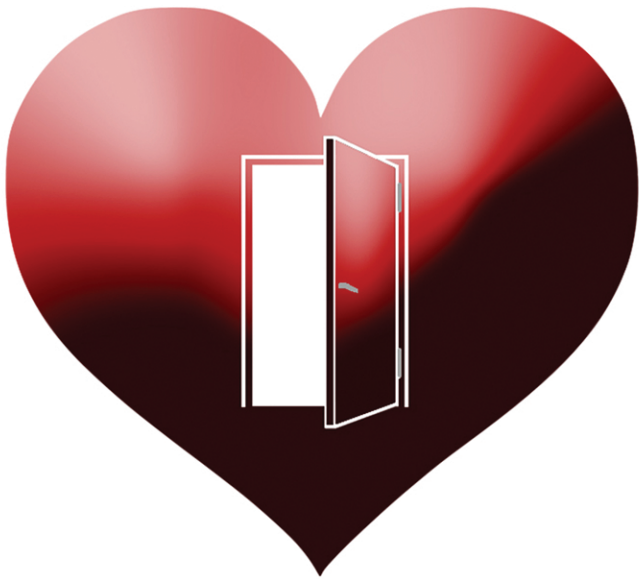


7 REASONS NOT To ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART



ANSWERING THE QUESTION:
"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

DENNIS M. ROKSER

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*7 Reasons Not To Ask Jesus Into Your Heart: Answering the Question:
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Dedicated to the glory of GOD
for the equipping of the saints
for their work of ministry in proclaiming
the Gospel with clarity;
and to Leonard A. Radtke –
my pastor, father-in-law, and mentor.
His love for the Lord, zeal for the lost, godly walk,
grace-oriented exposition of Scripture,
and uncompromising defense of the faith has been a
great example and encouragement to me in the ministry.

7 REASONS NOT TO ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART

ANSWERING THE QUESTION: “WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”

Have you ever heard someone say, “In order to be saved from Hell and go to Heaven, you need to ask Jesus into your heart”? Does this sound familiar? Have you ever read this on the back of tracts? Have you heard pastors or evangelists teach this?

Though perhaps sincerely spoken and well-intended, is it biblically accurate to ask Jesus into your heart? Are those who have simply trusted Jesus Christ and His finished work alone *not* yet saved because they have *not* asked Jesus into their heart? On the other hand, do those who have asked Jesus into their heart truly possess eternal life because they have done this? Or is all this simply a matter of semantics?

Now perhaps you are wondering, “Is asking Jesus into your heart even a real problem? And if so, is it a problem even worthy of addressing?” Let me share the testimony of two pastors that highlight the necessity of investigating this very issue.

Erwin Lutzer writes:

I remember being told as a child that to become a part of God’s family I needed to “Ask Jesus to come into my heart.” Every night as I prayed, that’s exactly what I would do.

“Jesus, come into my heart,” I asked. “Jesus, *please* come into my heart,” I pleaded. But I had no assurance that He had accepted me. I was frustrated and confused.

Like so many people today, I did not understand God's grace, or what saving faith is all about. I thought that God would save me because I was good, because I went to Sunday School—or because I prayed a prayer.

But finally, my parents were able to explain the truth to me. How I thank God that after much struggle they had come to understand it themselves. “Jesus did it all,” they said. “All you have to do is receive it by faith.”

Once I was persuaded that Jesus Christ is all I need to stand in the presence of a holy God, the issue was settled. On that winter evening, alone in our farmhouse on the Canadian prairie, Jesus Christ became my Savior. From that moment on, I have never doubted my salvation.¹

Hank Lindstrom also writes:

I was raised on the phrase “Ask Jesus into your heart,” and yet I was never saved. Every Sunday morning in the church that I was raised we sang a song called “Come Into My Heart, Lord Jesus.” The words were as follows: “Into my heart, into my heart; Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.” We sang this song every Sunday morning and were given the opportunity to “Invite Jesus into our hearts.” Well, I sincerely invited Jesus into my heart each Sunday and yet I was not saved.

My theology was totally based on the words of the song. I would pray something like, “Lord, please come into my heart. If you came into my

¹ Erwin Lutzer, Pastor of Moody Memorial Church, Chicago, IL, wrote this in a letter to the listeners of The Moody Church Radio Ministries, November, 1994.

heart before and left, please come into my heart again. If you never came into my heart before, please come in for the first time. If you came in and left, please come back and stay.” The song taught that Christ could come and go at will. I was confused and frustrated.

I invited Jesus into my heart at least 600 times, yet I was not saved because that message is not the gospel. I hardly missed a Sunday at church from the time I was six years old until I was eighteen years of age. To be fair, let’s say that from the time I was six years old until I was eighteen on at least 50 Sundays a year I invited Jesus into my heart. Eighteen minus six is twelve years times fifty times a year equals 600 (six hundred) times that I invited Jesus into my heart. On at least 600 occasions I invited Jesus into my heart.

Not until after I had turned eighteen years of age did I understand that I had to believe the gospel message of the death, burial and resurrection in order to be saved.²

Dear reader, these testimonies underscore the confusion and lack of assurance that comes with the preaching and believing of this modern-day Gospel invitation. So let me encourage you to carefully read and ponder the following pages of this booklet, remembering the exhortation of James who wrote,

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. (James 1:19)

² Hank Lindstrom, “Ask Jesus into Your Heart?” *Bibleline Ministries*. Calvary Community Church, Tampa, FL. Web.

REASON 1

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT IS NEVER FOUND IN THE BIBLE.

Yes, that is unbelievably true! With its enormous popularity, it is amazing to find out that nowhere in the Bible is anyone ever instructed to ask Christ into his heart to be saved. In fact, nowhere in the Scripture is there even one example of an individual ever asking Jesus into his or her heart – period! If this is true, why then should one do it or encourage others to do it?

Donald Bunge rightly raises the questions, “Did Jesus ever say: ‘Let me come into your heart’? Which one of the apostles wrote in New Testament books to ask Jesus to come into our hearts for salvation?”³

It appears that while a number of people affirm that the Bible is God’s inerrant and inspired truth, they have never evaluated this false response to the Gospel as to its scriptural accuracy. And if it is never found in the Bible, why use it? Is it not safe to assume that if you had never listened to Christian radio, or never attended an evangelistic crusade or a church, but simply read the Bible from cover to cover, that you would NEVER conclude that one needed to ask Jesus into his heart?

Now, do not misunderstand this. While the Bible mentions several times that Jesus Christ comes and lives in the heart of those who put their *trust in Him alone* (Colossians 1:27; Galatians 2:20; etc.), THE BIBLE NOWHERE INSTRUCTS SINNERS TO ASK JESUS INTO THEIR HEARTS TO BE SAVED!

Dear reader, God has promised only to bless His Word, not inaccurate clichés regarding it.

³ Donald H. Bunge, *What Happened To the Word “Believe”?* (Omaha: self-published, 1985), 15.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.
(Isaiah 55:8-11)

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT IS NEVER FOUND IN THE BIBLE.

If this popular but misleading cliché has no scriptural support, SHOULD NOT THAT SETTLE THE ISSUE?

But since to some people this reason alone is not enough...

REASON 2

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT IS NOT HOW ONE IS SAVED.

When the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas the million dollar question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved*” (Acts 16:30-31).

