

are commanded to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that they had once lived a sinful life, but that they were not living that way anymore (1 Cor. 6:9ff.). To truly repent, one must change the way he thinks *and* the way he acts.

**4 Confess Jesus as Lord.** The fourth step in God's plan of salvation is confession. The apostle Paul reminded the Roman Christians that "with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). From this text, it is evident that confession is an important part in the plan of salvation. But what, exactly, is confession.

*A Confession of Faith in Christ.* When one confesses that Jesus is the Christ, he is confessing his faith in the Son of God to save. A true follower of Christ will not be ashamed to be called a Christian in *any* situation. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..." (Rom. 1:16). When I confess my faith in Christ, it is a faithfulness that I will never deny even if my life is at stake (Rev. 2:10). During the first century, Christians often faced death when affirming their faith in Christ. One such story is that of Polycarp. He was taken before the Roman council and asked to deny his faith in Christ. With great boldness, Polycarp looked at the council (who held his life in their hands) and responded, "For eighty and six years my Lord has not denied me. How can I then deny Him?" How wonderful it would be if *all* Christians made the great confession with such conviction!

*A Confession of Faithfulness to Christ.* An individual's confession of Christ also means that he is willing to faithfully follow the Lord every day of his life. Jesus said, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will

also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 10:32-33). The confession of which Jesus is speaking is not simply naming the name of Christ. Jesus had already told many of these people that just saying "Lord" would not save anyone. Here, Jesus is speaking of a confession of faith in Him *as depicted through one's actions*. When I confess Jesus is the Son of God, I am confessing that I will follow Him faithfully all the days of my life. Confession is more than a one-time act. It is a continual walk in the steps of the Savior (1 Pet. 2:21).

**5 Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.** A final step in the plan of salvation that is overlooked by so many today is the act of baptism. Most people in our modern religious world would agree that a person needs to believe, repent, and confess Jesus as Lord to be saved. However, they do not believe or teach that a person must be baptized to be saved. What does the Bible say on the necessity of being baptized? Notice the following New Testament passages.

Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). It is clear from this text that Jesus taught that baptism was essential to one's salvation.

In Acts 2:38, Peter told the people on the Day of Pentecost who had asked what they needed to do to be saved, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is one of the clearest verses in the New Testament on the essentiality of baptism in the plan of salvation. Peter clearly taught that baptism was *for the remission of past sins*.

At Paul's conversion, he was commanded, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins,

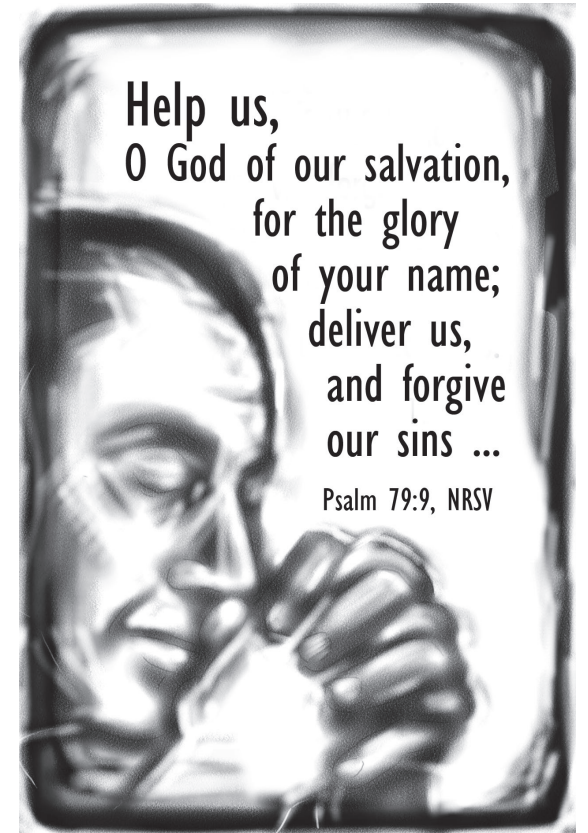
calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). From this text, we learn that the purpose of baptism is to wash away sins. If baptism is the point at which one's sins have been washed away, then those who have not been baptized have not had their sins washed away. Also, in this passage we learn how a person calls on the Lord's name. Like Paul, a person calls on the Lord's name by being baptized into Christ.

The apostle Peter clearly stated, "Baptism does now also save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). One of the key words here is the little word "also." It is not baptism alone that saves. Rather, it is baptism combined with hearing God's Word (Heb. 11:6), believing in Jesus Christ (Jn. 8:24), repenting of one's past sins (Lk. 13:3), and confessing Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:10). Baptism, as the culminating act in salvation, washes away sin. If the apostle Peter said that baptism saves us, how can we then say that baptism is not necessary for salvation?

Have you truly obeyed the Gospel as the Bible teaches? There are many who teach that all you must do to be saved is "believe on Christ." But that is *not* the full biblical plan of salvation. The Bible teaches that we are *not saved* "by faith only" (Jas. 2:24). I hope you will study these important matters and come to obey the will of God. If you would like to study further about the plan of salvation, or if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me. You may reach me by writing to the McLish Avenue Church of Christ at 607 McLish Avenue, Ardmore, OK 73401. You also can contact me through our website at [www.mclishchurchofchrist.com](http://www.mclishchurchofchrist.com).

