What does someone have to do to be "saved"?

This would seem to be the most basic of questions poised to the Christian. But rather unfortunately, the answers to this question actually vary dramatically. While some would say that in order to be saved one needs to merely believe in Jesus (quoting Acts 16:30-31), others would adamantly say that the Scriptures clearly present the need for one to believe *and be baptized* in order to be saved (using Mark 16:6). A Calvinist may say that a person truly possesses salvation *only if* that person's lifestyle reflects a faithful, Spirit-led life; ergo, a person wouldn't actually know that they were indeed saved until the final day when (or if) they were granted eternal life based on their works. And on the opposite side of the spectrum, an Arminiast may categorically adhere to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, but only with the added caveat that said person could possibly, potentially lose that salvation through a sinful, unrepentant lifestyle.

So then, who would be right? One of the above? None of the above? Whichever one you feel like believing, based on your current mood? Seriously, how does one filter through the countless *contradictory* opinions on the subject? (A subject, mind you, that is the absolute *crux* of the Christian faith.)

While most evangelicals would say that you just need to look to the Scriptures to find the answers, I postulate that *almost all Bible teachers say the same thing as they each promote opposing views*. Therefore, if everyone is using the Bible to back up their beliefs, and most have disparate viewpoints, then how can the Bible be supporting everybody's ideology? The answer is… *it isn't.*

There is a right way to view Scripture, and *there is a wrong to view the very same passages and verses*. Didn't the enemy of our soul initiate his deception to mankind by using God's very own words against man? And didn't this very same enemy again use God's own words to suit his own purposes as he attempted to deceive Jesus into giving in to his will and not the Father's? And in that instance, what transpired but a battle of what *indeed* God had said? And wasn't the outcome decided not only by what God had said, but *what God actually meant by what He said*? You see, on one hand we see Satan flinging God's Words around to suit his own purposes; on the other hand we see the Son of God wielding the Scriptures *in accordance with the will of God*, and not according to His own will. Herein lies the distinction.

The Scriptures reveal the will of God *through and through*, and it is God's intent, *and pleasure*, to make His will known to man. According to Amos 3:7, we can be sure that "the Lord God does *nothing* unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets." Can we know what God is doing and will still yet do? *Absolutely*. How will we know? *By reading the prophets*. And who are the prophets? Every single contributor to the Old Testament, up to and including the Chief Prophet, Jesus the Christ. (The New Testament is simply a retelling of everything that God had already said, unveiling that which was veiled in the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus' death and resurrection.) And by reading the prophets we must begin with the first

prophet, Moses, and begin where he begins…at the beginning, in Genesis. And we must continue from there, book by book, *in order*, so that we can see how God lays out His truth. Then, and only then, can we come into the New Testament where we meet Jesus (whose name literally means, "God saves") and truly understand anything about what God is trying to tell us through Him.

So before we answer the question "What does someone have to do to become saved?," let's make a simple observation about the question. What does the word "saved" even mean? Within Christianity, the words "saved" or "salvation" usually have *only one* connotation, that being "a deliverance from an eternity in hell." But within the pages of the Scriptures, one cannot view the word so narrowly. There is nothing intrinsically taught within the definition of the word "salvation" (or its variants) *other than* its literal meaning, which is simply "to be delivered, freed, or rescued." So the question one must ask when presented with some grammatical variant of the term 'salvation' is, *who* needs saving *and why*, and *from what* does that person need to be saved?

For instance, the Old Testament portrays the nation of Israel as being saved (Deut. 33:29; Jude 1:5), then *still needing* salvation (Is. 35:4), *getting* salvation (I Chron. 11:14; I Sam. 14:23), and *still yet to receive* salvation (Zech. 8:13; Rom. 9:27). The New Testament presents the Christian as *having already been* saved (Eph. 2:8) and *possessing* salvation (Jude 1:3), *in the process of being* saved (I Cor. 1:18), and *still yet to be* saved (Rom. 5:9-10). How does a person make sense of all that? Obviously there is something more to the picture of salvation than simply a one-time event of being "saved" and therefore being granted a deliverance from an eternity in hell.

So let's clarify exactly what this question is asking. The term "saved" can mean any number of things, such as saved from hell, saved from sin, saved from *sinning*, saved from the influences of the world and our enemies, etc. Since most of Christianity understands the term "saved" to mean *being a Christian* and being spared an eternity separated from God, let's answer that basic question. How does someone become a Christian? After all, it should be the most simplest of concepts, shouldn't it?

And indeed it is.

According to Paul in Ephesians 2:1-10 –

> 1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.
>
> 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly

> places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.
>
> 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

And from Paul in Romans 5:10-12, 15-16—

> 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. 12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—
>
> 15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. 16 And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.
>
> 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

From these two passages one can see:

- Everyone is born *dead* in trespasses and sins because of the entrance of death that came by the one man, Adam, through his sin. This death was passed on to *everyone*.

- We (the Church, the body of Christ, those we're calling "Christians") have been reconciled back to God and given life through the death of Jesus.

So exactly how is this done? Ephesians 2:8 tells us that we received this free gift (that which is spoken of in Romans 5:15 as well) by God's grace, that we were *saved*—i.e. *made alive*—by His grace *through* our faith. Our faith in what? Our faith (which literally means "belief") in the death of Jesus. It is as Paul says in I Corinthians 5:7, that Jesus Christ *our Passover* has been sacrificed for us. And if you know anything about the Old Testament (which you should), you'll know that referencing the passover lambs would bring to mind the death and shed blood of an unblemished, sacrificial, substitutionary animal that died in place of those under the judgment of death – the death of the first-born.

Simply put, Jesus died in our stead. He paid the price *for us.* We were born into death and Jesus died to free us from that curse. The death that we all owe is simply *the wage* (or *recompense*)

given to us for the sin passed on to all through Adam (Rom. 6:23, “the wages of sin is death...”). And since we were all born dead (which simply means separated from God), the death of Jesus on our behalf *gives us life* (which simply means fellowship with God); Jesus’ death pays that debt that we owe. And all we have to do to be saved by grace is to *believe,* that is *have faith* in the Provision God has given us: the Perfect Passover Lamb, Jesus the Christ. It is summed up most succinctly in Acts –

> Acts 16:30-31
> 30… and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household."

Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins? Do you believe that Jesus paid the price for you on that cross at Calvary? Do you accept this Provision on your behalf? *Then you have been saved, by grace, through your faith.* And that’s it. You now have life and fellowship with God. And we can know for certain that this *free gift* can never be lost, given back, or taken back by God because –

> Romans 11:29
> …for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Isn’t God awesome?!