

# How To Be Saved

## The Gospel Invitation by Mark Spence & Eric Hovind

Thanks for wanting to dig deeper into your relationship with your creator and truly understand your eternal destiny! The beauty of the Gospel is that it is so simple it can be summarized in just one verse (John 3:16); yet so amazingly profound that God gave us 66 books to communicate its truth!

In the very first chapter of the very first book of the Bible, we read that God created the world and everything in it, including Adam and Eve, and that it was very good.

*In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth. Genesis 1*

Because He created people, we are by very nature accountable to Him.

*20 "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Romans 1:20-21*

God created us to have a perfect, wonderful relationship with Him forever. So what happened? Why is the world such a mess? Why is there pain and suffering? Why isn't everyone enjoying a loving relationship with their Heavenly Father, the God of the universe?

## SIN

**The bad news**— sin! The story about a man and a woman and a perfect Garden depicts much more than an old fable. Genesis chapter 1 and 2 tell us about the perfect world that God made and the first man and woman. He created and placed there, Adam and Eve. God gave them the free choice to choose between good and evil. In Genesis 3 we read that Adam and Eve chose evil. They chose to disobey God. You might not think that one act of disobedience is really all that important to each one of us, but let's continue looking at the ultimate authority to see its end effect on us.

I've heard people say that when you die, good people go to Heaven and bad people go Hell. Well, kind of! The Bible teaches that the unrighteous or "bad people" will not inherit the kingdom of God.

*9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. — 1 Corinthians 6:9-10*

But what is the definition of righteous and unrighteous? Most of us have our own standard good and bad, and we feel that our good outweighs our bad. Many are satisfied that they have a pretty good chance of going to Heaven on the merit of their "good works." Do you think the God of the Bible considers you to be a good person? Let's find out using His Ten Commandments.

The ninth commandment says, "*You shall not lie.*" (Exodus 20:16) How many lies have you told in your life? Too many to count right! What do you call someone who tells a lie? A liar. God's standard of righteousness says not to lie because God is not a liar.

How about the eighth commandment? It says, "*You shall not steal.*" (Exodus 20:15) How many times have you taken something that doesn't belong to you? Don't lie about this! What do we call someone who takes things that don't belong to them? A thief. God's standard of righteousness is not to steal because God does not steal.

The seventh commandment says, *“You shall not commit adultery.”* Exodus 20:14) Because God is perfectly faithful, His standard of righteousness says that we are to be perfectly faithful. That is why He commands us not to commit adultery. You may be thinking, “I’ve never had sex with a married individual.” But Jesus said that even looking with lust causes us to commit adultery in our hearts. God not only sees the things we do, He sees the very things we *think*! Once again, we fall short of God’s standard.

How about the third commandment? It says, *“You shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain.”* (Exodus 20:7) Because God is perfect, He says that the use of His name is to be perfect. That’s why He says, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Have you ever taken God’s name and used it to swear? Have you ever texted OMG? That is called blasphemy and it is a very serious sin.

The Bible says that God’s enemies use His name in vain. The Bible sets the benchmark for “good” very high. ***God’s standard of a good person is perfection!*** (Romans 5:8) You are probably thinking, “But wait! Nobody’s perfect!” That’s right! Nobody’s perfect, everyone has sinned!

God tells us that adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9). He says that He will not hold them guiltless who take His name in vain (Ex 20:7). Liars and thieves will have their part in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). Isaiah 59 “says that your sins have cut you off from God.” Romans 3:23 says *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”*

Many treat sin like a cream puff when they need to treat it like a rattlesnake! Yes, the bad news is that you have missed the mark of perfection. Big revelation I am sure, but it gets worse. ***You can’t do enough good works to outweigh the bad works.*** The Bible says that all of our good works are as filthy rags to God (Isaiah 64:6). He is telling us that there is no way for us to get out of this situation on our own. We are trapped and doomed without someone to rescue us and save us from the destruction we deserve.

