

CHRISTIANITY EXPLAINED

Expanded Edition

A Biblical Guide to Understanding the Christian Faith

What does the Bible actually say?

A clear, Scripture-centered study of the Christian faith that explores the gospel, salvation, grace, repentance, difficult passages, and many of the questions that have divided Christians for centuries.

Written to help seekers, new believers, and longtime Christians discover the message of Jesus Christ by examining the Scriptures in their context.

Accepted Inc.

Helping the Hurting and the Lost in Jesus' Name

Acceptedinc.org

Christianity Explained - Expanded Edition

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All Scripture quotations are from the translation(s) identified within this guide unless otherwise noted.

Every effort has been made to present Scripture carefully and accurately. This guide is intended to encourage readers to study God's Word for themselves and to grow in their knowledge of Jesus Christ.

For additional resources, visit: Acceptedinc.org

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome

If you're reading this, you may be asking one of life's biggest questions:

What is Christianity really all about?

Perhaps you have never read the Bible. Maybe you grew up in church but still have questions. You may have been hurt by religion, confused by different denominations, or overwhelmed by Christians who seem to disagree on important issues.

If that's you, you're not alone.

One of the biggest reasons people become confused about Christianity is that they often hear many different opinions about what it means to be a Christian. Some say salvation can be lost. Others say it cannot. Some teach that you must stop sinning before God will accept you. Others teach that salvation is entirely by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

How do you know what is true?

The purpose of this guide is not to convince you to join a particular church or denomination.

The purpose is much simpler.

We want to open the Bible together and ask one question:

What does Scripture actually say?

Throughout this guide, we will do our best to distinguish between three things:

- What the Bible clearly teaches.
- Areas where sincere Christians hold different interpretations.
- The conclusions we have reached after studying Scripture as a whole.

Whenever possible, we will allow God's Word to speak first and keep our commentary secondary.

Our desire is not to win arguments.

Our desire is to point people to Jesus Christ.

Whether you have followed Christ for many years or are simply curious about Christianity, we invite you to read with an open heart and an open Bible.

Don't accept something because a pastor says it.

Don't reject something because someone on the internet says otherwise.

Search the Scriptures for yourself.

Ask questions.

Pray for wisdom.

Most importantly, keep your eyes on Jesus Christ, because Christianity is ultimately not about becoming good enough for God.

It is about what God has done through Jesus Christ to restore our relationship with Him.

Our prayer is that, by the time you finish this guide, you will have a clearer understanding of the gospel, a greater confidence in God's Word, and a deeper appreciation for the incredible love God has shown through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Our goal is not to tell you what to believe.

Our goal is to encourage you to open the Scriptures, examine what God has revealed, and discover for yourself the message of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 1

Where Did Christianity Really Begin?

Most people think they know where Christianity began.

Some would point to a stable in Bethlehem where Jesus was born.

Others would say it began when Jesus called His first disciples.

Some might even say Christianity began at the cross or with the resurrection.

Those are all pivotal moments in history.

But Christianity didn't begin there.

To understand Christianity, we have to go back before there were churches...

Before there were nations...

Before there was sin...

Before there was death...

We have to begin where the Bible begins.

With God.

The opening words of Scripture are simple, yet they answer one of the greatest questions humanity has ever asked:

SCRIPTURE

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

— Genesis 1:1

The Bible never attempts to prove God's existence. It simply introduces Him as the eternal Creator of everything that exists.

Everything has a beginning.

The universe.

Time.

Matter.

Life on earth.

But God does not.

He has always existed.

He alone is the Creator, while everything else is part of His creation.

That means your life is not an accident.

You are not the result of chance.

You were created intentionally by a God who knows you, loves you, and desires a relationship with you.

That relationship is where Christianity truly begins.

Many people think Christianity is about following rules, attending church, or trying to become a better person.

Those things may have a place in the Christian life, but they are not its foundation.

At its heart, Christianity is about a relationship between the Creator and the people He created.

From the very beginning, God's desire was not simply to have servants.

He wanted His creation to know Him.

To walk with Him.

To trust Him.

To experience His love.

When God created Adam and Eve, there was no fear.

No guilt.

No shame.

No sickness.

No suffering.

No death.

The world was exactly as God intended it to be.

SCRIPTURE

"God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good."

— Genesis 1:31

Imagine a world where every relationship is perfect.

Where no one hurts another person.

Where there are no hospitals, no cemeteries, no prisons, no tears, and no fear.

That was God's original design.

So what changed?

If God created a world that was "very good," why do we now live in a world filled with pain, violence, disease, and death?

The answer to that question is one of the most important in all of Scripture.

To understand why Jesus came, we must first understand what happened in a garden long before there was an empty tomb.

That's where our journey continues.

CHAPTER 2

If God Created a Perfect World, What Went Wrong?

If God is good...

If God created a perfect world...

Why do we live in one filled with pain, disease, violence, and death?

It's one of the oldest questions people ask, and the answer takes us back to a garden.

The Garden of Eden was unlike anything we have ever experienced.

Adam and Eve lived in perfect fellowship with God.

There was no fear.

No guilt.

No shame.

No death.

They had everything they needed, and they walked with the One who created them.

God gave them freedom to enjoy His creation, but He also gave them one command.

SCRIPTURE

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"

— Genesis 2:16–17

Many people ask why God placed that tree in the Garden at all.

The Bible does not answer every question we might have, but it does reveal something important.

Love and trust cannot be forced.

God created human beings with the ability to trust Him or to reject Him. Without a genuine choice, love would not be freely given.

Then another voice entered the story.

The serpent approached Eve and did something that Satan continues to do today.

He caused her to question God's Word.

SCRIPTURE

"Did God actually say...?"

— Genesis 3:1

Notice where the temptation began.

It did not begin with eating fruit.

It began by creating doubt about what God had said.

Then came the first recorded lie spoken to humanity.

SCRIPTURE

"You will not surely die... For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

— Genesis 3:4–5

The temptation was deeper than simply eating from a tree.

It was an invitation to distrust God's goodness and seek wisdom apart from Him.

Instead of trusting the Creator to define what was good and what was evil, Adam and Eve chose to decide for themselves.

That decision changed everything.

Sin entered the world.

Innocence gave way to guilt.

Peace gave way to fear.

Fellowship gave way to separation.

For the first time, Adam and Eve hid from the God they had once joyfully walked with.

SCRIPTURE

"I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid... so I hid myself."

— Genesis 3:10

Fear, shame, and hiding were not part of God's original creation.

They were the result of sin.

Yet even in humanity's rebellion, God did not abandon His creation.

Instead of leaving Adam and Eve to their shame, God came looking for them.

He called out, "Where are you?"

This was not because God had lost them.

It was because He was inviting them to come out of hiding and face what had happened.

Even more remarkable, before Adam and Eve left the Garden, God gave humanity its first promise of hope.

He declared that one day the serpent would be defeated.

The battle between good and evil had begun, but evil would not have the final word.

God also clothed Adam and Eve with garments of skin.

The Bible does not dwell on the details, but many Christians have understood this to be the first picture of an innocent life given to cover human shame—a foreshadowing of the greater sacrifice that would one day come through Jesus Christ. While Christians may differ on the significance of this event, it beautifully points forward to God's unfolding plan of redemption.

The Garden is not simply the story of humanity's first sin.

It is also the beginning of God's rescue story.

The moment humanity fell, God began revealing His plan to restore what had been lost.

That plan would unfold throughout the rest of the Bible and ultimately find its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Before we can understand why Jesus came, however, we need to answer another important question.

What exactly is sin, and why does it separate us from God?

CHAPTER 3

What Is Sin, and Why Does It Matter?

Most people have an idea of what sin is.

Ask ten different people, and you'll probably get ten different answers.

Some think sin is breaking the Ten Commandments.

Others think it's hurting someone else.

Still others believe sin is simply making mistakes.

The Bible paints a much bigger picture.

Sin is not merely something we do.

It is humanity's decision to live independently of God.

It is choosing our way over His.

That decision began in the Garden of Eden, but it didn't stay there.

It spread to every generation that followed.

SCRIPTURE*“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”***— Romans 3:23**

Notice what the verse says.

It doesn't say that some people have sinned.

It says all have sinned.

Every culture.

Every nation.

Every man.

Every woman.

Every pastor.

Every atheist.

Every person who has ever lived—except Jesus Christ.

