

Seven Reasons **NOT** To Ask Jesus into Your Heart!

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Have you ever heard someone say, “In order to be saved from hell and go to heaven, you need to ask Jesus into your heart”? Does this sound familiar? Have you ever read this on the back of tracts? Have you heard pastors or evangelists teach this? Though perhaps sincerely spoken and well-intended, is it biblically accurate to ask Jesus into your heart? Are those who have simply trusted Jesus Christ and His finished work alone not yet saved because they have not asked Jesus into their heart? On the other hand, do those who have asked Jesus into their heart truly possess eternal life because they have done this? Or is all this simply a matter of semantics?

1. Don't ask Jesus into your heart because IT IS NEVER FOUND IN THE BIBLE.

Yes, that is unbelievably true! With its enormous popularity, it is amazing to find out that nowhere in the Bible is anyone ever instructed to ask Christ into his heart to be saved. In fact, nowhere in the Scriptures is there even one example of individuals ever asking Jesus into their heart—period! If this is true, why then should one do it or encourage others to do it?

Donald Bunge rightly raises the questions: “Did Jesus ever say: ‘Let me come into your heart?’ Which one of the apostles wrote in New Testament books to ask Jesus to come into our hearts for salvation?” [1]

It appears that while a number of people affirm that the Bible is God's inerrant and inspired truth, they have never evaluated this false response to the Gospel as to its scriptural accuracy. And if it is never found in the Bible, why use it? Is it not safe to assume that if you never listened to Christian radio, or never attended an evangelistic crusade or a church, but simply read the Bible from cover to cover, that you would NEVER conclude that one had to ask Jesus into his heart?

Dear reader, God has promised only to bless His Word, not inaccurate clichés regarding it.

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater. So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (Isaiah 55:8-11)

If this popular but misleading cliché has no scriptural support, SHOULD NOT THAT SETTLE THE ISSUE?

2. Don't ask Jesus into your heart because IT IS NOT HOW ONE IS SAVED.

The Philippian jailor asked Paul and Silas the million dollar question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Their *only* reply was: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.*" (**Acts 16:30-31**)

Interestingly enough, they did not respond, "Have you ever read the Four Spiritual Laws?" Nor did they reply, "Well, just pray and ask Jesus into your heart." As a natural man (**1 Corinthians 2:14**), the jailor asked them "What MUST I DO to be saved?" The Greek word translated "must" (*dei*) speaks of something of absolute necessity (note **Matthew 16:21, John 3:14, John 3:30, 1 Peter 1:6**). Furthermore, the word "do" is in the present tense referring to an on-going action. Is this not how people think before they are saved by God's grace? They wonder, "What is the bottom-line necessity of on-going works or church rituals that I must do to be saved?" In our flesh, we yearn by nature to DO something to merit God's approval and to save ourselves. This is also the way of false religion. However, this is not God's plan of grace. The Bible clearly teaches the following:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Paul and Silas' reply totally challenged the jailor's human merit/works mindset by declaring, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*" The word "believe" (*pisteuo*) means "to rely upon, to trust in, to believe in." Being in the aorist tense in the Greek, it does not require on-going action but a definitive decision. Since "believe" is in the active voice, the jailor must choose to rely on the Lord Jesus Christ alone to be saved. Salvation is not a work of man for God, but a work of God for man, which one must choose to receive. Faith is the hand that receives the gift of salvation, which Christ paid for through His sacrificial and substitutionary work on the cross. (**Hebrews 1:3, 2:9, 10:10-14, 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 2:12**)

The late Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote, "This one word 'believe' represents all a sinner can do and all a sinner must do to be saved." [2] The Bible supports this simple truth repeatedly in over 100 verses in the New Testament. Some from the book of John are as follow:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye also have seen Me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:35-40)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. (John 6:47)

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins. (John 8:24)

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? (John 11:25-26)

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name. (John 20:31)

While in Bible College a number of years ago I was involved in a children's ministry on Wednesday nights at a local church. At the end of each weekly meeting an effort was made by the main speaker to present the plan of salvation. For several weeks I noticed a 12-year-old boy come forward at the invitation. As a result, the following week a good friend of mine and I volunteered to be counselors. Sure enough, during the invitation Ricky came forward as usual. Finally we were able to get him alone to talk with him. Our conversation went like this:

Us: "Ricky, why have you come forward tonight?"

