

## What Exactly Is the Gospel Message?

The short answer is: The word “gospel” means “**good news.**” It’s the good news message that mankind can be saved from the penalty of their sin and receive eternal life in Heaven with God through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though the word “gospel” means “good news,” there are many so-called gospels in the world that are anything but good news.

These so-called gospels from different religions require their followers to obey a strict list of “dos and don’ts.” These requirements bring people into bondage and leave them hopeless in the end. It’s not very good news for someone to tell you, “You just do your very best, and after you do your very best for the rest of your life, then maybe, just maybe, you’ll be worthy to go to Heaven.” That leaves people living a life of doubt as to whether they’re ever good enough.

**The only true gospel is that which we find in the Bible.** Let’s consider this in a bit more detail, shall we? I’m sure you’ve heard the terms “Salvation” or “Saved” before.

You may have heard someone say such phrases as:

- “You need to get saved,”
- “You need to experience salvation,”
- “You need to be born again,”
- “You need to ask Jesus into your heart,”
- “You need to accept Jesus as your personal Savior.”

These different phrases all describe the same thing. For our purposes, however, we will just use the term “*saved.*”

The word “*saved*” brings to mind some kind of danger from which a person needs to be rescued. They need to be snatched away, rescued, or saved from that situation.

The Bible teaches that God is a holy God who will judge the world in the future. And everyone who has not been saved is going to face God in judgment. You and I need to understand the good news that the Bible teaches us about being saved from the coming judgment of sin to experience eternal life in heaven with God.

Two questions help us understand this **good news.**

### 1. Why do I need to be saved?

Some people might say, “*Why do I need to be saved? I’m a pretty good person. God’s not going to judge me.*” These people seem to picture God with a huge heavenly scale on which He will compare our good deeds with our bad deeds. However, they don’t understand that no matter how good we try to be, we can never be good enough. We can never be worthy of eternal life in Heaven. One of the words translated “sin” in the New Testament means “to

*miss the mark.*” Who sets the mark that we have to live up to? The answer is God, Who is perfectly holy, righteous, and without sin. Romans 3:23 makes it very clear: *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* We have all missed the mark of God’s perfection. (So much for the *“I’m a pretty good person”* argument.) Romans 3:10 tells us, *“There is none righteous, no not one...”*

And that’s only part of the picture. God is not only perfectly holy and righteous, He is also perfectly just. His justice requires that He punish sin. Romans 6:23 tells us, *“For the wages of sin is death...”* Before we jump to the conclusion that this makes God cruel and unfair, let’s stop and remember what a wage is. A wage is something we earn, something we deserve.

Now, consider the word “death” for a moment. Death, in reality, is separation. We usually think of it on a purely physical level. Physical death is the separation of our soul and spirit from our body. The material and immaterial parts of us separate. The body is buried and the spirit lives on.

Most people only focus on this physical aspect of death. To be sure, at funerals we use phrases like, *“He’s in a better place,”* or *“Now she’s at peace.”* But most of us don’t understand that the Bible also talks about spiritual death. Spiritual death is the separation of our soul and spirit from God. When a person who **has been saved** dies, his spirit instantly goes to be with God in Heaven, but if he has **never been saved**, then his spirit is separated from God in Hell (see Revelation 21:8). So, when it comes to the question of why we need to be saved, the answer is clear: it is because **our** sin separates us from God. We fall short of His standard of perfection, and because of that, **we’ve earned** spiritual death and eternal separation from Him.

Sounds serious, doesn’t it? It **is** serious. To put it bluntly, we are all born sinners. You may have never heard that before, but that doesn’t change the truth of God’s Word. And because of our sinful condition, we need to be saved.

## **2. What must I do to be saved?**

People have many different answers to this question. Some feel that you have to say a certain prayer, or walk down a church aisle, or be an active member of a church. However, the Bible teaches that only one thing is necessary for us to be saved. In Acts 16:30-31, a jailer asked this same question of a man named Paul, who had just been miraculously released from prison. Paul’s response was simple: ***“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”*** According to this verse what we need to do to be saved is **believe in the Lord Jesus Christ**. It’s almost a trick question because we really can’t do anything to work for our salvation.

