How is a person saved?

Salvation & the Gospel · https://thebiblicalroots.org/answers/how-is-a-person-saved/

A person is saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is not something we earn by our works or moral efforts, but a gift God gives to those who trust in His Son (Eph 2:8–9; Rom 3:28). Jesus accomplished everything necessary for our salvation through His life, death, and resurrection (1 Cor 15:3–4).

Scripture is remarkably clear on this point. The apostle Paul writes:

> "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8–10)

Notice the order carefully. We are saved *by grace*—that is, by God's undeserved favor—*through faith*, which means trusting in Christ rather than ourselves. Paul explicitly rules out works as the basis of salvation. At the same time, he immediately affirms that good works do have a place: not as the cause of salvation, but as its result. We are not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *for* good works.

To understand why this is necessary, we have to return to the human condition. The Bible teaches that all people are sinners (Rom 3:23) and are spiritually dead apart from Christ (Eph 2:1–3). That means we are not capable of saving ourselves or contributing to our salvation. God, in His mercy, intervenes. He sends His Son to live the life we failed to live and to die in our place, bearing the penalty for sin (2 Cor 5:21). When a person believes in Christ, God credits the righteousness of Jesus to them (Rom 4:5–6), forgives their sins, and declares them righteous.

The word "faith" (*pistis* in Greek) is not mere intellectual agreement. It is personal trust—relying on Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness and reconciliation with God. This is why Scripture calls us to "repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Repentance involves turning from sin; faith involves turning to Christ. These are two sides of the same response to the gospel.

Across Christian traditions, there is broad agreement that salvation is rooted in God's grace and the work of Christ. Differences arise in how faith, works, and sacraments relate to salvation. Some traditions emphasize a more sacramental or participatory process, while others emphasize justification by faith alone. Even so, historic Christianity is united in affirming that salvation ultimately depends on what Christ has done, not on human merit.

Key Scriptures to Study

Core teaching passages

- Ephesians 2:8–10 — Salvation is by grace through faith, not a result of works
- John 3:3–8 — One must be born again by the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God
- Romans 10:9–13 — Salvation comes through confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in His resurrection
- Titus 3:4–7 — God saves us not by works, but by His mercy through regeneration and renewal

Supporting theological framework

- Romans 3:23–26 — All have sinned, and are justified freely by God's grace through Christ
- Galatians 2:16 — A person is justified by faith in Jesus Christ, not by works of the law
- John 1:12–13 — Those who receive Christ are given the right to become children of God

Clarifying or balancing passages

- James 2:17–26 — True faith is living and active, producing works as its fruit
- Matthew 7:21–23 — A warning that mere outward profession without true faith is insufficient

Objections & Misconceptions

Common Objection: "Do I have to do good works to be saved?"
Response: No. We are not saved by works (Eph 2:9; Titus 3:5). However, genuine faith will produce good works as its natural fruit (Eph 2:10; Jas 2:17). Works are evidence of salvation, not the basis of it.

Common Objection: "Is faith something I do to earn salvation?"
Response: No. Even faith is described as a gift from God (Eph 2:8; Phil 1:29). Faith is the means by which we receive salvation, not a work that earns it.

Common Objection: “What about baptism or other religious acts?”
Response: Scripture presents salvation as grounded in Christ alone and received through faith (John 3:16; Rom 5:1). Different Christian traditions understand the role of baptism differently, but all agree it does not replace the necessity of faith in Christ.

Why This Matters

This doctrine answers the most important question a person can ask: How can I be made right with God? If salvation depended on our performance, we could never have assurance. But because it rests on Christ’s finished work, believers can have confidence and peace (Rom 5:1). It also produces humility—since salvation is a gift—and a life of gratitude expressed through obedience and love (Gal 5:6).

Recommended Resources

- *What Is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert
- *The Cross of Christ* by John Stott
- *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* by N. T. Wright
- *Are We Saved by Faith Alone?* - R. C. Sproul
- *The Freedom of a Christian* – Martin Luther