

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## SOUL-SAVING LESSONS “What Must I Do to Be Saved?”

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

The walls began to shake. The prison doors flew open. And at that very moment a jailer awoke, realized his own fate, and started to commit suicide. But before he did, he heard these encouraging words: “Do yourself no harm for we are all here.” On the heels of that comforting statement, he asked the greatest question ever asked: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). Of all the questions that are asked in the Bible, none is of greater importance than this one. In fact, we can understand this question better if we ask it by placing emphasis on the different words in the question. For example, we could ask, “**What** must I do to be saved? This implies that salvation is active. It does not “just happen.” Rather, there is something we **do** to be saved. The Scriptures teach that this is the case. Jesus Himself said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

Then we might ask, “What **must** I do to be saved?” This teaches us that salvation is imperative. It is not a flippant matter or a matter to which we can take a lackadaisical approach. It is imperative. In Acts 9:6 Saul asked, “Lord, what must I do?” Christ told him to go into Damascus, where he would be told what he “must” do. There is a “must” in salvation. It is imperative.

We might also ask, “What must **I** do to be saved?” This teaches us that salvation is personal. We cannot be saved for others; nor can they be saved for you. We cannot be saved on anyone’s coattail. Salvation is an individual, personal matter. Romans 14:12 teaches us, “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.” One day I am going to stand before God to give an account of what I have done as an individual in relation to the Gospel.

Or we might ask, “What must I **do** to be saved?” It does not say, “What must I ‘guess’ or ‘feel’ to be saved?” It asks, “What must I **do** to be saved?” Jesus said in John 15:14, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” He said in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Some people ask, “Did you get salvation?,” or “Did you feel salvation?” The Scriptures ask, “What must I **do** to be saved?”

We also might ask, “What must I do **to be saved**?” This teaches us that salvation is of eternal importance. We are talking about the most important matter ever. Your eternal destiny depends on how you answer this question. Jesus said that if you answer correctly, you will one day go away into “everlasting life” (Mt. 25:46). But if you answer it incorrectly, then you will spend eternity in a place called Hell where “the worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched.” Your eternal destiny depends on your answering this question correctly.

In this lesson, I will be asking two questions: (1) What must I **know** to be saved?; and (2) What must I **do** to be saved? I know that it is important for us to understand the right things because Jesus said in John 8:32, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you

free.” The Scriptures say, “Do not be ignorant, but understand the will of the Lord” (Eph. 5:17). We must know the right things in order to be saved.

What things must we know to be saved? We must know that we are lost in sin without Jesus. The Scriptures teach in Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” As a result, we know that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). “The soul who sins shall surely die” (Ezek. 18:4). The Scriptures teach, “The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Is. 59:1-2). “There is none righteous; no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). To be saved, we must acknowledge that we are lost in sin.

We also must know that we cannot save ourselves from this sin. In Jeremiah 10:23 the Bible says, “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.” Man cannot find his own path to salvation. We cannot save ourselves. In John 6, Jesus taught some very difficult statements such as “Eat My flesh and drink My blood.” He was talking about His disciples consuming his entire essence in order to make sure that they had “the mind of Christ.” The Scriptures tell us that from that point on, some decided to “walk with Him no more.” Jesus then turned to the others and said, “Will you go away also?” Peter responded, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (vs. 68). We need to come to the understanding that we cannot save ourselves. We must allow God to save us. We have to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding—acknowledging Him in all our ways so that He will direct our paths (Prov. 3:5-7). So many people get caught up in following what others say about salvation, what they’ve heard, or what their parents may have done. Listen to what the writer of Proverbs said in Proverbs 14:12—“There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.” We must not do what we “think” is right. Instead, we must do what we **know** is right based upon the Scriptures.

We must know that we are lost in sin, and that we cannot save ourselves. Furthermore, we must know that only God can save us. If we are going to be saved, it will be by God’s grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches, “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.” The Scriptures teach that we are saved by the Gospel of Christ. Romans 1:16 tells us that the Gospel is “God’s power unto salvation.” Thus, we must “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls” (Jas. 1:21). The Scriptures teach that we are saved by obedience to the Gospel. Hebrews 5:9 teaches that Jesus is “the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him.”

