



Life's Most Important Decision

The most important decision you will ever make concerns who you are. That personal focus does not deal with gender, citizenship, politics, abilities, job, health, wealth, marital status, accomplishments, ethnic group, IQ, or any organizational or religious affiliation. This decision concerns your life now but, of far greater significance, determines your eternal destiny.

The most important decision you will ever make involves your response to Jesus Christ. Plainly speaking, you will either reject Him and face God's judgment, or spiritually embrace Jesus and gain eternal life. According to the Bible, there is no middle ground as 1 John 5:11-12 says, "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

The starting point for your critical decision about Jesus Christ is to evaluate your life according to God's standard with reference to sin (doing wrong, missing the mark) and righteousness (perfection in thoughts, words, and actions). An accurate evaluation will reveal that each of us is imperfect and all of us are prone to wrongdoing. The Bible confirms that conclusion in Ecclesiastes 7:20 and Romans 3:23.

Ecclesiastes 7:20, Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

Romans 3:23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

If you acknowledge your tendency to sin, what will you do about it? Perhaps you will avoid the issue entirely. On the other hand, you may give yourself the benefit of doubt with regard to right and wrong by grading on a curve. You might compare yourself to others—especially to those whose sins seem worse than yours—and, as a result, you can score well on a self-determined standard of what is good or bad. If you grade yourself on a curve, you may feel better, but you still fail to address personal shortcomings.

2 Corinthians 10:12, Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

If we lack understanding about our own sins, we often overlook or minimize sin's potential consequences, including one that is a real killer.

Romans 5:12, Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Romans 6:23a, For the wages of sin is death ...

James 1:14-15, But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

The Bible warns us that the major consequence of sin is death. This death can be relational, emotional, physical or spiritual and, in some situations, can encompass all of these aspects. On the other hand, God graciously offers forgiveness of sin and gives us eternal life.

If you are aware of your sins, if you want to avoid sin's killer consequence, and if you desire a relationship with God, then you probably realize that your sins must be addressed and dealt with in some manner. In coming to grips with this issue, you may try to offset your sins with good works, erroneously believing that God accepts good works to counter personal sinfulness. That is a typical assumption. Even most religions emphasize the necessity of good deeds to appease God. That perspective, however, denies biblical truth.

Romans 3:20, For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Galatians 2:16, nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law;

since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

Ephesians 2:8-9, For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

As the previous verses indicate, it is impossible for you to be sinless, and it is also impossible for you to do enough good deeds for God to overlook your sins. To deliver you out of the quagmire of this reality, God provides Good News that is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. This Good News is foundational for you to make the most important decision of your life.

GOD'S GOOD NEWS FOCUSES ON ATONEMENT FOR SIN

According to God's Word, your sinfulness is the problem, and the answer is sacrificial blood that meets God's standard for atonement (forgiveness of sin).

Hebrews 9:22, Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

You may ask, "Why is sacrificial blood necessary for God to forgive my sins?" This pattern of redemptive sacrifice—the death of an innocent substitute to atone for the guilty—was intimated near the dawn of history when God provided coats of skin for the nakedness of Adam and Eve prior to banishing them from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:21).

Genesis 3:21, And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Centuries later, under the Old Testament economy, God ordained that the blood of sacrificial animals would provide forgiveness for the sins of those bringing sacrificial offerings.

Leviticus 17:11, For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

These sacrifices, however, had to be repeated continually because the people desiring God's forgiveness continued to sin.

Hebrews 10:1-4, For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?³ But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Out of His love and grace, God provided the "Lamb of God" (the Lord Jesus Christ) who freely offered His life and shed blood as the necessary sacrifice for sins. Almost 2,000 years ago, John the Baptist recognized Jesus as the Lamb of God.

John 1:29, The next day he (*John the Baptist*) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (*explanation added*)

After living a sinless life, Jesus was crucified. When He died on the cross, the price of redemption (forgiveness of sin) was fully paid for all time.

Hebrews 9:25-26, Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he (*Jesus*) has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (*explanation added*)

Hebrews 10:10-14, And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

1 Peter 2:22-25, He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Peter 3:18, For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

The only sacrificial blood that meets God's standard to forgive your sins and redeem you from sin's penalty is the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:23-25, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom *God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith*. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. *[Emphasis added]*

Romans 5:9, Since, therefore, *we have now been justified by his blood*, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. *[Emphasis added]*

Colossians 1:18-20, And he [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preminent.¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, *making peace by the blood of his cross*. *[Emphasis added]*

The mind-boggling aspect of God's merciful forgiveness is that Jesus willingly gave His life and shed His blood to forgive your sin when you were still a sinner. He did this because of His abounding love.

John 3:16-17, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Romans 5:6 & 8, For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly ...⁸ but God shows his love for us in that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*. *[Emphasis added]*

Colossians 1:13-14, He [God the Father] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,¹⁴ *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*. *[Emphasis added]*

1 John 2:2, He is the propitiation [atonement] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

God accepted and approved the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ by raising Him from the dead. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 1:4 that Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul also stated that this resurrection power was of direct benefit to believers in Christ (Ephesians 1:19-20).