Ricky: "Because I want to be saved."

Us: "Well, we've noticed that you've come forward time after time at the invitation in the past. What did the previous counselors tell you?"

Ricky: "They told me to ask Jesus into my heart."

Us: "So did you do that?"

Ricky: "Yes, but I still don't know that I'm saved. I still don't know if Jesus really did come into my heart."

Us: "Well, Ricky, let us explain to you what the Bible teaches about salvation."

For the next 20 minutes, my friend Al and I proceeded to explain the following:

- Man's sinful condition before a holy God and His penalty for sin which is death (**Romans 3:10-12, 23; 6:23**).
- Christ's person and finished work, being God who became a man and died for our sins and rose again (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 1 Tim. 2:3-6; Isaiah 53:5-6**).
- How eternal salvation is a free gift to us by God's grace, received through simple child-like faith alone in Christ alone (**Acts 10:43; 13:38-39; John 3:16-18; 5:24**).
- How sinners are not saved by their good/religious works, including asking Jesus into their heart (**Galatians 2:16; Titus 3:5; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:28; 4:5**).

In an effort to make all this personal, we put Ricky's name in **John 3:16**. "For God so loved Ricky that He gave His only begotten Son to die for Ricky, so if Ricky would believe in Christ, Ricky would not perish, but Ricky would have right now and forever everlasting life." After listening intently during this time, Ricky then says to us:

Ricky: "Thank you for explaining all this to me. I would like to pray."

Us: "But Ricky, you don't have to pray to be saved. All you have to do is trust in Jesus Christ alone who did all the work of salvation for you when He died personally for you on the cross and rose again."

Ricky: "Yes, I understand that now and I believe that. I've just trusted in Jesus Christ to save me. I just want to pray and thank Him now for having saved me."

Don't ask Jesus into your heart because it is not how one is saved!

3. Don't ask Jesus into your heart because IT REQUIRES NO UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE TO DO IT.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of WHO Jesus Christ is and of WHAT Jesus Christ has done in order to save lost sinners from the just penalty of their sins by God's grace (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:16**). Because of this, God wants believers to proclaim the Gospel to others so that they would know what exactly to believe (**Mark 16:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21**). Frankly, any five year old can ask Jesus into her heart without any true understanding of the person, work, and accomplishment of the Lord Jesus Christ; or the "freeness" and "foreverness" of salvation by God's amazing grace.

Over the years I have talked to hundreds of people about their salvation. I have found that asking them 3 basic questions normally discloses their understanding of God's grace plan of redemption.

The 3 questions are:

- If you were to die in 13 seconds, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?
- If Jesus Christ was at the gates of heaven and asked you why He should let you in, what would you say?
- Is there anything you can do or fail to do to lose your salvation?

It is amazing that while people have “come forward” or “made a commitment to Christ” or “surrendered their lives to Christ” or “asked Jesus into their hearts;” many do not yet grasp that salvation is all by God’s grace, based solely on Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and received through faith in Christ alone. Instead, it is very common to hear them explain how good works are necessary either to get saved or to stay saved. This indicates that they are confused about God’s simple plan of salvation. And being told to ask Jesus into their hearts has certainly added to their confusion.

This is why the Scriptures go to great lengths to explain to us how one IS saved and how one is NOT saved.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39)

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28)

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:4-5)

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. (Romans 11:6)

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Galatians 2:21)

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. (Galatians 3:10-11)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. (Titus 3:5)

After a Bible study a few years ago a college-age man named Brian came up to me to introduce himself.

Brian: "We've never met before, Pastor Rokser, but my name is Brian."

Me: "Nice to meet you, Brian."

Brian: "Thank you for the Bible study tonight. It was really great."

Me: "Well, thank you, Brian. Why was it so helpful?"

Brian: "Because I was saved by God's grace tonight."

Me: "Really, that's wonderful, Brian! Tell me about it."

Brian: "When you taught that any five year old can ask Jesus into their heart without understanding the Gospel, that's exactly what happened to me."

Me: "Really, explain further."

Brian: "Having come to a sense of my sin and a knowledge of hell at the age of five, I greatly wanted to be saved. So my mom told me to pray and to ask Jesus into my heart. So I did. As the years went on I dedicated my life and re-dedicated my life several times because I wasn't sure that I was saved. But tonight I personally understood for the first time how Jesus Christ did it all on the cross when He died for me and my sins, and I've trusted Him alone to save me. Now I KNOW I'm saved."

