

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. At that very moment a jailor awoke, realizing that his fate was doomed—and he started to commit suicide. But before he did, he heard these words, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.” And upon the heels of that encouraging statement, the greatest question that has ever been asked comes: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). Throughout the Book of Acts, this question is asked two other times. In Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost as Peter preaches to the Jews, he brings his sermon to a climax and says, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” These people realized that they had just killed the Messiah. Verse 37 tells us, “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” Saul (who would later become the apostle Paul) also asked this question in chapter 9. As he is coming back from carrying out severe persecution on the church, he is headed down the road toward Damascus. He is blinded by a bright light. He realizes that it is Jesus, and he says, “Lord, what would you have me to do?” (Acts 9:4-6).

As we think about this question, and as we place emphasis on different words within the question, we can see just how important it is. For example, we could ask, “What must I **do** to be saved?” When we do this, then we come to realize that salvation requires something of us personally. We cannot simply sit there and expect God to do it all. Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, “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.”

Or, we could ask the question and place emphasis on the word “must.” “What **must** I do to be saved?” This is not a flippant matter. Rather, this is the most serious matter in the entire world. There is a necessity and an urgency to obeying the Gospel. We are talking about matters of eternal consequence.

Or, we could ask the question by placing emphasis on the word “I.” “What must **I** do to be saved?” Your mother cannot be saved for you. Your father cannot be saved for you. You cannot get to Heaven on the coattails of your family members or your friends. Salvation is an individual matter. **You** must make the personal decision to obey almighty God. As we think about this question, I want to impress upon your mind just how important this question really is. This question is so important because of the eternal consequences that accompany the answer. For example, if you answer this question correctly, then you can spend eternity with God, with all the saints of old, and with Jesus Christ in a place of bliss. In Revelation 21:1-4, the Bible describes Heaven as a place where there will be no more sorrow, death, crying, or tears. All the former sin—representing all the things that we hate—will not be there. Hebrews 4:9 describes Heaven as a wonderful place of rest. If you answer the question “What must I do to be saved” biblically, and if you answer it correctly, you can spend eternity with God.

But you need to know as well that if you do not answer this question correctly, and if you do not come to the Bible to see what God has to say about the matter, there is a place called Hell, and you will spend eternity there. No one wants you to go there. God certainly doesn't. He has done everything possible, but you must understand how important it is for you to answer this question correctly. In Mark 9:44, Jesus described Hell as a place where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." It is described in the Book of Revelation as a place of torment—where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. We want you to go to Heaven. And God wants you to go there also.

But to do that, you must come to the Bible and answer this question correctly. Here is the encouraging thing, however. God has given us His Word. And we can know from the Scriptures what to do to be saved. We **can** know the truth. And we can **know** when we come to the Bible that we **are** right! This is not a matter that we have to question. Nor is it a matter about which there should be any doubt. We can take God's Word, do what it says, and know that we are right with God. In Jeremiah 37:17, an evil king asked an important question of Jeremiah the prophet when he asked, "Is there any word from the Lord?" Perhaps Paul was thinking of this when he asked, "What does the Scripture say?" (Rom. 4:3). Today we are asking the question, "What does God say one must do to be saved?"

Let's turn our attention to the Bible as we think about the matter of salvation. There are five distinct steps within Scripture that are clearly laid out for us. First, we must **hear** the Word of God. When we talk about "hearing" the Word of God, we are not talking about accepting everything we hear from various individuals. We are not talking about accepting everything we hear from religious leaders. Rather, we are talking about coming to the Word of God to see what **it** has to say on the matter. Romans 10:17 tells us, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." We must have faith. But how do we **obtain** that faith? Faith comes from hearing God's Word. Psalm 95:8 teaches us, "Do not harden your hearts." We must hear correctly. And we must be sure that we obey what we hear. I am reminded of Hebrews 11:6, where the necessity of having faith is taught. The writer of Hebrews said, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

As we think about hearing God's Word, what does it really mean to hear that Word? There are three things that I want you to think about in regard to hearing the Word of God. There are three characteristics that relate to hearing God's Word. First, we absolutely must realize that God, and that He alone, is the only One Who has the right and the power to tell us what we must do to be saved. He is the sole Authority in matters of salvation. Our friends, our neighbors, and the religious leaders around us cannot get us to Heaven. God (through His Word) has provided the only answer, and we must do what **He** says for us to do. This pertains to authority, a good example of which is found in Mark 9. Jesus and His disciples have gone to the mount, and He is about to be transfigured before them. As Jesus is transfigured, Peter is fearful and does not know what to say. So, he blurts out, "It is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." The Bible tells us that before Peter could finish his sentence, God's voice came from Heaven, saying "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" God's Word and God's Son are the only authorities in religious matters. If we follow God's Word, then we can know that we are right. But if we follow the Word of God and something else, or if we follow something else instead of the Word of God, then we cannot know that we are right with God. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Jesus is the sole Authority in religious matters. He is the Head of the church (Eph. 1:21-23). And Colossians 3:17 makes it clear, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