Interestingly enough, they did not respond, “Have you ever read the Four Spiritual Laws?” Nor did they reply, “Well, just pray and ask Jesus into your heart.” As a natural man (1 Corinthians 2:14), the jailer asked them, “What *must* I do to be saved?” The Greek word translated “must” (*dei*) speaks of something of absolute necessity (note Matthew 16:21; John 3:14, 30; 1 Peter 1:6). Furthermore, the word “do” is in the present tense referring to an ongoing action. Is this not how people think before they are saved by God’s grace? They wonder, “What and how many good works or church rituals must I do to be saved?” In our flesh, we yearn by nature to *do* something to merit God’s approval and to save ourselves. This is also the way of false religion. However, this is *not* God’s plan of grace. The Bible clearly teaches,

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

When Paul and Silas declared to the Philippian jailer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved,” they totally challenged the jailer’s mindset of works or human merit. The word *believe* (*pisteuō*) means “to rely upon; to trust in; to believe in.” Being in the aorist tense in the Greek, this word does not require ongoing action but a definitive *decision*. Since “believe” is in the active voice, the jailer must choose

to rely on the Lord Jesus Christ alone to be saved. Salvation is not a work of man for God, but a work of God for man, which one must choose to receive. Faith is the hand that receives the gift of salvation which Christ paid for through His sacrificial and substitutionary work on the cross (Hebrews 1:3; 2:9; 10:10-14; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:12).

The late Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote, "This one word 'believe' represents all a sinner can do and all a sinner must do to be saved."⁴ The Bible supports this simple truth repeatedly in over 100 verses in the New Testament. Some from the book of John are as follows:

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** should not perish **but have everlasting life.** (John 3:16)*

***He who believes in the Son has everlasting life;** and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him. (John 3:36)*

*Most assuredly, I say to you, **he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life,** and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. (John 5:24)*

*And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who **believes in Me shall never thirst.** But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me*

⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Salvation: God's Marvelous Works of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1991), 33.

*I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and **believes in Him** may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:35-40)*

*Most assuredly, I say to you, **he who believes in Me has everlasting life.** (John 6:47)*

*Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for **if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.** (John 8:24)*

*Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. **He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.** Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)*

*But these are written that **you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.** (John 20:31)*

While in Bible college a number of years ago, I was involved in a children’s ministry on Wednesday nights at a local church. At the end of each weekly meeting an effort was made by the main speaker to present the plan of salvation. For several weeks I noticed a 12-year-old boy come forward at the invitation. As a result, the following week a good friend of mine and I volunteered to be counselors. Sure enough, during the invitation Ricky came forward as usual. Finally we were able to get him alone to talk with him. Our conversation went like this:

Us: “Ricky, why have you come forward tonight?”

Ricky: “Because I want to be saved.”

Us: “Well, we’ve noticed that you’ve come forward time after time at the invitation in the past. What did the previous counselors tell you?”

Ricky: "They told me to ask Jesus into my heart."

Us: "So did you do that?"

Ricky: "Yes, but I still don't know that I'm saved. I still don't know if Jesus really did come into my heart."

Us: "Well, Ricky, let us explain to you what the Bible teaches about salvation."

For the next 20 minutes, my friend, Al, and I proceeded to explain:

- ◆ Man's sinful condition before a holy God and His penalty for sin, which is death (Romans 3:10-12, 23; 6:23)
- ◆ Christ's person and finished work, being God who became a man and died for our sins and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; Isaiah 53:5-6)
- ◆ How eternal salvation is a free gift to us by God's grace, received through simple child-like faith alone in Christ alone (Acts 10:43, 13:38-39; John 3:16-18, 5:24)
- ◆ How sinners are not saved by their good or religious works, including asking Jesus into their hearts (Galatians 2:16; Titus 3:5; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:28, 4:5)

In an effort to make all this personal, we put Ricky's name in John 3:16. "For God so loved Ricky that He gave His only begotten Son to die for Ricky, so if Ricky would believe in Christ, Ricky would not perish, but Ricky would have right now and forever everlasting life." After listening intently during this time, our conversation continued:

Ricky: "Thank you for explaining all this to me. I would like to pray."

Us: "But, Ricky, you don't have to pray to be saved. All you have to do is trust in Jesus Christ alone who did all the work of salvation for you when He died personally for you on the cross and rose again"

Ricky: "Yes, I understand that now and I believe that. I've just trusted in Jesus Christ to save me. I just want to pray and thank Him now for having saved me."

John Newton, slave-trader turned Gospel preacher, had it right when he penned:

Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

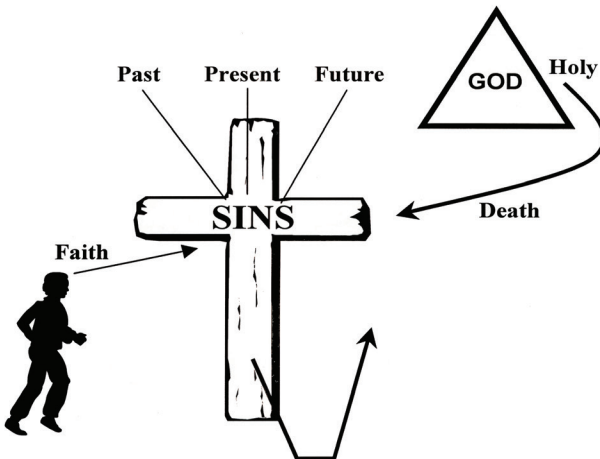
DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT IS NOT HOW ONE IS SAVED.

REASON 3

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT REQUIRES NO UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE TO DO IT.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of WHO Jesus Christ is and of WHAT Jesus Christ has done in order to save lost sinners from the just penalty of their sins by God's grace.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.
(1 Corinthians 15:1-4)



This definitive passage makes it clear that the Gospel of salvation centers in a specific person: Jesus Christ (God who became a man);⁵ a specific work (how He died and rose again); and a specific accomplishment (“*for our sins*”). The Gospel is “good news” as God now offers to helpless, hopeless, Hell-bound sinners the free gift of salvation through faith in Christ and His cross-work alone.

God wants believers to proclaim the Gospel⁶ to others so that they would know what exactly to believe (Mark 16:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Frankly, any five-year-old can ask Jesus into her heart without any true understanding of the person, work, and accomplishment of the Lord Jesus Christ; or the freeness and foreverness of salvation by God’s amazing grace apart from one’s religious works.

Over the years I have talked to hundreds of people about their salvation. I have found that asking them three basic questions normally discloses their understanding of God’s grace plan of redemption.

The three questions are:

- ◆ If you were to die in 13 seconds, do you *know for sure* that you would go to heaven?
- ◆ If Jesus Christ was at the gates of heaven and asked you, “*Why should I let you in?*” What would you say?
- ◆ Is there *anything* you can do or fail to do to **lose** your salvation?

⁵ Romans 1:1-4.

⁶ The author has written a detailed explanation of the Gospel in a booklet titled *Let’s Preach the Gospel*. Turn to the back cover to find out how to order this booklet.

It is amazing that, while people have “come forward” or “made a commitment to Christ” or “surrendered their lives to Christ” or “asked Jesus into their hearts,” many do not yet grasp that salvation is all by God’s grace, based solely on Christ’s cross-work and received through faith in Christ and His finished work alone. Instead, it is very common to hear them explain how good works are necessary either to get saved or to stay saved. This indicates that they are confused about God’s simple plan of salvation. And being told to ask Jesus into their hearts has certainly added to their confusion.

This is why the Scriptures go to great lengths to explain to us how one IS saved and how one is NOT saved.

