

The BEACON

Published by the Newton church of Christ
Meeting at: St. James Church St and Glendale Rd

Vol. 25, No. 7

Edited by John Cripps

July, 2011



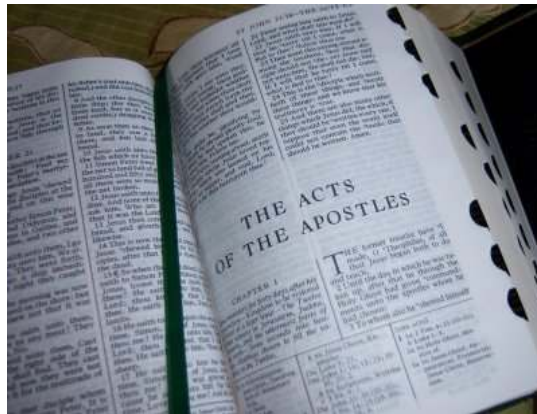
THE BIBLE PLAN OF SALVATION

Because there are over 2000 various denominations in this country, it is no wonder that people are confused over what God's word says about salvation. One group teaches it is all God's doing, another teaches that we must do good works that somehow earn something like merits toward our salvation, and many teach something in between or on either end of the spectrum. Those who know nothing or very little of the Bible look at this confusing mishmash of contradictions and throw up their hands in frustration and give up on ever trying to figure it out.

But the plan of salvation is not so confusing if we simply ignore (reject) man's 'interpretation' of the plan and simply look at what the Bible says about it. When we pick up God's word, which He has given us for the very purpose of knowing His will, we can read and understand (**Eph.3:4**) what the

former mystery (His plan for salvation) now is. If we read without preconceived ideas, we can clearly see what is and was required for our salvation.

The foremost thing that was necessary for our salvation is **THE GRACE OF GOD**. Without God's grace, this world would be nothing but a bunch of hopeless sinners wandering around trying to figure out how to remove sin from their lives and in despair because they lacked the knowledge of how it could be done. If they could ever come to the knowledge of the depths of sin, they would realize it would need to be punished for God to be called just, and for this reason, would be terrified after knowing what sin's price would be (**Heb. 9:22**). But God did show grace toward us in that He devised a plan by which we could be saved if certain things were done. Grace was certainly a gift, but it was not a gift without certain requirements.



The next thing that was necessary for our salvation was **THE BLOOD OF CHRIST**. We have seen already that in order to have remission of sins, blood must be shed. But whose? That of animals was insufficient to take away the sins of the world (**Heb. 10:4**), and if we offered our own, it would be an imperfect and unacceptable sacrifice (**Mal. 1:8**), for we all have sinned! (**Rom. 3:23**)

And that is where the blood of Christ comes in. Jesus pointed to this sacrifice when He instituted the memorial of the shedding of His own blood, which would be "for the remission of sins." (**Matt. 26:28**) It was that blood which purchased the church, the body of the saved (**Acts 20:28; 2:47**). By that blood we are justified (Rom. 5:9), forgiven of our sins (**Eph. 1:7**), and that "according to the riches of His grace." But that was not all!

In order for man to know what He had done **GOD REVEALED HIS WILL TO MAN**. This was certainly necessary for our salvation, for where would we be if God had done this for us and not told us how it was done? According to some, it is not necessary because God supposedly sends the Holy Spirit into the hearts of men previously chosen for salvation to cause them to believe, removing the necessity of revealing His will to man. But, God DID reveal His plan to man, and there is a good reason: in it is "the power of God unto salvation." (**Rom. 1:16**) Without the revealed will of God, the gospel, there is no knowledge of the power to be saved.

And this is where man's part begins. The first thing required of man is that **HE HEAR THE WORD**. Within the revealed word of God, He tells us that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (**Rom. 10:17**) Faith does not come by the Holy Spirit being sent into our hearts --- the word of God says so! And that makes perfect sense, too, for how could we believe in what we had never heard?

Which quickly brings us to the next necessity for salvation: **BELIEF THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD**. Once we have heard the revealed word of God, which tells us of the grace of God and how the blood of Christ was shed for our sins, we have a choice to make: either accept it or reject it. The reason John wrote what he did was that we might believe (**John 20:30, 31**). Lacking that belief, we will die in our sins (**John 8:24**).

And belief that Jesus is the Son of God is not the end, either. **WE MUST ALSO REPENT OF OUR PAST SINS AND TURN TO GOD**. It is tragic that some in the denominational world are teaching that 'God accepts you as you are.' God does NOT accept you as you are! If He did, why in the world would He send His Son to this Earth to suffer so horribly as an innocent one for us if God is going to accept us as we are? God "commands all men everywhere to repent" (**Acts 17:30**). Paul preached this everywhere he went (**Acts 26:20**).