This is why **hearing correctly** is so important. When we stand before God on the Day of Judgment, we are not going to have to give an account of what other people have told us to do. Rather, we are going to have to give an account of what the Word of God says, and our obedience to that. Jesus said in John 12:48, “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.” The first characteristic of proper hearing, then, is to recognize that God is the sole Authority in matters of religion. As we think about the characteristics of hearing, we need to stop and consider just how important this principle is. Some people skip over it lightly. Others refuse to even talk about it. But we know it is an important point because we are to go from **hearing** the Word of God to full-fledged **belief** in Jesus as the Son of God. There must be something that causes us to dig into this matter and search out the evidence in order to ensure that what we are being taught is true.

And that is the second characteristic of hearing. Hearing means that we must search, seek, and find the truth in God’s Word for ourselves. A good example of this is found in Acts 17:11 where we learn of the Bereans. It is 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.” Here we find people who heard the Word. And what did they do once they had heard it? Did they say, “Thank you for the Word. We accept it, and we are ready to obey it.” Absolutely not! They received it with all readiness, but what did they do next? They searched the Scriptures daily to see if what they were being taught was true to the Word and will of God. This same principle applies to us today. When we hear something, or when someone teaches us something about the Word of God, what should we do? Should we automatically accept what they say? Absolutely not! We should hear it, listen to it, and then take out our Bibles and search the Scriptures to see if it is true. That is what proper hearing is all about. We know this is the case because throughout the Bible we are taught to carefully hear and study the words of God. Paul told Timothy, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). We are told in Proverbs 15:28, “The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.” Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Thus, an important second characteristic of hearing is that we must search, seek, and find out for ourselves if what we have heard is true to the Word of God.

But there is a third characteristic of hearing. We must hear carefully the Words of almighty God. In Luke 8:18, Jesus said, “Take heed **how** you hear.” How do you hear the Word of God? Do you hear it in view of eternity? Do you hear it as a soul who is longing to do God’s will and who is willing to obey that will? In Mark 4:24, Jesus said, “Take heed **what** you hear.” We must not believe everything we hear. Just because someone says it does not mean that we should take it at face value. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, “Test all things; hold fast what is good.” But we must take heed not only how or what we hear, but also **whom** we hear. God said in Mark 9:7, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” We need to go to the right source for what we hear. God, Christ, and God’s Word are the sole sources of information related to our salvation.

Then there is a second step in salvation. We must **believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. John 8:24 explains the principle of belief. Jesus said, “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.” Jesus also taught the principle of belief in John 3:16 when He said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” We learn from the example of the Ethiopian nobleman (Acts 8) how important belief is. Philip is teaching him the Gospel, and they come to some

water. The Ethiopian then asks, "What hinders me from being baptized?" (vs. 36). Then Philip says, "If you believe with all your heart, you may" (vs. 37). Belief is essential to salvation. But we must realize that belief alone will never save anyone. So many people in the religious world today say, "All you have to do to be saved is to believe on Jesus in your heart, and you will be all right with God." But the Bible never says that. In fact, the Bible says the exact opposite of what some are saying today. In James 2:24 we are told, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." This is the only time when the phrase "faith only" is used, and here God says that faith only will not save us! Some in the religious world say that faith only will save us. But the Bible says that faith only will **not** save a person. If I wanted to convince you that "faith only" is not a biblical doctrine, what would I need to do? I would have to show clear-cut examples from the Bible of people who had faith in Jesus, and who had "faith only," yet who were still lost. Let's look at four examples of some in the New Testament who had "faith only," but who were not saved.

The first example is found in John 1:12. Here we find people who believe in Jesus. Yet we are told that their belief gave these people the right "to become children of God." If the concept of "faith only" were true, then the Bible would have said that, at that point, they **already were** children of God. But that is not what the Bible says. Rather, it states that they had the right "to **become** children of God." That is to say, at that point if they did everything else that the Bible says a person must do to be saved, then they would become children of God. Another clear example is found in John 12:42, where Jesus speaks to certain people who have believed in Him, but who do not have a faith that pleases God. In John 12:42 we are told, "Nevertheless 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." Here are people who are rulers among the Jews and who have faith in Jesus, but they will not confess Him. If the doctrine of salvation by faith only is true, then these people should have been saved at that point in time. But are they? Not according to Jesus' words in Matthew 10:32-33. Jesus said, "Therefore 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." Here in John 12 we find an example of people who believed in Jesus, but whose faith did not act. As a result, faith alone did not save them.

