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The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



**WHAT
MUST WE
DO TO BE
SAVED?**

"What must I do to get saved?"



“WHAT must I do to get saved?” This question was asked back in the year 50 C.E. by a jailer in Philippi, Macedonia. There had just been a great earthquake, and the doors of the prison in his charge had all broken open. Assuming that the prisoners had escaped, the jailer was about to kill himself. But one of the prisoners, the apostle Paul, called out: “Do not hurt yourself, for we are all here!”—Acts 16:25-30.

Paul and his fellow prisoner, Silas, had come to Philippi to preach a message of salvation, and they were in prison because of false accusations made against them. Grateful that the prisoners had not escaped, the jailer wanted to hear the message of Paul and Silas. What would he have to do to enjoy the salvation preached by these two Christian missionaries?

People today still need the salvation that Paul and Silas were preaching. Unhappily, though, many view the matter of being saved with deep suspicion. They are repelled by the arrogance and avarice of a number of those religionists who claim to teach them how to be saved. Others recoil

from the unreasoning emotionalism characterizing many evangelical religions that stress the idea of salvation. English journalist Philip Howard said that such so-called evangelists “assault the emotions and the check-signing hands rather than the minds of their audience.”—Compare 2 Peter 2:2.

Still others are shocked by the changes that sometimes take place in individuals who believe they have had a “saving” experience. In their book *Snapping*, Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman discuss the many religious experiences—including being “saved”—that came into vogue in the last few decades. They write about “the dark side” of such experiences and say that people are “snapped” into sudden personality changes that fail to give the promised fulfillment and enlightenment but rather produce delusion, closed minds, and an inability to face reality. The authors add: “We can describe the process as one of shutting off the mind, of not-thinking.”

This was not the case when first-century Christians experienced salvation.

The Philippian jailer did not 'shut off his mind' when the apostle Paul answered his question, "What must I do to get saved?" And Paul and Silas did not mount an 'assault on his emotions' and plead for a large financial contribution. Rather, "they spoke the word of Jehovah to him." Reasoning with the man, they helped him to come to a clear understanding of God's provisions for salvation.—Acts 16:32.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus"

Those Christian missionaries opened the jailer's mind to a fundamental truth about salvation. It was the same truth that the apostle Peter explained when the Christian congregation was first established. Peter pointed to the central role of Jesus Christ in the matter of salvation, calling him "the Chief Agent of life." That apostle also said: "There is no salvation in

anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved." (Acts 3:15; 4:12) Paul and Silas directed the Philippian jailer to this same Agent for salvation when they said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will get saved."—Acts 16:31.

What does it mean, though, to believe on the Lord Jesus? Why is there no other name but that of Jesus by which we can get saved? Will everyone eventually attain salvation? Did the apostles believe in the idea of "once saved, always saved"? These are important questions because, despite the fact that the words and actions of many modern religionists have tended to downgrade the term, we still need salvation. All of us need a satisfying, reasonable answer to the question: "What must I do to get saved?"

tered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned." (Romans 5:12) Why did Adam's sin cause death to spread to all men? Really, this was because of the natural outworking of things.

When Adam sinned, he was condemned to death in accord with divine law. This was both just and necessary. It was just, for life is not a right but a gift from God. By sinning deliberately, Adam forfeited all claim to that gift. (Romans 6:23) Adam's condemnation to death was necessary because nothing imperfect can be permitted to survive and pollute the universe indefinitely. Thus, when Adam sinned, he began to die and no longer possessed perfect, sinless life to hand on to his children as an inheritance. He could only give them life tainted with imperfection and sin.—Romans 8:18-21.

We should not, however, forget that it

is only because of God's undeserved kindness that we have even the short existence that is our lot today. (Job 14:1) God was not obliged to allow Adam and Eve to have children before they died. He allowed them to do so in order to prove that some imperfect humans would support God's sovereignty by keeping their integrity to him. God allowed this, too, because he knew that eventually he would redeem, or save, responsive descendants of those original rebels, Adam and Eve. How?

Provision for Salvation

Jehovah God could not simply set aside his righteous judgment. He cannot arbitrarily forget Adam's original sin and all that mankind has added to it since then. If God were to ignore his own just laws, this would undermine respect for his whole system of justice and confidence in it. Imagine the outcry that would be heard if, because of some personal whim, a human judge arbitrarily allowed a criminal to go unpunished. However, a compassionate judge can appropriately arrange for a statutory fine to be paid on behalf of a guilty person by some other willing individual. This, in a way, is what God has done for us.

Jehovah arranged for his own Son, Jesus Christ, to give his perfect human life in place of the perfect life forfeited by Adam. Jesus willingly carried the penalty for our sins—death. (Isaiah 53:4, 5; John 10:17, 18) The Bible says: "The Son of man came . . . to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many." (Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6) No one else could do this. Jesus was unique in that he was born without sin and remained a perfect, sinless human right up to his death. (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22) His faithfulness to death made it possible for him to pay the statutory penalty for our sins.

Remember, though, that God, the Su-

preme Judge, is under no obligation to free everyone. He views Jesus' sacrificed perfect human life as the payment of the debt we owe for sin. But Jehovah God will not apply this to unrepentant, unappreciative, willful sinners. Instead of offering some kind of general amnesty or universal salvation, the Bible sets out conditions that must be met if we are to be saved from the effects of inherited sin.