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39)

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28)

Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. (Romans 4:4)

And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. (Romans 11:6)

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the

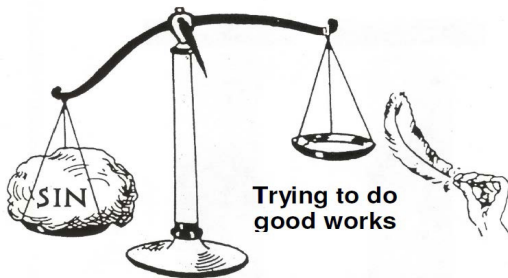
works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. (Galatians 2:21)

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." (Galatians 3:10-11)

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)



Salvation Attempted By Works

After a Bible study a few years ago, a college-age man named Brian came up to me to introduce himself.

Brian: "We've never met before, Pastor Rokser, but my name is Brian."

Me: "Nice to meet you, Brian."

Brian: "Thank you for the Bible study tonight. It was really great."

Me: "Well, thank you, Brian. Why was it so helpful?"

Brian: "Because I was saved by God's grace tonight."

Me: "Really, that's wonderful, Brian! Tell me about it."

Brian: "When you taught that any five-year-old can ask Jesus into their heart without understanding the Gospel, that's exactly what happened to me."

Me: "Really, explain further."

Brian: "Having come to a sense of sin and a knowledge of Hell at the age of five, I greatly wanted to be saved. So my mom told me to pray and to ask Jesus into my heart. So I did. As the years went on I dedicated my life and rededicated my life several times because I wasn't sure that I was saved. But tonight I personally understood for the first time how Jesus Christ did it all on the cross when He died for me and my sins, and I've trusted Him alone to save me. Now I KNOW that I'm saved."

Unfortunately, Brian's testimony is not out of the ordinary in evangelical churches when the Gospel of grace is not presented clearly. When asked about your salvation there is quite a difference between replying, "I am saved because I asked Jesus into my heart," versus "I know I was saved by God's grace when I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ who died for my sins and rose again to save me." The first reply focused on what YOU did. The latter response focused on what CHRIST has done for you.

Are you trusting in a prayer that you prayed to be saved? Or have you trusted in the wonderful Lord Jesus Christ *“who loved me and gave Himself for me”* so that He *“washed us from our sins in His own blood”*? (Galatians 2:20; Revelations 1:5)

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT REQUIRES NO UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE TO DO IT.

REASON 4

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT CONFUSES THE MEANS OF SALVATION WITH THE RESULTS OF SALVATION.

John 1:12 states, "*But as many as **received Him**, to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that **believe on His name.***"

This salvation verse clearly teaches that one becomes a child of God when receiving Jesus Christ through *believing* on His name.⁷ The word "*receive*," being in the aorist tense combined with the indicative mood, indicates a completed event, not an ongoing process. This is consistent with the new birth (John 3:3) and the receiving of a gift (Ephesians 2:8). Again, the sole condition to become a child of God is to personally "*believe*" in Jesus Christ alone.

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation **by His blood, through faith** (Romans 3:23-25a)*

The apostle Paul also explains to us in Galatians 4:6, "*And **because you are sons**, God has sent forth **the Spirit of His Son** into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Please note, "AND BECAUSE YOU ARE SONS." According to John 1:12, this became true of you through faith alone in Christ alone. This is reaffirmed in Galatians 3:26, "*For you are all sons of God **through faith in Christ Jesus.***"*

⁷ The name of the Lord Jesus Christ represents who He is and what He has done.

SALVATION



Before

After

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Dead in sin | Regenerated |
| Unrighteous | Justified- declared righteous |
| No peace | Peace |
| No access | Access |
| No hope | Hope |
| Ungodly | Godly |
| Sinners | Accepted in Christ |
| Under divine wrath | Saved from wrath |
| Enemies | Reconciled to God |
| Lost | Saved |
| Without Christ | Christ living in you |

What was the result of this? “*God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.*” Notice how every child of God has Jesus Christ come into his heart via the Holy Spirit when they believed in Jesus Christ. This is *not* because he *asked* Jesus Christ in, but because He came in as one of the many spiritual blessings given to him by God’s grace at the moment of faith in Christ.

*To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.** (Colossians 1:27)*

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

You need not ask Jesus into your heart. Biblically, He comes in the very moment you shift your trust from a church and good works to save you, and instead you place your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. Anything else is a confusion of means with results. Satan, via false teaching, has been very successful in putting “the cart before the horse.” For example, believers’ baptism is **not** a means of salvation but is to be an expression of it (Acts 8:30-39; 18:8).⁸ Still, a number of churches teach that water baptism (either as a baby or as an adult) is a means of grace or salvation. This is a clear-cut perversion of the Gospel. But is this really any different than asking Jesus into your heart, which also confuses the means with the results and puts the cart before the horse?

Furthermore, why is it that the Holy Spirit permanently indwells and seals every believer at the point of salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30) *without being asked in?*

*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, **having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.** (Ephesians 1:13)*

⁸ You are invited to order the booklet *Seven Key Questions about Water Baptism* from Duluth Bible Church (see the “Other Available Materials” section at the back for details).

Why is that every believer in Christ justified (Romans 5:1), redeemed (Ephesians 1:7), reconciled (Romans 5:10), forgiven (Colossians 1:14), etc. without asking for these blessings? Are they not given by God's grace the very moment that one rests by faith in Jesus Christ alone?

Imagine a wealthy millionaire who offers to you five million dollars as a free gift based on his hard work.

He says, "Here is five million dollars. I want you to personally have it. While I know you don't deserve it, nor have you earned it, you can have it right now as a love gift from me to you."

Would you respond by saying, "Oh, please give me your five million dollars. While I don't deserve it and cannot earn it, oh, please give it to me"?

Dear reader, if you responded like this, it would not only be bad manners, but would actually be an insult to the millionaire and an indication of your UNBELIEF. The wealthy millionaire already offered and promised to give you the money. You simply needed to take him at his word and receive it. No pleading or asking required. And if that is the case, would you not also be insulting the gracious God of the universe [who at the infinite cost of His dear Son, provided for you "*every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ*" (Ephesians 1:3)] if you do not simply take Him at His word and "*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*" and be saved? As the old hymn accurately communicates:

*"Tis so sweet to **trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His word, just to rest upon His promise, just to know Thus saith the Lord.**"*

DO NOT ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT CONFUSES THE MEANS OF SALVATION WITH THE RESULTS OF SALVATION.

REASON 5

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT EITHER RESULTS IN NO ASSURANCE OF SALVATION OR BRINGS A FALSE ASSURANCE TO PEOPLE.

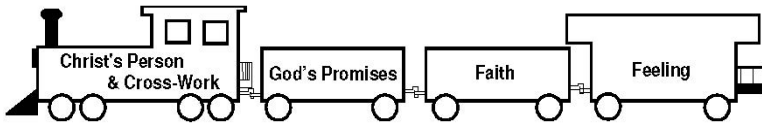
In talking about this issue to a pastor from a local Baptist church one day, he replied, "I would never tell the people of my church that they're not saved by asking Jesus into their hearts. They might lose the assurance of their salvation!" Ironically, I had talked to a man a year earlier who now attends this same church. He told me, "Though I asked Jesus into my heart several years ago, it was only in this past year that I've come to know for sure that I'm saved based solely on the work of Jesus Christ for my sins. I asked Jesus into my heart years before, but lacked full assurance of salvation until recently."