Ephesians 1:19-20, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places

YOUR RESPONSE TO THE GOOD NEWS ... THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION OF YOUR LIFE

As a beginning point, all of us deserve death because of our sins, but God freely gives us eternal life as Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The first verse in this study (1 John 5:11-12) said that eternal life is available in God's Son, Jesus.

1 John 5:11-12, And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

The Bible states that there is no access to God and no salvation except through the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 14:6, Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Acts 4:12, And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

God promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. You can receive Jesus into your life by believing that He died in your place as the ultimate sacrifice for your sins.

John 1:12, But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

John 5:24, Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

John 20:30-31, Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book [the Gospel of John]; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Acts 16:31, And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Romans 10:9-10, because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

God’s gift of salvation—forgiveness of sins with the associated promise of eternal life—can be for you. You can receive it through faith. This gift is provided out of the matchless grace and boundless love of God Almighty on your behalf.

Ephesians 2:8-9, For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1 John 4:10, In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

When you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has provided forgiveness of your sins by His sacrificial death, you may want to thank God for His love and salvation on your behalf. There is no specifically worded prayer that guarantees forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Believing in Christ is a matter of belief, not a matter of a verbal statement. You may, however, want to thank God for sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die in your place and give you eternal life. The following is an example of such a prayer of thankfulness.

“I thank you God for your grace and mercy in helping me understand that my sins separated me from you. I thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life through the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me to grow in my understanding of your love and help me to depend on your strength to live according to your truth revealed in the Bible.”

WHEN YOU BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR SALVATION, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN AND YOU RECEIVE THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE. YOU ARE THE RECIPIENT OF MANY OTHER SUPERNATURAL BENEFITS AS WELL, SOME OF WHICH ARE LISTED BELOW.

When you believe in Christ, God’s righteousness is accounted to you.

Romans 3:21-22, But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

2 Corinthians 5:21, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

When you believe in Christ, God justifies you (“just as if you never sinned”) and promises to complete the work He has begun in you.

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

Philippians 1:6, 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.

When you believe in Christ, you can rejoice because you are no longer God’s enemy under His wrath, but instead, you are reconciled to Him through Jesus.

Romans 5:9-11, Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

When you believe in Christ, you are a new creation whom God entrusts with the ministry of reconciliation (telling others about the importance of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ).

2 Corinthians 5:17-19, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

When you believe in Christ, God transfers you from spiritual darkness into the kingdom of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:13-14, He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

When you believe in Christ, God's Spirit is within you to teach you God's truths, to strengthen you, and to help develop Christ-like character in your life.

John 14:26, But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Romans 8:9 & 11, You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him ... If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Galatians 5:16-23, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

When you believe in Christ, you have the Bible to help you in every aspect of life. As you obey God's Word, you will mature spiritually and be equipped to complete the good works that God has prepared for you to do.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Ephesians 2:10, For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

When you believe in Christ, you are promised the abiding presence of Jesus.

Matthew 28:20b, ... And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

When you believe in Christ, you are assured that everything in life can be used by God to develop Christ-likeness in your life.

Romans 8:28-29, And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

When you believe in Christ, God promises that you can be more than a conqueror since you cannot be separated from the love of Christ. He also promises that He will not allow any temptations in your life that are more than you can bear.

Romans 8:35-37, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

1 Corinthians 10:13, No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

When you believe in Christ, you can understand and experience the fact that God uses trials as opportunities for spiritual growth.

James 1:2-4, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

When you believe in Christ, God gifts you with special abilities that are designed to build up others and complete various aspects of God's work in the world.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

When you believe in Christ, you are assured that you will meet Jesus when He returns and will be with Him and all other believers forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

There are many more promises that are yours when you believe in Christ. Receiving Christ into your life is but the first step toward enjoying the presence of God now in anticipation of being in God's presence forever with countless other believers in Christ.

WHAT IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR SALVATION AND ETERNAL LIFE?

In spite of the obvious benefits of having sins forgiven and gaining eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ, there are those who reject God's plan of salvation as revealed through His Son, Jesus. If someone rejects Christ, there are consequences in this life as well as the life to come. These consequences are described in God's Word.

A person who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will not be forgiven of sins, will not have eternal life, will remain spiritually dead in sin, will live by self-centered passions, and will remain under God's condemnation, facing His wrath.

John 3:18, Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

John 3:36, Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Ephesians 2:1-3, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

A person not believing in Christ rejects the things of God and is unable to understand biblical truth.

1 Corinthians 2:14, The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

A person not believing in Christ remains blind to God's truth and continues to follow Satan's plans through the destructive influences in the world.

2 Corinthians 4:4, In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Ephesians 2:1-2, And you [current believers in Christ] were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

A person not believing in Christ will remain hostile to God and His ways, will live only for self and associated matters of everyday life, and will be unable to please God.

Romans 8:5-8, For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's

law; indeed, it cannot.⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Hebrews 11:6, And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

There are many more consequences of not believing in Christ than are listed in this study. All such consequences, however, can be avoided by anyone who believes in Christ. If you have not made life's most important decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are encouraged to review the first part of this study in order to reconsider this eternally significant decision.