WE MUST ALSO CONFESS OUR BELIEF THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF

GOD. Without that confession, we will be denied by the very One who can save us (**Matt. 10:32, 33**). This verbal confession which leads to our salvation is a daily decision, not a one-time event. Our confession must be such that we speak up when faced with a challenge to our faith.

Having heard the word, believed it, repented of our sinful ways, and having confessed that belief, **WE MUST THEN BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF THOSE SINS.** It was the answer to those on Pentecost (**Acts 2:38**); it was the command of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (**Mark 16:16**); it is what saves us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (**1 Pet. 3:21**).

And once we have done all of these things, **WE MUST LIVE FAITHFULLY IN THE SERVICE OF OUR LORD UNTIL DEATH.** We must "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" if we expect to gain the reward of eternal life in heaven (**Heb. 10:23, 32-39**). How sad it would be for all of these other things to have been done and for us then to turn our backs on it all.

Have you done your part?

WHAT FATHERS DO !

Every father has done it. It almost certainly occurred when his child was taking his/her first steps. It probably happened when his child was learning to ride a bicycle or attempting to hit a ball with a bat. And, as the child grew older, there were new

activities to tackle -- at school, on the first job, when it was time to go off to college, etc. -- and Dad did it again and again.

What are we talking about? We have in mind the way a father steps in to help his child with difficult challenges and problems. He wants his child to learn and grow. And though he understands that he must allow him to try on his own, he also knows he will need to help along the way. So, he lets the child do all he can. Sometimes this means watching as those first steps lead to fall after fall, or standing back when the bike crashes, or simply observing when there are struggles at school. But he's always there, and he steps in at the crucial time to make up the difference between what the child can do on his own and what finally must get done. Making up the difference -- it's what fathers do!

If earthly fathers realize the need to help their children along the way, how much more does our Heaven Father know this (**Matthew 7:9-11**). And He does it! The Scriptures abound with references to the fact that God is there, watching, helping. He promised that "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (**Hebrews 13:5**). And, so, we can say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (**Philippians 4:13**).

Fathers -- we really need them. And, in an even greater way, we truly need the mercy and grace of our Heavenly Father to make up the difference between what we are and what we ought to be. Praise Him!

By - Greg Gwin ; Columbia, TN

THAT'S NOT WHAT I SAID!

I have been trying to educate a voice recognition computer program. I thought it would be great to simply speak my profound thoughts into a microphone and generate a text equivalent that can be edited and printed out, or to play back one of my wonderful sermons and create a written transcript. Oh, the difference between intentions and result! When I quoted John 3:16, the computer apparently heard "Were done so of the world, that he gave its own a bit of a son, two summer movie within Hampshire the parish the have ever lasting line." John Dvorak once wrote, Your computer is dumber than your dog. Dumb computer! Bad computer! That not what I said! You proved that Dvorak is the guru he is acclaimed to be.

But then, on second thought, my computer behaved much like people. They often hear something entirely different from what is said.

Case in point: I preached a sermon on baptism. A Baptist lady who was visiting commended me on the sermon and added, that was a good Baptist sermon. I did a mental rewind and could think of nothing Baptist in what I had said. I checked my notes and played back the tape of the sermon and the closest thing I could find to any Baptist doctrine was the word baptism which, of course, I used many times because, after all, the sermon was on baptism.

She had heard what she wanted to hear rather than what I had said. Baptist teach

about baptism, but not its necessity for salvation. She turned off her ears to anything that conflicted with what she already believed.

I have had brethren remark, sometimes positively, but most often negatively, on things I never said. Since I usually tape my sermons this is easily determined. When teaching on a controversial subject this has sometimes been a life saver. I began this practice back in the 60's when institutionalism was destroying the Lord's church and liberal brethren were doing all they could to destroy those who demanded book, chapter and verse for all the church did, those they label antis. Often knowing better they would accuse a sound preacher of making an unsound statement. Many a times I thanked the Lord for Thomas Edison and the electronic marvels he inspired.

Oh, I suppose I can eventually educate my computer to hear what I actually say, but I'm not too sure about people. Of course, this gives new meaning to the phrase, "He has a mind like a computer."

Let us not be like those Jesus described in **Matthew 13:13-14** - 13 **"Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."**14 **"And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; - (NKJV)**

By Ralph Joiner 1998

"TO KNOW TRUTH IS TO LIVE TRUTH"