

Can I Be Saved?

The FAQ "What is Christianity" covered the fundamentals of Christianity and how to be saved. This FAQ answers the question "what else do I need to do to be saved?" or "How to be sure that I am saved".

The apostle Paul warned the Greek philosophers in Athens of a coming day of judgment appointed by God.

Acts 17:31 because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained; of which he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead.

So there is a judgment day coming, but fortunately for us, God doesn't want us to be lost. Peter tells us that God wants us all to be saved.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow concerning his promise, as some count slowness; but is patient with us, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

If an all powerful God wants us to be saved, we have a pretty good chance. The only catch is that God gave us free will, you or I can reject his salvation if we want to. If God was to force everyone to be good, we would be just a bunch of robots. He loves us enough to give us the choice of where we want to spend eternity.

We saw in the FAQ "What is Christianity" that Christians believe in God (the LORD), an all powerful, all wise awesome being who cares about us, his children. God keeps track of what is going on with us, even taking the trouble to know how many hairs we have on our heads. He created the world, not just this world, he created the whole universe. Our ancestors sinned separating us from God and bringing the curse of death on the whole human race. Our sin can be so offensive to God that he would destroy us if he didn't care for us so much. Since he cares so much for us, instead of destroying us he sent his son, Christ, to be a sacrifice to save us from the coming day of judgment. Christ's life fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, but the people of his day didn't recognize him and instead crucified him. Christ's resurrection proved his divinity. After his resurrection Christ told his disciples to "go into all the world and make disciples of all nations". When the Holy Spirit came on the disciples in Acts 2, Peter explained to the very people who had killed Christ that they could be forgiven, if they would repent and be baptized.

We saw in the FAQ "What is Christianity" that we need to believe, repent, and be baptized. Is that all that we need to do to be saved, or is there something more?

There are things which Jesus expects us to do, commandments which he expects us to obey. We can invent a list of rules like the Pharisees and blindly follow it, but that won't save us. The following verses show that even people who do mighty works for Christ aren't necessarily going to be saved.

Matthew 7:21-23 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will tell me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many mighty works?' Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity.'

So we cannot earn salvation. At best we are unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10 KJV). What saves us is God's wonderful grace. Yes, we were created to do good works, but doing good works alone won't save us.

Ephesians 2:8-10 for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them.

So are we saved by faith or by works? We read in James 2 that the devils believe and tremble, but are not saved. The answer is that we need both faith and works and something else, there is a third piece to the "What must I do to be saved?" puzzle.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 If I speak with the languages of men and of angels, but don't have love, I have become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but don't have love, I am nothing. If I dole out all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but don't have love, it profits me nothing.

If I don't have love, but have a faith that can move mountains or give my life for Christ (a work), I won't be saved. So, in addition to faith and works (keeping Christ's commandments), we must have love.

Is that all? Let's see. The Scriptures are God's inspired word. So our answer must be one that does not contradict the other scriptures. The final piece that enables us to answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?", is found in Romans where Paul says that a person has to have Christ's spirit dwelling in him in order to really be one of Christ's disciples.

Romans 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if it is so that the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his.

Now let's tie it up into a neat package. Romans 8:9 said that we must have "God's spirit", and we can read in 1 John 4:18 that "God is love". But 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 said that we must have "love". Since God's spirit is love, we could read Romans 8:9 to say that we must have love.

Christ expects us to keep his commandments. The test which he gave us to enable us to tell real Christians from false ones is whether we have love for one another.

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, just like I have loved you; that you also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

In Matthew 7:23 when Christ told the people who did the mighty works that he didn't know them, we realize that they did not have his spirit (love), so he didn't recognize them. His spirit of love dwelling in us is what he is looking for. If we love him and keep his commandments, he will give us his Spirit of truth which will dwell in us and He and the Father will dwell in us through the Spirit.

John 14:15-20 If you love me, keep my commandments. I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, that he may be with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world can't receive; for it doesn't see him, neither knows him. You know him, for he lives with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more; but you will see me. Because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

If Christ is dwelling in our hearts we will be saved and we will not hear the terrible words, "Depart from me, I never knew you" from Matthew 7:21-23. If he is not dwelling in us, no amount of faith or works will save us.

Christ died for all mankind. He paid the awful price for our sins with his blood, he became the atoning sacrifice for you and me, but if we slip, and who doesn't, he is also our Counselor or lawyer. He knows what it is like to be human and can intercede for us with his father. The way to tell if we really do know him and love him, is to see if we keep his commandments.

