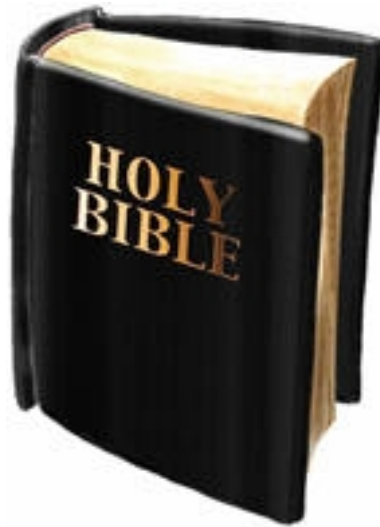


You Cannot  
**Accept Jesus**  
Without  
**Obeying His**  
**Commands**



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## Where Do We Start?

There is constant talk in the religious world today about “accepting Jesus, in your heart, as your savior”. Well, what does that mean exactly, and what does it include? Is there a simple prayer found somewhere in the Bible that I can say to “invite Jesus into my heart”, or are there other things that I must do?

Friend, if you are willing to ask yourself those questions, then we are in a good place to start seeking the answers. We must remember that God is looking for people who will diligently seek after Him (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus said that He would open the door for us, but we must first knock. We will never find the truth of God if we are not willing to seek it. **“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you”** (Matthew 7:7).

All of this begins with the Bible. Moses would tell the children of Israel something that is still true today. **“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law”** (Deuteronomy 29:29). God has revealed His will to mankind through the Scriptures. Now, it is our duty to obey what has been revealed.

## Jesus Christ is our Prophet

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world” (Hebrews 1:1-2). Jesus Christ is the promised prophet whom God raised up after Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18). Jesus spoke to us everything that God has commanded us and wants us to know. Paul was able to say that he declared the “whole counsel” or “whole purpose” of God. He would go on to write to Timothy that God has given us everything we need to be “equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17). God’s word no longer comes to us from various prophets at various times, but Jesus Christ has made known to us all the things that pertain to life and godliness ( 2 Peter 1:3).

Since Jesus Christ is the prophet promised by God, we need to listen to Him and obey His commands. God said the following things about this prophet: **“It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him”** (Deuteronomy 18:19). This means that if we refuse to both listen to and obey the words of this prophet, Jesus Christ, then God will punish us.

## We **Deserve** Punishment

It would be right for God to punish everyone. The only way you can remain righteous according to law is by never breaking it in the first place. Laws do not forgive, rather they define which actions are unacceptable. When we sin against God, then, we have condemned ourselves according to the Law. The prophet Ezekiel said “the soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20). This means that everyone who has violated God’s law, by sinning against God, is deserving of punishment and death.

Why hasn’t God killed everyone yet? It has been God’s desire since the foundation of the world to see everyone saved from their sins (1 Timothy 2:4). Peter would say that God is “patient toward [us], not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). The kindness that God shows by not punishing us immediately for sin should cause us to consider what we have done and change our lives. “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4)?

While we do not like to hear about our best efforts not being good enough, when it comes to earning our place in heaven, one sin ruins any chance that we ever had. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Notice that this is something that everyone *does*. You were not born apart from God, you were not forced to sin against God, but we all choose to listen to our own desires and passions. For we are all tempted when we are “carried away and enticed by [our] own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death” (James 1:14-15).

If this sounds like all hope of being in heaven with God has been removed, that is because it has been—with regard to the law. Thanks be to God, however, that He never planned for us to earn our salvation.

## The **Mercy** and **Grace** of God

The Apostle Paul summarizes our situation when he says “God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all” (Romans 11:32). When you stop and think about all of the things mentioned so far, this is the *only* way that salvation could be made available to everyone. If one person were good enough to earn their own salvation—**just one**—then God could *not* have mercy on anyone because that would be unfair. However, if *everyone* needs God’s mercy and grace, then He may offer it to all freely and fairly.

It is this understanding which caused Paul to say, “Oh, the depth of the

riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Romans 11:33). No one could have imagined how God would save us from our sins, and the way in which God has chosen to save us is more wonderful and lovely than anything we could have imagined!