Unfortunately, Brian's testimony is not out of the ordinary in evangelical churches when the Gospel of grace is not presented clearly. When asked about your salvation there is quite a difference between replying "I am saved because I asked Jesus into my heart," versus "I know I was saved by God's grace when I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ who died for my sins and arose again to save me." The first reply focused on what YOU did. The latter response focused on what CHRIST has done.

Are you trusting in a prayer that you prayed to be saved? Or are you trusting in the wonderful Lord Jesus Christ "*who loved me and gave Himself for me*" so that He "*washed us from our sins in His own blood*"? (Gal. 2:20; Rev. 1:5)

4. Don't ask Jesus into your heart because IT CONFUSES THE MEANS OF SALVATION WITH THE RESULTS OF SALVATION.

John 1:12 states, "*But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.*"

This salvation verse clearly teaches that one becomes a child of God by receiving Jesus Christ through believing on His name. The word “receive,” being in the aorist tense, indicates a completed event, not an on-going process. This is consistent with the new birth (**John 3:3**) and the receiving of a gift (**Ephesians 2:8**). Again, the sole condition to become a child of God is to personally “believe” in Jesus Christ alone.

The apostle Paul then goes on to explain to us in **Galatians 4:6**: “*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*” Please note, “**AND BECAUSE YE ARE SONS....**” According to **John 1:12**, this became true of you through faith alone in Christ alone. This is reaffirmed in **Galatians 3:26**: “*For ye are all the children of God BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.*”

So what was the result of this? “*God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.*” Notice how every child of God has had Jesus Christ come into his heart via the Holy Spirit when they believed in Jesus Christ. This is not because he asked Jesus Christ in, but because He came in as one of the many spiritual blessings given to him by God’s grace at the moment of faith in Christ.

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

You need not ask Jesus into your heart. Biblically, He comes in the very moment you shift your trust from a church and good works, and instead place your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. Anything else is a confusion of means with results. Satan, by means of false teachings, has been very successful in putting “the cart before the horse.”

For example, believers’ baptism is not a means of salvation but is to be an expression of it (**Acts 8:30-39, 18:8**). Yet a number of churches teach that water baptism (either as a baby or as an adult) is a means of grace or salvation. This is a clear-cut perversion of the Gospel. But is this really any different than asking Jesus into your heart, which also confuses the means with the results and puts the cart before the horse?

Furthermore, why is it that the Holy Spirit permanently indwells and seals every believer at the point of salvation (**Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30**) without being asked in? Why is it that every believer in Christ is justified (**Romans 5:1**), redeemed (**Ephesians 1:7**), reconciled (**Romans 5:10**) and forgiven (**Colossians 1:14**) and more without asking for these blessings? Are they not given by God’s grace the very moment that one rests by faith in Jesus Christ alone?

Imagine a wealthy millionaire who offers to you five million dollars as a free gift based on his hard work.

“Here is 5 million dollars. I want you to personally have it. While I know you don’t deserve it, nor have you earned it, you can have it right now as a love gift from me to you.”

Would you respond by saying:

“Oh please give me your 5 million dollars. While I don’t deserve it and cannot earn it, Oh please give it to me.”

If you responded like this, it would not only be bad manners, but would actually be an insult to the millionaire and an indication of your UNBELIEF. The millionaire already offered and promised to give you the money. You simply needed to take him at his word and receive it. No pleading or asking required. And if that is the case, would you not also be insulting the gracious God of the universe, who at the infinite cost of His dear Son, provided for you “*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*” (**Ephesians 1:3**) if you do not simply take Him at His word and “*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*” and be saved?

Do not ask Jesus into your heart because it confuses the means of salvation with the results of salvation.

5. Don’t ask Jesus into your heart because IT EITHER RESULTS IN NO ASSURANCE OF SALVATION OR BRINGS A FALSE ASSURANCE TO PEOPLE.

In talking about this issue to a pastor from a local Baptist church one day, he replied, “I would never tell the people of my church that they’re not saved by asking Jesus into their hearts. They might lose the assurance of their salvation!” Ironically, I had talked to a man a year earlier who now attends this same church. He told me, “Though I asked Jesus into my heart several years ago, it was only in this past year that I’ve come to know for sure that I’m saved based solely on the work of Jesus Christ for my sins. I asked Jesus into my heart years before, but lacked full assurance of salvation until recently.”

