

The Plan of Salvation

“Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16).

In the Book of Acts the Lord has given to us nine cases of New Testament conversion. From those examples one can clearly see what the Lord required of the people of the first century in order for them to be saved. If one seeks to become a child of God today, he can do no better than to study and follow those New Testament examples. If a sincere seeker of truth does today what those first-century disciples did, the result will be the same. He will be saved and become a Christian. He will not be a member of any denomination, for the Lord will add him to His church: “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47b; KJV).

In addition to these examples, the Lord has given many other passages that also instruct us in this most important matter of becoming a child of God. No one need misunderstand what the Lord requires for a person to be saved. *What is the plan of salvation?*

IN ORDER TO BE SAVED, ONE MUST BELIEVE IN JESUS

Jesus said that we will die in our sins if we do not believe in Him. “. . . for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). He also said, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

In John 3:16 Jesus declared, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

This does not suggest that one is saved by believing only; for a few verses later, Jesus elaborated on this, saying, “He who believes

in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

It is necessary to believe in Jesus. This is the beginning of the conversion process. Believing moves one in the direction of salvation (John 1:12). However, believing by itself—or “faith only”—will not save anyone.

IN ORDER TO BE SAVED, ONE MUST REPENT OF SINS

“Repentance” is a change of mind that brings about a change of direction in life (Acts 26:20). The goodness of God leads one to repentance (Romans 2:4).

God wants all people to *repent*. “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9). We must *repent* so that our sins will be blotted out (Acts 3:19). Jesus made clear the necessity of repentance when He said, “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

Faith combined with *repentance* moves one in the direction of salvation.

IN ORDER TO BE SAVED, ONE MUST CONFESS FAITH IN JESUS

Making the good confession of faith leads one to salvation. “For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Romans 10:10).

Jesus promised a blessing to those who confess Him and denial to those who deny Him. He said, “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My

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Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32, 33). When the eunuch confessed Jesus, he said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37).

Faith combined with *repentance* and *confession* moves one in the direction of salvation.

IN ORDER TO BE SAVED, ONE MUST BE BAPTIZED

Jesus tied belief and *baptism* together as standing in front of salvation. "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15, 16). It was unnecessary for Jesus to say, "He who has disbelieved and has not been baptized shall be condemned," for one who does not believe is certainly not interested in baptism or any other act of obedience to the Lord. Salvation must begin with believing.

We also find Jesus' command for *baptism* in Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Peter preached that one not only *repents* but also *is baptized* in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. "Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you

will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). He later declared that "baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21). Again, it was Peter who commanded Cornelius and his household to be *baptized*: "And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days" (Acts 10:48).

In reading about New Testament conversions, one cannot help but be impressed with the urgency of baptism. In each case the person was baptized immediately. In the account of the Philippian jailer's conversion, we read, "And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and *immediately* he was baptized, he and all his household" (Acts 16:33; emphasis mine). There is no justification for waiting days, weeks, or months to baptize one who has confessed his faith in Jesus. The urgency lies in the fact that forgiveness of sins does not take place until the believer is baptized.

Those who would make baptism an unnecessary option need to look carefully at these passages. Baptism is not optional. It is essential if one is to be saved.

When a person trusts in the Lord enough to obey Him by *believing* in Him, *repenting* of his sins, *confessing* his belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and *being baptized*, that person obtains salvation. He is saved by the love, goodness, and grace of God!

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