

## What Must I Do To Be Saved?

There is no greater question that man can ask because the Father and Creator of all mankind, "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth", (1 Timothy 2:4). You can be confident that our perfect Father has not left us without the answer to this critical question. Peter wrote, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence," (2 Peter 1:3). We have the answer to this question recorded again and again in the Scriptures. In fact, we even have an example of a man who asked this exact question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30)?

**Consider the Philippian Jailer, Acts 16:25-34:** Paul and Silas, both servants of Jesus, answered this man by saying, "'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God" (vs. 32-34).

Let us take note of the pattern:

- Someone (Philippian jailer and family) was told that belief in Jesus was expected.
- Someone (Philippian jailer and family) was required to know about Jesus.
- Someone (Paul and Silas) taught them (Philippian jailer and family) "the word of the Lord".
- Someone (Philippian jailer and family) was baptized.
- Someone (Philippian jailer and family) rejoiced because at this point they "had believed in God".

**Consider Romans 10:9-15:** This above pattern is recorded several times in the book of Acts (Acts, which refers to the "acts of the apostles"). Its pattern begins on a very basic level, and then builds. The Bible breaks this down very clearly for the reader. Consider Romans 10:9-15:

*"Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him. For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'"*

God, through His word, really "breaks down" the process of how one is saved. Let's take note that:

- Someone preaches God's word.

- Someone hears.
- Someone believes in God and that He raised Jesus from the dead.
- Someone confesses that Jesus is Lord.
- Someone is said to “call on the name of the Lord” which resulted in being “saved”.

However, where is baptism in this passage? Is there a contradiction in the Scriptures? Absolutely not! We must continue to harmonize all these passages to understand the full picture.

**Consider Saul/Paul of Tarsus, Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-16.** When we turn to Acts 9, we read that as Saul traveled to Damascus to arrest Christians and bring them to Jerusalem, a light from heaven flashed around him and he heard Jesus speak to him. The Lord said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” Saul answered, “Who are you, Lord?” Christ said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do” (Acts 9:1-6). As the story continues, we learn that Saul came into contact with a disciple named Ananias. Ananias then baptized Saul. But we also have this recorded in Acts 22. This is an important account, because it includes Ananias’ words to Saul before he baptized him. He said, “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). Did you notice something different? Saul’s baptism was tied to “calling on His name”. So, when you go back to Romans 10:13, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”, we see that baptism was understood to be a part of the process. When you read all of Acts 9:1-19 along with Acts 22:1-16, you will see the following:

- Jesus sends Saul to “be told what you are to do”.
- Someone (Ananias) shares the truth with someone else (Saul).
- Someone (Saul) believes.
- Someone (Saul) is told to be baptized to have their sins washed away, thus “calling on His name”.

**Consider Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, Acts 8:26-40:** In this section of Acts, we find Philip, a disciple of the Lord, who was told by an angel of God and the Holy Spirit to go to a certain location and join a man in a chariot. Philip obeyed the instruction and found a eunuch reading from Isaiah 53. The eunuch did not completely understand the passage and so Philip “opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus”. As they went along the road, the eunuch noticed some water and wished to be baptized. Philip told him, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The eunuch replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Philip then baptized him in the water and as they came up out of the water, Philip was taken away and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. We again see a common pattern:

- Someone (Philip) was sent to preach.
- Someone (the eunuch) heard the word of God.
- Someone (the eunuch) believed.
- Someone (the eunuch) confessed that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God”.
- Someone (the eunuch) was baptized (being totally immersed, not sprinkled, in water).

**Consider the great crowd in Acts 2:14-41:** In this section of Acts, we have recorded the first “sermon” preached after Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended back to the Father. As thousands of Jews were gathered together, the Lord’s apostles began to preach to the crowd. Then Peter taught the Jews that Jesus was in fact the Son of God. The Scriptures told of Jesus’ coming, and He did indeed come to His people, but the people rejected Him and had Him crucified. Upon hearing this truth they were “cut to the heart” and asked Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” This is much like the first example we looked at when the jailer asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The answer that Peter gave was, “Repent and be baptized every one of you 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). The passage continues on with Peter exhorting them by saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation”. Those who received his word were baptized. 3,000 individuals took his advice and followed his instruction. Does this patter look familiar?

- Someone (Peter and the apostles) preached the truth.
- Someone (3,000 individuals) believed the message.
- Someone (3,000 individuals) repented of their sins.
- Someone (3,000 individuals) was baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.

As the Bible says, “The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever” (Psalm 119:160). We put ourselves in great danger when we isolate one verse without considering the others. The first century Christian understood that God had a pattern for His people. In fact, the apostle Paul wrote to his fellow Christian brothers and sisters, “But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed” (Romans 6:17). Paul actually reminded them of that “standard of teaching” shortly after he had reminded them of their baptism. Just as Jesus was buried and resurrected, we also “put to death” our old life (symbolically through our baptism) and “walk in newness of life” (symbolically as we come up out of the water). When you “sum up” God’s word, this is the picture we should come away with:

- Someone preaches the word.
- Someone hears the word.
- Someone believes the word.
- Someone repents (a change of the mind which is evident by a change in action).
- Someone confesses that Jesus is Lord.
- Someone is baptized for the forgiveness of sins.

There are several more passages we could consider, but this gives us a clear picture of what God desires from us. No other scripture could be added to these that would change or contradict what God would have us to do. On the contrary, it would reiterate the same points. Though each and every step is not specifically mentioned in every recorded account, that does not mean that one apostle/disciple would

answer the question, "What must I do to be saved" one way and another disciple answer it a different way. There was a standard and it must be understood that on each occasion, all of these "steps" were taken. To "believe in God" is to follow His way. As Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Jesus also told His disciples, "Go into all world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). We can be confident that the same "pattern" was observed and taught by all believers. It would be good to remember Paul's writings to his brothers and sisters in Christ one more time: "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to *the standard of teaching* to which you were committed" (Romans 6:17). That standard of teaching is found in God's word and His word alone. Our belief and faith in God is not decided by what *we* feel or think is right, but instead, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

What about you? Have you heard the word of truth? Do you know about Jesus? Have you come to grips with our reality: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 3:23; 6:23)? Would you allow us to help you answer these questions by going to God's word and His word alone?

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