

Must We Do Something To Receive the Free Gift of Salvation?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

“Paul says that we are ‘freely’ justified (Rom. 3:24), and later he describes salvation as a ‘free gift’ (Rom. 6:23). Why do some claim that one must ‘do’ something, such as be baptized, in order to be saved?”

There are several factors to be considered in responding to this excellent question. Reflect upon the following:

Salvation is wonderfully described in the New Testament as a **free gift**. This terminology is employed in order to emphasize that God is under no **compulsion** to offer it.

Man, by his choice, has rebelled against the Lord. He thus has **earned** the penalty of death (cf. “wages” in Rom. 6:23).

Was the Creator morally obligated to offer salvation? No he was not. However, he has extended redemption to his creation as a matter of pure love and grace (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9).

From this perspective, forgiveness is depicted as a gift.

A Gift Can Be Conditional

The term “gift” (even “free gift”), however, does not necessarily exclude the idea of a **condition** being imposed. Note the following:

Jericho: A Conditional Gift

God promised the city of Jericho to the Hebrews as a **gift** (Joshua 6:2, 16), yet the Israelites were required to **submit** to several conditions in order to receive the gift (Josh. 6:3ff; Heb. 11:30).

Saved from Shipwreck: On Condition

During Paul’s voyage to Rome, the ship upon which he sailed encountered a life-threatening storm. It was feared that all would be lost.

Yet God, on account of Paul’s fidelity, “granted” (**charizomai** — to give freely) to him the lives of all that sailed with him (Acts 27:24).

In spite of that promise, the apostle later informed the centurion in charge of the vessel:

“Except [a condition] these abide in the ship, you [plural] cannot be saved” (27:31).

Work for the Gift

Jesus himself had clearly taught this principle. To the disciples he admonished:

“Work not for the food which is perishing, but [work—the verb is understood] for the food which is abiding unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall **give** unto you” (Jn. 6:27).

A gift, then, does not exclude the necessity to lovingly accept or “receive” that gift (cf. Jn. 1:11-12). And this is accomplished in obeying the Lord, and at the point of one’s immersion in water (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

Salvation a Free Gift Received by Obedient Heart

Even within the book of Romans this truth is apparent.

While salvation is therein represented as that which is “freely given,” the apostle nonetheless forcefully argues that these saints were “delivered” and “made free from sin” by virtue of their having “obeyed from the heart that form of teaching” which had been proclaimed to them (Rom. 6:17).











Earlier, in this same chapter, the apostle, with greater specificity, affirms that the Roman Christians began to walk in **newness of life** (i.e., salvation) at the point of their having been **united with Christ in the likeness of his burial and resurrection**.

This occurred when they were buried in baptism and raised therefrom (Rom. 6:3-10).

It is thus quite clear that salvation, as a free gift, and the need to obey the Lord, are not mutually exclusive propositions.

Let men then receive God’s free gift by submitting to his will.

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Scripture References

Romans 3:24; Romans 6:23; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Joshua 6:2, 16; Joshua 6:3; Hebrews 11:30; Acts 27:24; John 6:27; John 1:11-12; Acts 2:38, 22:16; Romans 6:17; Romans 6:3-10

Cite this article

Jackson, Wayne. "Must We Do Something To Receive the Free Gift of Salvation?" *ChristianCourier.com*. Access date: August 24, 2022.
<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/176-must-we-do-something-to-receive-the-free-gift-of-salvation>

**CHRISTIAN
COURIER**

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Publisher

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