## DEPRAVITY

Maybe you are still thinking, “Honestly, mankind is not all that bad.” That is part of the problem. We do not fully grasp how sinful we are, how disgusting to the very core we are in the eyes of Holy God!

Man is so *dead* that only God can make him *alive*,

So *blind* that only God could give him *sight*,

So *sinful* that only God could *forgive* him,

So *lost* that only God could *find* him,

So *helpless* that only God could *change* him.

There’s nothing in us worth saving and there’s nothing we could do to save ourselves. If God doesn’t do something to help us, we’re in big trouble. This is the true condition of every man and woman born on planet earth.

Jonathan Edwards once remarked, “every unconverted man would kill God, if they could only get to Him.”

In short, without a Savior, man is sinful ... lost ... helpless ... hopeless ... doomed ... damned!

## THE PENALTY

There is more bad news. When we break man’s law, we pay man’s penalty. ***When we break God’s law we pay God’s penalty and the Bible says, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).*** Literally, there is a hell to pay.

We are born into a sin-cursed world (Psalm 51:5), and we all personally choose to sin (Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8). Sin separates us from God and carries a death-penalty that must be paid. Our world fully embraces a sinful humanistic worldview which justifies selfish actions. ***This Humanistic Worldview says, “The end of all being is the happiness of Man.”*** That worldview is a dead end! People have tried all kinds of things to obtain fulfillment and purpose, but money, power and popularity never lead to true happiness.

God does not simply dismiss his wrath against sinners by the wave of a magic wand.

**That’s the bad news. Now let me give you the Good News — the Gospel!**

## **FAITH**

Although we are sinners, ***God still loves us.*** We were created for the purpose to enjoy a relationship with our Creator! There is a path to discover true happiness! ***True joy is discovered when we realize that the end of all being is not the happiness of man, but the Glory of God!*** God, Himself even wrote out the plan for our redemption in the Bible so that we could ***be sure*** of the path to freedom and forgiveness and hope.

All the major religions of the world claim to POINT to truth.

*The Hindu scripture, the Vedas, says truth is elusive and hard to find. Buddha, at the end of his life, said. “I’m still searching for the truth.” Mohammed wrote, “I point to the truth.”*

***Jesus Christ never claimed to point to truth. He said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6).***

“We don’t get to choose what is true. We only get to choose what we do about it.” —Kami Garia

You might assert that this Christian belief that Christ is the only way to Heaven is intolerant, dogmatic, even uneducated in light of the many world religions. However, in reality, there

are only two world religions: Those that espouse God's Word as truth and those that do not. Those that reject the Bible are themselves intolerant—intolerant of an ultimate authority, choosing to determine truth for themselves. The path to redemption is simple. It's made plain in Acts 4:12, *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

What is this good news about Jesus Christ being **the** way, **the** truth, **the** life? We call it the Gospel, the good news that God made a way for us to be saved, to be redeemed. God's Son, Jesus Christ, came and lived among men. He lived a perfect life. He never sinned one time. Then He laid down His life and allowed Himself to be the sacrifice, the payment for our sin debt for missing the mark of God's standard of perfection (John 10:15).

Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross taking upon Himself the sins of the world — past, present and future. Three days later, he literally rose from the dead giving Him victory over death and sin.

No other world-religion has a resurrected Savior! And Christianity is the only story where the hero dies for the villain! Christianity begins where all the world religions end, at death., and continues with resurrection. Because of the resurrection, we have a hope and a future in Christ. We have access to His throne room!

*"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:" — John 11:25*

He paid the debt that we deserved to pay, and proclaimed that anyone who believes, who accepts His payment, who puts their faith and trust in what He did on the Cross, can be saved from paying that eternal death penalty themselves.

How much does this sin debt cost? In 1978, I was given physical life. It didn't cost me a thing, but it cost someone else a lot. In 2001, I was given spiritual life. Once again, it didn't cost me a thing, but it cost Christ everything. Romans 6:23 says "The **gift** of God is eternal

life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It’s a gift! You can’t earn it. You can’t buy it. It is a gift received by faith alone.