This is one of the few things every Christian tradition agrees on.

No one stands before God on the basis of a perfect life.

Sometimes people ask,

“I'm basically a good person. Isn't that enough?”

It's an honest question.

The problem is that our definition of “good” is usually based on comparing ourselves to other people.

God's standard is not the person next door.

God's standard is His own perfect holiness.

When we compare ourselves to others, we may look good.

When we compare ourselves to God's perfection, every one of us falls short.

SCRIPTURE*“There is none righteous, no, not one.”***— Romans 3:10**

This is why sin matters.

Sin isn't just about breaking rules.

It breaks relationship.

Think back to the Garden.

The moment Adam and Eve sinned, they didn't celebrate their newfound freedom.

They hid.

They were ashamed.

They were afraid.

Sin separated them from the God they had once walked with.

That same separation has affected every human being ever since.

SCRIPTURE*“For the wages of sin is death...”***— Romans 6:23a**

The Bible teaches that the consequence of sin is death.

Physical death entered the world.

Spiritual separation entered the human heart.

A creation that had once reflected God's perfect design became marked by suffering, disease, conflict, and loss.

We see the evidence of that brokenness every day.

Wars.

Broken families.

Violence.

Addiction.

Greed.

Pride.

Jealousy.

Fear.

These are not signs that God created an evil world.

They are reminders that we live in a world that has been damaged by sin.

At this point, another question naturally arises.

If every one of us has sinned...

If God's standard is perfection...

How could anyone possibly have a relationship with Him?

Can enough good deeds erase our sin?

Can religion make us acceptable to God?

Can trying harder repair what has been broken?

The Bible's answer may surprise you.

No amount of human effort can remove the guilt of sin or restore our relationship with God.

If we could save ourselves, we would not need a Savior.

SCRIPTURE

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

— Ephesians 2:8–9

That may sound discouraging at first.

But it is actually the beginning of the greatest news the world has ever heard.

If we cannot reach God by our own efforts, what if God chose to reach us instead?

That question leads us to the heart of Christianity.

Long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God had already begun revealing His rescue plan.

That is where our journey continues.

CHAPTER 4

Did God Already Have a Rescue Plan?

If you had been standing in the Garden of Eden the day Adam and Eve sinned, what do you think you would have expected God to do?

Would He destroy them?

Would He abandon them?

Would He simply walk away and begin again?

Many people imagine God as an angry judge waiting to punish anyone who steps out of line.

But the very first pages of the Bible reveal something remarkable about God's character.

The moment humanity rebelled against Him, God didn't respond by abandoning His creation.

He responded by pursuing it.

Think about that for a moment.

Adam and Eve sinned.

Adam and Eve hid.
 But God came looking.
 That pattern repeats itself throughout the entire Bible.
 Humanity runs.
 God pursues.
 Humanity rebels.
 God reaches out.
 Humanity falls.
 God provides a way back.
 That is one of the central themes of Scripture, and it begins in the Garden.
 After confronting Adam, Eve, and the serpent, God announced the consequences of their rebellion.
 The serpent would be cursed.
 The ground would be cursed.
 Pain, toil, and death would now become part of the human experience.
 Yet, hidden within those words of judgment was one of the greatest promises ever given.
 Long before there was Bethlehem...
 Long before there was a cross...
 Long before there was an empty tomb...
 God promised that evil would not have the final victory.

SCRIPTURE

— Genesis 3:15

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." (ESV)

This verse is often called the "Protoevangelium" ("first gospel") because many Christians understand it as the Bible's first promise of a coming Savior who would ultimately defeat Satan.

After giving that incredible promise, God did something else that many readers overlook.

Adam and Eve had tried to solve their problem themselves.

After they sinned, they immediately realized they were naked. Their first instinct was not to run toward God but to hide from Him. They sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Isn't that exactly what humanity has been doing ever since?

We try to cover our guilt.

We try to earn God's approval.

We try to convince ourselves that if we're good enough, religious enough, generous enough, or sincere enough, everything will be okay.

But fig leaves were never enough.

Neither are our own efforts.

Then God stepped in.

SCRIPTURE

"And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them."

— Genesis 3:21

The Bible simply tells us that God clothed Adam and Eve with garments of skin.

It does not explain every detail of what happened.

Many Christians understand this to be the first picture of an innocent life being given to cover the shame caused by sin. While Scripture does not explicitly state that this sacrifice foreshadows Jesus Christ, it is a connection that many believers have seen throughout church history because of the Bible's later teaching about sacrifice and atonement.

Whether or not Moses intended his readers to see every detail at this point, one truth is unmistakable.

God did for Adam and Eve what they could not do for themselves.

Their own covering was insufficient.

God provided one.

That theme appears again and again throughout the Bible.

When humanity cannot save itself...

God provides.

When humanity cannot bridge the gap...

God makes a way.

When humanity deserves judgment...

God extends mercy while remaining just.

As you continue reading the Old Testament, you'll begin to notice something remarkable.

The Bible isn't telling dozens of unrelated stories.

It's telling one story.

Every generation is waiting.

Every promise is building.

Every sacrifice is pointing somewhere.

The question is no longer whether God has a rescue plan.

The question becomes:

Who is the One God promised would come?

The answer begins with a man whom God called out of a pagan land and made an extraordinary promise.

His name was Abraham.

Part C

At first, God's promise may have seemed impossible to believe.

Generations came and went.

People were born.

People died.

Kingdoms rose and fell.

Yet the promise remained.

Then, many years after Adam and Eve left the Garden, God called a man named Abraham and made a covenant that would change history.

SCRIPTURE

"Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"

— Genesis 12:1–3

Notice that last promise.

God didn't say Abraham's family would only bless one nation.

He said all the families of the earth would be blessed through him.

The rescue plan that began in the Garden was becoming clearer.

God was preparing the way for Someone who would bless the entire world.

Years later, God tested Abraham in a way that has caused readers to stop and think for thousands of years.

He asked Abraham to offer his beloved son, Isaac.

As they climbed the mountain together, Isaac asked a question that echoes throughout the rest of the Bible.

SCRIPTURE

“Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”

— Genesis 22:7

Abraham answered with remarkable faith.

SCRIPTURE

“God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.”

— Genesis 22:8

At the last moment, God stopped Abraham and provided a ram in Isaac’s place.

Isaac lived because another died in his place.

Many Christians see this event as a powerful foreshadowing of Jesus Christ. While Genesis does not explicitly identify it that way, the similarities are striking and have been recognized by Christians throughout history.

Once again, the Bible points us to the same truth.

God provides.

Centuries later, Abraham’s descendants became slaves in Egypt.

After hundreds of years, God raised up Moses to lead His people to freedom.

But before they were delivered, one final plague would pass through the land.

God instructed every household to sacrifice a spotless lamb and place its blood on the doorposts of their homes.

SCRIPTURE

“The blood shall be a sign for you... When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

— Exodus 12:13

It wasn’t the goodness of the family inside the house that saved them.

It was the blood God had instructed them to apply.

Year after year, God’s people continued offering sacrifices.

Lambs. Goats. Bulls.

These sacrifices reminded Israel that sin was serious and that forgiveness came at a cost.

Yet they also pointed to something greater.

If those sacrifices had completely removed sin forever, they would never have needed to be repeated.

Instead, they pointed forward to the day when God would provide the perfect sacrifice once and for all.

By now, a pattern should be impossible to miss.

A promise in the Garden.

A substitute for Isaac.

A spotless Passover lamb.

A sacrificial system that pointed beyond itself.

The Bible keeps building anticipation.

The question is becoming impossible to ignore.

Who is the One all of these signs have been pointing toward?

Part D

As the centuries passed, God’s promises became even clearer.

Through the prophets, He began revealing more about the One who was coming.

He would be born into the family of Abraham.

He would come through the line of King David.

He would establish an everlasting kingdom.

He would bring light to the nations.

He would be called “Mighty God” and “Prince of Peace.”

He would also suffer.

This is where many people became confused.

How could the promised King also be a suffering servant?

How could the One who would reign forever also be rejected by His own people?

The prophets faithfully recorded what God revealed, even when they could not fully understand how every piece fit together.

SCRIPTURE

“But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.”

— Isaiah 53:5

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophets described a Savior who would suffer for the sins of others.

They also foretold where He would be born, the family He would come from, and that His kingdom would never end.

Little by little, the picture became clearer.

The promise God made in the Garden was not forgotten.