If we are going to be saved by God, we will be saved in His church. Acts 2:47 tells us that after people had obeyed the Gospel, the Lord added them daily to the church. We must know that we are lost in sin and that we desperately need the Gospel. We must know that we cannot find our own path to salvation. No one can be saved for me. Only by God’s grace and obedience to His plan in the Gospel can we be saved.

Now let’s answer the second question. If I understand these things, what must I do to be saved? It is important that I **do** something. In John 7:17 Jesus clearly taught that if we are going to do the will of God, we first must know God’s will. Acts 16:30 asks, “What must I do to be saved?” So what must a person do to be saved? In this part of the lesson, I want to identify from Scripture exactly what God says a person must do to be saved by showing the Bible verses on this topic.

To be saved, a person must hear God’s Word—the message of salvation from the Word of God. The psalmist wrote, “Today if you will hear His word,” do not harden your heart (Ps. 95:7). Scripture teaches us that faith is essential. “Without faith, it is impossible to please

God” (Heb. 11:6). We must have faith. But how do we get faith? If faith is essential, then the process by which we obtain faith also is essential. Romans 10:17 says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” If faith is essential (and it is!), then the process by which we get faith also is essential. How do we get faith? “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” To be saved, a person must listen to what God says regarding salvation. Sometimes we rush through this first step and go right into belief. But we commit a grave error when we do that. This is the first and most fundamental step in God’s plan of salvation. What does it mean to really hear God’s Word? It is fundamental because the next step is full-fledged belief in and commitment to Jesus.

Hearing God’s Word means that we recognize the authority of the Bible. In Mark 9 Jesus took Peter, James, and John upon a high mountain where He was transfigured before them. Peter, because he is afraid and does not know what to say, suggests, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. Let’s make three tabernacles—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Then God’s voice said, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” What does it mean to hear the Word of God? It means that we recognize that Jesus and the New Testament represent the voice of salvation today. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” When we stand before God, we will not be judged by what is on the *New York Times* top-seller list. We will not be judged by what religious writers have said. We will be judged by the Bible. Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (Jn. 12:48). We must understand that the Bible is to be our sole authority in matters of salvation. But the good news is that if we will take the Bible and do what it says, then we can know beyond the shadow of a doubt that we are right with God. “Hearing God’s Word” means that we recognize the authority of Scripture. It also means that we must search diligently and prove that what we hear is true to the Scriptures. The best example of hearing the Word of God correctly is found in Acts 17:11. Paul had gone into the area of Berea, and then said, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” Paul, as it were, knocked on the door and told the Bereans that he had a message from God. Did they slam the door in his face? No. They said, “Paul, come in and sit down.” Paul proclaimed the Gospel to them, and they received it with readiness of mind. But what happened next? Did they say, “Paul, you must be right. So we’re going to accept what you say, no matter what”? No. They said instead, “Paul, we’ve heard what you had to say. We’ve written it down and taken notes. We’re going to search to see if it is true.” They “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” To hear correctly, we must “prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). We must not “believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1). We also must realize the importance of “careful hearing.” In Luke 8:18 Jesus said, “Take heed how you hear.” In Mark 4:24 He said, “Take heed what you hear.” Revelation 2:3 teaches, “He has ears to hear, let him hear.” We must make sure that we are hearing with the right motive. We also must make sure that we are hearing the right thing—the Word of God. And we must make sure that we are listening carefully concerning the most important subject of all—salvation. The first step in God’s plan of salvation is to hear the Word of God.

Then we must believe in Jesus to be saved. In Acts 8 Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch were traveling down the road in a chariot. Philip was teaching him the Gospel. They came to a certain water, and the eunuch asked, “Here is water; what hinders me?” Philip then said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” In John 8:24 we see the words of Jesus which teach us that belief is essential: “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” It is essential that we believe

in Jesus. Belief is important! We must believe in Christ in order to obtain salvation. So many people stop right here and say, "All you have to do is believe in Jesus, and then you will be saved because all it takes is 'faith only.'" The idea of "faith only" occurs only one time in the Scriptures—and it says the exact opposite of what millions are teaching and believing. Millions in the religious world say, in answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?," "Just believe in Jesus." The Bible uses the phrase, "faith only" one time—and it says the exact opposite of what millions are saying. In James 2:24 we read, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not by faith only.**" Those in the religious world say that we **are** saved by "faith only." But God uses that phrase to say that we are **not** saved by faith alone!