We are not saved by the law or the righteous works of the law "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in [God's] sight" (Romans 3:20). God will save all of mankind by His grace and through their faith (Romans 3:30, Ephesians 2:8). If we are saved by grace, then does that mean I no longer have to obey the things God has said? "May it never be! On the contrary, **we establish the law" through our faith** (Romans 3:31). If we believe that God has sent His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, then certainly we should do whatever God commands.

## We **Establish** the Law

God is love (1 John 4:8), and He has shown this love to us in His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:8). There is nothing that can pull us away from the love of God outside of our choice to leave. No government, no army, no angel or demon can cause God to stop loving us (Romans 8:38-39). However, *we can choose* to reject both God's love and God's will for our lives.

God's love has been extended to all mankind because Jesus Christ died for the "sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Since there will be people who are not saved, this means it is possible for us to reject the love of God. If we reject the love of God, then what hope do we have of living everlastingly in heaven? None.

What about the rejection of God's will for our lives? Jesus Christ said that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). He says the same thing in John 15:14 by stating "**You are my friends if you do what I command you.**" What about those who do not obey Christ's commands? Clearly they do not love Him nor are they His friends. Do we expect that the enemies of God will be saved on the last day? Certainly not! We must strive then, while we can, to become friends of God.

## Obedience and Salvation

When our faith establishes the Law of Christ in our hearts, then we will, without hesitation, do the things that God has commanded. Paul said that he preached the gospel to the world so people would have an *obedient* faith (Romans 1:5). This means **there are things we must obey in the gospel of Jesus Christ!**

Paul wrote two letters to Christians in Thessalonica (First and Second Thessalonians) because he heard of their faith and love in Christ Jesus. He said that he thanked God all the time because their “faith [was] greatly enlarged” and the love they had “toward one another grows ever greater” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). These were people who were full of faith and love! However, he also mentioned that they were being persecuted because of their faith in Jesus Christ, and answers a question they were surely asking: “Will God do anything to these people who are harming us?”

Paul wrote to them that some people are enemies of the cross of Christ because they “do not know God” and “**do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus**” (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Surely, we can understand this means **there are things that must be obeyed**. In other words, we cannot simply hear the gospel of Jesus Christ; there is some action or obedience that is required on our part. James said to “prove [ourselves] doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22). We must be careful to avoid expecting salvation simply because we have heard God’s word. We must be careful to *do* what God has commanded.

Is this a salvation of works? No, we must remember that Paul said it is our *faith* that establishes the Law. It is through our faith that we obey God. If we obey for any other reason, then that obedience will not be good enough.

## Faith and Action

One of the greatest lies that Satan has ever told the world is that all we must do to be saved is believe in God. Do we ever stop to consider that Satan himself very much believes in God? Do we think that Satan will be saved? Of course not! Then why would it be any different for us? God does not show partiality to anyone (Acts 10:34). “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe and shudder” (James 2:19). We must do more than simply believe that God is; we must allow that belief to cause us to seek after God (Hebrews 11:6).

How does all of this fit together with faith? Didn't we say earlier that we are "saved by grace through faith"? Yes, and that is exactly right! **We need to understand what it means to have faith in God**, then we can understand how we are saved by God's grace.

James tells us that faith without works is dead. "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself" (James 2:17). He would later say, regarding Abraham and his willingness to obey God, "that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected" (James 2:22). The word "perfected" means "completed", so in order for us to have faith, we must be spurred into action by what we believe. *That is faith!*

Jesus compared those who love and obey God to servants serving an earthly master (Luke 17:7-10). Servants do not obey their masters because they hope for a special reward, but they are obedient because that is their job. Likewise, we ought to serve God because He is our Master. We are God's unworthy servants who only do what our Master commands (Luke 17:10).

Now that we know what faith is, we can understand what Paul meant when he said that we are saved "by grace through faith". Our faith, as it is becoming obedient to God, will do whatever it is that God commands. We do this because we love God (John 14:15).

## Grace **Through** Faith

We know that it is God's desire to save us (1 Timothy 2:4). But *when* exactly does God save us? "Grace through faith" is the answer to that question. Remember, Paul said that he wanted people to become obedient to the gospel (Romans 1:5, Romans 16:26). This means there are some things **we must obey** so that our faith becomes perfect, or complete (James 2:22). Only a *living faith that is actively seeking after and serving God will be acceptable*.