I am convinced that NO ONE has ever been saved or received the assurance of their salvation by asking Jesus into his/her heart. Why? Because there can be no salvation, nor assurance of salvation by something that is foreign to Scripture.

1 John 5:11-13 teaches the how of assurance when it says:

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:11-13)

The assurance of a “know-so” salvation is based on Christ’s work alone and the promises of God. This assurance is given to those who “*believe on the name of the Son of God*” because “*these things have I written unto you.*” Like the old saying Goes: “God said it. Christ did it. If you believe it, that settles it!”

Now this is not to say that those who have asked Jesus into their heart are not saved. They may be genuine believers in Christ. But if they are saved, they have been reconciled to God through placing their faith in Christ, not by asking Jesus into their heart.

Out of curiosity one Sunday morning I asked the believers of Duluth Bible Church how many of them had asked Jesus into their heart at some time in their life. To my surprise, around 60% had done this (though they never heard it from this pulpit). I then proceeded to ask how many of them knew for sure they were saved by God’s grace at some time after they had done this. The majority said that at a later time they were saved and knew it.

I have counseled a number of people who struggled for years with their assurance of salvation because instead of hearing the Gospel of grace clearly presented, they had been told this inaccurate and misleading cliché. While asking Jesus into your heart may be an expression of positive volition towards God, or may accompany faith in Christ, it certainly is NOT SYNONYMOUS with faith in Christ.

6. Don’t ask Jesus into your heart because REVELATION 3:20 DOES NOT TEACH IT.

Whenever a scriptural attempt is made by someone to support this wrong response to the Gospel, normally **Revelation 3:20** is used.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:20)

Ironically, the words “ask,” “Jesus,” and “your heart” are not found in this verse! How could this verse then ever be teaching that? So what is **Revelation 3:20** teaching?

The general context of this verse is Jesus Christ's letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor (**Revelation 2-3**). These were actual local churches that existed at the time of John's writing, and are representative of the kinds of churches that have existed throughout the church age, including today.

Revelation 3:14-22 is particularly addressed by Jesus Christ to the church of Laodicea. Like the waters that flowed into the city of Laodicea, the spiritual state of this church was "lukewarm" and made Christ want to puke (**3:15-16**). While the church viewed itself in a good condition materially, our Lord viewed this same church in a wretched condition spiritually (**3:17**). They were in desperate need of what Jesus Christ alone could provide for them (**3:18**). Verse **19** is especially significant to our discussion where the true Head of the church declares:

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
(**Revelation 3:19**)

This raises the important question: who is it that Christ chastens or disciplines? Is it the unsaved or the redeemed? **Hebrews 12:6-8** answers this by teaching:

For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. (Hebrews 12:6-8)

While God condemns the unsaved, He chastens believers so that "we might be partakers of His holiness" (**Hebrews 12:10**) in our Christian walk. This indicates that these verses in **Revelation 3:19** are addressed to believers in Christ. Regarding the use of the word "love" in **Revelation 3:19**, Greek grammarian Daniel Wallace has insightfully written the following.

"Here '*phileo*' is used for 'love'—a term that is never used of God/Jesus loving unbelievers in the NT. (Indeed, it would be impossible for God to have this kind of love for an unbeliever, for it routinely speaks of enjoyment and fellowship.) *Agapao*, rather, is the verb used of God's love for unbelievers [cf. **John 3:16**]. This '*phileo*' must be applied to the Laodiceans here, for the verse concludes, 'Be zealous, therefore, and repent.' The inferential '*oun*' ("therefore") connects the two parts of the verse, indicating that the Laodiceans are to repent because Christ loves (*phileo*) them!" [4]

Thus, Jesus Christ must be addressing genuine believers in verse **19**. Furthermore, it would be inappropriate to command a spiritually dead unbeliever to "be zealous" (or "hot"—**3:15**). The Bible knows nothing of "cold" or "hot" unbelievers. And like the corrective commands given to the other four churches in this section (**Revelation 2:5, 16, 22, 3:3**), the believers of the church at Laodicea were to "repent." This would involve them choosing to have a decisive change of mind (*metanoeson*—aorist active imperative of repentance) regarding their spiritual condition. This results in genuine confession of sin to God (**1 John 1:9; 1 Corinthians 11:31-32; Proverbs 28:13**) and a change in spiritual direction.

