

# What Leads to Our Salvation?

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Believing that Jesus Christ existed is obviously the first step in having a relationship with Him. After all, if you don't believe Christ ever existed, then trying to have a relationship with Him would be rather pointless. Fortunately, most people will at least acknowledge that Jesus did, in fact, exist, and the historical evidence certainly supports this conclusion. What's unfortunate is that many people think that just acknowledging the reality of Christ is sufficient proof that they "believe" in Him. Of course, such a belief would result in an extremely superficial relationship (if even that) and not anywhere close to the vital relationship we must have with Christ to receive our salvation. To be given God's gift of salvation, we must have a far more meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ than just acknowledging His existence. Indeed, we need to believe in Christ as the Bible would have us believe in Him.

So, what exactly constitutes a "meaningful" and "vital" relationship with Christ? Furthermore, how do we know if our relationship with Christ is "sufficient" for our salvation (enjoying eternal life in His kingdom of heaven). How do we know we are believing in Christ as the Bible would have us believe in Him? The answers to these important questions are well covered in the New Testament. (Note: "Being saved" and "salvation" mean the same thing.)

## Salvation and Having Eternal Life in Heaven

With respect to our salvation, Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us:

***"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."***

Here are the key takeaways from these few, but critical words:

1. Our salvation ***is not*** dependent on any works (or good deeds) that we perform; and
2. Our salvation ***is not*** based on our being a good person; and
3. Our salvation ***is not*** earned, but rather is a gift from God through His grace; and
4. God's gift of salvation and eternal life ***is*** given to us because of our faith, and nothing else.

Yes, okay – but faith in what, you ask? The answer, of course, is faith in God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and His Gospel. How do we know this? Scripture confirms this numerous times and here are just a few examples:

***"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*** (John 3:16)

***"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."*** (John 6:40)

***"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.'"*** (John 11:25)

But what exactly must we believe in when it comes to believing in Jesus Christ? Jesus answers this question in John 8:23-24:

***"And He was saying to them [the Jewish religious leaders], 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He [God], you will die in your sins.'"*** (The original Greek text did not include the word "He" so it read, "for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins.")

Why is this important? Because there is only One who can claim the name "I AM", and that is God Himself.

***"Then Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'; and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.'"*** (Exodus 3:13-14)

We are instructed by Jesus Himself that to have eternal life and not die in our sins, we must believe that He is, indeed, God, because He was, is, and always will be, the second Godhead of the Holy Trinity – God the Son, also referred to as God in the flesh, or God incarnate.

What else must we believe about Jesus Christ to fully qualify as "believing in Him as the Bible would want us to believe" so that our salvation will be given? The Apostle Paul answers this question in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 (our underline emphasis is added):

*“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”*

Note: This should sound a bit familiar as the Gospel of Jesus Christ was first introduced in our PDF document, *“Why Is Jesus Christ the Main Character?”*. A portion of the Gospel is also on our website’s home page.

So, the first element of our sufficient, vital, and meaningful relationship with Christ is to believe that He is, indeed, God, representing the second person of the Holy Trinity. The second element is to believe in the Gospel, i.e., the Good News that Christ died in the flesh for us, that His *sinless* blood sacrifice was sufficient to pay the penalty owed to God for our having sinned, and that He was resurrected (brought back from the dead) on the third day to demonstrate eternal life is possible for those who believe.

And now you know why Jesus Christ is, indeed, our Lord and our Savior.

- ✠ His Spirit is none other than God Himself, so Jesus is our Lord, and
- ✠ With His sacrifice paying the penalty for our having sinned, Jesus Christ saves us from eternal damnation in Hell, freeing us to be in the presence of God, our Father, in heaven, so Jesus is also our Savior.

There are three additional elements that define what a sufficient, vital, and meaningful relationship with, and belief in, Christ looks like:

1. Our faith in Jesus Christ must be a *repentant* faith, and
2. Our faith in Jesus Christ and His Gospel must be an *abiding* faith, and
3. Our faith in Jesus Christ and His Gospel must be an *enduring* faith.

A repentant faith is one in which we renounce sin<sup>1</sup> and have a 180° degree change in heart and mind that has us become, in essence, new creatures in Christ.<sup>2</sup> Said differently, because of our new, sufficient, vital, and meaningful relationship with Christ, we stop being our old selves, and start being new people, who don’t continue our past behaviors as if truly believing in Christ changed nothing about us. This is best explained in 2 Corinthians 5:16-19:

*“Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”*

We discuss this change in behavior in greater detail in our PDF, *“What Does Being Christ-like Look Like?”*.

Having an abiding faith in Christ simply means that we do not treat our new relationship with Him as a one and done deal. We should consider our new relationship with Christ as a walk we will take, every day, for the rest of our lives. Ideally, we try to ask ourselves daily, “How can I best glorify God today to show that my faith in His Son is real, vital, and meaningful?” If we are on that track and stay on that track, we are believing in Christ as the Bible would have us believe. When we are truly reconciled with God through our belief in His Son, we seek to spend everyday living in His Light, leaving no shadow of darkness (sin).

We will encounter challenges because of our faith, and having our faith endure through those challenges proves that our faith was not only genuine but that we also never lost it. Jesus confirms the faith that endures, is the faith that saves.

***“But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.”*** Matthew 24:13

Our repentant, abiding, and enduring faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior manifests itself through our daily behavior and is exemplified when we love Jesus as He loves us (and gave His life for us). We demonstrate this love by keeping His commandments, and His two most important commandments are: (1) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, and (2) You shall love your neighbor as yourself. When we do this, we demonstrate to God that we honor and cherish His gift of salvation.

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<sup>1</sup> Renouncing sin does not mean we can never sin again – we are, after all, human. It simply means that we sincerely commit to not sinning again. We all will fail at this, but because of our faith in His Son, God will forgive us if we ask Him to – and if we really mean it.

<sup>2</sup> Please note, our 180° change may be gradual, and may take time. This was even true with some of Jesus’ hand-picked Apostles. Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew probably made the transition quickly. For Thomas (who now has the nickname “Doubting Thomas”), it took much longer.