



Getting to Heaven

Ironically, the most important thing about this life is making sure you are well positioned to enjoy the next one! Curious too, that the hardest thing about getting this right is realizing that you need to. That step is called becoming a seeker, which is what you already are or you wouldn't be here. So relax, it is our loving God who has put it upon your heart to seek for His salvation. He will surely meet you and help you with that good desire!

The following four chapters are taken from our book, *Salvation Basics: For this Life and the Next*. The full version (17 chapters) is [available at Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B000APR004) in paperback or as an ebook.

Salvation Basics

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Chapter 5

HOW CAN I GET TO HEAVEN?

You are going to love this! You getting to heaven is a piece of cake. Jesus has literally done all of the hard work and the Holy Spirit will be doing all the heavy lifting. You don't even have to convince Father God to let you in—He wants you in!

Getting you saved so that you can get to heaven is your loving Father's idea from beginning to end. If the enemy had his way, you would never even realize that there is a heaven to go to (and a hell to avoid) and you would certainly never realize that you are going to need Jesus to save you in order to get you there.

God has been working to save you all throughout your life. You just may not be very aware of what He has been doing. So relax. You don't need to talk God into saving you or impress Him with how terrified you are of hell or how aghast you are at your own sinfulness. If you even have a glimmer of these realities, it is because He has been helping you to know the truth so that He can use your love of the truth (which He gives you) to save you.¹

All you need to do to get to heaven is to "get saved." This phrase has many true facets of meaning which you will hear from time to time, such as "entering into a life-saving relationship with Jesus Christ"; "giving your life to Christ"; "having your sins forgiven"; "turning from sin to live for God"; "inviting Jesus into your heart and life"; "believing in what Jesus has done for you at the cross"; and of course "being born again."

Don't let this confuse you! The main idea is that you are making an appeal to God to save you and you are choosing to put your belief and trust in what He says He has done for you through Jesus Christ. This act of faith is our side of it in terms of the part we play.²

On the Father's side there is a lot going on that we can't see and only partially may feel or sense. These will be covered more fully in the chapter "What Is the New Birth?" For now let's just say that what is involved in our salvation is nothing less than making us entirely new creations placed in a new spiritual environment (new for us) called the Kingdom of God.³ Truly, God does all of the hardest parts!

Preparing for the Steps

So far we have been talking about turning towards God to be saved so that we can get to heaven. This is the second half of salvation, so to speak, the longer and better half: Being saved *for God, for this life and for heaven*. The first part is being saved *from our sins and from hell*. The two go hand in hand. You absolutely cannot take sins with you into heaven. In fact they are guaranteed to take you in the opposite direction, if you cling to them down here!

These two sides of salvation are encompassed by a word which describes the necessary first step of the process: repentance. Repentance indicates a change of mind or a change of direction. It also carries a dual meaning: turning *from* sin and turning *towards* God. Repentance may include feeling sorry, but in essence it is a turning around. Imagine a traveler

feeling sorry he is going in the wrong direction, but continuing on anyway—that's not repentance. Repentance is turning completely around and going the right way!

Desiring to be saved means, therefore, that there is a genuine willingness to give up *anything* in your life in order to turn to God. No one can become free of sin without God's help, so a part of repentance and the salvation which follows it, is seeking God's love, wisdom and power for complete deliverance from known sins. Fortunately for all of us, the Lord doesn't say, "Get free of your sins, and then I'll see about saving you." Mercifully, He receives all who turn to Him, no matter what their condition. Even so, there has to be a resolute and real decision to turn from sin as part of the turning to God. Otherwise, we are still heading the wrong way on the road, but praying that God will miraculously make it end at the right destination anyway. That's not being real!

What do you have to part with immediately? You have to give up at least those portions of pride and fear that have been holding you back. These may seem like friends and wise counselors, but they are not. Pride and fear are our enemies! They have pushed and pulled us into countless dangers and wrong directions. All along they have been thwarting God's desire to draw us into His loving embrace.