Right on the heels of this corrective rebuke, Jesus Christ then gives these believers a wonderful offer.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:20)
“Behold (pay attention, listen), I stand at the door.” Jesus Christ has been and continues to stand (perfect active indicative) at the door. The question is “what door?” Now to assume this is the door of your “heart” is totally foreign to the passage. It would seem more appropriate to understand this as the door of the Laodicean church meeting. While this church was saying, “I am rich, and increased with goods and have need of nothing,” they actually had Jesus Christ on the outside of the church. No wonder He is then described as repeatedly “knocking” (present tense).

Moving from the Laodicean church generally, Jesus Christ then appeals to the individual believers on the inside of this church. “If (3rd class condition—one might or might not) *any man* (singular) *hear My voice, and open* (singular) *the door, I will come in to him.*” Notice the two conditions that Christ requires to be fulfilled by those on the inside:

1. “*if any man hear My voice*”—This refers to what Jesus Christ has been saying in verses **14-19**.
2. “*and opens the door*”—This again refers to the door where the church is gathered and involves the genuine repentance He required.

Connected with these two conditions are three wonderful promises by Jesus Christ Himself:

1. “*I will come in to him*”—This is a promise of Christ’s personal entrance into the church to meet the believer face to face (the literal idea of the Greek word “*pros*,” translated “to”).
2. “*and will sup with him*”—This is a promise of Christ’s personal fellowship with this repentant believer.
3. “*and he with Me*”—This is a promise of reciprocal fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Some people have misunderstood the phrase “*I will come in to him*” to mean that Jesus will come into his heart, i.e. penetration into his heart.

Michael Cocoris clarifies this when he writes the following:

“Now, verse 20 itself says Christ will come “in to” (two different words), not come “into” (one word). The verse is saying that Christ will come in the church to the person, not that Christ will come into the person. When He gets in the church with the person He will eat dinner with him. That is, He will have fellowship with him. This is not a hair-splitting of the English text, but an accurate reflection of the Greek. In Greek, “come in” (*eiserchomai*) is one word. It is followed by the preposition “to” (*pros*). That construction occurs eight times in the New Testament (Mark 6:25, 15:43; Luke 1:28; Acts 10:3, 11:3, 17:2, 28:8; Rev. 3:20). In each instance it means to enter into a building and stand before a person.” [5]

Now please note that there is no need to ASK JESUS IN! He promises to come in and is knocking, wanting to come and fellowship with any believer if he/she is willing to hear His word and open the door.

Chester McCalley further writes:

“...verse 20 is speaking of fellowship not salvation. There were different words for the morning, noon, and evening meals. The word translated dine was the one used for the evening meal that consisted of leisurely, relaxed conversation and fellowship around the food. This verse is not appropriate in the evangelization for the unbeliever. The proper term for the required response to the gospel message is believe.” [6]

Revelation 3:20 is a verse for believers, NOT UNBELIEVERS. It is a promise of personal fellowship with and from Jesus Christ, NOT AN OFFER OF SALVATION. And even if it was a salvation verse (though it is not), nowhere is the concept of “asking Jesus into your heart” found in this verse. “*If any man hear my voice and open the door, I WILL COME IN TO HIM.*” You need not ask Him in. This erroneous concept is pure eisegesis, not sound exegesis. But what a wonderful promise of Christ’s fellowship for any lukewarm believer who repents.

Wallace humorously adds: “If it causes us some measure of panic to have to use other than **Revelation 3:20** when we share the gospel, keep in mind that the earliest Christians did not have this verse. Revelation is the last book of the Bible to be written. How was it possible for Peter and Paul and James to ever see anyone get saved without this verse? They never had it! But if I read the book of Acts correctly, they had a measure of success in sharing the gospel even in spite of this handicap.”[7]

7. Don’t ask Jesus into your heart because IT DOES NOT CLARIFY THE CONDITION OF SALVATION, IT CONFUSES IT—ESPECIALLY WITH CHILDREN.

I have been told on various occasions how helpful this Christian cliché is with children. Frankly, I am convinced the opposite is true.

Children begin life thinking very concretely, not abstractly. They understand “ball,” “dog,” and “hat” before they understand “death,” “hell,” and “salvation.” When confronted with an appeal to ask Jesus into their heart, they are prone to imagine Christ in bodily form somehow living in the organ that pumps our blood. Perhaps this is why the young girl who was leaning against her mother’s chest exclaimed the following:

Girl: “Mom, I hear Jesus in your heart.”