Another example is found in John 8:30. The text records, "As He spoke these words, many believed in Him." Here are people who have faith in Christ, yet they have a skewed view of salvation. They believed that they could still place their trust in Abraham and in the Old Law. But listen to what Jesus said to these people who had "faith only." In verse 44, Christ said, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do." These people had "faith only" in Christ, yet they were still children of the devil. What can we learn from this example? Faith alone cannot save us. If we have only faith, then we are still children of the devil.

A fourth example can be found in Acts 9 where Saul (who later would become the apostle Paul) was going down the road toward Damascus. He is blinded by a bright light, and he then utters these words: "Lord, what would you have me to do?" (vs. 6). The word "Lord" means "Master," "Savior," or "Owner." Saul believed in Jesus at this point, and realized that He was his Master or Savior. But Saul was not saved at this point. He was told to go into the city, and that there he would be told what he must do. We read in Acts 22:16 that Saul was told, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." In everyday life, we understand that if we "just believe" in something, that does not necessarily mean that we will receive some benefit from it. For example, supposed I take

a dollar bill. And I say, "I am going to give this dollar bill to you. It is a free gift, and I want you to have it." If you "just believe" that (that is, if you just have "faith only"), but you never do anything about it, will you then receive the dollar bill? Absolutely not! You have to not only "believe," but you have to come get the dollar bill from me. Yes, you must have the belief (faith) that I will give you the dollar bill. But you also must take an action that is necessary for you to receive the dollar bill. That is to say, you have to reach out and take the dollar bill out of my hand in order to receive the gift. Question: Have you done anything to "earn" the dollar bill? Absolutely not! But you did have to meet certain requirements. That same principle applies to salvation. When God tells us to do something and we follow through, that does not mean that we have somehow "earned" salvation. We have simply met the requirements that God gives us. So, we hear the Word of God, and then we believe in Jesus as the Son of God.

But the third step in the plan of salvation is that we must repent of our past sins. Repentance is a changed will that leads to a changed way of life. It is not just sorrow alone. Rather godly sorrow **produces** repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). In Luke 13:3, Jesus said to some people who were wondering about salvation, "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." People were wondering about those who had blood mingled with their sacrifice. They asked about 18 men who were killed when a tower fell on them. They wanted to know if those who perished had died because of their sins. Jesus told them that they were no worse sinners than anyone else. Then he told them that unless they repented, they, too, would perish. So, we must change our will, and that, in turn, must lead to a changed way of life. We must not have just sorrow alone. Rather, we must have sorrow that leads us to produce good works in our lives. For example, in Luke 3:7-8 we are told about certain people who went out to be baptized by John as a result of the preaching he was doing. John said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance." Here are people who were wanting to be baptized merely because they thought it was "the thing to do." But John told them that they had to repent and that they had to show by the fruits in their lives that they wanted to do God's will.

So, we must hear the Word of God. We must believe in Jesus as the Son of God. And we must repent of our past sins and change our ways. But the fourth step in the plan of salvation is that we must be willing to **confess** Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We must publicly align our lives with Christ, and state that we are willing to trust Him. In Romans 10:10 we are told, "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Here, it is made clear that if we are going to be saved, then we must confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord of our lives. Jesus repeated this when He stated in Matthew 10:32-33, "Therefore 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." It is essential that I confess Jesus as my Lord and Savior, and that I align myself with Him publicly.

Then there is a fifth step in the plan of salvation that is so very important. We must be baptized for the remission of our sins. Many in the religious world today will admit that it is good to be baptized. They also are willing to admit that because Jesus was baptized, then it is something that we, too, should do. But in their view, it is not something that is essential to salvation. Let's examine, then, what the Bible has to say about this matter. Let's think for a few moments about what the Scriptures teach concerning baptism. First, let us note that some in the religious world today suggest that you can be "baptized" in one of three different ways. You can be baptized by immersion, by sprinkling, or by pouring. Any one of those, it is suggested, is acceptable to God. But the Bible does not teach that at all. You

will not find that in the pages of the Holy Scriptures. In fact, we see quite plainly in the New Testament that baptism is performed only by full-body immersion. Let's look at four examples that prove this to be true. Look at Mark 1:10 and the baptism of Jesus. There, we are told that as Jesus "came up out of the water," the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. Ask yourself this question. In order to "come up out of the water," what must you first do? You must first "go down into the water." When Jesus was baptized, He went down into the water, and then He came up out of the water. That is how baptism is carried out in the New Testament.