Generation after generation waited.

Some died believing the promise would one day be fulfilled.

Others wondered if it ever would.

For nearly four hundred years after the last Old Testament prophet, heaven seemed silent.

No new prophets appeared.

No new revelation was given.

Many people wondered if God had forgotten His promise.

But God had not forgotten.

He was preparing the world for the most important moment in human history.

At exactly the right time, the silence ended.

A child was born in the small town of Bethlehem.

His birth would divide history itself.

Some knew Him as the son of Mary.

Others knew Him as the son of Joseph.

The angels called Him the Savior.

History would know Him as Jesus Christ.

Everything the Bible had been pointing toward was about to be revealed.

The promise made in the Garden...

The covenant with Abraham...

The substitute provided for Isaac...

The Passover lamb...

The sacrifices...

The prophets...

They were never separate stories.

They were all preparing the world for one Person.

His name was Jesus.

That is where our journey continues.

CHAPTER 5

Why Is Jesus the Center of Everything?

Imagine reading a mystery novel.

For chapter after chapter, the author leaves clues.

Some are obvious.

Others seem insignificant.

A name is mentioned.

A symbol appears.

A promise is made.

Nothing seems to fit together.

Then, suddenly, everything makes sense.

Every clue had been pointing to the same person all along.

That is exactly what happens when you read the Bible.

For four chapters, we have followed a story that began in a perfect garden.

We watched humanity fall.

We saw God promise that evil would one day be defeated.

We followed that promise through Abraham, Isaac, Moses, the Passover, the sacrifices, and the prophets.

Every step of the journey has been leading to one person.

Jesus Christ.

Many people think Jesus simply appeared in the New Testament.

The Bible presents a very different picture.

Jesus was not an unexpected solution to an unexpected problem.

He was the fulfillment of God's plan that had been unfolding from the very beginning.

When the time was right, after centuries of waiting, God stepped into human history in a way no one expected.

He didn't come as a conquering king.

He didn't come leading an army.

He didn't come to overthrow the Roman Empire.

He came as a baby.

Born in a small town.

To an ordinary young woman named Mary.

Raised in the home of a carpenter.

If you had been alive that day, there would have been nothing about His appearance that suggested He would change the course of human history forever.

Yet heaven knew exactly who He was.

SCRIPTURE

"And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"

— Luke 2:10–11

Think about those words.

The angel didn't announce the birth of a philosopher.

Or a political leader.

Or merely another prophet.

He announced the birth of a Savior.

Why?

Because the greatest problem facing humanity was never Rome.

It wasn't poverty.

It wasn't disease.

It wasn't politics.

Humanity's greatest problem was the same problem introduced in the Garden.
 Sin had separated us from God.
 And now, at last, the One God had promised had arrived.
 Not to condemn the world.
 But to save it.

Part B

At this point, another question naturally arises.
 If Jesus is the promised Savior...
 Why did He have to become human?
 Why couldn't God simply forgive our sins from heaven?
 After all, if God is all-powerful, couldn't He just declare everyone forgiven?
 It's an honest question, and one that many people have wrestled with.
 The answer begins by understanding who God is.
 The Bible teaches that God is perfectly loving.
 But it also teaches that He is perfectly holy and perfectly just.
 Those qualities are not in competition with one another.
 They exist together in perfect harmony.
 Imagine a judge standing in a courtroom.
 A guilty person appears before him, and the evidence is overwhelming.
 The judge knows the person is guilty.
 Would that judge be considered just if he simply smiled and said,
 "Don't worry about it. You're free to go."
 Of course not.
 We would call that corruption, not justice.
 Now imagine the same judge stepping down from the bench, paying the penalty himself, and satisfying the demands of justice at his own expense.
 Justice would be upheld.
 Mercy would be extended.
 That picture begins to help us understand the cross.
 God did not ignore sin.
 Neither did He abandon us because of it.
 Instead, He chose to provide what we could never provide for ourselves.
 Throughout the Old Testament, every sacrifice reminded God's people that sin carried a cost.
 But those sacrifices could never permanently remove sin.
 They pointed beyond themselves to something greater.

SCRIPTURE

"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

— Hebrews 10:4

Every lamb that was sacrificed...
 Every drop of blood that was shed...
 Every altar...
 Every priest...
 Every offering...
 Was pointing toward the day when God Himself would provide the perfect sacrifice.

That is why Jesus came.
 Not merely to teach.
 Not merely to perform miracles.
 Not merely to be an example.
 He came to accomplish what no one else could.
 He came to do what every sacrifice before Him could only point toward.
 This is why the arrival of Jesus changed everything.
 He was not simply another teacher in a long line of religious leaders.
 He was the fulfillment of God's promise.
 The One the prophets had spoken about.
 The One Abraham looked forward to.
 The true Passover Lamb.
 The perfect sacrifice.
 The Savior the world had been waiting for.
 But before Jesus could die for our sins, He first had to show the world who He really was.
 That is where we turn next.

Part C

When Jesus began His public ministry, people immediately recognized that there was something different about Him.
 He didn't teach like the religious leaders of His day.
 He didn't simply explain what others had written.
 He spoke with authority.
 Crowds gathered wherever He went.
 The blind received their sight.
 The lame walked.
 The deaf heard.
 Storms became calm at His command.
 Thousands were fed with only a few loaves of bread and a few fish.
 Even the dead were raised.
 His miracles amazed the crowds, but they were never the main point.
 Jesus didn't perform miracles merely to impress people.
 His miracles revealed something about who He was.
 Every miracle was a sign pointing to a greater truth.
 He gave sight to the blind, but He also claimed to be the Light of the World.
 He fed the hungry, but He also called Himself the Bread of Life.
 He raised the dead, but He also declared that He is the Resurrection and the Life.
 Again and again, Jesus was inviting people to look beyond the miracle and see the Savior.
 Not everyone welcomed Him.
 Some believed.
 Some doubted.
 Some followed Him wherever He went.
 Others accused Him of deception.
 The religious leaders watched Him closely, hoping to find a reason to reject Him.
 Why?
 Because Jesus wasn't simply teaching people how to live better lives.
 He was making extraordinary claims about Himself.

Those claims forced everyone who heard Him to make a decision.

Was He telling the truth?

Was He merely a teacher?

Was He a prophet?

Or was He exactly who He claimed to be?

That question is just as important today as it was two thousand years ago.

Before we can understand why Jesus died on the cross, we must first understand who He claimed to be.

If His claims were true, they change everything.

If they were false, Christianity has no foundation at all.

That is the question we will examine next.

CHAPTER 6

Who Did Jesus Claim to Be?

If you stopped ten people on the street and asked,

“Who is Jesus?”

You would probably hear ten different answers.

Some would call Him a great teacher.

Others would say He was a prophet.

Some believe He was a revolutionary.

Others believe He never existed at all.

Even among people who believe in God, opinions about Jesus vary dramatically.

But have you ever stopped to ask a different question?

Who did Jesus say He was?

That question changes everything.

After all, if Jesus never claimed to be anything more than a teacher, Christians would have no reason to worship Him.

If He claimed to be God when He wasn’t, then He could not be trusted.

But if His claims were true...

Then no person in history has ever been more important.

Instead of beginning with what churches teach about Jesus, let’s begin where we have tried to begin throughout this guide.

Let’s examine what the Bible actually says.

Part B

One of the most common claims you’ll hear is that Jesus never actually said,

“I am God.”

At first glance, that argument may sound convincing.

After all, if Jesus wanted people to believe He was God, why didn’t He simply say those exact words?

The answer is found by understanding the culture in which Jesus lived.

Jesus was speaking to first-century Jews who knew the Scriptures well.

Instead of using twenty-first century language, He used words and titles they immediately understood.

One day, Jesus made a statement that shocked everyone listening.

SCRIPTURE

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’”

— John 8:58

To many modern readers, that statement may not seem unusual.

But the people standing there immediately understood what Jesus was claiming.

Centuries earlier, when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, Moses asked for God's name.

God answered,

SCRIPTURE

"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.'"

— Exodus 3:14

Jesus didn't merely say He existed before Abraham.

He identified Himself using the very name God had revealed to Moses.

The reaction of the crowd tells us they understood exactly what He meant.

SCRIPTURE

"So they picked up stones to throw at Him..."

— John 8:59

Why would they do that?

They weren't preparing to congratulate Him.