Dear friends, I am convinced that NO ONE has ever been saved or received the assurance of their salvation by asking Jesus into his or her heart. Why? Because there can be no salvation, nor assurance of salvation by something that is foreign to Scripture.

First John 5:11-13 teaches the *how* of assurance when it says,

*And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. **He who has the Son has life**; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. **These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.***

The assurance of a “know-so” salvation is based on Christ’s work alone and the promises of God. This assurance is given to those who “*believe in the name of the Son of God*” because “*these things I have written to you.*” Like the old saying goes, “God said it. Christ did it. If you believe it, that settles it!”



Now this is not to say that those who have asked Jesus into their hearts are not saved. They may be genuine believers in Christ. But if they are saved, they have been reconciled to God through placing their faith in Christ, *not* by asking Jesus into their hearts.

Evangelist Larry Moyer writes:

Although individuals have often been saved when the phrase “invite Christ into your heart” was used, it has also misled and confused others. The issue is trusting Christ, not “inviting Him into your heart.” For the sake of being faithful and clear messengers, we ought to ask the lost to do what the Gospel of John exhorts them to do – trust in Christ to save them.⁸

Out of curiosity one Sunday morning I asked the believers of Duluth Bible Church how many of them had asked Jesus into their hearts at some time their lives. To my surprise, around 60 percent had done this (though they have never heard it from this pulpit). I then proceeded to ask how many of them knew for sure they were saved by God’s grace at some time *after*

⁸ Larry Moyer, “Should Revelation 3:20 Be Used In Evangelism?” *Evantell Newsletter* (August-October, 1983).

they had done this. The majority said that at a later time they were saved and knew it.

Have you ever noticed how people who “ask Jesus into their heart” normally ask Him in OVER AND OVER AGAIN? Why is that? Is it not because it did not grant them absolute assurance of their salvation? Instead, it oftentimes leads to questions such as:

- ◆ Did Jesus Christ really come in?
- ◆ Was I sincere enough when I prayed?
- ◆ Did I say the right words?
- ◆ How do I know He came in?

This confusion is the result of shifting the issue of salvation to what YOU ARE DOING, instead of putting your trust in JESUS CHRIST and WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR YOU when He died for your sins and rose again.

I have counseled a number of people who struggled for years with their assurance of salvation because instead of hearing the Gospel of grace clearly presented, they had been told this inaccurate and misleading cliché. While asking Jesus into your heart may be an expression of positive volition towards God, or may accompany faith in Christ, it certainly is NOT SYNONYMOUS with faith in Christ alone.

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT EITHER RESULTS IN NO ASSURANCE OF SALVATION OR BRINGS A FALSE ASSURANCE TO PEOPLE.

REASON 6

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE REVELATION 3:20 DOES NOT TEACH IT.

Whenever a scriptural attempt is made by someone to support this wrong response to the Gospel, normally Revelation 3:20 is used.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:20)

Ironically, the words “ask”, “Jesus”, and “your heart” are not ever found in this verse! How could this verse then ever be teaching that? So what *is* Revelation 3:20 teaching?

The general context of this verse is Jesus Christ's letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor (Revelation 2-3). These were actual local churches that existed at the time of John's writing, and are representative of the kinds of churches that have existed throughout the church age, including today.

Revelation 3:14-22 is addressed by Jesus Christ to the church of Laodicea in particular. Like the waters that flowed into the city of Laodicea, the spiritual state of this church was “lukewarm” and caused Christ to be on the verge of puking in disgust (3:15-16). While the church viewed itself in a good condition materially, our Lord viewed this same church in a wretched condition spiritually (3:17). They were in desperate need of what Jesus Christ alone could provide for them (3:18). Verse 19 is especially significant to our discussion where the true Head of the Church declares:

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Revelation 3:19)

This raises the important question: who is it that Christ chastens or disciplines? Is it the unsaved or the redeemed? Hebrews 12:6-8 answers this by teaching:

*“For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? **But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.** (Hebrews 12:6-8)*

While God condemns the unsaved, He chastens believers so that *“we may be partakers of His holiness”* (Hebrews 12:10) in our Christian walk. This indicates that these verses in Revelation 3:19 are addressed to *believers* in Christ. Regarding the use of the word *“love”* in Revelation 3:19, Greek grammarian Daniel Wallace has insightfully written:

Here *phileō* is used for *“love”*—a term that is never used of God/Jesus loving unbelievers in the NT. (Indeed, it would be impossible for God to have this kind of love for an unbeliever, for it routinely speaks of enjoyment and fellowship.) *Agapaō*, rather, is the verb used of God’s love for unbelievers [cf. John 3:16]. This *phileō* must be applied to the Laodiceans here, for the verse concludes, *“Be zealous, therefore, and repent.”* The inferential *oun* (*“therefore”*) connects the two parts of the verse, indicating that the Laodiceans are to repent because Christ loves (*phileos*) them!⁹

Thus, Jesus Christ must be addressing genuine believers in verse 19. Furthermore, it would be inappropriate to

⁹ Daniel B. Wallace, *“Revelation 3:20 and the Offer of Salvation.”* Bible.org. Scripture Twisting. 5 May 2004.

command a spiritually dead unbeliever to “*be zealous*” (or “hot”—3:15). The Bible knows nothing of “cold” or “hot” *unbelievers*. And like the corrective commands given to the other four churches in this section (Revelation 2:5, 16, 22; 3:3), the believers of the church at Laodicea were to “*repent*.” This would involve them choosing to have a decisive change of mind (*metanoeson*—aorist active imperative of repentance) regarding their spiritual condition. This results in genuine confession of sin to God (1 John 1:9; 1 Corinthians 11:31-32; Proverbs 28:13) and a change in spiritual direction.

Right on the heels of this corrective rebuke, Jesus Christ then gives these believers a wonderful offer.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:20)

“*Behold* [pay attention, listen], *I stand at the door*.” Jesus Christ has been and continues to stand¹⁰ at the door. The question is, “What door?” Now to assume this is the door of your “heart” is totally foreign to the passage. It would seem more appropriate to understand this as the door of the Laodicean church meeting place. While this church was saying, “I am rich, and increased with goods and have need of nothing,” they actually had Jesus on the *outside* of the church meeting place. No wonder He is then described as repeatedly “knocking.”¹¹

Moving from the Laodicean church generally, Jesus Christ then appeals to the individual believers on the inside of this church. “*If* [third class condition—one might or might not] *anyone* [singular] *hears My voice and opens* [singular] *the door, I will come in to him*.” Notice

¹⁰ This is a perfect, active, indicative verb in the Greek.

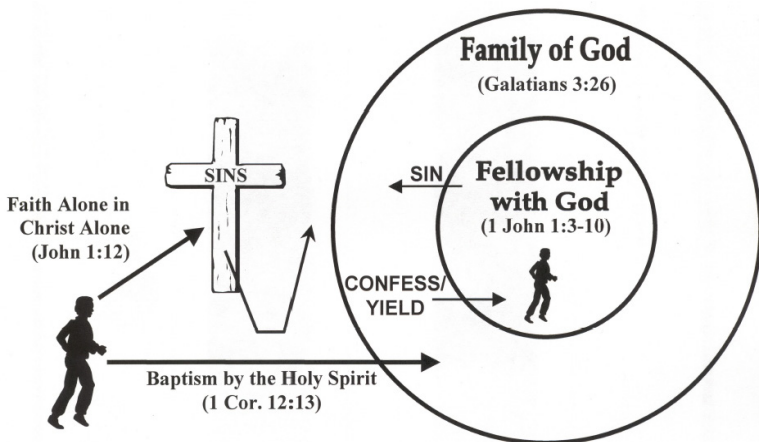
¹¹ Present tense.

the two conditions that Christ requires to be fulfilled by those on the inside:

1. *“If anyone hears My voice”*—This refers to what Jesus Christ has been saying in verses 14-19.
2. *“and opens the door”*—This again refers to the door where the church is gathered and involves the genuine repentance He required.

