

Chapter one

Salvation

Why do I need to be saved?

A) You were created by God to love and serve Him (Matthew 22:37–40). His will for your life is clearly revealed through His Word the Bible. Within the Bible are written all of the commands that God expects you to obey—it is His law (John 14:15).

B) Everyone has broken God's law (Romans 3:10, 23). Consider only a few of God's commands (Exodus 20): Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever taken something that wasn't yours? Have you ever lusted after someone else? Have you ever coveted what belonged to another? You don't have to go very far into God's law before you realize that you have broken not just one but many of His commands.

C) When you break a man-made law there is a punishment. Speeding is punished with a fine and theft is punished with serving time in prison. Breaking God's law also brings punishment and that punishment is eternal death (Romans 6:23; Matthew 25:46). Breaking God's law is sin and sin is rebellion against God. Because God is infinite, the consequences of rebelling against Him are also infinite. As a sinner you stand guilty of law-breaking and are condemned to eternal death in hell.

D) There is nothing you can do to merit God's forgiveness. No amount of money can repay the debt you owe Him. No amount of time spent in His service can make up for breaking His law. No amount of good works is ever enough to outweigh your sin. The Bible is clear that there is nothing you can do in and of yourself to escape the sentence of eternal death (Psalms 49:6–9; Ephesians 2:8–9; Isaiah 64:6; Galatians 2:16).

How can I be saved?

A) There is good news (gospel)! John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (NIV). Jesus Christ died on the cross in your place and took the punishment of death that you deserved upon Himself (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4). He offers you eternal life (John 17:3; Revelation 3:20).

Is there a cost involved in God's offer of salvation?

A) God's gift of salvation is freely offered to everyone, but there is a cost involved in being Jesus' disciple. In fact, Jesus made a point of urging those who sought to follow after Him to count the cost of such a decision (read Luke 14:25–33):

The commitment

When Jesus said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple,” He meant that you must love God more than you love anyone else (not that you must literally “hate” your family). Your loyalty to Jesus must come before your loyalty to your family, your spouse and even your life itself. Are you willing to love God more than anyone, including yourself?

The cross

The cross was an instrument of humiliation and death. If you want to follow Christ, you will have to die to yourself. This means that you must renounce your right to control your own fate and choose your own way. Are you willing to give up your self-sovereignty and obey the will of Christ?

The cost

Jesus warned that those who don’t consider the true cost of their endeavors will find themselves unable to complete them (Luke 14:28–33). Are you willing to count the cost and take Jesus’ words to heart—“So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple”?

How do I respond to God’s offer of salvation?

Confess your sins

Confession is not mere speculation (“If I have sinned...”) or catharsis (“Just wanted to get that off my chest...”). It is agreeing with what God says about your sinful condition. It is recognizing and acknowledging that you are guilty of breaking His law. When you confess, you must put aside your natural desire to justify yourself and deny the truth. Instead, you must agree with God that you stand justly condemned as a sinner (Psalm 32:5; 1 John 1:9–10).

Repent of your sins

Repentance is not simply feeling bad that you have done wrong. It is a complete change of mind toward sin and a desire for forgiveness. When you repent, you turn from your old way of living for sin and self and begin living for Christ. True repentance always shows itself in a change of behavior (Acts 3:19; 8:22; 17:30).

Believe in Christ

You must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He died on the cross in your place, and that He was resurrected to bring life to the world. You must place your trust in Christ’s sacrifice as the atonement for your sins (Romans 10:9–10, 13; Acts 16:31). When you believe

in Christ, you are staking your whole life on Jesus' claim that He is the way to God and there is no other way.

Faith alone in Christ alone

Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (ESV, also Acts 4:12). There is only one way to be forgiven of your sins and to be reconciled to God—through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Not of works

Your faith in Christ is not a work of which you can boast—it is only possible by and through God's grace (Ephesians 2:8–9). God's Word is clear that no work can save you.

Pray to God

Many people find it helpful to be guided in how to express their decision to trust Christ for salvation. Here is an example of a prayer for salvation that carefully accounts for the essential requirements of turning to God:

[For adults] God, I confess that I have broken your law. I stand justly condemned as a sinner. Today, I declare that I choose to repent of my sin and turn from my old way of living for sin and self. I also declare that I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He died in my place and that He was resurrected to bring me life. I place my faith and trust in His sacrifice and I humbly ask you to forgive me and give me new life. Thank you for saving me. In Jesus name, Amen.

[For children] God, I know that I have done bad things. I am sorry for doing wrong. I believe that Jesus is Your Son. I believe that He died for me and that He came back to life so that I could live in Him. I ask you to forgive me and come into my heart. Thank you for saving me. In Jesus name, Amen.

Be Baptized

Baptism is the first step of obedience for those who have been saved. (Acts 16:31–34). It is also one of the ways that you "confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord" (Romans 10:9, ESV). If your baptism takes time to arrange, don't wait—tell someone (a parent, a sibling, a friend) about your conversion. Confessing Christ is not a single, isolate event—it's something you'll be doing the rest of your life!

What happens when I'm saved?

- A. When you are saved, you are spiritually united with Christ and become a part of His body. As a result of this union, you are: Justified. God forgives your sins and declares you righteous in His sight (Romans 3:24–26; 5:9).

1. Justified. God forgives your sins and declares you righteous in His sight (Romans 3:24–26; 5:9).
2. Regenerated. You become spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:1–5). This is what the Bible means when it speaks of being “born again” (John 3:1–8).
3. Sanctified. You are made holy—you are set apart from sin and the world, and you are dedicated to God as His possession (1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11).
4. Cleansed. Your guilt and sin is washed away and you are made clean (1 Cor 6:9–11).
5. Reconciled. God reconciles you to Himself through Christ. You are no longer an enemy of God but a friend (Colossians 1:21–22; Romans 5:10).
6. Adopted. God adopts you as His child with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities associated with such a relationship (John 1:12–13; Galatians 3:26; 4:4–6; 1 John 3:1). This relationship is the essence of what it means to be saved (John 17:3).
7. Naturalized. You become a citizen of Christ’s kingdom (Colossians 1:13). The kingdom has a King, laws, a culture and a mission.