Under the Law, blasphemy—claiming equality with God—was considered a capital offense.

They believed Jesus had just made a claim that only God could make.

This wasn't the only time it happened.

On another occasion, Jesus said something equally astonishing.

SCRIPTURE

"I and the Father are one."

— John 10:30

Once again, the religious leaders reached for stones.

Jesus asked them why.

Their answer is revealing.

SCRIPTURE

"The Jews answered Him, 'It is not for a good work that we are going to stone You but for blasphemy, because You, being a man, make Yourself God.'"

— John 10:33

Notice something important.

The people listening to Jesus believed He was claiming equality with God.

Whether they accepted His claim or rejected it, they clearly understood what He was saying.

Jesus didn't correct them by saying,

"You've misunderstood Me. I never claimed that."

Instead, He continued revealing His unique relationship with the Father.

As we continue reading the Gospels, the evidence becomes even stronger.

Jesus accepted worship.

He forgave sins.

He claimed authority over the Sabbath.

He spoke with an authority that belonged to God alone.

The question is no longer whether Jesus made extraordinary claims.

The question is whether those claims were true.

That is the question every reader must answer for themselves.

Part C

Words are important.

But actions often reveal even more.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus did things that caused people to ask a question no ordinary teacher would ever inspire.

“Who is this Man?”

One day, four men carried their paralyzed friend to Jesus.

The crowd was so large they couldn’t get through the door, so they climbed onto the roof, opened it, and lowered the man down in front of Him.

Everyone expected Jesus to heal him.

Instead, Jesus said something completely unexpected.

SCRIPTURE

“Son, your sins are forgiven.”

— Mark 2:5

The religious leaders immediately began thinking to themselves,

SCRIPTURE

“Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

— Mark 2:7

Think about their question.

They didn’t object because Jesus healed people.

They objected because He claimed the authority to forgive sins.

In their understanding, forgiveness of sins ultimately belonged to God alone.

Jesus knew what they were thinking.

So He asked which was easier: to say, “Your sins are forgiven,” or to say, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.”

Then, to demonstrate that He truly possessed the authority He claimed, He healed the man in front of everyone.

The miracle wasn’t simply about restoring a man’s ability to walk.

It confirmed that Jesus had the authority to forgive sins.

Again, the miracle pointed beyond itself to who Jesus really was.

This wasn’t the only time Jesus did something that astonished those around Him.

Time after time, people fell before Him in worship.

What is remarkable is not simply that they worshiped Him.

It is that Jesus accepted their worship.

Throughout the Bible, worship belongs to God alone.

When human beings or angels were worshiped, they refused it.

Yet Jesus received worship without correcting those who offered it.

Another example appears after Thomas saw the risen Christ.

Overwhelmed by what he witnessed, Thomas declared,

SCRIPTURE

“My Lord and my God!”

— John 20:28

Notice Jesus’ response.

He did not rebuke Thomas.

He did not say, “Don’t call Me that.”

Instead, He commended Thomas for believing.

As we read the Gospels, the evidence continues to grow.
 Jesus forgave sins.
 He accepted worship.
 He exercised authority over nature.
 He commanded demons.
 He raised the dead.
 He claimed authority over life itself.
 Each event leaves us with the same question the crowds often asked:
 Who can do these things except the One sent from God?
 By now, one thing should be becoming clear.
 Jesus never presented Himself as merely another religious teacher.
 His words, His miracles, and His authority forced people to make a decision.
 Either His claims were true...
 Or they were the greatest deception in history.
 There is very little room for anything in between.

Part D

By now, we've looked at Jesus' own words.
 We've seen the claims He made.
 We've seen the authority He exercised.
 We've seen the reactions of the people who heard Him.
 Some believed He was the promised Messiah.
 Others accused Him of blasphemy.
 Still others wanted Him dead.
 One thing is certain.
 No one who truly listened to Jesus walked away believing He was merely another religious teacher.
 He didn't leave people with that option.
 One day, Jesus asked His disciples a question that every person must eventually answer.

SCRIPTURE

"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'"

— Matthew 16:15

It is one of the most important questions ever asked.
 Not, "What does your church say?"
 Not, "What do your parents believe?"
 Not, "What does your favorite preacher teach?"
 Jesus made it personal.
 "Who do you say that I am?"
 Peter answered without hesitation.

SCRIPTURE

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

— Matthew 16:16

Throughout history, millions of people have answered that question in different ways.
 Some have rejected Him.
 Some have admired Him.

Some have ignored Him.

Others have devoted their entire lives to following Him.

But no one can remain neutral forever.

If Jesus is who He claimed to be, then His words deserve our complete attention.

If He is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world, then Christianity is not simply one religion among many.

It is God's invitation to be reconciled to Him through His Son.

Everything we have studied so far has been leading to this moment.

The promise in the Garden.

The covenant with Abraham.

The Passover lamb.

The sacrifices.

The prophets.

The birth of Jesus.

His teachings.

His miracles.

His claims.

All of it points to one undeniable truth:

Jesus is the center of the biblical story.

But one question still remains.

If Jesus truly was the promised Savior, what did His death on the cross actually accomplish?

That question takes us to the heart of the Christian faith.

And it is where our journey continues.

CHAPTER 7

Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

Few events in history are more recognizable than the cross.

It appears on church buildings.

It hangs around people's necks.

It is displayed in artwork, books, and films around the world.

But have you ever stopped to ask a simple question?

Why the cross?

If God is all-powerful...

Why couldn't He simply forgive humanity?

Why was Jesus' death necessary?

These are honest questions, and they deserve honest answers.

To understand the cross, we must first understand the problem it was designed to solve.

From the very beginning of this guide, we've seen that humanity's greatest problem was never politics, poverty, disease, or war.

Those are all real problems.

But they are symptoms of something deeper.

Our greatest problem is that sin separated us from the God who created us.

God loves us more than we can imagine.

Yet God is also perfectly holy and perfectly just.

His justice cannot simply pretend that sin never happened.

If a judge knowingly allowed evil to go unpunished, we would not call that justice.

We would call it corruption.
 The same is true with God.
 His love never cancels His holiness.
 His mercy never ignores His justice.
 So how could a holy God forgive guilty people without compromising His perfect justice?
 That is the question the cross answers.
 For centuries, animal sacrifices reminded God's people that sin carried a cost.
 But those sacrifices were never the final answer.
 They pointed forward to Someone greater.

SCRIPTURE

"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

— Hebrews 10:4

Every sacrifice was a reminder.
 Every lamb pointed beyond itself.
 Every drop of blood anticipated the day when God would provide the perfect sacrifice.
 Then Jesus came.
 He did not come merely to teach people how to live.
 He came to accomplish what no one else could.
 The cross was not an accident.
 It was not a tragedy that caught God by surprise.
 It was the fulfillment of the rescue plan that had been unfolding since the Garden of Eden.
 The cross was where God's perfect justice and perfect love met.
 But what actually happened when Jesus died?
 That is where we turn next.

Part B

Imagine standing beneath the cross that day.
 The sky grows dark.
 The crowds that had shouted only hours before begin to fall silent.
 Roman soldiers carry on with their duties, unaware that they are witnessing the most important moment in human history.
 To many people, it looked like another execution.
 Another man condemned to die.
 But the Bible reveals that something far greater was taking place.
 Jesus was not dying because He deserved punishment.
 He had lived the only perfectly sinless life in history.
 He never lied.
 He never sinned.
 He never rebelled against His Father.
 He was completely without guilt.

SCRIPTURE

"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth."

— 1 Peter 2:22

If Jesus was innocent, why was He hanging on a cross?
 Because He was willingly taking our place.

From the beginning of this guide, we've seen a pattern repeated throughout Scripture.

A ram in place of Isaac.

The Passover lamb protecting Israel.

The sacrifices offered year after year.

Each pointed to the same truth:

A substitute would one day be provided.

Jesus became that substitute.

SCRIPTURE

"But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed."

— Isaiah 53:5

Notice what Isaiah says.

He was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities.

The punishment He endured was not for His own sins.

It was for ours.

This is one of the greatest demonstrations of God's love in all of history.

God did not stand at a distance and tell humanity to find its own way back.

He entered our world.

He bore our judgment.

He paid the debt we could never repay.

That is why the cross is at the center of Christianity.

It is not merely a symbol of suffering.

It is the place where God's rescue plan was accomplished.

Yet one question still remains.