Connected with these two conditions are three wonderful promises by Jesus Christ Himself:

1. *“I will come in to him”*—This is a promise of Christ’s personal entrance into the assembly to meet the believer face to face (the literal idea of the Greek word *pros*, translated *“to”*).
2. *“and will dine with him”*—This is a promise of Christ’s personal fellowship with this repentant believer.
3. *“and he with Me”*—This is a promise of reciprocal fellowship with Jesus Christ.



Some people have misunderstood the phrase “*I will come in to him*” to mean that Jesus will come into their hearts, i.e., penetration into their hearts.

Michael Cocoris clarifies this when he writes:

Now, verse 20 itself says Christ will come “*in to*” (two different words), not come “*into*” (one word). The verse is saying that Christ will come in the church to the person, not that Christ will come into the person. When He gets in the church with the person He will eat dinner with him. That is, He will have fellowship with him. This is not a hair-splitting of the English text, but an accurate reflection of the Greek. In Greek, “*come in*” (*eiserchomai*) is one word. It is followed by the preposition “*to*” (*pros*). That construction occurs eight times in the New Testament (Mark 6:25, 15:43; Luke 1:28; Acts 10:3, 11:3, 17:2, 28:8; Revelation 3:20). In each instance it means to enter into a building and stand before a person.¹²

Please note that there is no need to ASK JESUS IN! He promises to come in and is knocking, wanting to come and fellowship with any believer if he or she is willing to hear His word and open the door.

Chester McCalley further writes:

Verse 20 is speaking of fellowship not salvation. There were different words for the morning, noon, and evening meals. The word translated dine was the one used for the evening meal that consisted of leisurely, relaxed conversation and fellowship around the food. This verse is

¹² G. Michael Cocoris, *Evangelism: A Biblical Approach* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 82-83.

not appropriate in the evangelization for the unbeliever. The proper term for the required response to the gospel message is believe.¹³

Dear friends, Revelation 3:20 is a verse for believers, *not unbelievers!* It is a promise of *personal fellowship* with and from Jesus Christ, *not an offer of salvation!* And even if it was a salvation verse (though it is not), nowhere is the concept of “asking Jesus into your heart” found in this verse! “*If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him.*” You need not ask Him in. This erroneous concept is pure eisegesis,¹⁴ not sound exegesis. But what a wonderful promise of Christ’s fellowship for any lukewarm believer who repents. Wallace humorously adds:

If it causes us some measure of panic to have to use a verse other than Revelation 3:20 when we share the gospel, keep in mind that the earliest Christians did not have this verse. Revelation is the last book of the Bible to be written. How was it possible for Peter and Paul and James to ever see anyone get saved without this verse? They never had it! But if I read the book of Acts correctly, they had a measure of success in sharing the gospel even in spite of this handicap.¹⁵

DON’T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE REVELATION 3:20 DOES NOT TEACH IT.

¹³ Chester McCalley, *The Gift of Salvation* (Kansas City: Word of Truth, 1988), 31.

¹⁴ “Eisegesis” means to read one’s beliefs or thoughts into a verse, while exegesis derives one’s beliefs or thoughts out from a passage.

¹⁵ Wallace, *Revelation 3:20 and the Offer of Salvation*.

REASON 7

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT DOES NOT CLARIFY THE CONDITION OF SALVATION, IT CONFUSES IT— ESPECIALLY WITH CHILDREN.

I have been told on various occasions how helpful this Christian cliché is with children. Frankly, I am convinced the opposite is true.

Children begin life thinking very concretely, not abstractly. They understand “ball”, “dog”, and “hat” before they understand “death”, “hell”, and “salvation”. When confronted with an appeal to ask Jesus into their hearts, they are prone to imagine Christ in bodily form somehow living in the organ that pumps our blood. Perhaps this is why the young girl who was leaning against her mother’s chest exclaimed:

Girl: “Mom, I hear Jesus in your heart.”

Mom: “Really, honey? What is Jesus doing?”

Girl: “Oh, He’s just percolating coffee.”

Bob Wilkin testifies of the confusion this inaccuracy has wrought among children when he writes:

Years later I was teaching an evangelism course at a Bible College in East Texas. I had my students write out their testimonies after I had explained what I have recounted above. I found that quite a few of the students went through years of confusion because someone told them as children that if they asked Jesus into their hearts they would be saved. They wondered if they had done it right. They wondered if they had been sincere enough. So they asked Him in over and over again for years. They couldn’t

gain assurance. Finally someone shared with them that to be saved they had to trust in Christ alone. Only then, by their own testimony, did they come to faith in Christ. Years of inviting Him into their lives had only confused and frustrated them.¹⁶

The condition of salvation for children is the same as it is for adults, that is:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26)

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. (John 6:47)

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31)

A Vacation Bible School song for children hits the nail right on the head when the kids sing:

Salvation is a big word, but I am not too small,
/ To know Christ died on Calvary, from sin to
save us all. / For *when a sinner trusts Him* to save
him from his sin, / *The Savior comes with peace
and joy to dwell his heart within.* / Salvation! Sal-
vation! The gift of life is free. / For Jesus died
for sinners even YOU and ME!

DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT DOES NOT CLARIFY THE CONDITION OF SALVATION, IT CONFUSES – ESPECIALLY WITH CHILDREN.

¹⁶ Bob Wilkin, "Don't Ask," *The Grace Evangelical Society News* (August 1991): 1.

NORMAL OBJECTIONS

When presenting these truths, I am normally confronted by some of the following objects.

OBJECTION 1

BUT ISN'T THIS ALL SIMPLY A MATTER OF SEMANTICS?

My reply to this is a “yes” and “no,” depending on what you mean. Yes, it is a matter of semantics if you mean that word meanings and definitions are very important.

Charles Ryrie addresses this by stating:

Furthermore, it seems to me that those who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible ought especially to be concerned with accuracy in communicating the truth. All the Bible is inerrant and important to us. But certainly how we as Christians express the Gospel ought to be our greatest concern. We do not confuse or short-change or obscure God's good news of His grace – how He gave His Son so that we might have eternal life through faith in Him. *Semantics is key in understanding and communicating the Gospel.*¹⁷

On the other hand, this is *not* a matter of semantics if you mean that “trusting in Jesus Christ alone” and “asking Jesus into your heart” are really saying the same thing.

¹⁷ Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989), 22-23.

Ryrie goes on to wisely state:

Just as words were the means God used to record the Gospel in the Scriptures, so words are the means we use to explain the Gospel to others. Therefore, a correct choice of words is important, even essential, in stating the Gospel well.¹⁸

When the Holy Spirit directed the writers of Scripture to record in perfect accuracy the inerrant Word of God, He knew the difference between *pisteuō* (“believe”) and *aiteō* (“ask”). Time and time again He decided that *pisteuō* (“believe”) would be the word used to describe the one condition of salvation. Dear friend, if *pisteuō* was good enough for the Holy Spirit, isn’t it good enough for you?