Mom: “Really, honey. What is Jesus doing?”

Girl: “Oh, He’s just perking coffee.”

Bob Wilkin testifies of the confusion this inaccuracy has wrought among children when he writes the following:

“Years later I was teaching an evangelism course at a Bible College in East Texas. I had my students write out their testimonies after I had explained what I have recounted above. I found that quite a few of the students went through years of confusion because someone told them as children that if they asked Jesus into their hearts they would be saved. They wondered if they had done it right. They wondered if they had been sincere enough. So they asked Him in over and over again for years. They couldn’t gain assurance. Finally someone shared with them that to be saved they had to trust in Christ alone. Only then, by their own testimony, did they come to faith in Christ. Years of inviting Him into their lives had only confused and frustrated them.” [8]

The condition of salvation for children is the same as it is for adults, namely:

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

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. (John 6:47)

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. (Acts 16:31)

NORMAL OBJECTIONS

When presenting these truths, I am normally confronted by some of the following objections.

Objection #1: “BUT ISN'T THIS ALL SIMPLY A MATTER OF SEMANTICS?”

My reply to this is “yes” and “no,” depending on what you mean. Yes, it is a matter of semantics if you mean that word meanings and definitions are very important.

Charles Ryrie addresses this by stating:

“Furthermore, it seems to me that those who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible ought especially to be concerned with accuracy in communicating the truth. All the Bible is inerrant and important to us. But certainly how we as Christians express the Gospel ought to be our greatest concern. We do not want to confuse or shortchange or obscure God’s good news of His grace—how He gave His Son so that we might have eternal life through faith in Him. Semantics is key in understanding and communicating the Gospel.” [9]

On the other hand, this is not a matter of semantics if you mean that “trusting in Jesus Christ alone” and “asking Jesus into your heart” are really saying the same thing.

Ryrie goes on to wisely state:

“Just as words were the means God used to record the Gospel in the Scriptures, so words are the means we use to explain the Gospel to others. Therefore, a correct choice of words is important, even essential, in stating the Gospel well.” [10]

When the Holy Spirit directed the writers of Scripture to record in perfect accuracy the inerrant Word of God, He knew the difference between “*pisteuo*” (believe) and “*aiteo*” (ask). Time and time again He decided that “*pisteuo*” (believe) would be the word used to describe the one condition of salvation. Dear friend, if “*pisteuo*” was good enough for the Holy Spirit, isn't it good enough for you?

Objection #2: “BUT IS IT REALLY THAT BIG OF A DEAL HOW YOU EXPLAIN THE WAY OF SALVATION AS LONG AS YOU ARE SINCERE?”

Regarding one's sincerity, **Joshua 24:14** reads:

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve Him in SINCERITY and in TRUTH.

God is a God of truth and commands us to be “speaking **the truth** in love.”

Is Gospel clarity really that big of a deal? Yes, **it certainly is:**

- a. **If you are concerned about preaching the Gospel accurately.** Why?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
(Romans 1:16)

- b. **If you believe a correct understanding of God's plan of salvation determines where one will spend eternity.**

*Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that **know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ**: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9)*

- c. **If you sense your great responsibility toward God to teach the Word of God just like God gave it.**

My brethren, be not many masters (teachers), knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. (James 3:1)

- d. **If you want God's blessings and not His cursing in your ministry.**

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8-9)

The late William Pettingill, in his commentary on Galatians titled, “By Grace Through Faith Plus Nothing,” writes:

“An appalling score awaits settlement for those who have muddled the Gospel of Christ and preached something else, either through ignorance, or through a desire to please men.” [11]

Can you imagine hearing a doctor say the following to you as you lie on the surgeon's operating table?

Doctor: “Well, let’s remove that liver now.”

You: “But doctor, it's not my liver but my gall bladder that needs removing.”

Doctor: “Liver or gall bladder—what's the difference? You're so picky!”

Dear reader, by that time I would be requesting another surgeon immediately! Yet, when it comes to someone's eternal destiny, we too often are satisfied with something less than scriptural accuracy.

Why is it that we demand extreme accuracy and exact wording when it comes to various contracts that we sign, yet when it comes to a person's eternal salvation we tolerate biblical inaccuracy or doctrinal fuzziness?

