
The
TRUTH
About What
REALLY
MATTERS

It is not unusual for people to disagree over what the Bible says. However, there is one subject where we had better get its meaning right because our eternal destiny depends on it. That subject is salvation. What do we need to be saved from? What happens to us after we die?

Some people may not care about this issue because they don't think they need to worry about it. However, the Bible warns us in **Romans 6:23** - "***the wages of sin is death.***" This means that anyone who sins is under the penalty of death. What about people who say that they do not sin? The Bible answers:

Romans 3:23 - All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

1 John 1:8 - If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Everyone is under the penalty for sin called **spiritual death**. God created Adam, the first man, perfect, but Adam experienced spiritual death the instant he sinned when he ate the fruit God had forbidden him to eat. He did not die physically when he ate it because he lived several hundred more years. However, his relationship with God was broken by sin, and he was separated from God. This separation from God is called "spiritual death."

Genesis 2:17 - From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat , for in the day that you eat from it, you shall surely die [spiritually].

Genesis 3:6 & 8 - ... and she [Eve] took from its fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband [Adam] with her, and he ate. ...and the man and his wife hid them-selves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

God cannot overlook sin. His perfect righteousness and justice must judge it. So, Adam had a real problem. He was separated from God, and there was nothing he could do about it. The only hope he had was for someone else, who was not guilty of sin, to volunteer to take the punishment for his sin. This is exactly what Jesus Christ did.

Romans 5:6 - For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died as a substitute for us.

Peter 3:18 - For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God...

It should be evident to everyone that we are in the same hopeless condition as Adam. Our sins have separated us from God, putting us under His judgment and causing us to become spiritually

dead. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Like Adam, our only hope is for someone else to save us. Notice in the first verse quoted above that Christ died for the ungodly. That includes all of us. **Jesus Christ paid the penalty for all sinners.**

1 John 2:2 - And He [Jesus Christ] is the propitiation [satisfactory payment] for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 Timothy 4:10 - For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men...

This means that sin is no longer a barrier between God and man. God does not condemn us for our sins because He condemned Christ for them. So the issue in our salvation is not sin! The issue now is Jesus Christ. Will you accept His work on the cross to restore your relationship with God, or will you rely on your human good?

A jailer asked the apostle Paul, "**What must I do to be saved?**" Paul answered, "**Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved...**" The jailer's sins never entered the picture. His eternal destiny depended on whether he trusted in what Christ did for him. Living a moral lifestyle, faithful church attendance, religious dedication, nothing we can do can save us.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourself, it is the **gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.**

Do you understand what this means? God has offered salvation to us as a GIFT. We simply accept Christ's work on the cross as payment for our sins. We do nothing to pay for salvation ourselves. It is given to us, and we do not deserve it. The Bible calls this "**grace.**" There is no way we can earn it with our own impressive works.

Christ did not do a partial job on the cross and then rely on us to perform good deeds to finish it. As Christ hung on the cross, He said, "**IT IS FINISHED !**" (John 19:30). This means that the payment for our sins was paid in full. There is nothing left for us to do. We receive His gift of salvation by simply believing that His sacrificial death on the cross paid for our sins and reconciled us to God.

John 3:14-18 - Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man [Jesus Christ] be lifted up; that whoever BELIEVES in Him has eternal life. For God so loved the world that whoever BELIEVES in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. Whosoever BELIEVES in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not BELIEVE is condemned already because he has not BELIEVED in the name [person] of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36 - He who BELIEVES in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not BELIEVE, will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

John 6:28-29 - Then they asked Him, "What will we do, that we may work the works of God [for salvation]? Jesus answered them and said, "This is the work of God, that you BELIEVE in Him whom He has sent."

John 6:40 - For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and BELIEVES in Him, may have eternal life...

John 6:47 - Truly, truly, I say unto you, he who BELIEVES has eternal life.

John 11:25 - Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who BELIEVES in Me will live even if he dies.

John 12:46 - I have come as light into the world, that everyone who BELIEVES in me may not remain in darkness [spiritual death].