OBJECTION 2

BUT IS IT REALLY THAT BIG OF A DEAL HOW YOU EXPLAIN THE WAY OF SALVATION AS LONG AS YOU ARE SINCERE?

Regarding one’s sincerity, Joshua 24:14 reads:

Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in SINCERITY and in TRUTH...[!]

God is a God of truth and command us to be “*speaking the truth in love.*”

Is Gospel clarity really that big of a deal? *Yes, it certainly is:*

1. If you are concerned about preaching the Gospel accurately. Why?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

¹⁸ Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, 24.

2. If you believe a correct understanding of God's plan of salvation determines where one will spend eternity.

*Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, **in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.** These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9)*

3. If you sense your great responsibility toward God to teach the Word of God just like God gave it.

*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that **we shall receive a stricter judgment.** (James 3:1)*

AWANA International, a Gospel-preaching ministry to children, has sought to faithfully proclaim in word and writing God's plan of salvation to thousands over the years. Yet in giving a survey to some 18,000 pastors and Christian workers regarding the accuracy of various Gospel invitations, 13,412 *inaccurately* stated that they agreed with the statement, "Right now ask Jesus to come into your heart." While AWANA's materials are clear and accurate concerning the content of the Gospel and the one condition of salvation, apparently many who seek to utilize their material have not been.

Dear friends, this survey indicates that the preaching of this confusing cliché is a **SERIOUS**

EPIDEMIC OF INACCURACY in many churches. To seek to clarify this inaccuracy, AWANA writes:

Children who hear this invitation are often confused and mistakenly think that Jesus literally comes into their hearts. The simplicity of trusting in Christ becomes misunderstood. We are saved because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross (Ephesians 1:7). When we put our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit indwells us, and our bodies become His temple. Being indwelled by the Holy Spirit, however, is a result of salvation, not the method by which we are saved. Those who use this invitation often base it on Revelation 3:20. Unfortunately, they are using the passage out of context because it does not apply to salvation.¹⁹

4. If you want God's blessings and not His cursing in your ministry.

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8-9)

The late William Pettingill, in his commentary on Galatians titled, *By Grace Through Faith Plus Nothing*, writes:

An appalling score awaits settlement for those who have muddled the Gospel of Christ and preached something else, either through ignorance, or through a desire to please men.²⁰

¹⁹ AWANA Clubs International. "Clear and Confusing Invitations" (2007). PDF file.

²⁰ William Pettingill, *By Grace through Faith Plus Nothing: Simple*

Can you imagine hearing a doctor say the following to you as you lie on the surgeon's operating table?

Doctor: "Well, let's remove that liver now."

You: "But, Doctor, it's not my liver but my gall bladder that needs removing."

Doctor: "Liver or gall bladder – what's the difference? You're so picky!"

Dear reader, at that point I would be requesting another surgeon immediately! Yet, when it comes to someone's eternal destiny, we too often are satisfied with something less than scriptural accuracy. Why is it that we demand extreme accuracy and exact wording when it comes to various contracts that we sign, yet when it comes to a person's eternal salvation we tolerate biblical inaccuracy or doctrinal fuzziness?

Does it not bother you when a minister tells you not to worry about *exactly* what the Bible says?

For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? (1 Corinthians 14:8)

The great emperor Napoleon had three commands he gave his messengers as they conveyed his messages to various sections of his army. Those three commands were, "Be clear! Be clear! Be clear!" Those who are entrusted with proclaiming the Good News of Christ must also be clear.

The battle is on for the souls of men. If we ever needed a "clear call" from the bugler, it is now. Do not garble the Gospel, nor the right response to it!

OBJECTION 3

BUT HAVEN'T PEOPLE BEEN SAVED BY ASKING JESUS INTO THEIR HEARTS?

Again, let me emphatically state that *nowhere* in the Bible is *anyone* ever saved *by asking Jesus into their hearts!*

Now it is true that they may have trusted Christ as Savior at the same time they asked Jesus into their hearts and God in His grace saved them *in spite of* this confusing cliché. Nevertheless, this is no excuse for biblical inaccuracy. Furthermore, how many people have asked Jesus into their hearts while never trusting in Him and His work *alone*? Is it worth the risk? Larry Moyer wrote:

In inviting men and women to come to Christ, we must invite them to do what the Scriptures ask them to do—trust Christ to get them to heaven. We must make that clear. And to be clear, we must avoid misleading and confusing phrases. Invitations such as, “give your life to Jesus,” “pray to receive Christ,” and “invite Jesus into your heart,” are not only not used in Scripture but can result in a person’s trusting in a prayer or depending on something he or she did instead of trusting Jesus Christ and what He did.

During an evangelistic outreach in Texas, when I invited those who wanted to trust Jesus Christ to talk with me, a teenager responded. I asked him, “Why did you respond?” He answered, “I’ve come to realize that I need to be saved.” I said to him, “Tell him a little bit about yourself.” “Well,” he said, “when I was very small, I bowed my head and invited Christ into my heart.” So I said to him, “Now let me ask you something

extremely important. Have you been trusting Christ or have you been trusting a prayer to save you?" His reply was distressing. "I did not even know Christ died for me. I thought God liked that prayer so much that if you simply said that prayer, you'd go to heaven. I've never understood you have to trust Christ to save you." Giving people the kind of message that boy received can be damaging and misleading.²¹

OBJECTION 4

BUT SO MANY PEOPLE USE THIS EXPRESSION, IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD.

The accuracy of Scripture is not determined by a popularity context, otherwise we would all be Roman Catholics or Muslims by sheer number. Also, the issue is *not* what I am writing versus Pastor So-and-So. It is *not* an issue of personality, but biblical principle. The issue is: Does this cliché accurately communicate the truth of Scripture or not? Does it have the divine approval of "*Thus says the Lord*"?

Many times in human history the majority has been wrong:

- ◆ Adam Thompson of Cincinnati, Ohio, near the middle of the eighteenth century, was the first American to fill a bathtub. Those who heard of it became alarmed. Doctors predicted rheumatism and inflammation of the lungs from such practice. Some American cities put a ban on bathtubs and even refused permission to do the new "bathtub exercise." But today a home is not complete without a bathtub or shower. The crowd was wrong.

²¹ R. Larry Moyer, *Free and Clear: Understanding & Communicating God's Offer of Eternal Life* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 42.

- ◆ Musicians and critics groaned and laughed at the music Richard Wagner wrote. But his compositions have transformed the music world. The crowd was wrong.
- ◆ “Fulton’s Folly” was the name the crowd gave to that first steamboat. But today’s steamships, like small cities, sail the seven seas. The crowd was wrong.
- ◆ For eleven years Goodyear and his wife worked on vulcanizing rubber. Everyone laughed at Goodyear but today, wherever rubber is named, you hear the name, Goodyear. The crowd was wrong.²²

Will you base your beliefs and practice on the popular opinion of the human crowd or upon the unfailing and unchanging truths of the *Word of God*?

OBJECTION 5

BUT DOESN’T ROMANS 10:9 TEACH ONE TO ASK JESUS INTO HIS HEART?

Like Revelation 3:20, Romans 10:9 is used as a proof-text to support this erroneous cliché of evangelical Christianity.

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

Unlike Revelation 3:20, the context of this verse *does* deal with personal salvation.

- ◆ Romans 9 – The Past National Election of Israel
- ◆ Romans 10 – The Present Personal Rejection of Christ

²² Nathaniel Olson, *The Crowd May Be Wrong*, 1-2.

