

Must One Be A Member Of The Church To Be Saved?

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Eph. 1:19-23

Eph. 1:19-23, *“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”*

Common expressions heard today are:

- “One does not have to be a member of the church to be saved.”
- “The church doesn’t save anyone.”
- “One can be a Christian and not be a member of any church.”

Many are also of the opinion that being a good citizen is the equivalent of being a Christian. We need to inquire whether these beliefs are true. Does the Bible teach these popular doctrines?

Where does the Lord save?

It is a truth accepted by all that the Bible teaches that the Lord saves.

Can an expression be found in the Bible that states, “Good people can be saved out of the church”?

The question is: “Where does the Lord save — in the church, or out of it?” Or, “Can one be saved outside of the Lord’s church?”

The Bible answers the question, for it not only teaches whom the Saviour is, but also when and where He saves. The Saviour is the one who states the conditions of pardon for man and also tells him by what means and in what place he must be to receive salvation.

Jesus Christ has the right to say both when and where he will save.

The Lord desires the salvation of all; but if a man is to obtain it, then he must enter into that realm where God has placed it.

- 1 Thess. 5:9, *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,”*
- 2 Pet. 3:9, *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*
- 1 Tim. 2:4, *“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”*

God “walls in” His blessings

For some reason, God has always seen fit to place certain restrictions or requirements that exclude all from salvation that will not comply with them.

To illustrate: In the days of Noah, God offered men salvation from the destruction of the flood, but the offer was only to those who were willing to enter into the ark before the flood came. Concerning that salvation, Peter wrote”:

1 Pet. 3:19-20, *“By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”*

This passage plainly states that this salvation was in the ark. All who stayed out of the ark were lost. There was no other place to be saved from the flood; therefore, unless people entered into the ark they were lost.

The end of the story shows that only eight people were saved from the flood. These entered the ark — and safety.

However, the rest of mankind failed to meet the divine requirements by failing to enter within the “walls” that surrounded salvation; hence, they were destroyed.

Since God’s requirements in the days of Noah placed salvation from the flood in the ark, the question follows, “Where has God placed salvation from sin today?”

God has definitely located salvation and has stated certain requirements of all responsible beings, if they wish to be saved.

People cannot obtain that salvation in any place, nor in any way, different from these requirements.

Salvation is in Christ

The Bible very plainly states that salvation is in Christ; that God saves only through Christ.

The Apostle Paul declares in 2 Tim. 2:10, *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”*

Since Paul says that salvation is obtained *“in Christ”*, the question might be asked, “Cannot people obtain salvation in some other place?”

The Apostle Peter says in Acts 4:11-12 concerning the church that Christ established, *“This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*

Peter definitely and plainly declares, *“Neither is there salvation in any other.”*

The Bible then emphatically states that salvation is *“in Christ”* and in no other.

Hence, inspired men of God locate salvation from sin in a definite place as surely as Peter located salvation from the flood in a definite place.

One was *“in the ark”*; the other is *“in Christ”*.

Salvation today cannot be obtained just anywhere; it can only be obtained *“in Christ Jesus”*.

Hence, men are mistaken when they think there are many ways to be saved.

There are not a thousand ways to heaven, nor two. There is one way, not merely a way.

Jesus declares in John 14:6, *“... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

One cannot obtain salvation in any other place; for it cannot be found anywhere except *“in Christ”*. In Him is the sphere in which salvation is found.

What blessings are in Christ?

All spiritual blessings are in Christ. Eph. 1:3, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”*

Notice some of the many blessings which are found *“in Christ”* and what it means to be *“in Him”*.

Redemption is in Christ

Rom. 3:24, *“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”*

Redemption is another word for salvation or forgiveness. Jesus died to redeem man from sin, but one must come within those boundaries where redemption is located in order to be purchased with the price of His blood.

- 1 Pet. 1:18-19, *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*
- Acts 20:28, *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”*

Forgiveness is in Christ

Col. 1:14, *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”*

Since the *“forgiveness of sins”* is *“in Christ”*, then one must be there to have his sins forgiven.

Eph. 1:7, *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”*

One is a “new creature” in Christ

2 Cor. 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.”*

A *“new creature”* is one who has been born anew — one who has become a Christian.

John 3:5, *“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

But one cannot be a new creature outside of Christ. He also cannot be a new creature outside of the kingdom of God which was purchased by the blood of Christ.

Life is in Christ

- John 1:4, “*In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*”
- 1 John 5:11-12, “*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*”

One cannot enjoy spiritual life and at the same time be outside that realm where it is found.

To illustrate again:

- In the beginning of time God provided a sphere of life for all creation.
- He ordained that fish live in the water (Gen. 1). Can a fish live out of water? No, fish must live in that realm wherein God located their physical life.
- Now, notice the application: Where did God place spiritual life? Certainly, it was not outside of Christ, but rather “in Him”.
- Eternal life is in Christ, and everyone who has the Son has also the life that is in the Son. Thus, the sphere for man’s spiritual life is “*in Christ*”.