If Jesus truly paid for our sins, what did He mean when He cried out,

"It is finished"?

Those three words have changed countless lives, and they are the key to understanding the gospel itself.

Part C

As Jesus hung on the cross, the suffering was almost over.

After hours of agony, He spoke three words that have echoed through history.

SCRIPTURE

"When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished,' and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit."

— John 19:30

Those three words may be among the most important ever spoken.

But what was finished?

Was Jesus saying His life was over?

No.

He was declaring that the work the Father had sent Him to accomplish had been completed.

The debt that sin had created was fully paid.

The sacrifices that had been offered year after year had reached their fulfillment.

The rescue plan God had promised in the Garden had accomplished its purpose.

Nothing more needed to be added to what Christ had done.

That does not mean our lives end at the cross.

It means our salvation does not begin with our performance.

It begins with Christ's finished work.

This is one of the greatest differences between Christianity and every system that teaches people they must earn God's acceptance.

The gospel is not the announcement that we must save ourselves.

The gospel is the announcement that Jesus has done for us what we could never do for ourselves.

That is why the Bible repeatedly describes salvation as a gift rather than a reward.

SCRIPTURE

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

— Ephesians 2:8–9

Notice the order.

We are not saved because we work.

We work and grow because we have been saved.

Good works are the fruit of salvation.

They are never the price of admission.

This truth has brought peace to countless believers who spent years wondering whether they had done enough to earn God's acceptance.

The cross reminds us that Jesus did not leave His work half finished.

He did not make salvation merely possible and then leave the rest for us to complete.

He finished the work the Father gave Him to do.

That does not mean Christians never struggle with sin.

It does not mean obedience is unimportant.

It does mean that our confidence rests in the Savior's finished work rather than our imperfect performance.

The cross is not the end of the story.

Three days later, something happened that would forever prove Jesus' victory over sin and death.

The tomb was empty.

Part D

If the story ended at the cross, Christianity would simply be the story of a good man who died for what He believed.

But the story didn't end there.

Jesus Himself had repeatedly told His disciples that He would be killed and that He would rise again on the third day.

At the time, they didn't understand what He meant.

When Jesus died, His followers were devastated.

The One they believed to be the Messiah had been crucified.

Their hopes seemed buried with Him.

His body was placed in a tomb.

A large stone was rolled across the entrance.

Roman guards were stationed outside.

From every human perspective, the story was over.

But God was not finished.

The cross accomplished exactly what Jesus came to do.

The resurrection would prove that His sacrifice had been accepted and that death itself had been conquered.

The apostle Paul later explained why the resurrection is so essential to the Christian faith.

SCRIPTURE

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”

— 1 Corinthians 15:17

Think about that for a moment.
 Christianity does not rest on inspiring teachings alone.
 It does not stand merely because Jesus performed miracles.
 It stands or falls on one historical event.
 Did Jesus rise from the dead?
 If He remained in the tomb, then death won.
 Sin won.
 Hope was lost.
 But if the tomb was empty...
 If Jesus truly rose from the dead...
 Then everything He said about Himself was vindicated.
 His victory over sin was real.
 His promise of eternal life can be trusted.
 And His invitation to follow Him is unlike any other invitation the world has ever known.
 The resurrection is not an optional part of the Christian message.
 It is the proof that the work Jesus declared “finished” on the cross was accepted by the Father.
 The cross purchased our redemption.
 The empty tomb proclaimed Christ’s victory.
 So the next question becomes one that every honest seeker should ask:
 Did Jesus really rise from the dead?
 That is where our journey continues.

CHAPTER 8

Did Jesus Really Rise From the Dead?

Everything Christianity teaches rests on one historical event.
 The resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 Think about that for a moment.
 If Jesus remained in the tomb, then His followers were mistaken.
 His promises cannot be trusted.
 His victory over sin and death never happened.
 The apostle Paul understood this better than anyone.
 He wrote that if Christ had not been raised, the Christian faith would be empty.
 Christianity does not ask people to believe in a myth or a legend.
 It asks them to consider an event that the earliest Christians proclaimed had happened in history.
 That is a bold claim.
 And bold claims deserve careful examination.
 After Jesus died, His disciples were not expecting a resurrection.
 They were frightened.
 Confused.
 Discouraged.
 The One they believed to be the Messiah had been crucified.

They hid behind locked doors, fearing they would be next.

From a human perspective, the movement Jesus started appeared to be over.

Then something changed.

The very people who had been hiding suddenly began publicly proclaiming that Jesus was alive.

What happened?

The New Testament records that Jesus appeared to many people after His resurrection.

He did not appear only to one individual.

He appeared to His disciples.

He appeared to women who came to the tomb.

He appeared to two followers on the road to Emmaus.

He even appeared to a large group at one time.

SCRIPTURE

“Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.”

— 1 Corinthians 15:6

Why is that statement important?

Because Paul wasn't writing hundreds of years later.

He was writing within the lifetime of many eyewitnesses.

In effect, he was saying,

“There are still people alive who saw Him. Ask them.”

That is a remarkable claim.

Something else deserves our attention.

Nearly all of Jesus' disciples suffered persecution because they refused to deny what they had seen.

People may die for something they sincerely believe to be true.

But people rarely choose suffering and death for something they know is a lie.

The disciples consistently testified that they had seen the risen Christ.

They were beaten.

Imprisoned.

Persecuted.

Yet they continued proclaiming the same message:

Jesus is alive.

Of course, the resurrection cannot be proven in the same way that a mathematical equation can be proven.

Like every historical event, it must be examined by weighing the testimony, the evidence, and the historical records.

Each person must decide what they believe.

But one thing is certain.

Without the resurrection, Christianity has no foundation.

With the resurrection, everything changes.

The empty tomb means death was defeated.

Sin no longer has the final word.

Hope is no longer wishful thinking.

Eternal life becomes a promise grounded in the victory of Jesus Christ.

But this leads to another question.

If Jesus accomplished all of this...

How does His finished work become ours?

How does a person receive the gift of salvation?

That is where we turn next.

CHAPTER 9

How Is a Person Saved?

After everything we've explored, one question remains.

If Jesus lived the perfect life we could never live...

If He died for our sins...

If He rose from the dead...

How does His finished work become ours?

Do we earn it?

Do we deserve it?

Do we receive it by being good enough?

People have wrestled with these questions for centuries.

The good news is that the Bible gives a clear answer.

One day, a jailer asked the apostle Paul the most important question anyone can ask.

SCRIPTURE

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.'"

— Acts 16:30–31

Notice what the jailer asked.

He didn't ask how to become more religious.

He didn't ask how to improve his life.

He asked how to be saved.

Paul's answer is remarkably simple.

Believe in the Lord Jesus.

That simplicity surprises many people.

After all, haven't we always been told that salvation is complicated?

That we have to become good enough?

That we have to clean ourselves up before God will accept us?

The Bible tells a different story.

Salvation is not something we achieve.

It is something we receive.

SCRIPTURE

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

— Ephesians 2:8–9

Think about the word gift.

A gift cannot be earned.

If you work for it, it is no longer a gift.

If you pay for it, it is no longer freely given.

The reason salvation is called God's gift is because Jesus has already paid the price.

That does not make faith unimportant.

Faith is how we receive what Christ has already accomplished.

Imagine someone pays off a debt that you could never repay.

The payment has been made.

But you still have to accept what has been done for you.

The same is true with salvation.

Jesus accomplished everything necessary through His death and resurrection.

The invitation is now extended to every person.

Will you trust Him?

Will you receive the gift He offers?

That naturally leads to another question that has divided Christians for generations.

If salvation is received by faith, what role does repentance play?

That is the question we will examine next.

Part B

If salvation is received by faith, another question naturally follows.

What is repentance?

Few words have created more confusion among Christians than this one.

Ask ten believers to define repentance, and you may receive ten different answers.

Some say it means feeling sorry for your sins.

Others say it means turning from every sin before God will save you.

Some define it as changing your behavior.

Others describe it as a complete change of mind that results in a changed life.

So what does the Bible actually say?

The New Testament repeatedly calls people to repent.

There is no question that repentance is important.

The question is what the Bible means by the word.

The Greek word most often translated “repent” literally carries the idea of a change of mind.

It describes a change in the way a person thinks that results in a change of direction.

When a person encounters Jesus Christ, they no longer see God, themselves, sin, or salvation the same way.

Their thinking changes.