Don't worry; you don't have to give up *all* your pride and fear—even if you could. Alas, there is simply too much of it to become free all at once. Genuine liberation from those two formidable foes will take God working with us step by step as we get to know Him better. So, be prepared: You will have pride and fear dogging your steps for some time to come. This isn't a final farewell to those false friends, but it is a good beginning.

You would also be wise to give up your claim to yourself, your right to do things "my way." I have known many people who have been saved without doing this, but they are a sad sight, really. Trying to go on living for that false god Self with Jesus on the inside is an idea that cannot fly! What works beautifully is learning how to live for Jesus, allowing Him to take the lead. He knows what's truly good for you and always has your best at heart.

Why not give yourself fully and freely to Jesus and be done with it? Your life won't be worth a plugged nickel to you if you die without giving it to the Lord for Him to save. And it isn't worth much even now if you try to live without Him. It will never bring you peace and fulfillment unless it is given *entirely* to God. Don't wait to get to heaven to finally live for Jesus. Don't wait until you die to start living the heavenly life. It is meant to be lived down here!

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33

The Steps to Heaven

The way up first leads us down. These steps to heaven begin by leading "downward" into the humility of total honesty, into facing unpleasant realities and into recognizing our moral failure.

Step 1. Realize that you *will* die one day. This first step to awakening is obvious once you have taken it. Nevertheless, countless multitudes live in apparent denial, thinking or hoping that they will never have to face the day of their own death. The truth is it won't kill you to look death square in the face—even your own inevitable death—nor will it rob you of your

zest for life. And if things go well, you will arrive at the Right Solution to the death dilemma and a sword that has been hanging over your head will have been removed. That's a good thing!⁴ So, let's turn and face the dread reality: Every life ends in death. Or does it?

Step 2. Realize that you want to go to heaven, not hell. Life doesn't "just end" with death; it goes on long we die. Most of us have a nagging suspicion that there are only two possible outcomes to life on earth: eternal life or eternal death; eternal reward or eternal punishment; heaven or hell. No one wants to burn. Sure, some crazy, hell-bent rock stars think it's going to be a party down under, but no sane person believes that.

Step 3. Realize you can't get to heaven by yourself. You are doing great so far! You have passed two fundamental measures of sanity: a) you know you are not god and that your life on earth will end one day and b) you have the good sense to realize that you need to strap on a golden parachute before your plane crashes and burns. But that thought of burning forces to the surface the most troubling questions of all: "Do I qualify for heaven? Will God let me in? Why would God let me in?"

You may try to answer these questions with bluff and bluster: "I'm really not so bad. I'm certainly not as bad as others are, or as I could have been." Ah, yes, you have been *trying* to be good, but have you been good enough? Your conscience will never let you say that you have fully measured up to even your own (low) standards, much less God's.⁵

Step 4. Realize that you need someone to save you. It may hurt to admit it, but none of us have the power to rise to heaven on our own, nor do any of us have the moral character to qualify us for being raised up there by God. But don't think that all is lost! There is Someone who wants to save us; Someone who has the power to get us there; Someone who can "bend the rules" so that we can be allowed to enter in. His Name is Jesus Christ and He is fully empowered and qualified by Father God to get anyone to heaven who wants to be saved by Him.⁶ So, what are you waiting for? Take the next step!

5. Step 5. Go to that "Someone" and get saved!

Prayer

Father, my eyes are open! I can see that I am going to die one day and I sure don't want to end up in the wrong place. But I have to admit that I don't have the moral purity and perfection to be assured of making it to heaven on my own. Thank You for seeing my need of Your saving help long before I did! Thank You for making me aware of an even greater need and desire—to know You. Please don't let me "sleep walk" through the rest of my life, missing out on the greatest gift life has to offer, a living, loving relationship with my God! Lead me now into the steps I need to take and the prayers I need to make. I am ready to give myself to You!

Chapter 6

HOW CAN I GET SAVED?