And does it not bother you when a minister tells you not to worry about EXACTLY what the Bible says?

*For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?
(1 Corinthians 14:8)*

The great emperor Napoleon had three commands he gave his messengers as they conveyed his messages to various sections of his army. Those three commands were, “Be clear! Be clear! Be clear!” Those who are entrusted with proclaiming the Good News of Christ must also be clear.

The battle is on for the souls of men. If ever we needed a “clear call” from the bugler, it is now. Do not garble the Gospel, or the right response to it!

Objection #3: “BUT HAVEN'T PEOPLE BEEN SAVED BY ASKING JESUS INTO THEIR HEART?”

Again, let me emphatically state that NOWHERE in the Bible is ANYONE ever saved BY ASKING JESUS INTO THEIR HEART!

Now it is true that they may have trusted Christ as Savior at the same time they asked Jesus into their heart and God in His grace saved them in spite of this confusing cliché. Nevertheless, this is no excuse for biblical inaccuracy. Furthermore, how many people have asked Jesus into their hearts while never trusting in Him and His work alone? Is it worth the risk?

“In inviting men and women to come to Christ, we must invite them to do what the Scriptures ask them to do—trust Christ to get them to heaven. We must make that clear. And to be clear, we must avoid misleading and confusing phrases. Invitations such as: ‘give your life to Jesus,’ ‘pray to receive Christ,’ and ‘invite Jesus into your heart,’ are not only not used in Scripture but can result in a person's trusting in a prayer or depending on something he or she did instead of trusting Jesus Christ and what He did.

During an evangelistic outreach in Texas, when I invited those who wanted to trust Jesus Christ to talk with me, a teenager responded. I asked him, ‘Why did you respond?’ He answered, ‘I've come to realize that I need to be saved.’ I said to him, ‘Tell me a little bit about yourself.’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘when I was very small, I bowed my head and invited Christ into my heart.’ So I said to him, ‘Now let me ask you something extremely important. Have you been trusting Christ or have you been trusting a prayer to save you?’ His reply was distressing. ‘I did not even know Christ died for me. I thought God liked that prayer so much that if you simply said that prayer, you'd go to heaven. I've never understood you have to trust Christ to save you.’ Giving people the kind of message that boy received can be damaging and misleading.” [12]

Objection #4: “BUT SO MANY PEOPLE USE THIS EXPRESSION, IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD.”

The accuracy of Scripture is not determined by a popularity contest; otherwise, we would all be Roman Catholics or Moslems by sheer numbers. Also, the issue is not what I am writing versus Pastor so and so. It is not an issue of personality, but biblical principle. The issue is: “Does this cliché accurately communicate the truth of Scripture or not? Does it have the divine approval of ‘thus saith the Lord’?”

Many times in human history the majority has been wrong:

- “Adam Thompson of Cincinnati, Ohio, near the middle of the Eighteenth Century, was the first American to fill a bathtub. Those who heard of it became alarmed. Doctors predicted rheumatism and inflammation of the lungs from such practice. Some American cities put a ban on bathtubs and even refused permission to do the new ‘bathtub exercise.’ But today a home is not complete without a bathtub or shower. The crowd was wrong.
- Musicians and critics groaned and laughed at the music Richard Wagner wrote. But his compositions have transformed the music world. The crowd was wrong.
- ‘Fulton's Folly’ was the name the crowd gave to that first steamboat. But today steamships, like small cities, sail the seven seas. The crowd was wrong.
- For eleven years Goodyear and his wife worked on vulcanizing rubber. Everyone laughed at Goodyear but today, wherever rubber is named, you hear the name, Goodyear. The crowd was wrong.” [13]

Will you base your beliefs and practice on the popular opinion of the human crowd or upon the unfailing and unchanging truths of the **Word of God**?

Objection #5: “BUT DOESN'T ROMANS 10:9 TEACH ONE TO ASK JESUS INTO HIS HEART?”

Like **Revelation 3:20**, **Romans 10:9** is used as a proof-text to support this erroneous cliché of evangelical Christianity.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (Romans 10:9)

Unlike **Revelation 3:20**, at least the context of this verse does deal with personal salvation.

- **Romans 9:** The Past National Election of Israel
- **Romans 10:** The Present Personal Rejection of Christ
- **Romans 11:** The Future National Salvation of Israel

However, in **Romans 10:9**, like **Revelation 3:20**, there is no “asking Jesus into one's heart” mentioned. This passage is especially targeted at Jews (chapters **9-11** is about Israel) who would make the claim to “believe in the Lord.”