Acts 16:31 - BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved...

Now you may be thinking that this is too easy. After all, no one gets something for nothing, right? That's right. Even though our salvation costs us nothing, it cost God a great deal. And when you try to add your own works to Christ's perfect work, you are rejecting God's GIFT of salvation. Its like trying to pay someone a few pennies for a very expensive gift. It is an act of pride that is insulting to the one who gave the gift.

The Bible commands us to be good, but not for the purpose of ensuring our salvation. Satan's oldest lie, "If you are good, you will go to heaven, and if you are bad, you will go to hell."

The Bible does not say that we are saved by doing good deeds, by keeping the Ten Commandments or the Law, or by religious obedience!

Titus 3:5 - He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy [grace in action] ...

Romans 3:20 & 28 - For by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified in His sight... For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Galatians 2:16 - Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Christ Jesus...

We are justified before God by our faith in Jesus Christ, not by our works. Our works are considered to be filthy menstrual rags when compared to Christ's work on the cross (Isa. 64:6).

It is a tremendous relief to realize that we do not have to do something in order to be reconciled to God. Arrogance is responsible for resisting the gift of salvation because human pride wants to take the credit. But all glory belongs to God.

Romans 4:2-5 - If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? "And Abraham BELIEVED God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor but as debt. But to the one who does not work, but BELIEVES in Him who justifies the ungodly, his FAITH is reckoned as righteousness.

The apostle James addressed the issue of faith and works from a different perspective as seen from man's viewpoint instead of God's.

James 2:14 & 17 - What use is it, my brethren, if a man claims to have faith but has no works? Can that faith save him? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead being by itself.

James was writing to believers and was focusing on the point that while their faith justifies them before God, it is their behavior that justifies them before people. Unbelievers can't see faith because it is invisible. But people can see one's testimony and life of righteousness in Christ that should produce good works.

If a believer is unloving, selfish, indifferent, or hypocritical, would anyone listen to him talk about Jesus Christ? No, because they would see through his hypocrisy and his testimony would be compromised. And, since they cannot see his faith, it is useless or "dead" as proof that he possesses God's imputed righteousness and eternal life. But if his faith is alive and vibrant, he will have love, compassion, and generosity toward others and they will be more willing to listen to him give the gospel.

Believers are justified before God by their faith and justified before people by their works. It has been established that our salvation does not require good deeds. However, our testimony to the unbelieving world does require good works and a life of righteousness.

What happens to people who depend on their good works to get into heaven?

Rev 20:11 - And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them [to hide].

The Judge of the Universe, Jesus Christ, will reside over the Great White Throne Judgment which is for those who rejected the gift of salvation. No sins will be mentioned at this trial. Why not? Because Christ paid for them. So if no one will be judged according sin, what will be the standard of judgment? Works. Good works are recorded in books in heaven and will be presented at this trial. Unbelievers will be shocked; to find that all their good works combined will not get them into heaven.

Revelation 20:12 - And I saw the dead [spiritually dead unbelievers] **both great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened** [where their works are recorded]; **and another book was opened which is the book of life; and the dead** [spiritually dead unbelievers] **were judged from the things which were written in the books according to their works.**

God's justice accepts Christ's PERFECT WORK on the cross and rejects man's works. So unbelievers stand condemned, not for their sins, but for relying on their own works instead of Christ's. Our best human efforts to atone for our sins are rejected, and since some people refuse to accept Christ's atonement alone for their sins, God's perfect righteousness must judge them.

Revelation 20:15 - And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life [because of rejection of Jesus Christ], **he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

Unbelievers' names are blotted out of the "**book of life**" when they die because they failed to put their faith alone in Christ alone for salvation.

It is imperative to listen to what the Bible has to say about salvation instead of listening to people who are guided by erroneous traditions. God offers salvation only as a gift. Receive it by trusting in Christ's work, or reject it by trusting in your own works. Its really that simple. The choice is yours. What will you do?

Right now you can tell God the Father that you are trusting totally in Christ and you will receive eternal life. You have God's Word on it!

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