Faith sometimes gets a bad rap, being described as something only for the weak. The truth is, everyone practices faith! You have faith in the food you eat and the air you breathe. You even put faith in drivers that you have never met, trusting that they will not cross those strips of white paint on the road as you fly past each other only a few feet apart. Faith is a part of our everyday lives. The most important faith question we need to ask is, in what or in whom do we place our faith for our eternal destiny and how much faith do we need?

I could put lots and lots of faith in a rickety old chair to hold me; however, my faith won’t determine whether the rickety, old chair will hold me. I could put very little faith in a rock solid chair to hold my weight; but, my little faith won’t change the fact that the sturdy chair has no problem holding me up. You see, it is not the amount of our faith; it is the **object** of our faith that matters.

In what are you placing your faith? Good works? Religion? A church? A pastor? A spouse? ***The Bible teaches us that there is only one thing in which we can put our trust to have salvation, and that is the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.*** If you are putting your trust in anything other than Christ, then you need to “repent.” That word means “to change your mind.” You need to change your mind about what you place your trust in for salvation. Your faith must be in ***Christ alone.***

## **GRACE ALONE**

Someone once said, “Faith is believing God is telling the truth.” This takes grace —God’s grace. What is this grace? It’s God’s undeserved favor.

***Grace is not only undeserved favor, but it is favor shown to the one who has deserved the very opposite. —HA Ironside***

This grace only has true meaning when we see our sin-filled lives as God sees them. We are at the nearest point of receiving God's grace when we begin to realize we can't do anything righteous. God is not asking us to clean our life up. He's asking us to lay our life down. There's a difference. We can't even seek after God in our own wicked state if it were not for the grace of God!

*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. — Psalm 10:4*

But the good news is that God seeks after sinners! God's mercies are new every morning.

*22 It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. — Lamentations 3:22-23*

God's grace is waiting for you right now!

## **REPENTANCE**

**The word repentance means "to change your mind."** This is an important word in understanding how we choose to spend eternity in Heaven with God.

Mark 1:15 records the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. He began by giving the command: "...repent and believe in the Gospel." This is God's required response to sin.

Peter, one of the twelve apostles, ended his sermon on the day of Pentecost by telling everyone who had believed in the name of Jesus to **repent** and to be baptized as public testimony of their new found faith in Christ. (Acts 2:38)

Paul, author of thirteen books in the New Testament, explained in Acts 10:21 that he had declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:21) He reiterates in Acts 26:18 how Jesus Himself had sent Paul "to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to



God [that is to repent], that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

Repentance is not works. Even our ability to see our sin as God sees it and to have the choice to turn away from sin toward God exemplifies the sheer GRACE OF GOD!

Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly reminds us that it is not our works of righteousness that saves us from a depraved life and an eternal destiny in hell. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Repentance is not an optional add-on to salvation. It is absolutely crucial to it, illuminating for the whole world those who have been saved by God, from those who have not. Jesus warned, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). When the apostles heard Peter’s story about Cornelius converting to Christianity, they praised God for granting the Gentiles “repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18). In 2 Corinthians 7:10, the apostle Paul writes about repentance that leads to salvation.”

We know that we are saved by grace alone through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8).

Repentance is part of that faith, but not a separate action. Trusting in Christ and putting one’s faith in Him involves a turning from self (repentance) and a turning to Christ (faith).

Theologian and Apologist Norman Geisler illustrates this with, “Faith and repentance are inseparable, in the same way that the command to *come here* cannot be fulfilled without *leaving there*.”

Sometimes an earthly illustration falls short of conveying the Holiness of God Almighty. But allow me to use the situation of adultery to try to give you a picture of the relationship between repentance and faith in God.

If your spouse committed adultery, and came back to you to ask forgiveness and to restore your relationship with them with the following, I wonder how you would respond.