◆ Romans 11 – The Future National Salvation of Israel

However, in Romans 10:9, like Revelation 3:20, there is no “asking Jesus into one’s heart” mentioned. This passage is especially targeted at Jews (Romans 9–11 is about Israel) who would make the claim to “believe in the Lord.”

Romans 9:30-31 raises the question:

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. (Romans 9:30-31)

God’s answer is found in verse 32.

*Why? Because **they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, but the works of the law.** (Romans 9:32a)*

What was Israel’s basic problem?

***For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.** As it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and **whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.**”(Romans 9:32b-33)*

Israel stumbled at the simplicity of putting their trust alone in Jesus as their Messiah Savior. This failure caused Paul to express and explain:

*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel **is that they may be saved.** For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.** (Romans 10:1-4)*

Instead of simple faith plus nothing in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, Israel sought to obtain righteousness before God by the works of the Law. Yet many would still confess with their mouth that they believed in the Lord, while still trusting their law-works as well. Thus, to clarify the person and finished work of Jesus Christ that needed to become their sole object faith, Paul writes:

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

To confess that one believes in the LORD while rejecting Jesus Christ as that very God (“Lord”) misses the true person of the Savior. And a failure to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead (which is proof of His propitiatory death) means that one has yet to embrace the finished work of Jesus Christ as sufficient to save them.

Verse 10 then clarifies the correct order for us when it reads:

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:10)

This verse emphasizes what Jesus Christ taught when He said:

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matthew 12:34b)

We can confess to others of our salvation by God’s amazing grace when we have *believed* in Jesus Christ and His finished work alone with our hearts.

These verses are not requiring two conditions for salvation. That would contradict or leave as insufficient over 100 verses in the New Testament that require a sinner to simply “believe” in Jesus Christ alone. Nor

do these verses even remotely teach that we need to ask Jesus into our heart.

However, please note that these verses do emphasize to us that each individual must come to personally trust in Christ alone if he or she is going to be saved. This includes you!

By nature, we inherently want to work for and merit our salvation. Inviting sinners to “ask Jesus into their hearts” accommodates this fleshly desire. It asks us to “do” something, instead of “trusting” in Someone—the Lord Jesus Christ. The nineteenth century prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon, strikes at the heart of this religious tendency when he wrote:

Oh, the many times that I have wished the preacher would tell me something to do that I might be saved! Gladly would I have done it, if it had been possible. If he had said, “Take off your shoes and stockings, and run to John O’Groat’s,” I would not even have gone home first, but would have started off that very night, that I might win salvation. How often have I thought that, if he had said, “Bare your back to the scourge, and take fifty lashes,” I would have said, “Here I am! Come along with your whip, and beat as hard as you please, so long as I can obtain peace and rest, and get rid of my sin.”

Yet that simplest of all matters—believing in Christ crucified, accepting His finished salvation, being nothing, and letting Him be everything, doing nothing but trusting to what He has done—I could not get a hold of it.²³

²³ *C.H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography*, eds. S. Spurgeon and J. Harrold, rev. ed., Vol. 1, *The Early Years 1834-1859* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1976).

JOHN 3:16

THE GREATEST VERSE IN THE BIBLE

For God. The greatest Being
so. The greatest degree
loved. The greatest affection
the world. The greatest object of love
that He gave. The greatest act
His only. The greatest treasure
begotten. The greatest relationship
Son. The greatest gift
that whoever. The greatest company
believes. The greatest trust
in Him. The greatest object of faith
should not perish. The greatest deliverance
but have. The greatest assurance
everlasting. The greatest promise
life. The greatest blessing

A SUMMARY

REASON 1: DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT IS NEVER FOUND IN THE BIBLE.

REASON 2: DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT IS NOT HOW ONE IS SAVED.

REASON 3: DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT REQUIRES NO UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE TO DO IT.

REASON 4: DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT CONFUSES THE MEANS OF SALVATION WITH THE RESULTS OF SALVATION.

REASON 5: DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT EITHER RESULTS IN NO ASSURANCE OF SALVATION OR BRINGS A FALSE ASSURANCE TO PEOPLE.

REASON 6: DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE REVELATION 3:20 DOES NOT TEACH IT.

REASON 7: DON'T ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART BECAUSE IT DOES NOT CLARIFY THE CONDITION OF SALVATION, IT CONFUSES IT – ESPECIALLY WITH CHILDREN.

In this booklet I have not sought to be personally judgmental, but discerning. The Word of God has already judged the inaccuracy of this misleading salvation cliché as it has been weighed in the balance and been found wanting.

Furthermore, is it an act of love to stand by and watch your neighbor's home burn down and not awaken them because they do not like being disturbed? I think not! Genuine love warns men and women of the truth of the Gospel and how by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone they can be saved. So if you find yourself disturbed, be like the Bereans of Acts 17 and "*search the Scriptures daily whether those things are so.*"

A FINAL APPEAL

Dear readers, do not let your pride (“I’ve taught that cliché in the past”) or your emotions (“I’ve prayed this with my kids”) or your traditions (“Our church has always said that”) get in the way of truth and biblical accuracy on the most important issue that anyone must address. While this misleading cliché is a sacred cow in evangelism today, let us return to the authoritative Word of God to embrace what God Himself says about our eternal salvation.

“What must I do to be saved?”...

***BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND
YOU WILL BE SAVED (Acts 16:31).***

Don’t ask, just believe!

PERSONAL TESTIMONIES

JILL LAUGHLIN, GRAND RAPIDS, MN

When I cook, I very seldom follow the recipe exactly. I like to try different combinations of foods and shortcut methods. This usually results in a satisfying meal—especially for my husband because he will try anything. However, the same cannot be said for salvation.

Sadly, at a young age I was introduced to a shortcut method of salvation, which produced very unsatisfying results. With my eternal destiny at stake, the necessary ingredients to be saved were never explained to me. What follows is my explanation of why I was *not* saved when I followed the shortcut recipe of asking Jesus into my heart.

One evening as the neighborhood children and I gathered for our nightly round up of games, we found ourselves at the apartment building nearby. We soon chose one court to scatter from and randomly rang as many doorbells as possible in a minute. Having gathered to report our mischievous deeds to one another a lady introduced herself and in short order began to talk of Jesus. In our culpable state we felt obligated to listen. After quickly delivering her “convenience food” plea to be saved, we were soon stupefied. Holding hands, my playmates and I were reciting along with her the sinner’s prayer. She then handed each of us a tract that contained the sinner’s prayer.

Years passed, and having kept the tract, every so often I would pull it out and recite the prayer. I never knew if I truly belonged to God yet, hence I kept repeating the prayer on the card to be saved. Over and over again I asked Jesus into my heart, yet I had no assurance of salvation.

Growing up with a father who drank heavily, life seemed tumultuous at times. In my search for security, I felt the answer was in the Bible. Though I read verses of Scripture every so often, they made no sense to me (1 Cor. 2:14).

After attending several churches, and being told many different things to do to be saved, I finally chose to enroll in a religious class in high school. This only confused me more.

My distress came to an end when, while attending college, I stumbled onto Kenwood Bible Chapel. For the first time in my life someone reasoned with me from the Scriptures. I heard who Christ was, why He came, and why I needed to believe in Him. First Peter 3:18 shouted out: *“For Christ also once suffered once for sins, the just [Christ] for the unjust [me], that He might bring us [me] to God.”* Another time I heard a message just on the Gospel *“how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”* Wow!

