

Teaching 9 of 11

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

The answer fits on one line.

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Acts 16:31

Paul and Silas sat beaten and chained in the worst cell of a jail. At midnight they were praying and singing hymns (Acts 16:25). Then an earthquake shook every door open and every chain loose. The jailer woke, saw the open doors and drew his sword to kill himself. “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here,” Paul called out.

Trembling, the jailer fell at their feet and asked the biggest question a person can ask: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Some would hand him a list. Give ten percent. Keep the right day. Clean up first. Say this prayer word for word. Paul’s answer fit on one line: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

What it means to believe

πιστεύω

pisteuō (pis-TYOO-oh)

To believe; to trust; to lean your full weight on.

The word is πιστεύω *pisteuō*: to believe, to trust, to lean your full weight on something. You show you believe a chair will hold you when you sit down. Believing in Jesus is putting your whole weight on Him: that He died for your sins, rose from the dead, and saves you.

No list, no formula, no payment

Paul did not say keep the Sabbath, give a tenth, clean up your life, or repeat a prayer after me. He pointed a scared man to a Person.

The whole New Testament says the same. “Whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Not whoever tithes or keeps a day. “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (John 6:29). “By grace you have been saved through faith... not a result of works” (Ephesians 2:8-9). God justifies the one who “does not work but believes” (Romans 4:5).

The thief and the soldier

The thief on the cross was never baptized, never tithed, never kept a Sabbath, and could do no good works. He turned to Jesus and said, “Remember me.” Jesus answered, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42-43).

When Peter preached to Cornelius, “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word” while he was still speaking (Acts 10:44). No raised hands, no led prayer. They believed, and God saw it.

Romans 10:9 and the sinner’s prayer

“With the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses” (Romans 10:10). It starts in the heart. The mouth speaks what the heart already holds, the way “I love you” comes out of love that is already there. Romans 10 is not a magic spell.

The Bible never gives one set prayer you must pray to be saved. If you prayed one when you trusted Jesus, praise God. But if you have prayed it a hundred times to be sure, you can rest. Words do not save you. Jesus does.

Baptism and good works

The jailer believed, then “was baptized at once” (Acts 16:33). Baptism is beautiful and commanded, but it follows faith, like a wedding ring shows a marriage that already exists. And “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10). Good works are the fruit, not the root. The jailer who locked them up washed their wounds the same night.

Remember this

When the jailer asked how to be saved, Paul gave no rules, no formula and no price. He said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus.” That is still the answer today.