God has not made this hard for us! The only really difficult part is coming to the realization that we need God to save us. That usually means getting ourselves into terrible trouble or discovering what an undeniable moral failure we actually are. We may prolong the agony of self-discovery by thinking that we can fix our troubles (but we can't fix them all) and that we can fix our moral failures (but how can Self fix self?).⁷

We may hold out to our very last spiritual breath thinking "all is lost" or "I just can't give in," but if we are ready to reach out to God, the rest is easy. Jesus did the really hard part on the cross when He took the punishment our sins deserved. His "work" of dying for our sins is actually what gets us saved.⁸ God wants this more than you do! So, put your doubts and fears aside as well as you can and let's go forward. The Lord knows how to meet you along the way. Just allow yourself to follow these simple steps, study the scriptures and say the prayers:

Steps to Salvation

Step 1. Admit you need God. Have you realized that your life is not working out—that it is going in the wrong direction? Have you realized that you cannot "fix" you and that no one else and nothing else can either? Good! Then what you have been going through has been teaching you a life-saving lesson! Now, you are ready to begin your true life.⁹

Step 2. Turn to God. This means turning all the way around: Away from your wrong ways and towards God and His ways. You have been showing Him your back; it's time to show Him your face and to start seeking to look in His face.¹⁰

Step 3. Confess to God. This is telling the truth to God, hiding nothing. The problem isn't other people, or the world God made, or God and His ways. It's you and your ways! Let Him know how you have lived for yourself and not for Him. Be honest with Him about how that has hurt others and yourself. Then "confess" your need of His mercy and help.¹¹

Step 4. Believe in God. By an act of your will choose to believe that God really does love you, forgives you, and wants to save you through what Jesus has done for you at the cross. Now ask Jesus to come into your heart, into your life and to live His life in you. He is certain to do it! Be sure to say the prayers at the end of this chapter.

There Is So Much More

Now that you have prayed to be saved, you are! You may be feeling Christ's peace, fresh confidence or a sense of hope restored. You may have received a vision, felt His love or were touched by His presence. Or He may be asking you to simply take it on faith and just rest in that. The experience is different for everyone. The common element that dawns inside all of us is a faith-knowing, summed up in the phrase, "I know that I know that Jesus is alive!" and the willingness to declare that He is Lord.



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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. Romans 10:9

You will certainly want to "nail this down" by going to "How Can I Be Sure I'm Saved?" There is actually so much that has just taken place that it really needs a whole chapter to describe the birth that you have undergone ("What Is The New Birth?") and another to describe the life that you have now entered ("What Are My First Steps?"). Please keep reading!

Prayers

Father, please forgive me for all the ways in which I have lived for myself, hurt others, and turned my back on You. I confess and repent of all these sins. Thank You for loving me and making a way for my sins to be forgiven through Jesus.

Jesus, please come into my heart, into my life and live Your life in me. I surrender myself to You, body, soul and spirit. Grant me an assurance of my eventual entry into heaven won for me by Your death and resurrection. Help me by Your Word and Holy Spirit to trust and follow You step by step into the new life here on earth that You have also promised can be mine.

Holy Spirit, please come and heal my broken heart of all the hurt that my own sins and those of others have caused. Show me and tell me Your truth in ways that I can receive and understand. Help me fight to remain loyal to the One who laid down His life for me by laying down my "old life" and my wrong ways for Him!

Chapter 12

HOW CAN I BE SURE I'M SAVED?

What a tragedy it would be if we were to go through all of our life tormented by a secret fear that maybe we aren't really saved. The truth is no one ever deserves to be saved. No one ever lives fully worthy of salvation. Everyone has to be saved by the Blood of Jesus and the mercy and grace of God. Period.

Therefore no one can truly take any confidence about their salvation if they keep looking to themselves and checking to see how they are doing as a sign of whether or not they are going to be saved in the end. The only way to settle this issue and to finally and fully lay all fears to rest is to let God's Word declare the truth and then stand on it with believing faith, resisting all temptations to doubt what God has written.

Allow yourself to follow these simple steps, see what the scriptures say, then pray the prayers and take your stand. Don't be surprised if you have to stoutly resist some doubts and fears. Eventually, they will die down, vanquished by your faith in grace and in God's Word.



