will get away with any crime against Him**; God has seen and recorded in His “books” every single sin ever committed and He will be completely just in pronouncing His sentence.

That is what you need to be saved from: God's judgment and wrath. Or to put it the terrifying way one of the final chapters of the Bible does, you need to be saved from God "throwing" you into the "lake of fire" ([Revelation 20:15](#)<sup>L</sup>).

While it is certainly true that God is loving, forgiving, merciful, and gracious — as will be shown in the following sections — the Bible also presents God as being full of wrath against those who break His laws and reject His offer of reconciliation.

While many people wrongly conclude that hell isn't an actual place, "and if it is, a loving God certainly wouldn't send anyone there," the Bible states clearly that God, the just Judge of the universe, has the authority, the power, and the intention of sending all those who reject His Son Jesus Christ there. Consider the following passages from the Bible:

*"He who believes in the Son [Jesus Christ] has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" ([John 3:36](#)<sup>L</sup>).*

*"Then I saw a great white throne and Him [God] who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" ([Revelation 20:11-15](#)<sup>L</sup>).*

*"God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man [Jesus Christ] whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" ([Acts 17:30-31](#)<sup>L</sup>).*

The concept of God sending those who reject His Son to a literal hell may seem unlikely, unfair, or even crazy to you. Yet the Bible plainly and consistently speaks of its reality ([Luke 16:19-31](#)<sup>L</sup>; [2 Thessalonians 1:8-10](#)<sup>L</sup>) which leaves two options: either hell is real or hell is not real. Since nothing else in the Bible has ever been proven false — historical events, places, people, prophecies — it would be wise to take the Bible at its word — **hell is real.**

Being separated from God and punished in hell for eternity should cause everyone to ask, "What can I do to be saved from God sending me there? The answer is clear: "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."


What does that mean though? Does that simply mean that you believe Jesus existed like some other historical figure, like Plato, Napoleon, George Washington, or Alexander the Great, or is there something more to belief than that?

To “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” is much more than intellectual assent to the fact that He existed; it means that you place your trust, your faith, your expectant hope for being saved in who Jesus is and what He did for you.



## Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ is without question the most significant person in the history of the world. The Bible says much about Jesus — that He was born of a virgin woman, that He performed supernatural acts like healing people of diseases and turning water into wine, that He was crucified on a cross and rose from the dead. Here are a few more things the Bible says about Jesus:


### Jesus is the Son of God:


*“And the Word [Jesus] became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth”* ([John 1:14](#) )

### Jesus is equal with God:

*“In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God”* ([John 1:1-2](#) ) *“I and the Father are one” – Jesus* ([John 10:30](#) )

### Jesus is the only way to God:

*“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” – Jesus* ([John 14:6](#) )

*“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved”* ([Acts 4:12](#) )

*“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* ([1 Timothy 2:5](#) )

## What Jesus Did for You

Jesus is all of the above and much more. So what did He do for you that He is calling you to believe in?

Jesus lived a perfect life so that He could offer Himself on the cross in your place as the only sacrifice that would satisfy God’s justice for your sin:

*“He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

*“The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29)

Jesus died so that God could demonstrate His love for sinners and so that God's just punishment for sin could be placed on Jesus and not on you:

"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Romans 5:8-9).

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [i.e. satisfying God's justice] for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

"And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

Jesus rose from the grave and appeared to hundreds of people so that you would have a living Savior and Lord:

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also" (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

Therefore, to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ" means to place your trust, your faith, your hope in the person and work of Jesus Christ, whose sinless life and sacrificial death are alone able to reconcile the broken relationship you have created with God as a result of your sins against Him.

## Putting It All Together

So let's go back to the very first question and put it all together: What must you do to be saved?

1. You must agree with God that you have sinned against Him and that you deserve judgment for it. If your offenses against God aren't settled on His terms, you will have to pay the awful penalty yourself — eternal separation from God in hell.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10).

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

2. You must repent of your sin, which means that you turn in a new direction away from your sin and commit to following God, relying on Him for the strength to do so.

“Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’ [literally, the good news about Jesus Christ] (Mark 1:14-15).

“God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man [Jesus Christ] whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

3. You must respond to and receive God’s merciful and gracious offer to save you and place your faith, hope, trust, belief in Jesus Christ’s righteousness and His perfect sacrifice of Himself on the cross as the only payment God will accept for the sin debt you have accrued against Him and the only means of your being reconciled to Him.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God” (John 3:16-21).

“The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, “whoever believes on Him will not be disappointed.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek [Gentile]; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for “whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:8-13).