In order to be saved, we must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and we must be willing to confess that fact before other people (John 3:16, Acts 8:37, Romans 10:9, 1 Timothy 6:12). We must be willing to repent of our past sins, turn again to God, and perform deeds appropriate to repentance (Matthew 3:8, Luke 13:3-5, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 26:20). For example, if we have stolen something in the past, we must be willing to return what we have taken. Zaccheus, when he had repented, was willing to give back all of the money that he had stolen from people over the years (Luke 19:8). We must have the same heart when we repent of our sins.

Finally, as Jesus Christ Himself stated, we must be baptized. In Mark 16:16, Jesus says that **“he who believes and is baptized shall be saved”**. This clearly shows that belief alone in God will *not* save us. That belief must spur us into action; we must be obedient to the things that Christ has commanded because of our faith. Again in Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus told His apostles to **“make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.”** We can see, again, that baptism is for all who would become Christians and that we must be willing to obey all of Christ’s commands. **Since Jesus died for us, we must be willing to live for Him** (Romans 12:1-2).

In Colossians 2, we are shown exactly how this fits together with the concept of being saved “through faith”. When we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, surely we will listen to Him and obey His commands. *Then* we have faith in Him. This faith should lead us to be baptized, just like Christ said in Mark 16 and Matthew 28. When we are baptized, **God works through our faith to raise us up to a newness of life**, just like when He raised Jesus from the dead (Colossians 2:12).

The apostle Paul would write that we are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ and are raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). Since we died with Christ in our baptism, we are then freed from the law and the penalty of the law, which is death (Romans 6:7). This is why the apostle Peter would say, on the day of Pentecost, that baptism was for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). We must understand that we cannot have our sins forgiven without this baptism. We must die to the law so that we can be alive to God through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:11). After talking about the changes that take place when we are baptized into Christ Jesus, Paul would write that “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

## **Baptism is the Beginning**

Baptism is not a sacrament. It is not something that makes you saved for the rest of your life. God has not asked us to perform an outward ritual, but to make our lives living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). We must be willing to live every moment of every day for God’s glory and good pleasure.

Baptism is not the end of our search to please God, but the very beginning. It is the point in time when we clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:27). It is when we make an appeal to God to save us through the resurrection of His Son (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is when we are born again by water and the Spirit (John 3:5) - remember that Paul refers to our state after

baptism as a newness of life. What is a newness of life other than a birth? We are “born again” after we have put our old self to death with Jesus Christ in baptism (Romans 6:3-4).

## **Not Faith Alone**

Friend, if you are someone who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then you have already made the most difficult part of the journey. Now, by the mercies and grace of God, I would ask you to carefully consider what the Bible says about our salvation in Jesus Christ.

If you have “accepted Christ as your personal savior” or prayed the “sinner’s prayer”, I would ask you to consider the following things that James says.

There is a teaching today which states that we are saved by our faith alone. This is **not true**. James says, “you see that a man is justified by works and **not by faith alone**” (James 2:24). Neither are we saved by some great work that we can do to make ourselves acceptable to God. The fact is, **we are saved when we are willing to take God at His word and obey the commands that He has given**.

It is God’s desire for all of us to be saved. It is God’s desire for you to be baptized into His beloved Son because of your faith. When you choose to do this, you will be baptized into the death of Christ and you will die to the law (Romans 6:3). It is at this point that all of your past sins will be forgiven for the law will no longer have dominion over you (Romans 6:7). Then you will be raised to walk in newness of life—you will be a new creature in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) created and made new again by God for good works (Ephesians 2:10).

## **Some Things to Think About**

### *Deuteronomy 6:4-6*

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

### *John 14:15*

**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.**

### *John 14:21*

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.

### *Matthew 7:21*

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

### *John 3:5*

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

### *Matthew 7:24-27*

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and *does not act on them*, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall."

### *1 Timothy 2:3-6*

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

*Acts 2:38-39*

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

*Acts 22:16*

Now why do you delay? **Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins**, calling on His name.

*Matthew 28:19-20*

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

*Mark 16:15-16*

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. **He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved**; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned."

**Would you like to be baptized into Jesus Christ?**

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