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Steps to Confidence

Step 1. Make up your mind and settle it in your heart. As long as you look to your own weaknesses and failures you will find plenty of reasons to doubt that you are saved. But we are not saved by our “doing”—it is a free gift that we receive through our believing! Choose to believe what God’s Word says and stick with it. Since we are “saved by grace through faith,” the critical question is this: “Do I have saving faith?”¹²

Step 2. Do you believe in Jesus? Jesus says that anyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. We are saved because of what Jesus did for us, not anything we can do. Faith is how we receive the salvation God wants us to have.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

Step 3. But do I really have *saving faith*? This is where many people get trapped by doubts. (“If I really believed wouldn’t I be doing better? Why don’t I feel it more?”) Let the truth of scripture set you free: Paul clearly tells us what saving faith is. It is being able to state out loud that “Jesus is Lord” and to believe in our heart that He was raised from the dead. This is the “evidence” within us that we have received the gift of saving faith: We now know who Jesus is (as Lord of heaven and earth) and what He has done (as the Savior who died for our sins and was raised to life). Note well how absolute the promise is:

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. Romans 10:9

Step 4. Can I lose it? Not if you keep calling on His Name! Don’t risk letting your faith fade away over time. Keep it “alive and well” by calling, asking, pleading for His help whenever you need help. The Lord promises to *always* save those who do. If we stay steadfast in calling on His Name, this scripture provides an unassailable confidence that our salvation has truly begun and is continuing.

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13

A tripod is a remarkably stable construct. You can take a three-legged stool and place it firmly on any terrain. These three scriptures taken together will keep you standing solidly against any attempt by the enemy to put you off balance, doubting your salvation. I suggest that you memorize them, but at the very least, make sure you drink in deeply the saving truths they are telling you and know where to find them when you need them. Once the Lord showed me this “tripod” in scripture, my confidence and the joy of my salvation became very solidly seated in me indeed.¹³



Prayers

Father, please forgive me for doubting that You love me. I keep looking at my failures and many weaknesses and just can't see how You can. But You say that You sent Jesus to the cross out of love for me. I cast down all doubt and fear and choose to believe that You are not lying to me!

Jesus, please forgive me for doubting what You have done for me. You died on that cross for all of my sins and I know it! You have given me faith to believe it. Help me conquer my unbelief and live with confidence.

Holy Spirit, please come and help me take my stand once and for all on the truth, no matter what my feelings or other thoughts may be saying. I repent of looking to me (and how I'm doing) instead of to God and His Word!

Chapter 13

HOW CAN I STAY SAVED?

The key to staying saved is staying connected to Jesus! This should be evident, since it is Jesus who saves us. He has a really good grip on us and that is the most important factor—no power can “snatch” us out of His Hand.¹⁴ However, we too need to exercise our grip on grace and here's why: Free will remains in play. God had to work *through* our free will to get us to accept His salvation. In the same way that He *wants* to save everyone, but can only save those who freely choose to let Him do it, He wants to *keep* everyone saved, but we have to freely choose to let Him do that as well.¹⁵

Consider the main New Testament description of our salvation, our “key” for understanding the basics:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 WEB

This powerful statement declares to us the unchanging basis of our salvation, binding together salvation, God's grace and ourselves. Even so, this golden chain of salvation has a “weak link” in it. First, let's examine the three unbreakable parts of the chain:

1. Salvation is God's idea and His passionate, unchanging desire for all of us. The Father chose us to be saved from before the worlds began. In His love for us He sent Jesus to the cross. Jesus fully accomplished all that was necessary for us to be saved through His death and resurrection. *Nothing can change this.*
2. Grace is God's eternal nature. He is always full of compassion, love, understanding and mercy for us. By His mercy-filled heart He made a way to cover our sins through the atoning death of His Son. This is His unending gift of grace to every one of us. You cannot sin a sin



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that is not already forgiven by God and covered with the Blood of Jesus. *Nothing can change this.*