4. You must reject any and all of your own supposed good works as completely ineffective to save yourself and mend your separation from God — church attendance, religious activities like communion, baptism, or prayer, charitable giving, personal goodness and kindness, helping the poor and disadvantaged, good intentions, etc.

“Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Romans 4:4-5).

5. You must follow Jesus Christ as your Lord (master) by obeying Him and His Words — this is the evidence of one who is saved.

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation [one who satisfies

God's justice] for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:1-6).

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

## Conclusion

Every human being has sinned and thus created a conflict with God — you, me, Mother Theresa, the Pope, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, the apostle Paul, everyone. You have only two choices in dealing with your sin:


1.) You can choose to accept God's gracious offer of reconciliation by repenting of your sin and placing your faith in Jesus Christ's sinless life and atoning death on your behalf as the only way that God's justice can be satisfied for your sin.

Or...


2.) You can choose to pay the penalty for your sin yourself by ignoring or rejecting or altering God's offer of reconciliation through Jesus Christ which will result in someday your being judged guilty by God and sentenced to hell for eternity.

## And Forget Being Good, You Must Be Perfect... Or More Precisely, Declared So By God

No matter how good of a person you think you are right now or how good of a person you plan to be in the future, you can never be good enough to go to heaven because God's standard is perfect righteousness and you have already failed that standard (and will again).


*"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all" ([James 2:10](#) ).*


*"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" – Jesus ([Matthew 5:48](#) ).*

*"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees [those who were thought to be righteous], you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" – Jesus ([Matthew 5:20](#) ).*

How can anyone ever be perfectly righteous? No one can ... except if God declares you so.

To be forgiven and spend eternity with a sinless God in a sinless place (heaven), you will need to be declared righteous (justified) by God, even though you haven't been righteous and never will be. That can only occur when God declares that your past, present, and future sin be credited to Jesus' account and Jesus' perfect righteousness be credited to your account. This "swap" (your sin paid for by Christ and His righteousness credited to you) is how God can judicially declare you righteous and allow you into heaven.

*"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" ([2 Corinthians 5:17-21](#) ).*

*"For if by the transgression of the one [Adam, the first sinner], death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression [Adam's] there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness [Christ's] there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" ([Romans 5:17-19](#) .*

## A Before and After Picture...

The following passage from the New Testament letter to the Ephesians gives a before and after picture of one who believes in Jesus Christ and is saved.

Before picture: dead in sin

*"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

God changes the picture...

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

After picture: saved through faith for good works

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:1-10).

This passage gives the complete picture: you are dead in sin, God intervenes to save you because of His love and mercy (not giving you what you do deserve – judgment), He brings your salvation to pass by His grace (giving you what you don't deserve – Christ's righteousness), and you are called to receive this offer of reconciliation with God by faith alone, not trusting in any righteousness of your own. Good works will be the evidence — not the means — of your salvation (James 2:26)

Being "saved" or "born again" (John 3:1-8) doesn't mean your life will become easier. In fact, you can count on being misunderstood, ostracized, persecuted, and maybe even killed for your faith in Christ. If the unbelieving world hated Christ, it follows that they will hate His followers (John 15:18-25). You need to count the cost of being a follower of Jesus.

But having your sins forgiven, being declared righteous, fulfilling the purpose for which you were created (to serve and glorify God), experiencing joy in the midst of turmoil, and inheriting eternal life in heaven far outweigh any temporal trouble.

Now you know the answer to the question: "What must I do to be saved?" The final question for you is: Will you respond to God's call in your heart today and receive his loving, merciful, and gracious offer to save you?

Remember, you are sinful and stand condemned before God, the just Judge. Yet God loves you and desires to save you through His Son Jesus Christ, who is the only One who can mediate the dispute you have created with God. I'm pleading with you: be reconciled to God today through repenting of your sin and placing your faith for salvation in Jesus Christ. When you do, God will forgive your sin, He will credit you with Christ's righteousness, He will indwell you with His Holy Spirit, and He will give you eternal life in heaven. What could be better and 8more important than that?!

"Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7).

Genuine saving faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to be right with God. If by God's grace you have received this gift of faith, you must now spend the rest of your life striving to become more like your Savior and Lord Jesus Christ in thought, word, and deed (Romans 8:28-30). That may sound like a daunting task — and it is — but God promises to give you the power and desire to do so (Philippians 2:12-13) as you draw near to God in prayer and studying His Word. It will also be important that you become a part of a fellowship of other believers (a church) where God is reverently worshiped and His Word faithfully taught.