If I wanted to convince you that a person cannot be saved by faith alone, how would I do it? I would need to give you some examples from the Scriptures of people who believed in Jesus, yet who were still lost. I'll give you four. In John 1:12 Jesus said, "As many as received Him, to them He **gave the right to become** children of God, to those who believe in His name." What does belief do? Does it make us a child of God? No. It gives us the right "to become" something that we still are not. Belief alone does not save. In John 12:42 the Scriptures say, "Even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." Question: Can a person believe in Jesus, be unwilling to confess Him, and still be saved? Let Jesus answer. In Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus said, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." There were people who believed in Jesus, but would not confess Him. Jesus Himself said that such people are not saved. The clearest example is found in John 8:30—"As He spoke these words, many believed in Him." In the same context, in verse 44 Jesus spoke to those people who believed in Him but who would not commit their lives to Him, He said, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do." People had believed in Jesus. Yet Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil." What does that teach us? It teaches us that we can believe in Christ, yet still be a child of the devil. Belief alone will not save anyone. How do we know that? James 2:19 says, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" Are we ready to say that "belief alone" is the only step in the plan of salvation? If so, then we must acknowledge that the demons are saved. Will the demons be saved? No. Here is what belief alone will get you. The only thing it will get you is a front-row seat in the halls of Hell right next to all the demons. Someone says, "That sounds harsh and unkind." I am not saying this to be harsh or unkind. I am saying this because if a person is in sin, he or she needs to know it. If the Bible teaches that belief alone cannot save, we want people to know that that is not what the Scriptures teach. If all you have done is believe, you are still lost.

We must hear God's Word. And we must believe in Jesus as the Son of God. But we also must repent of our sins. In the context of Luke 13:3,5, certain people had come to Jesus. It looks like they wanted to "tattle tale" on others. They asked, "What about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices? Were they worse sinners than others? What about people who were walking down the road, and the tower of Siloam fell on them? Were they worse sinners than everyone else?" Jesus said, "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." In Acts 3:19 Peter proclaimed, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." When the Jews asked in Acts 2:37, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be forgiven of killing our Savior?," Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (vs. 38). What is biblical repentance? Is it just sorrow? We know it cannot be that because 2 Co-

Corinthians 7:10 says, "Godly sorrow produces repentance." Godly sorrow leads one to repent, but it is not itself repentance. A person can cry a bucketful of tears, yet still not repent. Sorrow is a part of repentance because it produces repentance. What is real repentance? It is a changed will that leads to a changed way. We change our way of thinking, and then we change our way of acting. Jesus illustrated this in Matthew 21:28-31 when He told a story about a father who had two sons.

"He came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?"

It was the son who said he would not go, but changed his way of thinking and changed his way of acting so that he went and worked in his father's field. In Luke 3:6-8 we read of John the Baptist saying to the religious elite of his day, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance." Repentance is not just a changed mind. It is a changed life that follows from a changed mind. A person must repent in order to be saved.

A person also must be willing to confess Jesus as the Son of God. In Acts 8, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch were traveling down the road. The eunuch asked, "Here is water. What hinders me?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch then said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (vs. 37). Romans 10:10 teaches that confession is essential to salvation when it states, "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Must a person confess with his mouth to be saved? Absolutely! Jesus said, "Whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." We must confess Jesus as the Son of God.

But there is one more step. The last step in God's plan of salvation is being immersed into Christ for the remission of sins. There is so much confusion in our religious world today on the topic of baptism. But it is not God's fault. God is clear concerning the fact that baptism is essential to salvation. But what is baptism? Is it sprinkling, or pouring, or immersion? We can know for a fact from the Scriptures that baptism is full-body immersion. Four different passages teach us this. In John 3:23 we see that "John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, **because there was much water there.**" Of sprinkling, pouring, and full-body immersion, which takes "much water"? Only full-body immersion! In Romans 6:1-4 Paul likened baptism to a burial. What happens at a burial? We dig a hole in the ground, place the body in the ground, and the completely cover the body all around. That is the picture used to depict baptism.