And because their thinking changes, their lives begin to change as well.

Repentance is not merely feeling guilty.

Many people feel guilty without ever turning to Christ.

Neither is repentance simply trying harder to become a better person.

If changing our behavior could save us, Jesus would not have needed to die.

Instead, biblical repentance and biblical faith are inseparable.

When someone truly believes the gospel, their heart and mind are changed by the truth of who Jesus is.

That change begins to transform the way they live.

The Bible never presents repentance as a way to earn salvation.

Rather, it is part of the response to God’s grace.

It is turning away from trusting ourselves and turning toward Jesus Christ.

That does not mean a Christian instantly becomes perfect.

Every believer continues to grow.

There will be victories.

There will also be struggles.

The Christian life is not about achieving sinless perfection overnight.

It is about following the One who has already accomplished our salvation.

This raises another important question.

If Christians still struggle with sin after coming to faith, does that mean they were never truly saved?

That question has divided sincere believers for generations.

It deserves a careful, biblical answer.

Part C

One of the greatest fears many Christians carry is this:

“If I’m truly saved, why do I still struggle with sin?”

It’s an honest question.

Many sincere believers have wondered whether their ongoing struggles mean they were never really saved.

The Bible gives a surprisingly honest answer.

Even the apostle Paul described an intense struggle between his desire to obey God and the reality of living in a fallen body.

SCRIPTURE

“For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.”

— Romans 7:19

Think about that for a moment.

This is the apostle Paul writing.

The same man who planted churches, preached the gospel, and wrote much of the New Testament openly admitted that he experienced an ongoing struggle.

That should encourage us.

The Christian life is not a life without conflict.

It is a life with a new conflict.

Before coming to Christ, many people live without giving much thought to pleasing God.

After trusting Christ, the Holy Spirit begins working within us.

New desires are born.

We begin loving what God loves and grieving over the things that once seemed normal.

The struggle itself is often evidence that something has changed.

The Bible never teaches that Christians become instantly sinless.

Instead, it teaches that we are growing.

Learning.

Being transformed day by day into the likeness of Christ.

SCRIPTURE

“And we all... are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”

— 2 Corinthians 3:18

Growth takes time.

Just as a newborn child does not become a mature adult overnight, a new believer does not instantly reach spiritual maturity.

God is patient with His children.

He continues His work in them throughout their lives.

This does not give us permission to ignore sin.

Rather, it reminds us that the Christian life is a journey of continual growth, dependence upon Christ, and increasing obedience.

The question is not whether a Christian will ever struggle.

The question is where that struggle leads.

Part D

When Christians sin, they do not stop being God’s children.

But neither do they become comfortable living in sin.

The Holy Spirit lovingly convicts believers.

He draws us back to Christ.

He leads us to confession, repentance, and renewed fellowship with God.

SCRIPTURE

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

— 1 John 1:9

Notice that John was writing to believers.

He expected Christians to confess their sins because Christians still fail.

At the same time, John also warned against treating sin lightly.

God’s grace is never a license to continue living however we please.

A heart that has truly trusted Christ begins to desire what pleases Him.

That desire may grow slowly.

There may be setbacks.

There may be seasons of struggle.

But the direction of a believer’s life begins to change because Christ has changed them from the inside out.

This brings us to one of the most debated questions in Christianity.

What about passages that warn about willful sin, falling away, or continuing in sin?

Do they teach that a Christian can lose salvation?

Or are they addressing something else?

Sincere Christians have wrestled with these passages for centuries.

Rather than avoiding them, we will examine them carefully in the next chapter, allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.

Our goal is not to defend a tradition.

Our goal is to understand what God’s Word actually teaches.

CHAPTER 10

What About Willful Sin, Unrepentant Sin, and Falling Away?

If you’ve been a Christian for any length of time, you’ve probably encountered verses that can be unsettling.

Perhaps you’ve read about willful sin in Hebrews.

Or you’ve wondered about the “sin leading to death.”

Maybe you’ve heard someone say,

“If you commit one willful sin after you’re saved, you’ve lost your salvation.”

Others have been told,

“If you don’t repent of every sin before you die, you cannot enter heaven.”

Still others have concluded that a Christian can live however they please because grace covers everything.

These are not small questions.

They affect how people view God, salvation, assurance, and the Christian life itself.

Sadly, these passages have often produced fear instead of confidence and confusion instead of clarity.

So how should we approach them?

The first step is to remember something we’ve emphasized throughout this guide.

Scripture interprets Scripture.

We should never build an entire doctrine on one difficult passage while ignoring dozens of passages that speak clearly about the same subject.

Instead, we must examine each passage in its context and allow the whole counsel of Scripture to guide our understanding.

As we do that, we will discover something encouraging.

The Bible never contradicts itself.

When two passages appear to be in tension, it is usually because we have not yet understood one of them in its proper context.

That is the journey we are about to take.

We are not trying to defend a denomination.

We are not trying to prove a theological system.

Our goal is the same as it has been from the beginning of this guide.

To discover what God's Word actually teaches.

Let's begin with one of the passages that has troubled more Christians than perhaps any other.

Hebrews chapter 10.

Part 2 – What Does Hebrews 10 Really Mean by “Willfully Sinning”?

Few passages have caused more fear among Christians than these words from Hebrews.

Many people have read them and wondered:

“Did I commit a willful sin?”

“Have I lost my salvation?”

“Have I gone too far for God to forgive me?”

Those are serious questions.

Before we answer them, let's do something that is often skipped.

Let's read the passage in its context instead of focusing on one verse by itself.

SCRIPTURE

“For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment...”

— Hebrews 10:26–27

At first glance, these verses can sound frightening.

Some Christians understand this passage to teach that a believer who deliberately sins after coming to Christ can lose salvation.

Others understand it differently, seeing it as a warning addressed to people who have heard the gospel but are in danger of rejecting Christ and returning to the old sacrificial system rather than trusting in His once-for-all sacrifice.

So how do we decide?

The first step is to ask a simple question.

Who was the letter written to?

The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish people who were under tremendous pressure.

Many had believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Because of that faith, they faced persecution, rejection, and suffering.

Some were tempted to abandon Christ and return to the sacrifices offered under the Law of Moses because it seemed safer and more acceptable.

Throughout the entire letter, the author keeps making the same point.

Jesus is greater.

Greater than the angels.

Greater than Moses.

Greater than the priesthood.

Greater than the sacrifices.

Again and again, the writer explains that Christ's sacrifice was offered once for all and is completely sufficient.

When we reach Hebrews 10:26, the immediate context is still about that very subject.

The warning is not isolated from the discussion.

It follows the author's repeated teaching that there is no sacrifice greater than the sacrifice of Christ.

If someone knowingly rejects the only sacrifice God has provided, there is nowhere else to turn.

There is no second Savior.

There is no greater sacrifice waiting to be offered.

That is why the warning is so serious.

The focus of the passage is not on a believer who stumbles, falls, or struggles with sin.

The focus is on the danger of turning away from the only sufficient sacrifice God has provided.

That raises another important question.

If Hebrews 10 is not teaching sinless perfection, how should we understand the many passages that acknowledge believers still struggle with sin?

To answer that, we need to compare Scripture with Scripture, beginning with Paul's own testimony in Romans 7.

Part 3 – Why Did Paul Still Struggle with Sin?

After reading the warning in Hebrews, many people begin asking another important question.

If Christians are expected to stop sinning completely, why did the apostle Paul describe his own struggle with sin?

This is one of the reasons it is so important to compare Scripture with Scripture.

The Bible does not contradict itself.

Instead, it gives us a complete picture when we read passages together.

Listen to Paul's own words.

SCRIPTURE

"For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."

— Romans 7:15

A few verses later, Paul writes,

SCRIPTURE

"For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing."

— Romans 7:19

These are remarkable statements.

Paul is not describing someone who loves sin.

He is describing someone who hates it.

There is a tremendous difference.

Before a person comes to Christ, they may sin without much concern.

After coming to Christ, the Holy Spirit begins changing the heart.

Sin that once seemed acceptable now brings conviction.

The struggle itself has changed.

Paul wasn't celebrating his failures.

He was grieving them.

That distinction is important.

The Christian life is not marked by perfection.

It is marked by a new direction.

Believers still stumble.

They still fail.

But they no longer see sin as a friend.

They increasingly see it as an enemy.

Paul's struggle did not cause him to lose hope.