3. Saving faith is part of the free gift of salvation that He has prepared for us.¹⁶ Faith doesn't save us—grace does. Grace is the Father's love. Grace is Jesus' sacrifice. Grace is the gift of the Spirit. When we seek Him to be saved, grace also provides a "gift of faith" in what Jesus has done. God gives this to us without "take backs"! You may not always have enough faith, trust and belief to resist sin or be confident about God's love for you, but you *always* have the gift of faith inside of you reminding you that Jesus is Savior and Lord. *Nothing can change this.*

The only thing that can possibly change is our will. Our freedom to choose is as real as it is deadly. We could choose life or death before we encountered Jesus and we can still choose life or death now that we know Him.¹⁷ It was choosing to trust God as our Savior that got us saved in the first place. Consistently choosing against trusting our lives to God and His way of saving us, is where the possibility of losing salvation comes in.

By God's own decree the free gift cannot be forced upon anyone. He has given the power to choose life or death *to us*. No matter how desperately everyone needs His salvation, God does not force saving faith upon them. This is the enormity of the free will issue: Not all will be saved. Why? Because of their sins? Never! Jesus' death fully atoned for everyone's sins! Because God doesn't want them saved? Impossible! The Father doesn't want anyone to be lost!¹⁸

The Crucial Role of Our Will

The heart-breaking tragedy is that people are going to hell every day whose sins are fully atoned for by Jesus and who are fully loved and desired by Father God.¹⁹ *No one has to go to hell!* However, if we use our free will to reject the only One who can save us from the hell our sins deserve, where else is there for us to go? That's how powerful free will is in the hands of an unbeliever! The lost can so "No!" to God and make it stick from here to eternity.

This relationship between our freedom of will and God's grace-giving way of saving sinful humanity shows us the key to *staying* saved. First, let's use it in reverse: Can our sins "un-save" us? Never! Jesus' death has fully atoned for everyone's sins! Might God turn against us and "un-save" us? Impossible! The Father doesn't want anyone to be lost. If we can't lose our salvation due to our sins and if God is never going to turn against us, then what can possibly "un-save" us? *That little word "through"!*

We who are being saved have been given the gift of saving faith: We know who Jesus is (as Lord and Savior) and we know what He did for us. This is our opening to God. By the faith that came into us through the new birth, we are looking to Jesus, hoping in Him and trusting in Him to save us. We may be doing it very imperfectly, but even if our faith seems pathetically weak to us, God still sees that we want His salvation and are therefore giving Him permission to save us. Saving faith and all that the new birth make available to us cannot be taken from us. *Even the gift of faith cannot be changed!*

But we may *choose* not to let God's grace work *through* our faith to save us. If you are like me, you're saying "Never! I would never not want to be saved! I could never turn against God and Jesus like that!" I agree it seems impossible. But it is, nevertheless, a real danger. I believe that

is why there are so many warnings in the New Testament, repeatedly calling us to persevere in faith and faithfulness.²⁰ Keep in mind that the New Testament warnings were primarily given to Christian believers. For more on this see the next chapter, "Can I Lose My Salvation?"

How could any believer turn against his own salvation? At the time of this writing I have been a Christian for thirty years and a priest for twenty. I have seen many believers fall into all kinds of terrible sins, yet turn from them and be restored by the almost unbelievable patience and grace of God. But I have also seen some be swallowed up by their sins, so that it has bent and twisted even their thinking and believing about God and Jesus.

I have also seen the terrible reality of people who have died in their sins—with their sins blazing red hot, so to speak—and with no apparent sign of repentance. This is a far cry from how most people live out their faith. It is remote, but it is real. Your faith may not seem to be working for you at times, but *whatever you do, don't stop working your faith!*

The Miracle Key

The key to staying saved is calling on the Name of the Lord. The promise God gives us is universal and absolute no matter what condition we are in: All who call on His Name *will be saved*.

For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord [invoking Him as Lord] will be saved. Romans 10:13 AMP

So whatever else you do, be sure to call and keep on calling on His Name. What's the rule? No minimum or maximum is indicated in the text, but my rule has always been: *Call as much as you need to, as often as you need to, for as long as you need to!* Even though the promised help doesn't always show up immediately with swords swinging, it always comes. Eventually, you will discover an increase of strength to resist the temptation. Eventually, you will find yourself moving through the trial towards the "other side." Eventually, you will once again be floating in the river of peace, basking under an open heaven. Never quit! Never give up! Saving help will always come... when you call and keep calling on His Mighty Name.