The news boiled over in my heart as I learned why I even needed to be saved as a sinner in the eyes of a holy God. I also discovered salvation was a free gift and the religious activity or works I did to please God would not pay off my sin debt and bring me closer to God. Jesus Christ had already accomplished everything needed when He died for my sins and rose again.

The Bible made it clear that the only ingredient needed from me was faith in Christ’s work. My response to the Gospel was to believe—*“But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, to those that believe in His name”* (John 1:12). All my previous religious efforts went out the kitchen window as God spoke to me in Ephesians 2:8-9: *“For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of*

works, lest any man should boast.” God’s power to save me was not unleashed when I prayed the sinner’s prayer, but only when I believed the Gospel. Romans 1:16 states, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation.”

Though in insincerity I had said a prayer, faith alone in Christ alone is God’s method for salvation. My begging to have salvation and forgiveness was the wrong procedure. While entreating Him to save me, I had no Gospel facts upon which to rest my faith.

God’s recipe for salvation is a never-fail, foolproof one. For once in my life I have followed the directions in the proper order. Ephesians 1:13 states, *“In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.”* Now that I have believed in Christ alone for salvation, I know I’m sealed until the day of redemption. I can now pray a prayer of thanksgiving and experience the delightful results of accepting God’s recipe of faith in Christ alone.

“Joy floods my soul for Jesus has saved me, Freed me from sin that long had enslaved me; His precious blood, He gave to redeem, Now I belong to Him; Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me – Not for the years of time alone, But for eternity!”²⁴

MEGHANN ANDERSON, DULUTH, MN

I was saved when I was about 15 years old. I believed that for me to go to heaven I needed to ask Jesus into my heart. When I was six years old, I said a prayer and asked Jesus into my heart for the first time. A year later I repeated the prayer and asked again, because I figured I did not really mean it the first time. My insecurity had begun.

²⁴ *Now I Belong to Jesus* by Norman J. Clayton.

In the eighth grade I started to wonder where I would spend eternity. Thus, I attended a Bible study with a friend and was shown from the Bible that it is only by God's grace that one is saved, a gift of God. Romans 6:23 teaches, *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* This confused me because I had never heard this before. I did not have an assurance as to where I would go if I died and did not want to go to Hell. I cried myself to sleep many times asking Jesus into my heart over and over again, and asking for forgiveness for anything I might have done to lose my salvation. I wanted to *know* that I would spend eternity with God and not be afraid to die.

Later, I heard again that all I needed to do was believe or trust what Christ did on the cross. He paid for all my sins. He finished the job. There was nothing left for me to do to be saved. First Peter 3:18 states, *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit."* Isaiah 53:5-6 further teaches, *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."*

I learned that nowhere in the Bible does it say to "ask Jesus into your heart." I soon found out that asking was a work, something I did. Romans 4:5 explains, *"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness."* Salvation is 100 percent the work of Jesus Christ! The best part is He never takes it away, no matter what I do. When He promises everlasting life, He means I will never, ever perish. With my confusion cleared up by the Word of God, I then trusted Jesus Christ and His work alone

for my salvation, so I now know for sure that I am going to Heaven.

KURT WITZIG, DULUTH, MN

I was raised in a good home and our family attended church, which was part of a liberal denomination. I had no idea what it meant to be saved or how to become saved. When I was 11 years old I somehow received literature from the Billy Graham organization. I remember reading the material over and then asking Jesus into my heart. I was very serious about this, which is why I chose to do this in the privacy of our storage closet. I then signed a card stating that I had asked Jesus into my heart and mailed it back to the Graham organization where I no doubt became another number for them to add. I waited for some sort of obvious feeling to correspond with my experience of asking Jesus into my heart, but it never came. The problem was that, though I was sincere, I had no idea what all this really meant. Soon afterward I figured that it “didn’t work” and went on with normal life – still unsaved.

It wasn’t until years later, as a junior in college, that I heard the good news of the Gospel and placed my faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. I then understood that He died as my substitute as Ephesians 5:2 says, “*And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*” How excellent it is to know for sure that I am now saved due to the completed work of Jesus Christ and the written promises of God: “*Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure*” (Rom. 4:16). This assurance does not come by way of some personal experience or work performed by me: “*Who has saved... not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace*” (2 Tim. 1:9). Rather, my assurance rests solely on the

promises of God made in light of the satisfactory work of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary: “*These things have I written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life*” (1 John 5:13). I need not wait for a feeling to come over me nor do I have to ever doubt my salvation. I know that I have been saved by faith alone in Christ alone. And praise God for that!

SOME RESPONSES FROM OUR FIRST EDITION

“I wanted to include [in their Sunday school material] this booklet as it is SO needed in today’s churches!”—an instructor of Sunday school teachers

“I so appreciate the copy of Seven Reasons! It is always so refreshing to find others ‘out there’ who are clear on the wonderful Gospel of God’s Grace, and who are spreading it, defending it, and contending for it.”—a president of an evangelistic ministry

“[I] read Seven Reasons on the Internet. Very good. This is something that needs to go to the Christian community at large.”—a missionary

“I appreciate your sending me a copy of Seven Reasons, as it is a clarification I intend to take up with our evangelism troops. It is a necessary exposition which dispels much confusion and I will undoubtedly refer to it often.”—an evangelism director

“It [Seven Reasons] is useful and well-put-together, and I would like to make them available to those who fellowship with us in our assembly and the Bible studies, for personal study and to hand out to emphasize a clear gospel when witnessing to others who perhaps have been ‘Christianized’ into ‘Christianity.’”—a believer from Davenport, ND

“Words can never adequately express how truly blessed I was by your recent publication, *Seven Reasons*. To God be the glory!”—a saved ex-nun

“The booklet has changed my concept of Revelation 3:20. I have known that trusting in Christ alone, and grace alone was the linchpin of my redemption. I will never again give an altar call with ‘Ask Christ into your heart.’”—a pastor

RECENT RESPONSES FROM OUR SECOND EDITION

“I was at a Bible conference this week in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and a young brother handed me the pamphlet mentioned on the Subject line [*Seven Reasons*]. He knew that I had been trying to convince fellow believers for years of the unscriptural practice of the “sinner’s prayer” and so he gave it to me for my encouragement. Needless to say, it was a BIG encouragement to see such a sound pamphlet on the subject.”—an evangelist

“Thanks for sending us the *Seven Reasons... booklets*. It is a great little tool that we will be able to make great use of. I commend you for succinctly clarifying the real issue with this modern appeal to the Gospel.”—a pastor

“I am a collegiate minister at a State University. I read *Seven Reasons* and I agree with everything. I stumbled across it while preparing a Bible study about faith alone for salvation. You did a great job of answering the question I had about Romans 10:9-10.”—a collegiate minister

“I thank God for your ministry, and I look forward to handling out the booklet to well-meaning but mistaken believers who insist that asking Jesus into the heart is the way to be saved, as if it’s some magical little formula. Most American Christians are caught up in clichés, and while they mean well I fear that we are exporting a false Gospel to the missions fields.”—a concerned believer

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dennis M. Rokser (M.Div., D.Min., Grace Biblical Seminary) has pastored Duluth Bible Church since 1985. The focus of his teaching has been the Gospel of God's grace as it relates to salvation, eternal security, the believer's identification/position in Christ, and living by grace through faith-resting in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.



All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:2-4)

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