Instead, it caused him to look away from himself and toward Christ.

After describing his battle, he cried out,

SCRIPTURE

"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

— Romans 7:24

Notice what Paul did not ask.

He did not say,

“How can I save myself?”

He asked,

“Who will deliver me?”

His confidence was never in his own ability to achieve perfection.

His confidence was in Jesus Christ.

The very next verses remind us where that confidence belongs.

SCRIPTURE

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

— Romans 8:1

That does not mean sin is unimportant.

It means our standing before God rests on Christ’s finished work rather than our flawless performance.

Christians are called to pursue holiness.

They are called to resist temptation.

They are called to grow in obedience.

But the Bible never teaches that acceptance before God depends on reaching sinless perfection in this life.

That brings us to another passage that has confused many believers.

The apostle John wrote,

“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning.”

What did John mean?

At first glance, it may seem to contradict what Paul wrote.

But when we examine John’s words carefully, we’ll discover that the two apostles are teaching the same truth from different perspectives.

Part 4 – What Did John Mean When He Said a Christian Does Not Keep on Sinning?

At first glance, John’s words can seem difficult to reconcile with what we have just read in Romans.

Paul openly admitted his struggle with sin.

Yet John wrote,

SCRIPTURE

“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.”

— 1 John 3:9 (ESV)

Some people read this verse and conclude that a genuine Christian will never commit another sin.

But if that were John’s meaning, we immediately run into another statement from the very same letter.

Earlier, John wrote,

SCRIPTURE

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

— 1 John 1:8

A few verses later he continue

SCRIPTURE

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

— 1 John 1:9

And then he adds,

SCRIPTURE

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

— 1 John 2:1

Notice the balance.

John encourages believers not to sin.

At the same time, he recognizes that believers do sin and points them to Jesus as their Advocate.

So what does John mean in chapter 3?

Many Bible scholars understand John’s wording to describe a person’s ongoing pattern of life, not the absence of every individual act of sin.

John is contrasting two lifestyles.

One person is content to live in continual rebellion against God without conviction or repentance.

The other has been born of God and now has a new heart, new desires, and a new direction.

Christians are not sinless.

But neither are they comfortable making sin their way of life.

When they fail, the Holy Spirit convicts them.

They confess.

They grow.

They continue following Christ.

Paul describes the believer’s inner struggle.

John describes the believer’s new direction.

These are not contradictory pictures.

They are two sides of the same reality.

The Christian life is not measured by flawless perfection.

It is measured by a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, whose grace continues to transform us day by day.

This brings us to one final question.

If believers still struggle, yet God continues His work in them, how can we have confidence that we truly belong to Him?

That is where we turn next.

Part 5 – Seeing the Whole Picture

As we come to the end of this chapter, it is worth stepping back and looking at the bigger picture.

At first glance, passages like Hebrews 10, Romans 7, and 1 John 3 can seem difficult to reconcile.

But when we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, a consistent message begins to emerge.

The Bible never minimizes sin.

God takes sin seriously because it separates people from Him and damages every part of our lives.

He calls His children to pursue holiness, resist temptation, confess their sins, and grow in obedience.

At the same time, the Bible never teaches that a Christian’s acceptance before God depends on achieving sinless perfection in this life.

If that were true, no one could have confidence before God.

Instead, our confidence rests in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that Christ offered one perfect sacrifice for sins.

Paul reminds us that believers still experience a struggle with the flesh, yet there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

John reminds us that believers do not make sin their way of life, yet when they do sin, they have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous.

These are not competing messages.

They are different pieces of the same beautiful picture.

The Christian life is not a choice between grace and holiness.

It is a life where grace produces holiness.

We do not obey God in order to become His children.

We obey because, through faith in Christ, we already belong to Him.

We do not confess our sins because we fear God will stop loving us every time we fail.

We confess because our relationship with Him is real, and we desire to walk in close fellowship with the One who has already forgiven us.

This truth changes everything.

Instead of living in constant fear, wondering whether every failure has separated us from God, we can live with confidence in Christ while continuing to grow in obedience.

Our eyes remain fixed, not on our own imperfect performance, but on the perfect Savior who loved us and gave Himself for us.

The more we understand His grace, the more we desire to honor Him with our lives.

That leads us to one final question that every believer eventually asks:

Can I know for certain that I am saved?

The Bible's answer is one of the most encouraging truths in all of Scripture.

That is where we turn next.

CHAPTER 11

Can I Know That I Am Saved?

Have you ever wondered whether you are really saved?

Perhaps you've asked yourself questions like these:

"What if my faith isn't strong enough?"

"What if I didn't repent enough?"

"What if I commit another sin?"

"How can I know that God has truly forgiven me?"

If you've ever struggled with questions like these, you are not alone.

Many sincere Christians live with constant uncertainty.

They love Jesus.

They want to obey Him.

Yet they spend their lives wondering whether they have done enough.

The good news is that God does not want His children living in continual fear.

He wants them to know Him.

He wants them to trust His promises.

And He wants them to have confidence in what Christ accomplished on the cross.

Near the end of his first letter, the apostle John explained exactly why he wrote.

SCRIPTURE

"I write these things 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

Notice what John did not say.

He did not write so believers would constantly wonder whether they were saved.

He did not write so they would spend every day questioning God's love for them.

He wrote so that those who believe in Jesus Christ may know they have eternal life.

That little word—know—is one of the most comforting words in the entire New Testament.

God does not offer His children a life of constant uncertainty.
 He offers them assurance based on His promises.
 Our confidence is not found in having a perfect week.
 It is not found in never struggling.
 It is not found in remembering every sin we have ever committed.
 Our confidence is found in Jesus Christ.
 The One who lived the perfect life we could never live.
 The One who died the death we deserved.
 The One who rose again.
 The One who promised that everyone who believes in Him has eternal life.
 That brings us to one of the most important questions in this entire guide.
 Where should our assurance rest?
 Should it rest in our performance...
 Or should it rest in God's promises?
 That is where we turn next.

Part 3 – Why Does the Bible Contain Warning Passages?

At this point, some readers may be wondering,
 "If salvation is God's gift and believers can have assurance, why does the Bible contain so many warnings?"
 That is an important question.
 The warnings in Scripture are not mistakes.
 They are not contradictions.
 They are part of the way God teaches, protects, and matures His people.
 Think of a loving parent teaching a child.
 A parent warns a child not to run into a busy street.
 The warning is real.
 The danger is real.
 But the purpose of the warning is protection, not fear.
 In a similar way, the Bible warns believers about the seriousness of sin, the danger of drifting from Christ, and the importance of persevering in faith.
 These warnings call us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.
 They remind us not to become spiritually careless or self-confident.
 The New Testament repeatedly encourages believers to continue trusting Christ, growing in obedience, and encouraging one another.
 Those commands are not given because God is looking for reasons to reject His children.
 They are given because God desires His children to grow in a healthy relationship with Him.
 The Christian life is not a single moment of faith followed by a lifetime of indifference.
 It is a lifelong walk with the Savior.
 As we continue walking with Him, we learn more about His character, His grace, and His will for our lives.
 The warnings of Scripture help keep us awake, alert, and dependent upon Him.
 They remind us that following Jesus is not merely agreeing with certain facts.
 It is a living relationship built on faith.
 At the same time, we must never allow the warning passages to erase the many promises God has given to those who trust in Christ.
 The same Bible that warns us to remain faithful also assures us that God is faithful.
 He does not abandon His children.

He continues the work He has begun in them.

SCRIPTURE

"And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

— Philippians 1:6

What an encouraging promise.

Our hope is not that we are strong enough to hold on to God.

Our hope is that God is faithful enough to hold on to us.

That does not make us passive.

It inspires us to love Him, trust Him, and continue following Him every day.

As we grow in our understanding of God's grace, fear gradually gives way to confidence.

Not confidence in ourselves.

Confidence in Jesus Christ.

The final question, then, is not whether God keeps His promises.

The final question is this:

What should the Christian life look like after we have been saved?

That is where we turn next.

Part 4 – What If I Still Have Doubts?

Even after reading God's promises, some believers quietly ask,

"What if I'm the exception?"

"What if my faith isn't strong enough?"

"What if I don't feel saved?"

Those questions are more common than many people realize.

The first thing to remember is that our assurance is not based on our feelings.

Our emotions change.

Some days we feel close to God.