A lot of people today ask, "What would Jesus do?" Mark 1:9-11 tells us that at Christ's baptism, "Coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove." Question: For a person to "come up out of the water," what must that person first do? He or she must first "go down into the water." In Acts 8:37-39 the Ethiopian eunuch stopped his chariot, and he and Philip went down from the chariot into the water. Philip baptized the eunuch, and the eunuch then came up out of the water. Why stop the chariot? Why should both of them get out and go down into the water? Why would both of them need to come up out of the water? Sprinkling and pouring would not require those things. But full-body immersion would! So, if baptism is full-body immersion, what is its purpose? So many today say that baptism is not essential, but is instead, "an outward sign of an inward grace" because a person is already saved, but is being baptized to be identified as a Christian. That is **not** what the Scriptures teach! They teach that baptism is essential to salvation. A person is not saved a moment before he or she is baptized.

Is that what the Scriptures teach? Listen to Jesus, because He made it so plain when He said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). Did Jesus teach that both belief and baptism are essential to salvation? He certainly did! Think about the conversion of Saul. He was told to go into the city of Damascus, where he would be told what he must do. What was that "must"? Acts 22:16 tells us when it says that Ananias told him "Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Baptism is essential to salvation. I also want you to notice Acts 2:38—"Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." What was the purpose of baptism? It was "for [in order to receive] the remission of sins." Are we saying that we can "earn" our salvation? Of course not! But does God say that baptism is essential? Absolutely! Someone might say, "Well, that's all well and good, but the Bible never actually says that 'baptism saves.'" I beg to differ—because it does! In 1 Peter 3:21 Peter said, "Baptism does also now save us." Baptism does save, and is essential in God's plan of salvation. Someone might say, "OK. But the Bible never says I have to be baptized to go to Heaven." But the Bible does say that. In John 3:5 Jesus said, "I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." You cannot get to Heaven without being baptized. It is a command of God that a person must obey in order to right before God.

I would like to ask you to stop and think for just a moment about your own salvation. Where were you when you were saved? What steps did you take to obtain salvation? Did someone tell you to say "the sinner's prayer"? Did someone tell you to lay your hand on the TV? What did you do? Where were you? How old were you? Now that you've drawn up your own salvation experience, let's examine it based on what we have said here today. Did you hear the Word of God? Did you believe in Jesus as God's Son? Were you willing to repent of your sins? Did you make the good confession? And were you baptized by being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins? If you answered "No" to any of those questions, then I kindly say to you today that you are not saved. But the good news is that you can be saved. You can be right with God. Today you can obey the Gospel and become a New Testament Christian. We plead with you to obey the Gospel of Christ before it is everlastingly too late. Won't you do that today while you know the truth and you know what is right?

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”

1. In Acts 16:30, what question did the Philippian jailer ask?
2. In Matthew 7:21, what important point did Jesus make?
3. According to Romans 14:12, why is salvation important to each human being?
4. According to Jesus' statement in John 14:15, what does a person's obedience to God's commands indicate?
5. According to Jesus' statement in John 8:32, what is the only thing that can make a person “free”?
6. What important point is made in passages such as Romans 3:23 and Ezekiel 18:4?
7. What does Jeremiah 10:23 teach us?
8. According to Acts 2:47, what happens to a person when he or she is saved?
9. According to Romans 1:16, what is “the Gospel”?
10. What important point is contained in Hebrews 11:6?
11. What does James 1:21 admonish each person to do?
12. According to John 12:48, what will serve as our judge when we stand before God?
13. What does Ephesians 5:17 admonish us **to** do and **not** to do?
14. What does 1 Thessalonians 5:21 admonish us to do?
15. According to Romans 10:17, what is the origin of biblical faith?
16. What does John 3:16 teach a person to do if he or she wants to be saved?
17. What does Luke 13:3 teach a person to do if he or she wants to be saved?
18. What does Romans 10:10 teach a person to do if he or she wants to be saved?
19. What does Mark 16:16 teach a person to do if he or she wants to be saved?
20. In Luke 8:18 and Mark 4:24, what did Jesus say about things we might hear?
21. According to 1 Peter 3:21, **what** “does also now save” us?
22. According to the New Testament, which of the following is the proper mode of baptism—sprinkling, pouring, or full-body immersion?
23. According to Acts 22:16 is baptism essential for salvation?