Requirements for Salvation

So, then, what is required for salvation? The prime requirement is the one that the apostle Paul stated to the Philippian jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will get saved." (Acts 16:31) Heartfelt acceptance of the shed blood of Jesus is essential if we are going to be saved. And what will salvation mean for us? Jesus indicated the answer when he said: "I give them everlasting life, and they will by no means ever be destroyed." (John 10:28) For most, salvation will mean everlasting life on an earth restored to paradisaic perfection. (Psalm 37:10, 11; Revelation 21:3, 4) In the case of a "little flock," however, it will mean ruling with Jesus in his heavenly Kingdom.—Luke 12:32; Revelation 5:9, 10; 20:4.

Some suggest that belief in Jesus is the end of the matter. "There is just one thing that any one needs to do to get to heaven," says one religious tract. "That is, to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, surrender to Him as Lord and Master, and openly confess Him as such before the world." Thus, many believe that a sudden, emotional conversion experience is all we need in order to guarantee everlasting life. However, to concentrate on only one essential requirement for salvation to the exclusion of the others is like reading one crucial clause in a contract and ignoring the rest.

This becomes more evident when we

What we must do to be saved

WHY do we need to be saved? Because all of us suffer the disastrous consequences of sin: imperfection, pain, sickness, grief, and finally death. The apostle Paul explained that this is so because our forefather Adam rebelled against God's law. Paul wrote: "Through one man [Adam] sin en-

listen to the comments of some who at one time thought that professing belief in Jesus was all that was needed to be saved. Bernice says: "I was raised in the Brethren Church, but I came to wonder why, if everlasting life is dependent solely on Jesus, he himself said: 'This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.'"—John 17:3.

For nine years Norman was convinced that he was saved. But then he saw that more was required than an emotional profession that Jesus Christ was his Savior. "I saw from the Bible that it was not enough just to acknowledge to God that we are sinners and in need of salvation," he says. "We also have to do works that befit repentance."—Matthew 3:8; Acts 3:19.

Yes, believing in Jesus is crucial to our salvation, but more is needed. Jesus spoke of some who professed faith in him and even did "powerful works" in his name. But he did not recognize them. Why? Because they were "workers of lawlessness" and did not do the will of his Father. (Matthew 7:15-23) The disciple James reminds us of the need to "become doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves with false reasoning." He also said: "You believe there is one God, do you? You are doing quite well. And yet the demons believe and shudder. . . . Faith without works is dead."—James 1:22; 2:19, 26.

Some, though, argue that those who are genuinely saved do all these things anyway. But is that really the case in practice? Denis, who 'accepted Jesus' when he was a young boy, says: "The 'saved' people I have known feel no great need to examine the Scriptures because they think they already have all they need for salvation."

Indeed, the hypocrisy and unchristian acts of many who claim to be saved have brought the whole subject of salvation into disrepute.

Nevertheless, many insist that the Scriptures say: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." (John 3:36, *King James Version*) Therefore, they conclude that once you have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you can never again be lost. "Once saved, always saved" is their watchword. But is that what the Scriptures really say? To answer this, we need to consider everything the Bible says on the subject. We would not want to 'deceive ourselves with false reasoning' by reading only selected parts of God's Word.

"Once Saved, Always Saved"?

Notice the inspired warning of the disciple Jude. He wrote: "Beloved ones, though I was making every effort to write you about the salvation we hold in common, I found it necessary to write you to exhort you to put up a hard fight for the faith that was once for all time delivered to the holy ones." (Jude 3) Why did Jude write this? Because he knew that individual Christians could still lose the 'salvation they hold in common.' He went on to say: "I desire to remind you . . . that Jehovah, although he saved a people [the Israelites] out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed those not showing faith."—Jude 5.

Jude's warning would be pointless if Christians did not face a danger similar to that of those Israelites. Jude was not questioning the value of Jesus' sacrifice. That sacrifice has saved us from Adamic sin, and Jesus will protect those who exercise faith in him. No one can snatch them out of his hand. But we can lose that protection. How? By doing what was done by many Israelites who were saved from



What would happen if you ran back into a burning building after being saved?

not bearing fruit [God] takes away . . . If anyone does not remain in union with me, he is cast out as a branch and is dried up; and men gather those branches up and pitch them into the fire and they are burned." (John 15:2, 6; Hebrews 6:4-6) Those losing faith in Jesus also lose everlasting life.

"He That Has Endured . . . Will Be Saved"

Yes, there are various things involved in getting saved. We must take in accurate knowledge of God's purposes and his way of salvation. Then we must exercise

faith in the Chief Agent of salvation, Jesus Christ, and do God's will the rest of our lives. (John 3:16; Titus 2:14) Salvation is sure for those who follow this course. But it involves persevering right to the end of our present life or of this system of things. Only "he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved."—Matthew 24:13.

Along with others in his household, the jailer in Philippi responded positively to the message of salvation that Paul and Silas preached. "One and all, he and his were baptized without delay." (Acts 16:33) We can take similar positive action. Thus, we will enter into a close and blessed relationship with Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, and can have complete confidence in divine provisions for salvation. The Philippian jailer "rejoiced greatly with all his household now that he had believed God." (Acts 16:34) Such a course will also cause us to 'rejoice greatly.'

Egypt. We can deliberately choose to disobey God.—Deuteronomy 30:19, 20.

Imagine being rescued from a burning tower. Think of the relief you would feel as you were safely taken from the building and the rescuer said: "You are safe now." Yes, you would have been saved from certain death. But what would happen if you decided to go back into the building for some foolish reason? Your life would again be in danger.

Christians are in a saved condition. They have the prospect of everlasting life because they are in an approved position before God. As a group, their salvation from Adamic sin and all its consequences is sure. But individually they will be saved to eternal life only if they continue to adhere to all of God's requirements. Jesus emphasized this when he likened himself to a vine and his disciples to branches in that vine. He said: "Every branch in me

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