Other days we may feel discouraged, distant, or overwhelmed.

God's promises do not change when our emotions do.

Think about the disciples.

There were times they demonstrated remarkable faith.

There were also times they doubted, became afraid, misunderstood Jesus, and even fled when He was arrested.

Yet Jesus did not abandon them.

He patiently continued teaching, correcting, restoring, and strengthening them.

The Christian life is not about never having questions.

It is about bringing those questions to the One who has the answers.

When doubts arise, the answer is not to look inward endlessly.

The answer is to look back to Christ.

Remember His promises.

Remember the cross.

Remember the empty tomb.

Remember that your salvation rests on what Jesus accomplished, not on the strength of your emotions.

The Bible invites us to place our confidence in God's faithfulness.

SCRIPTURE

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself."

— 2 Timothy 2:13

This does not mean our faith is unimportant.

It means our confidence ultimately rests in the character of God.

He is truthful.

He is faithful.

He keeps every promise He has made.

As you continue growing in your relationship with Christ, there will be days of great joy and days of struggle.

There may even be seasons when questions arise.

Do not let those moments drive you away from God.

Let them drive you toward Him.

Read His Word.

Pray honestly.

Spend time with other believers.

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

The more you know Him, the more your confidence will rest, not in yourself, but in His unfailing love and His finished work.

With that assurance firmly in place, we are ready to ask one final practical question.

If I have been saved by grace through faith, how should I live each day as a follower of Jesus?

Part 5 – How Should I Live Now?

If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, your life has been changed forever.

You are not only forgiven—you are made new.

But what does that mean for your everyday life?

The Christian life is not about trying to earn God’s approval.

It is about living in response to the grace you have already received.

Because you are saved, you now have a new identity.

You are a child of God.

You are loved, accepted, and secure in Him.

From that identity flows a new way of living.

Jesus calls His followers to walk with Him daily.

This includes growing in your understanding of God’s Word, spending time in prayer, and learning to trust Him in every area of life.

It also means turning away from sin—not to earn salvation, but because your heart is being transformed.

As you grow, you will begin to see changes in your desires, your attitudes, and your actions.

This process is often gradual.

There will be victories and setbacks.

But God is at work in you.

SCRIPTURE

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

— 2 Corinthians 5:17

Living as a follower of Jesus also means loving others.

Jesus taught that the greatest commandments are to love God and to love people.

This love is not always easy, but it is a reflection of the love God has shown you.

You are also called to be part of a community of believers.

The Christian life was never meant to be lived alone.

Encouragement, accountability, and shared growth are essential parts of your journey.

Finally, remember that your purpose now includes pointing others to Christ.

Your life, your words, and your actions can help others see the hope found in Him.

You do not have to be perfect.

You simply need to be faithful.

As you walk with Jesus day by day, trust that He will continue shaping you into the person He created you to be.

And remember—this journey is not about striving to become someone new on your own.

It is about allowing God to work in you and through you, one step at a time.

CHAPTER 12

Living the Christian Life

Receiving Jesus Christ is not the end of the journey.

It is the beginning.

From the moment you place your faith in Christ, you begin a lifelong relationship with the God who created you and loves you.

Christianity is not merely about believing certain facts.

It is about knowing a Person.

Just as every healthy relationship grows through communication, trust, and time together, your relationship with God grows as you spend time with Him.

That growth does not earn His love.

It is the result of already being loved.

Jesus described this relationship using the picture of a vine and its branches.

SCRIPTURE

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

— John 15:4

Notice what Jesus emphasized.

He did not tell His followers to produce fruit through their own effort.

He told them to remain connected to Him.

Fruit is the natural result of abiding.

The same is true in the Christian life.

As you grow closer to Christ, your thoughts, desires, attitudes, and actions begin to change.

This transformation is often gradual.

Some changes happen quickly.

Others may take years.

God is patient with His children.

One of the greatest ways we grow is by reading God’s Word.

The Bible is more than an ancient collection of books.

It is God’s revelation of Himself.

It teaches us who He is, who we are, and how He desires us to live.

The more we understand His Word, the more we recognize His voice and His character.

Prayer is another essential part of the Christian life.

Prayer is not simply asking God for things.

It is a conversation with your Heavenly Father.

It is a time to worship Him, thank Him, confess your sins, seek His wisdom, and place your burdens into His hands.

God invites His children to come to Him with confidence because of what Jesus has accomplished.

The Christian life was never meant to be lived alone.

God designed believers to encourage one another, worship together, learn together, and serve together.

No church is perfect because no group of people is perfect.

Yet God often uses other believers to strengthen our faith, encourage us during difficult seasons, and help us continue growing.

As you mature in Christ, you will also discover that God has given you opportunities to serve others.

Every act of kindness.

Every encouraging word.

Every opportunity to share the hope of the gospel.

Every expression of Christ's love becomes part of your testimony.

You do not have to know everything.

You do not have to have all the answers.

Simply tell others what Jesus has done in your life and point them to Him.

There will be times when you stumble.

There will be seasons when you struggle.

Do not allow failure to convince you that God has abandoned you.

Run back to Him.

Confess your sins.

Receive His forgiveness.

Continue walking with Him.

The Christian life is not measured by never falling.

It is measured by continually looking to Christ and allowing Him to lift you up again.

As the years pass, you will discover that Christianity is not about trying harder to earn God's acceptance.

It is about learning to trust the One who has already accepted you through Jesus Christ.

The closer you walk with Him, the more you will experience His peace, His joy, His wisdom, and His transforming grace.

The greatest invitation in history is not simply to believe certain truths.

It is to know the Savior who loved you enough to give His life for you.

That brings us to the final chapter of this guide.

Now that we have explored what Christianity is, there is only one question remaining.

What will you do with Jesus?

CHAPTER 13

What Will You Do with Jesus?

We have come to the end of this guide.

Together, we have taken a journey that began in a perfect garden.

We watched humanity's relationship with God broken by sin.

We saw God's promise that a Savior would come.

We followed that promise through the Old Testament.

We discovered that Jesus was not an afterthought or God's backup plan.

He was the fulfillment of the promise God had been making from the very beginning.

We examined who Jesus claimed to be.

We explored why He died on the cross.

We celebrated His resurrection.

We learned that salvation is a gift of God's grace, received through faith in Jesus Christ.

We examined difficult passages that have confused many Christians and discovered that God's Word presents a consistent message of grace, truth, holiness, and hope.

Finally, we learned that the Christian life is not about trying to earn God's acceptance.

It is about walking each day with the One who has already demonstrated His love for us.

Now, only one question remains.

What will you do with Jesus?

No one else can answer that question for you.

Not your parents.

Not your pastor.

Not your church.

Not your friends.

One day, every person will stand before God.

On that day, our greatest accomplishment will not be our career, our wealth, our popularity, or even our religious activities.

The question will be simple.

What did you do with Jesus Christ?

Jesus extends the same invitation today that He extended two thousand years ago.

He invites weary people to come to Him.

He invites sinners to receive forgiveness.

He invites the broken to find healing.

He invites those carrying guilt to discover grace.

He invites those searching for purpose to find life in Him.

Christianity is not an invitation to become perfect before God will love you.

It is an invitation to trust the One who loved you while you were still a sinner.

SCRIPTURE

“But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

— Romans 5:8

If you have never placed your trust in Jesus Christ, you can do so today.

Salvation is not earned through good works.

It is not purchased by religious effort.

It is received by placing your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

If you already know Him, continue walking with Him.

Keep learning.

Keep growing.

Keep loving others.

Keep extending the same grace that God has extended to you.

There will be moments of great joy.

There will also be moments of struggle.

When those difficult days come, remember where your hope is found.

Not in your own strength.

Not in your own goodness.

But in Jesus Christ.

The One who promised,

SCRIPTURE

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

— Matthew 28:20

Our prayer is that this guide has helped you see the beauty of the gospel more clearly.

If it has encouraged you, challenged you, or answered questions you have carried for years, then our work has been worthwhile.

But this guide was never meant to replace the Bible.
Its purpose is to point you to it.
Open God's Word.
Read it for yourself.
Ask questions.
Seek truth with humility.
Most importantly, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus Christ.
He is the center of the Bible.
He is the center of the gospel.
He is the hope of the world.
And He is the Savior who still changes lives today.
Thank you for taking this journey with us.
May God richly bless you as you continue seeking Him.
"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."
Philippians 4:23

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