People have a hard time with this. They feel that our good standing with God has to be a result of some outward good works done for Him. But it’s not. In the Gospel of John 6:28, we read that one day Jesus was met by a group of people who wanted to work to gain acceptance before God. They asked Jesus, *“What shall we do, so that we may work the works*

of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."* Even in the context of working the works of God, Jesus made it clear that the only thing we can do is **"believe"** (see also John 1:11-13).

Many times, you'll tell a person that he just needs to believe in Jesus and he'll be saved, and he'll look at you and say, *"Well, that's ridiculous. You mean I just need to believe that there was some guy named Jesus who lived long ago and because of that I'll go to Heaven?"* It's kind of frustrating when people say that sort of thing. Believing in Jesus is more than just intellectually accepting the fact that there was a person named Jesus who lived long ago. The term "believing" as used in these verses is having faith (believing) that Jesus is Who He claimed to be, and trusting in what He did for us in dying on the cross to pay the **complete** penalty for our sins and rising again so that we may have eternal life in Heaven.

What did Jesus do to provide a way for us to go to Heaven? He died on the cross and rose from the dead. He did not deserve to die, but God's justice required that someone pay the penalty for our sins for them to be forgiven. We read in Romans 5:8, *"But God demonstrated His own love for us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

You may be familiar with the famous verse John 3:16, *"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."* What you must do to be saved is honestly believe that Jesus died in your place to provide forgiveness for your sins and that He rose from the dead, so that He is your living Savior. Believing this means that you are accepting His work on your behalf as the only sufficient payment for the debt of your sin (see also 1 Corinthians 15:1-11).

Believe is a popular word today. You've probably seen it on wall plaques, especially around Christmas. Maybe you've also heard people say, *"You just gotta have faith."* Unfortunately, a lot of people have faith in the wrong things. We can have all the faith in the world, but if we're not trusting in the right things, then that faith is worthless. Christ's all-sufficient death on the cross is something worth believing and having faith in. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not as a result of works so that no one can boast."* God offers salvation as a free gift to anyone who will accept it.

Think about your own life for a second. **What do you trust in to get to Heaven?** Do you trust in your good works? Do you trust in the fact that you're a good person? Do you trust in the fact that you've joined a church and have been baptized? My friends, according to the Bible, those things don't save us. Only Jesus saves. The only way to be saved is to believe in **Who** Christ is and **what** He alone has done for you, and **accept** His gift of salvation that He freely offers.

The choice is up to you. You are indeed a sinner and deserving of punishment, but God loves you. He desires to have a close and personal relationship with you. And He has made it possible for that to take place. But He doesn't force it on you. He leaves the decision up to you. Will you recognize your sin, and acknowledge your need of a Savior? Will you decide to turn to the Lord and go to Him on **His** terms by accepting Jesus alone as your Savior?

Will you humble yourself before God, acknowledging that you can't earn salvation? Will you stop relying on your own personal works and "righteousness" to get to heaven and accept the "free gift of God which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"? (Romans 6:23)

If it is your desire to be saved as the Bible teaches, why don't you tell God about your decision to trust Him? It can be as simple as telling Him,

*"Lord, I confess that I have sinned. I understand that my sin separates me from You and that I need a Savior. I believe that you sent Jesus to come and die on the cross for me, taking my punishment on His shoulders. I believe Jesus died, was buried, rose again, and is alive today! I believe that He and He alone can rescue me from the wages of my sin. I trust in Jesus to save me. I will quit trusting in myself to get to Heaven. I now trust Jesus alone. Thank you for giving me the free gift of eternal life. Help me to grow in this new life from Jesus. Amen."*

Friend, based upon the authority of God's Word, if you believe in and trust Jesus as your Savior, you can know that you have been saved. The Bible says in Romans 10:9, "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.**" (Emphasis mine.)

Some favorite Bible verses that comfort and assure me are: "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." 1 John 5:11-13

Read that again... carefully.

If you would like to contact us for further help, resources, or encouragement, please click [here](#).

Your friend and neighbor,

Tom Jeffcott