One is reconciled in Christ

2 Cor. 5:18-20, “*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.*”

Reconciliation is another word which indicates pardon, forgiveness of sins, or salvation. When man is reconciled with God, his sins are forgiven and he is united with God.

God and man meet “*in Christ*”; hence, to be “*in Christ*” is to be reconciled to God.

One is reconciled in the one body

Eph. 2:16, “*And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.*”

Therefore, one must be in that one body to be reconciled to God; and to be in the one body is to be “*in Christ*”.

To be “*in Christ*” is to be in the church

The Bible explains that the “*one body*” is the church.

- Eph. 1:22-23, “*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*”
- Col. 1:18, “*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*”
- Col. 1:24, “*Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.*”

Thus, to be “*in Christ*” is to be in His church

Let’s put this all together.

Since being reconciled unto God means being forgiven of sins, people are saved, or pardoned, or reconciled in the church.

Since people are reconciled in one body, and the body is the church, then people are saved, or reconciled only in the church, the one body.

The Bible also declares that Christ is the Saviour of the body, which is the church.

- Eph. 5:23, “*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*”
- Eph. 5:29-30, “*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*”

Since the church is the body of Christ, and Christ is the Saviour of the body, how then, can a person be saved and not be a member of the church? One must be a member of that which Christ is the Saviour in order to be saved.

Salvation is promised only to those who are in the body of Christ, the church. Acts 2:47, “*Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*”

This verse teaches that the Lord saved the people and that He added them to the church in the same process.

- To be saved is to be “*in Christ*”, for salvation is “*in Christ*” (2 Tim. 2:10).

- To be saved equals being in the church, for the Lord adds the saved to the church.
- Therefore, to be “*in Christ*” is to be in His church.

There are no saved people outside of the church of the New Testament, because the Lord adds all of the saved to the church.

Christ established only one church

The Bible teaches that there is but one body

- 1 Cor. 12:20, “*But now are they many members, yet but one body.*”
- Eph. 4:4, “*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*”
- Acts 4:10-12, “*Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. **Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.***”

The Bible also teaches there is only one way one can enter that body.

- Rom. 6:3, “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*”
- Gal. 3:27, “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*”
- 1 Cor. 12:13, “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*”
- Rev. 14:13, “*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*”

Conclusion

How a person become a member of the church? One must become a Christian. The following are the steps necessary to make that happen:

- **Faith.** Heb. 11:6, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* When I was in high school (I was about 17 years old), a neighbor boy my same age told me he was an atheist. Since I had been baptized, I took the opportunity to talk to him about the scriptures. He told me that he could see that living the life of a Christian was good, but he wasn’t sure if he believed there was a God. But to be on the safe side, maybe he should go to church, and when he dies and stands before God (if there is a God) on the day of Judgment (if there is a Judgment), maybe if God sees that he has gone to church and lived a good life that God would send him to heaven (if there is a heaven), and not to hell (if there is a hell). I told him, “It doesn’t work that way. You have to believe in Him with all your heart or you cannot please Him.”
- **Repentance.** Acts 2:38, *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”* Acts 11:18, *“... Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”* If while you were sleeping, you heard a noise in the other room, and you think to yourself, “There’s a burglar in my house!” So you reach for your cell phone, and as quietly as you can, you call the police, tell them there is a burglar in your house, and you give them your address. Soon, you heard them arrive and capture the thief. He yells, “I’m sorry; I’m sorry!” What is he sorry for? He is sorry that he got caught; not that he stole. In true repentance the thief would be sorry that he ever stole and wants to change his life so that he would never steal again. That is true repentance. It is a change of mind that brings about a change of action. That is what we have to do before we can become a Christian.
- **Confession.** Rom. 10:9-10, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* What do we confess? That we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Note that in the above scriptures that faith (believing), repentance, and confession are “**UNTO**” righteousness, life, or salvation. “Unto” means toward something; not that one has already attained.

- **Baptism.** It is baptism where righteousness, life, and salvation are attained. Jesus, himself, was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, “*But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” (Matt. 3:14-17). Jesus was baptized because God said it was the right thing to do. Did you see how pleased God was about Jesus being baptized? Jesus also said “*it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*” We are baptized because it fulfills His righteousness, not because it is of our righteousness.

In fact, if we are not baptized, we are still in our sins. “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” (Acts 2:38). Peter, what did you say the reason of baptism is? “for the remission of sins”. Why would anyone want to leave out the step that removes our sins?

Jesus commanded that to reach salvation we must be baptized. “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” (Mark 16:15-16).

Ananias told Saul (before he was rename Paul) the very same thing, “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*” (Acts 22:16). Baptism is a requirement given by God.

Baptism is called a burial. “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” (Rom. 6:4). Our old man is to be dead to us. “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was*

raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Rom. 6:3-6). Baptism is God’s blueprint for applying the blood of Christ in our lives by baptism. We are free from our old sins only when we are baptized.

This doesn’t mean “sprinkling. The scripture above says baptism is a burial. We don’t take a dead body to the cemetery and sprinkle a little dirt over it; we bury the body.

If you have not become a member of Christ's church, won't you consider it today?

