

THE BIBLE, OUR GUIDE TO SALVATION

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The knowledge that God does exist should make all people want to discover what His plan for mankind is and how we can go about fulfilling that plan. Solomon said, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man” (Ecc. 12:13). Paul declared to Timothy, “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Understanding that the Bible makes us complete, we can rest assured that what is recorded therein is completely accurate. After comforting the disciples about his impending departure Jesus said, “**I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**” (Jn. 14:6). Since it is through Christ that we reach the Father and eternal life, let us notice the plan put forth that allows us to gain entrance into the body of Christ which is the church (Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:18). The gospel itself is an account of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-8). Paul explained to the Roman Christians that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was what justified man before God (Rom. 3:9-12; 5:6-11). Because of His great love for us God desires that all people hear, believe, and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Tim. 2:4).

The first step toward salvation is the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Paul said, “But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 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” (Rom. 10:8-9). He also declared, “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” (Rom. 10:10). From this section of scripture we conclude that belief and confession is mandatory if one wants to be saved. However, there is no single passage in the Bible that gives the complete plan of salvation.

The second step is repentance for sin. Paul said, “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom. 2:4). This is what Peter commanded those on Pentecost to do, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Like a puzzle, after putting the pieces together, we conclude that belief, repentance, and confession are mandatory for one to gain salvation.

However, like a puzzle, there is still a missing piece. Paul told the Romans that it was through baptism that we are united with Christ, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:3-5). Recall the words of Peter on Pentecost telling those to whom he preached the purpose of baptism, which was “for the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38). Peter **did not say** the purpose of baptism was to join a denomination, to demonstrate one’s desire to follow Jesus, or to show that grace and salvation was received at a prior point. What Luke did record for us after Peter’s sermon was, “Then they that gladly received his word

were baptized: and the same day there were **added** *unto them* about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). Those that wanted to please God and do as He commanded submitted to baptism after having met the requirements that led to baptism. These people did not “join the church of their choice,” rather God “added” them to His church (Acts 2:41, 47).

The requirements mentioned are God’s requirements for salvation. If we are going to please God, we must heed His words, not those of men (Mt. 28:18; Acts 4:19)!