*Hey, I am sorry I let you down. Even though it really isn't a big deal or anything that I slept with Suzy, I guess it is a big deal to you. So, I'll try not to let that happen again.*

How much forgiveness do you think you would grant? Would you have a restored relationship after that? I didn't think so.

But what if you truly saw the awful hurt of unfaithfulness to your spouse? What if you understood you had broken the coveted trust between the two of you and came to your spouse humbly saying:

*I am so sorry that I sinned. I am begging your forgiveness for every even thinking of sleeping with someone else. I realize how this wicked betrayal of your trust has ruined our relationship. Please forgive me.*

The situation would be entirely different because the attitude is different. You don't call on the lifeguard to save you unless you admit that you are drowning. You can't call on Jesus Christ to save you from sin until you see your sin as God sees it either!

Repentance does not mean perfection. We don't clean ourselves up on our own and then try to get God to take us back. Rather, it is choosing a different attitude toward sin. We will remain sinners until God calls us home to Heaven. We will have to ask forgiveness of sin until we die. But as a child of God, God gives His children power and strength to battle against it.

A person who truly repents and trusts Christ alone for salvation is what a Christian is! The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Christians are marked by characteristics of their Savior, Jesus Christ. Christian means "Christ-like." Compassion, love, goodness meekness, humility, honesty, dependability—these mark the life of a Christian.

## THE BIG QUESTION

It doesn't matter if you are young or old, healthy or sickly, rich or poor. **We all have an appointment with death.** We have no promise of tomorrow. If it were your day before the Holy Creator of the universe, asking you why you should be permitted to live with Him forever in Heaven, what would you say?

Would you tell Him you think your good works outweigh your bad?

Would you show Him your baptism certificate?

Would you remind Him about all the things you accomplished in life?

Would you brag about your church attendance?

According to what we have looked at in God's Word, the highest authority, ALL of these reasons for justification fail miserably! We don't serve God to gain His acceptance; we are accepted by God, and therefore, we serve Him. God will not ask for your church attendance record. He will not ask for a baptism certificate nor a good works vs bad works score card. God Almighty will ask one question: "What did you do with My Son, Jesus, who I sent to pay your sin debt?"

*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. — Romans 6:23*

## INVITATION

If you have never repented and put your trust in Jesus Christ who died on the cross and rose again to provide the way of salvation for you, then I invite you to do that today.

*30 ...but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath*

*ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. — Acts 17:30-31*

My friends Matt and Sherry wrote a poem as a prayer for people who desire a relationship with God. While there are no magic words, but rather an attitude, a change of your heart and mind, you could use this poem as a sample of what it means to pray to God and ask Him for forgiveness and salvation.

***Jesus, you died upon the Cross and rose again to save the lost. Forgive me now of all my sin; come be my Savior, Lord, and friend. Take my life and make it new, and help me Lord to live for you.***

The Bible says in Romans 10:13, *“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* That’s a promise from the Creator of the universe. His promise is not based on our emotions or feelings, our good works or bad. Salvation is based on the object of our faith, Jesus Christ.

The God of the universe loves you and desires to have a relationship with you. He wants to give your life true purpose and joy. The Gospel really is simple.

**Admit** that you are a sinner who has come short of the glory of God, and because of your sin, you deserve to be punished. (Romans 5:8; 3:23)

**Believe** that Jesus Christ died, was buried and rose triumphantly over death and sin paying the punishment for you on the cross. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

**Call** upon the Lord Jesus. Repent of trusting anything but Christ alone for salvation and you can be saved from eternal destruction and be assured of a home in Heaven forever. (Romans 10:10-13)

***Our authority is the Bible—God’s Word.*** No other religion has a book of such miraculous power. No other book offers you a loving relationship with the Creator of the universe—a God who loves you enough to let His only Son die for you. No other world religion has a

resurrected Savior. Trust Jesus Christ and begin your God-quest journey with your Creator today!