How Can I Be Saved?

A jailer in the city of Philippi once asked Paul and Silas this very question:

> "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30)

It is the most important question you will ever ask.

Many people have been taught that salvation must be earned. Do enough good works. Keep enough duties. Climb higher through life (and maybe even many births). Someday, perhaps, you will reach the top and be saved.

But how do you know when you have done enough? You don't. It is a ladder with no top. So, what does the Bible teach?

Salvation is a gift. If you must earn it, it is wages. A gift is not earned. The Bible says:

> "For you are saved by grace through faith; and it is not of yourselves: it is the gift of God —not of your worthy actions, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Good works cannot buy it. Of course you should do good. But if good works could buy pardon, then Christ died for nothing (Galatians 2:21). God saved us "not by righteous works which we have done, but according to his mercy." (Titus 3:5)

Neither harsh penance, nor many births can buy it. A new body with the same old guilt is not salvation. It is only a longer debt.

Everyone comes to God the same way. The rich man and the poor man. The scholar and the laborer. The high and the low. No one may boast (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

But a gift can still have terms. Suppose a king lays a pardon on the table and says, "Come and take it." Coming does not buy the pardon. It receives what the king has already signed.

Likewise, God has set the terms which we must accept:

Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31).

Repent. Turn from sin and from idols. God "commands all men every where to repent." (Acts 17:30)

Confess Jesus before others. "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:10)

Be baptized into Christ. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16)

None of these steps pays anything to God. They receive what He has given. Jesus is "the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey him." (Hebrews 5:9)

And when God saves you, He teaches you to live a new life. Good works follow salvation. They do not buy it (Ephesians 2:10).

Some refuse the gift because it hurts their pride. It says you cannot save yourself. That is not an insult. That is good news!

Conclusion:

The cross is the payment. Faith that obeys is the open hand.

Will you keep climbing a ladder with no top? Or will you receive God's gift?

Will you believe, repent, confess Jesus, and be baptized into Christ? (Acts 2:37-38)

Then work for Him because you are grateful, not because you fear the future.

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