To confess that one believes in the LORD while rejecting Jesus Christ as that very God misses the true person of the Savior. And a failure to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead (which is proof of His propitiatory death) means that one has yet to embrace the finished work of our Lord.

Verse **10** then clarifies the correct order for us when it says:

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:10)

This verse emphasizes what Jesus Christ taught when He said:

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (Matthew 12:34b)

We can confess to others of our salvation by grace when we have BELIEVED in Christ with our hearts.

These verses are not requiring two conditions for salvation. That would contradict or leave as insufficient over 100 verses in the New Testament that require a sinner to simply “believe” in Jesus Christ alone. Nor do these verses even remotely teach that we need to ask Jesus into our heart.

However, please note that these verses do emphasize to us that each individual must come to personally trust in Christ alone if he/she is going to be saved. This includes you!

By nature, we inherently want to work for and merit our salvation. Inviting sinners to “ask Jesus into their hearts” accommodates this fleshly desire. It asks us to “do” something, instead of “trusting” in Someone. The nineteenth century prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon, strikes at the heart of this religious tendency when he writes:

“Oh, the many times that I have wished the preacher would tell me something to do that I might be saved! Gladly would I have done it, if it had been possible. If he had said, ‘Take off your shoes and stockings, and run to John O’Groat’s,’ I would not even have gone home first, but would have started off that very night, that I might win salvation. How often have I thought that, if he had said, ‘Bare your back to the scourge, and take fifty lashes,’ I would have said, ‘Here I am! Come along with your whip, and beat as hard as you please, so long as I can obtain peace and rest, and get rid of my sin.’ Yet that simplest of all matters—believing in Christ crucified, accepting His finished salvation, being nothing, and letting Him be everything, doing nothing but trusting to what He has done—I could not get a hold of it.” [14]

John 3:16—The Greatest Verse In The Bible

For God	The greatest being
so	The greatest degree
loved	The greatest affection
the world,	The greatest object of love
that he gave	The greatest act
his only	The greatest treasure
begotten	The greatest relationship
Son,	The greatest gift
that whosoever	The greatest company
believeth	The greatest trust
in Him	The greatest object
of faith should not perish,	The greatest deliverance
but have	The greatest assurance
everlasting	The greatest promise
life.	The greatest blessing

FINAL APPEAL

Dear readers do not let your pride (“I’ve taught that cliché in the past”) or your emotions (“I’ve prayed this with my kids”) or your traditions (“Our church has always said that”) get in the way of truth and biblical accuracy on the most important issue that anyone must address. While this misleading cliché is a sacred cow in evangelicalism today, let us return to the authoritative Word of God to embrace what God Himself says about our eternal salvation.

“What must I do to be saved?”

BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED. (Acts 16:31)

Don't ask, just believe!

Footnotes:

- [1] Bunge, Donald H., "What Happened To The Word Believe" (p. 15)
- [2] Chafer, Lewis Sperry, "Salvation" (p. 33)
- [3] Fugate, J. Richard., "What the Bible says about Child Training" (p. 136)
- [4] Wallace, Daniel B., "Scripture Twisting" (www.bible.org)
- [5] Cocoris, G. Michael, "Evangelism, A Biblical Approach" (p. 82-83)
- [6] McCalley, Chester, "The Gift of Salvation" (p. 31)
- [7] Wallace, Daniel B., "Scripture Twisting" (www.bible.org)
- [8] Wilkin, Bob, "Don't Ask" (The Grace Evangelical Society, p. 1)
- [9] Ryrie, Charles C., "So Great Salvation" (p. 22-23)
- [10] Ryrie, Charles C., "So Great Salvation" (p. 24)
- [11] Pettingill, William, "By Grace Through Faith Plus Nothing" (p. 20)
- [12] Moyer, R. Larry, "Free and Clear" (p. 42)
- [13] Olson, Nathaniel, "The Crowd May Be Wrong" (p. 1-2)
- [14] Spurgeon, Charles H., "C.H. Spurgeon Autobiography" (vol. 1)

Where Did the Idiom "Asking Jesus into your heart" come from?

David Platt - Why "Accepting Jesus in Your Heart" Is Superstitious & Unbiblical