# What Must I Do to be Saved?

Ben Bailey



The Bible says that Jesus Christ came to seek and save the lost (Lk. 19:10). If we are honest with ourselves, we will realize that this includes every one of us. The Bible says, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). God also tells us that our sins separate us from Him and bring about spiritual death (Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 6:23). The good news is that *God does not want anyone to be lost*. Rather, *He wants all people to be saved* (1 Tim. 2:4). Jesus Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for all (Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:1-2). The Bible tells us that we *can* know the truth about salvation, and that we *can* be saved (Jn. 8:32; 1 Jn. 5:13). That being the case, each person must ask himself or herself an important question: “What must I *do* to be saved?” Let’s examine in detail exactly what the Bible teaches that a person must do to be saved. As you read, this tract asks you to honestly examine your own situation to see if what you did to be saved matches what *the Bible* teaches (2 Cor. 13:5).

**1 Hear God’s Word.** The first step in God’s plan of salvation is to hear/listen to God’s Word. The Bible says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). And, “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6). In the past, I am afraid that we have under-emphasized the importance of hearing God’s Word. What does it mean to *really hear* God’s Word? Please understand that hearing God’s Word does not mean that we will simply accept whatever someone says, even if they say it is from the Bible. If we truly hear God’s Word, we will come to understand two important principles.

First, hearing God’s Word means that we recognize its authority. As God said on

the Mount of Transfiguration, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear Him” (Mk. 9:7). The Bible is the ultimate and final authority in all matters in religion (Mt. 28:18ff.; Col. 3:17; Jn. 12:48). When there is a Bible question, or when someone needs to know what to do to be saved, we must let the voice of God be the final authority. The question of Romans 5:4 should stand out in our minds: “What do the Scriptures say?” Too many times we hear the voice of other men, commentaries, or church manuals over the voice of God. When we decide to hear God’s Word, we are saying that we will let God have the sole, final say-so in this matter.

Second, hearing God’s Word means that we give a diligent effort to study, search, seek, and test. In the process of hearing, one must use the reasoning capabilities with which God has endowed him in order to discern truth from error (1 Thess. 5:21). We need to be good hearers like the noble Bereans who “...received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11, ASV). We need to be cautious in regard to *how* we hear (Lk. 8:18), *what* we hear (Mk. 4:24), and *who* we hear (Mk. 9:7). To hear God’s Word requires that we engage our ears *and* our mind in order to make an intellectual decision about what is said, based on the Bible as the final authority.

Ask yourself: “To whom have I been listening on the matter of salvation?” Do you listen to God alone? Or, do you listen to God plus someone else’s opinion or teaching? Remember, only God and His Word will matter on the Day of Judgment (Jn. 12:48).

**2 Believe in Jesus Christ.** The second step in the plan of salvation is belief. Jesus said, “If you do not believe that I am He, you will surely die in your sins” (Jn. 8:24). True belief is always an active, obedient faith. Jesus taught the multitudes that they could not call Him “Lord,”

yet not do the things He said (Mt. 7:21). Believing in Jesus means that we are willing to trust and follow Him with our whole heart. A beautiful example of this is seen in Acts 8. Philip began to teach the Ethiopian nobleman the Gospel plan of salvation. The text of Acts 8 tells us that as Philip was teaching the nobleman about Christ, they came to water and the nobleman wanted to be immersed. Philip then tells him, “If you believe with all your heart you may” (Acts 8:37). From this text, we learn that belief is a conviction that Jesus is the Christ—our Savior. We also learn that we must be willing to do whatever Jesus says if we really believe in Him (Acts 8:38ff.).

While belief is an important part of the biblical plan of salvation, people must understand that *belief alone* will never save anyone. In fact, the word “belief” never means “mere mental acceptance.” Belief always means an active, obedient trust in God (Gal. 5:6). You and I understand this in everyday life. For example, imagine that I am drowning and a person throws me a life preserver. If I “just believe” that the life preserver will save me, but I never *do anything* to “be saved” (Acts 2:40), *will* I be saved? Absolutely not! “Just believing” that the life preserver will save me will get me no closer to actually being saved. I must take steps of action in order to be saved (such as reaching for the preserver, holding on, and helping pull myself in). Likewise, one must take *steps of action* (along with his belief) in order to be saved. It is so sad that there are thousands of denominational people who teach that all one must do to be saved is “believe in Jesus and accept Him as your personal Savior.” Nothing could be farther than the truth. The Bible never says that “faith only” will save. In fact, the only time that the phrase “belief/faith only” is used in the Bible is in James 2:24, and there the text says, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and *not* by

*faith only.*” Isn’t it interesting that some suggest that “faith only saves,” while the Bible says exactly the opposite. May we say with Paul, “Let God be true, and every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4).

**3 Repent of Past Sins.** The third step in God’s plan of salvation is repentance. In Luke 13:3, Jesus expressed the necessity of repentance when He said, “Unless you repent you shall all likewise perish.” Peter preached to the Jews that they needed to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out (Acts 3:19). Since repentance is such an important step in the plan of salvation, let us examine how the Bible defines repentance.

*Not Sorrow Alone.* Many in our modern world equate repentance with crying and tears. While those may be associated with repentance, in and of themselves they do not *constitute* repentance. For example, Paul stated that godly sorrow does indeed lead to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10), but such sorrow by itself is not repentance. Other things are involved.

*A Changed Will.* Repentance is best defined as “a changed will that leads to a changed way.” Joel encouraged the Israelites to mend their hearts, not just their garments (Joel 2:13). The point Joel is making is clear. We must not have merely an outward sign of repentance. Rather, we also must have a *changed heart*. One version renders Joel 2:13 as “tear your hearts, not your garments”. True repentance implies that we first must be willing to change the way we think.

*A Changed Way.* The second part of repentance demands that we show our repentance by a *changed life*. John told the hypocritical Jews to “bring forth fruits worthy of repentance...” (Mt 3:8). Baptized believers