Another example is found in Acts 8:37-42, where we find the conversion of the Ethiopian nobleman. He is told that he must believe in Jesus, and he says, "I believe." Verses 38-39 explain that both Philip and the nobleman went down into the water, Philip baptized the nobleman, and then they both came up out of the water. The Ethiopian was on a long journey. He therefore probably had something in his chariot to drink. If sprinkling or pouring were true, why, then, did both the nobleman and Philip have to "go down into the water" and "come up out of the water"? The only answer can be that the correct mode of baptism is full-body immersion.

John 3:23 is another example where we see this to be true. The text says, "John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there." You do not need "much water" for sprinkling or pouring. But you **do** need "much water" for full-body immersion. A fourth example is found in Romans 6:1-4 and in Colossians 2:12. In the context of both of these passages, Paul is discussing the importance of baptism, and he likens it unto a burial where we are buried in baptism with Jesus Christ and into His body. Paul obviously would not use an illustration that contradicts the mode of baptism. At a funeral, workers dig a hole in the ground and place the casket containing the body in that hole. They then cover the casket on all sides with dirt. The body is fully submerged in the ground and is covered on every side. That is the picture of baptism in the New Testament. So, baptism in the New Testament is performed via full-body immersion alone. We must realize, however, that baptism is not merely "something good to do." It is not "just a command of God." Rather, it is something that the Scriptures teach is essential to salvation. For example, when the Jews cried out in Acts 2:37, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?," the answer was clear. 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" (vs. 38). Here they are told that they need to repent and be baptized, not because they have **already been** saved, but in order **to be** saved! Baptism was a requirement for salvation. Jesus had taught the disciples this very thing in Mark 16:16 when He said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." What were the two requirements Jesus set forth in this passage for salvation? They were belief and baptism. We are told in 1 Peter 3:21, "Baptism does now also save us." You will not find any language in all the Bible that is clearer than that. If God wanted to say, "You must be baptized in order to be saved," how would He say it? He probably would say, "Baptism does now also save us." We know that baptism is essential because it is what puts us "into the body" (the body of the saved). How do we get into that body? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." We get into the body through baptism. We learn in John 3:5 that we are born into the kingdom "by water and by spirit." That is how we enter the kingdom of God—through the new birth of baptism. We are taught in 2 Timothy 2:10 that salvation is in Jesus Christ. If salvation is in Jesus, then how do we get "into Christ"? Galatians 3:27 states plainly that a person is baptized into Jesus Christ.

Today I am asking you to think about your own soul in terms of what the Bible has to say about salvation. If you died right now, would you go to Heaven? Have you done the things you need to do to get right with God? Have you heard the Word of God—and heard it in such a way that you are willing to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you believe in Christ so much that it causes you to repent, turn from sin, and turn to God? Have you confessed that Christ is your Lord and Savior? And have you been baptized for the remission of your sins as the Bible teaches? If not, we are pleading with you not to delay in this matter. We love your soul. God loves your soul. And we want nothing more than for you to go to Heaven.

Today if you would like to have a copy of this lesson, we will gladly make that available to you on DVD or CD. We are praying that you will respond properly to the Gospel by obeying the plan of salvation.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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

1. According to Acts 16:30, what is the most important question in the Bible?
2. In Acts 16, the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas a question. What was their answer?
3. In Acts 2:37, the Jews on the Day of Pentecost asked a question. What was the question, and according to Acts 2:38, what was the answer they received?
4. How many passages are there in the New Testament which teach that a person is saved by “faith alone”?
5. Give one passage in the New Testament that speaks about “faith only” (quote the passage and tell where it is found).
6. According to this lesson, why does “hearing” play such an important part in the plan of salvation?
7. According to 2 Corinthians 7:10, to what does godly sorrow lead?
8. What was the point of John the Immerser when he told the hypocritical Jews of his day that they needed to show “fruits worthy of repentance” (Mt. 3:8)?
9. What is involved in “confessing Christ”?
10. According to Matthew 10:32-33, confessing is a reciprocal act. If we do it, then “someone else” will do it, too. Who is that someone else?
11. How does a person “call on the name of the Lord” today to be saved?
12. What is the correct mode of biblical baptism?
13. What modes of baptism are not authorized by God’s Word?
14. According to Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16, what is one of the purposes of baptism?
15. According to Galatians 3:27, what is another one of the purposes of baptism?
16. Using the text of 1 Peter 3:21, explain the importance of baptism in the plan of salvation.
17. What are the five biblically mandated steps of salvation?
18. When a person fulfills the requirements of the five steps in salvation, has he or she “earned” that salvation?
19. According to Revelation 2:10, what should people be careful to do after they have become Christians?