

MESSAGE OF SALVATION

Have you ever personally trusted Christ or are you still on the way? Would you like to become a real Christian and be sure of it?

Think back to the beginning of time when God and Adam and Eve walked and talked together in that beautiful spot called the Garden of Eden. Can you imagine what they talked about? I'm sure they related with ease to each other. *Everything was perfect until that day Adam and Eve broke the relationship bond.*

Perhaps you have experienced a falling-out when someone betrayed you, or you double-crossed a friend. You can understand why Adam and Eve hid. Fear replaced the happy conversations between them and God.

The amazing part of the story is that God didn't give up on his plan for a human race. There were consequences, of course, but God, in a phenomenal gesture of love, provided a way for them...and ultimately for us, to come back into relationship with Him.

It turns out that God has a plan. His plan is full, complete and eternal pardon for the wrong Adam and Eve did and for the sins you and I have committed.

Now some of us have trouble admitting that "*sin*" word. The Bible talks about the sin problem as "falling short of God's standard. Just suppose I said one wrong word a day or I had just one bad thought a day. It wouldn't take long to rack up a thousand wrongs, would it? In my lifetime my record would be extensive.

Do you think that God will just blink an eye, like Santa Claus, and give me presents anyway? That He'll say, "Aww, come on, let's forget about that, let's be friends?"

No, because God, like I said earlier, wants a meaningful relationship with us. But with all this junk between us and God that can't happen. We wouldn't admit it out loud, but secretly I think we too desire this relationship with God so we try to fix the problem.

We assume that if we go to church then we can be all chummy with God. Or we think, "Surely giving to the poor will make God sit up and take notice."

All the time God is saying, "You don't have to be religious.

- You don't have to do more good works than bad.
- You don't have to count beads.
- You don't have to keep the Ten Commandments.
- You don't have to make a pilgrimage to some holy place.
- You don't have to burn candles.
- You don't have to refuse to eat certain foods."

In other words, nothing you do can fix things.

"Well," you say, "if I can't fix things, what chance do I have?"

Good news: Jesus fixed it. You will never be held accountable for the guilt of your sin because Jesus has taken the punishment for you!

How? Imagine that list of thousands of unkind words, of evil thoughts, of lies, cheating that you've committed over your lifetime. Hold the list in your hand. Remember, this is the junk that stands between you and God. Now picture God taking that long list of sins and placing them on Jesus.

The Bible tells us that God took, not just your list, but mine, and the sins of the whole world and chalked them up to Jesus. And that's why He died on the cross.

I know it doesn't sound fair for someone else to take the rap for what we've done but remember God designed us right from the beginning to have a love relationship with Him. He didn't shift to Plan B because we goofed. It is God's longing and love for people that caused Him to win them back.

Here's this huge rift in the relationship and He makes a bridge in the shape of a cross. All the bridges we build, like the bridge of good works and the bridge of giving to the poor, aren't long enough to span the chasm. He built the bridge. He came to us.

I suppose we could ignore this gift and try to not worry that we're not in right relationship with God. The better way is to confess our sin to Him personally and specifically. Honesty is a good thing, especially since God knows everything anyway.

When Jesus said, "It is finished," it was like He stamped the words, "Paid in full," on that long list we held in our hand. It's like He's given us a check but we still have to cash it.

If we never go to the bank, that is, if we don't accept that Jesus paid the debt for our sins, we'll never know the joy of that sweet relationship with God.

But when we confess our sin to Him and surrender to His Lordship over our life, then we receive His forgiveness, and all that trash is taken away and God welcomes us into His family.

I hope this little explanation will help you in your quest to become a real Christ follower. If you have questions please write and I will try to point you in the right direction. Read the Gospel of John in your Bible. The apostle John goes to great lengths to explain what being born again means and how a lost person can be found. There are also many helpful books. Here are the titles of two which I'm sure you'll find helpful: *Just Give Me Jesus* by Anne Graham Lotz and *Searching for God Knows What* by Donald Miller.

God be with you as you continue in the direction of personally trusting Christ.