Prayers

Father, thank You that You always want to save me and will never reject me or forsake me. Thank You that saving me has been Your idea all along. You chose me to be saved before You created the worlds! Please keep forgiving my unbelief and working to increase my faith in the greatness of Your love for me and the steadfastness of Your promises to me.

Jesus, thank You for rescuing me by going to the cross and taking the punishment I deserved. You have covered all of my sins through Your death and resurrection. Please forgive me for those times when I'm afraid my sins aren't covered. As big as my sins are and as big as they



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sometimes feel, they are still nothing compared to Your sacrifice! Thank You for laying down Your life for me. Help me always to call on Your Name.

Holy Spirit, thank You that You have freely chosen to live within me. You are always working to keep my faith alive by reminding me to trust in the Father's love and to call on Jesus for help. You are with me even when I can't feel You. You are strengthening me even when I'm at my weakest. You are helping me hang on even when I feel like letting go. Never let me stop calling on the Name of the Lord!

¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14: *But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.*

² "Getting saved" is the essential first step into eternal life and it is incredibly easy; staying saved will come later. Wait for Chapter 12.

³ 2 Corinthians 5:17: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come;* 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.*

⁴ King Solomon advised us all to gain wisdom by facing death: Ecclesiastes 7:4 AMP: *The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth and sensual joy.*

⁵ Romans 3:23; previously cited, p. 12.

⁶ Peter, who was an eye-witness of the resurrection, declared Jesus to be the Savior of the whole world: Acts 4:11-12: *"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 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."*

⁷ Paul summarizes the human predicament with brutal honesty: Romans 7:18-19 AMP: *For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it. [I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out.] For I fail to practice the good deeds I desire to do, but the evil deeds that I do not desire to do are what I am [ever] doing.*

⁸ Then, he answers his own heart cry and ours: Romans 7:24-25 AMP: *O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death? O thank God! [He will!] through Jesus Christ (the Anointed one) our Lord!*

⁹ Jesus is adamant that we cannot live without Him: John 15:4: *"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."*

¹⁰ Through Isaiah the Lord insists we turn to Him as the only way to be saved: Isaiah 45:22: *"Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."* Such repentance is not optional—not if we fear perishing: Luke 13:5: *"No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

¹¹ Hear the tender mercy of God making His appeal: Isaiah 1:18: *"Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."*

King David appealed to the Lord for mercy after murdering Uriah: Psalm 51:1: *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.*

¹² Ephesians 2:8; previously cited, p.7.

¹³ Who is more joyful over your salvation: You or the God who is saving you? Psalm 51:12: *Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.*

¹⁴ John 10:28: *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

¹⁵ These two scriptures have been given us by God to assure us that He wants everyone to be saved: 1 Timothy 2:3-4: *This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to*

the knowledge of the truth; Also 2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

¹⁶ Romans 5:1-2: *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* See also Romans 5:15-17, 6:23 for more on salvation as “free gift.”

¹⁷ We always have the power and the responsibility to choose between good and evil. Two things hinder us: We often don't truly know what is right or we aren't sufficiently motivated to do it. Even so, God does not excuse us from our moral duty: Deuteronomy 30:19-20 AMP: *I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you that I have set before you life and death, the blessings and the curses; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live. And may love the Lord your God, obey His voice, and cling to Him.*

¹⁸ 1 Timothy 2:3-4; previously cited, p. 75.

¹⁹ Romans 3:22-25; previously cited, p. 37.

²⁰ These are just a sample of the many warning texts. I will include more in the next chapter: Colossians 1:21-23: *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard; Also, Mark 13:13 AMP: "And you will be hated and detested by everybody for My name's sake, but he who patiently perseveres and endures to the end will be saved (made a partaker of the salvation by Christ, and delivered from spiritual death)."*