1 John 2:1-3 My little children, I write these things to you so that you may not sin. If anyone sins, we have a Counselor with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. And he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commandments.

Christ invites all who are over-burdened and troubled to come to him and become his disciples. When compared to the alternative, his commandments

are not hard to keep. Sometimes it doesn't seem that way, but in the long run it will be well with those who follow Jesus.

Matthew 11:28-30 'Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

The rewards of walking with Jesus are great. If we love him we will keep his commandments and his Spirit will dwell in us. His Spirit will guide us through life and through life's problems and will even pray to God on our behalf. Christians have a direct line to the creator of the universe, that line is called prayer.

Philippians 4:6-7 In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Christianity is a religion based on the supernatural, we have an active enemy, the devil, but God will take care of us, if we ask. We can pray to God, the creator of the universe, and lay our problems cares, wants, and burdens at his feet, remembering that he cares for us. Sometimes we may have to suffer or even die for him; but if we ask him for the strength we need, we can remain faithful even unto death and in the long run he will give us a crown of life (Revelation 2:10). Compared with our eternal reward, our afflictions here seem light and momentary.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore we don't faint, but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we don't look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

God has given us his inspired word, the Bible, which we can study and use to understand his will. The Holy Spirit which dwells in us will guide us and help us understand the Bible. Once we learn about Christ, believe in him, and start keeping his commands, Christ, the Father and the Holy Spirit move into our hearts. Being a Christian is a wonderful thing. Once we accept Christ and become his follower, his blood continually washes away our sins.

1 John 1:9-10 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we haven't sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Another compelling reason to believe in Christ that God answers our prayers.

When the Holy Spirit dwells in us and conveys our prayers to God, when our requests match God's will, answers to our prayers happen. Things happen which do not necessarily defy the laws of nature or physics, but things which are very unlikely, we call this phenomenon God's Providence. The problem with using this reason to prove Christianity to non-believers is that you have to be a believer for this to work. Once you become a believer and see your prayers being answered it greatly strengthens your faith. I have seen some wonderful answers to prayer. Yes, you can say that such things are coincidence, but with a Ph.D. with a minor in mathematics, I can say that the chances of them happening just when they did are so small that I am firmly convinced that God is real and very powerful and Christianity is the only way to live.

God does not always choose to answer our prayers in the way we want him to, sometimes we just have to trust him. God does not think like we do. He is so far beyond what we can understand that we often have no idea what he is doing. Sometimes in answering our prayers, God says "no", or "wait", or "I have something better for you", and sometimes he says "YES".

We need to be faithful to him and trust him no matter what, like the three Hebrew children who were tossed into a super heated fiery furnace for defying king Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship his golden idol. They told the king that God could save them, if he wanted to, but they were not going to sin against God, even if he didn't deliver them. (But He did deliver them.) The strength of Christianity is that people of faith are willing to die for Christ trusting him to save them.

Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, 'Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.'

Christ did not harm those who were crucifying him even though he could have called ten legions of angels, instead he forgave them and prayed for them. To be a follower of Christ, a Christian, we must follow Christ, love others (even our enemies), forgive them, pray for them, and be gentle and kind to everyone.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 The Lord's servant must not quarrel, but be gentle towards all, able to teach, patient, in gentleness correcting those who oppose him: perhaps God may give them repentance leading to a full knowledge of the truth, and they may recover themselves out of the devil's snare, having been taken captive by him to his will.

When problems arise and differences occur, and they will, we must keep our temper and be gentle and kind and say only those things which build people up not tear them down. We need to give grace to those that hear us. In order to do this we need to be full of Christ's spirit of love and kindness, remember we are speaking to God's children. If we try to do this in our own wisdom, we will probably mess us, we need to be humble and ask God for help and guidance.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for building up as the need may be, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Christians are be God's ambassadors to this world and our mission is to help people be reconciled to God. We can do this by reaching out to them and helping them, by loving them, and by sharing the gospel with them, as Christ commanded us to do. Sometimes they may not be willing to come to us, we may need to go them. Will you be a good ambassador for Christ?

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

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Earlier we said that we must seek God's forgiveness and we must forgive others. This is such an important part of our salvation that the next FAQ is devoted to forgiveness. If we really do have God's love in our heart, we will be able to forgive others.