

INTRODUCTION

The HOLY BIBLE

ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION

Containing the Gospel of John



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have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (3:16–17).

WHY DO WE NEED TO BE SAVED?

But why do we need to be saved? Jesus said, "Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin" (8:34). If we are honest with ourselves, we cannot deny that from the moment of our birth we have done wrong things—things that make us guilty before God and deserving of his judgment. The Bible calls these wrong things sin, and sin separates us from God. And because we are separated from God, we face the awful prospect of his eternal wrath (3:36).

JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY

Can anyone save us from God's wrath and assure us of heaven? Some people believe that they can get to heaven by doing good works, or by following the teachings of a religion, or even by giving money to churches or charities. But Jesus clearly said that none of these things would save us: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (14:6). No human effort can give us eternal life.

In fact, the only "work" that can save us is the "work" of believing in what Jesus has done to accomplish our salvation: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (6:29). And to those who so believe, the promise of God stands firm: "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (1:12).

The Gospel of John has always been one of the favorite books of the Bible. Many say it was the first Bible book they read. John tells the story of Jesus Christ, carefully recording many events of his life. And John states plainly why he does so: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:31).

THE SON OF GOD

John wants to show us who Jesus really is: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . ." (1:1, 14). Jesus, during his life on earth, was God in human form! And just in case John's introduction isn't clear enough, a few sentences later he quotes John the Baptist, who says, "I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (1:34). Throughout the book, John gives evidences of Jesus' deity—that Jesus performed many miracles (2:1–11; 4:46–54; 5:1–17; 6:1–13, 16–21; 9:1–7; 11:38–44), and that he fulfilled prophecies written centuries before (2:13–22; 3:14; 5:46; 12:14–16).

GOD'S LOVE

But why would Jesus, who is God, leave heaven to live on earth as a human? Jesus himself tells us why: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but

HOW DOES JESUS SAVE US?

John the Baptist calls Jesus the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). Jesus explains that our salvation comes through his death on the cross as the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for our sin (3:14–15). Chapters 18–19 describe Jesus' death, and then chapter 20 describes his glorious triumph over death as he rose from the dead. Jesus' resurrection means that he can give eternal life to all who believe in him: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die . . ." (11:25–26).

DO YOU BELIEVE?

That last verse (11:26) actually ends with Jesus asking, "Do you believe this?" It is a question that every person must answer: Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Do you believe that he died on the cross to free you from the guilt and judgment of sin? Do you believe that he rose from the grave, breaking the power of death and making a way for you to have eternal life in heaven? If so, you may express your faith in him by praying this prayer:

Heavenly Father, I believe that Jesus Christ is your Son, and that he died on the cross to save me from my sin. I believe that he rose again to life, and that he invites me to live forever with him in heaven as part of your family. Because of what Jesus has done, I ask you to forgive me of my sin and give me eternal life. Help me to live in a way that pleases and honors you. Amen.

If you have just committed your life to Christ, sign your name below as a testimony of your decision.

Name _____

Date _____

GROWING IN CHRIST

Once you have received the gift of eternal life, you will want to grow in your knowledge of him and your obedience to him. Jesus' teaching about how to live for God can be summed up in three simple instructions:

Read the Bible. Jesus said, "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me" (14:21). One way to show our love for God is to read and live out the commands set forth in the Bible, God's holy Word. Read the Bible daily to learn how to live a life that honors God and gives testimony to others that Jesus has made a difference in your life.

Pray. Communication with God through prayer keeps your focus on eternal things. If you are truly following Jesus, your desires will be for God's glory and for his kingdom, the church. Jesus promised, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (15:7).

Seek Christian fellowship. Meeting regularly with Christian brothers and sisters allows you to follow Jesus' example of love and to fulfill his command to "love one another . . . just as I have loved you" (13:34). Just as Jesus surrounded himself daily with his disciples and followers, find a Bible-believing church

where you can meet with other Christians. There you will find joy and encouragement in the fellowship of God's people.

ASSURANCE

If you have just accepted Christ as your Savior, you may be wondering, "What happens if I sin after I'm saved?" All Christians sin from time to time. But the good news is that Jesus' death paid for all your sin, both past and future. If you humbly admit your sin to God, the Bible promises that God will forgive you and cleanse you from all your sin. Pray for God's help to keep you from falling into sin again. Jesus assures us in the Bible that, "whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (6:37). Your salvation is sure because Christ's sacrifice of himself on the cross is greater than any sin.

You might also wonder, "What happens when I don't feel close to God? Am I still saved?" When a person has accepted the gift of salvation, Jesus describes his relationship with them as a shepherd and his sheep: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (10:27-28). Salvation is not based on feelings but on the fact that God has welcomed you into his family through faith in Jesus. Nothing on earth or in heaven can break that bond. If you feel far away from God, examine your life to see if there is unconfessed sin standing between you and God. Continue to read the Bible and pray regularly, filling your mind with God's truth and goodness. Talk with other Christians and learn from their experiences. You will grow closer to God as your knowledge and experience of him grows. Rest assured in the promise that "no one is able to snatch [you] out of my hand."