

## The Plan of Salvation according to the Bible

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- Romans 6:23 – *“For the wages of sin is death.”*
- Romans 3:23 – *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”*
- 1 John 1:8 – *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”*
- So applying these Scriptures, you may think “All have sinned (so that includes me). And the wages of sin is death. Then why bother changing my life?”
- The answer: because there is more to those Scriptures.
  - 1 John 1:9 – *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*
  - Romans 6:23 – *“...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
  - Romans 3:24 – *“and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”*
- Yes, we all sin and yes, the wages of sin is death but it doesn’t end there
  - There exists a gift of God – eternal life in Christ Jesus
  - A gift that brings redemption, justification, and forgiveness
- Now it is also clear that not everyone will obtain this gift
  - Revelation 20:15 – *“If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”*
  - There’s a **lake of fire** reserved for those whose name was not found written in the book of life
- So how do we obtain this gift?
- How do we get our names written in the book of life and avoid the lake of fire?
- A question that unfortunately is answered differently depending on who you ask
  - And if you’ve ever pointed that out, perhaps you’ve been told “well, people interpret Scripture differently, but here’s our (this particular denomination’s) take on it”
- But is that true?
  - **Matthew 7:21-23** – *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*
  - These are people who will think that they were serving the Lord while they were living but are going to be rejected by Jesus upon judgment. Why?
  - **2 Peter 3:16** – *“He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, **which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.**”*
  - These people will be rejected because they apparently distorted the Scriptures
  - So if you can distort the Scriptures, is there really multiple ways to interpret the Scriptures that tell us how to get to heaven?

- Titus 2:1 – *“You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.”*
  - This of course implies that it is possible to not teach sound doctrine and going back to 2 Peter 3:16 – that would lead to your destruction as well as the destruction of those who are being taught because they’re not getting sound doctrine either
  - Scripture is not open to man’s interpretation (2 Peter 1:20-21)
  - So when God says something, there is a meaning – 1 meaning, 1 plan of salvation in the case of this sermon
  - And this sermon is not going to provide my thoughts/interpretations on this topic, rather only what the Bible says on the topic
  - First thing – division (denomination) is forbidden (1 Corinthians 1:10-17)
  - Think of a fraction – the bottom number is known as the denominator because it divides the top number (the numerator)
  - It is Christ’s church (Matthew 16:18)
    - He is the only way we can possibly make it to the Father (John 14:6, Acts 4:12)
    - Teaching in the name of anyone else or anything else is forbidden (Galatians 1:6-9)
- Hopefully I’ve made it abundantly clear that there is but 1 path to heaven, but if not – consider the following additional Scriptures
  - John 14:6 – *“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”*
  - Acts 4:12 (Peter speaking of Jesus) – *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”*
    - Jesus is the only way – nothing else will get you to the Father (this is singular, not plural)
  - 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10
    - This Scripture tells us a few things
    - 1 – there is a gospel of our Lord Jesus and by this gospel, we can be saved (Romans 1:16) – again, this is singular not plural
    - 2 – to not know it, to not obey it, or to not believe it is to face God’s wrath eternally
  - So what is this 1 gospel?
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
  - This gospel is of 1<sup>st</sup> importance – above your jobs, even above your family
  - Christ died for our sins, was buried, raised from the dead, and appeared to many to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that He had truly been raised from the dead
- It is this gospel that you must hear and if you haven’t heard before, you have now heard
  - Romans 10:17 – *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*
  - Do not take my word for it though – read the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and you will find that this is true

- Jesus did die (Matthew 26-27), was buried (Mark 15:42-47), arose from the dead (Luke 24), and appeared to many (John 20-21)
- Once you have heard this, read this, and understood this – you must believe it

- John 3:16-21

- To believe in the gospel of Jesus is to not perish, but have eternal life
- To not believe is to be condemned
- But what is belief? Is it mere mental assent?
- This is the question that many will teach that the answer to is yes and they will say that this is the conclusion of the plan of salvation on man's part
- But is that true? What does vs 19-21 say?
- Light has come into the world, but there is still darkness in the form of evil and those who live this way hate the light
- Vs 21 – *“But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”*
- Not only does the truth exist (1 Corinthians 15:1-8 as we've discussed), not only must you believe it, but apparently belief here implies action – we must live by the truth
- How do we live by the truth? *“...what he has done has been done through God.”*
- If our actions aren't God's actions through us, if we aren't obedient to what God tells us, then we're not living a life that will lead to salvation
- And if we just have mere mental assent, have we demonstrated our belief by our actions – have we been obedient to the entirety of God's Word (the Bible)?
- God's Word tells us that there are additional steps that we must meet if we wish to receive the gift of salvation

- James 2:14-25

- Again, is mere mental assent enough?
- If that's all you have and if the plan of salvation stops there, what different are you than a demon? Are demons saved?
- Again, one may say that sure demons believe, but they don't confess – we'll examine this shortly
- This Scripture gives numerous applications of this idea
  - If someone has a need that you know about and you wish them well but do nothing to help them – what good have you done?
  - Was Abraham considered righteous before or after he offered Isaac as a sacrifice based on God's direction? His faith was completed by his actions
  - Was Rahab considered righteous before or after she lodged the spies?
- Matthew 16:27 – *“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to **what he has done.**”*

- Jesus is going to distribute the reward of eternal salvation based on what we've done, not on what we believe
        - Many will take this and claim that I and my fellow brethren in the church of Christ teach works salvation. This is not true. Continue reading and I'll prove it – I will address this shortly.
    - To further support these claims, belief is necessary for salvation
      - Romans 10:9, Acts 16, Mark 16:16, John 11:25, Romans 3:22-24, Hebrews 11:6, etc.
    - And belief is not mere mental assent, but is obedience
      - John 3:36, Romans 1:5, Romans 16:26, Matthew 7:21, Acts 16, Acts 19, Galatians 5:6, etc.
- Once you've heard and believed, you must make a confession upon your belief
  - **Matthew 10:32-33**
    - To acknowledge Christ is for Him to acknowledge you – wonderful news
    - However, to disown Christ is for Him to disown you
    - Notice, this confession must be before men (Romans 10:9 further adds that this confession must be made with your mouth)
    - So it must be public in nature
    - One cannot be a Christian in name only
    - Ephesians 4:1 – *“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”*
    - Matthew 25:31-46 – you can deny Christ by your actions or lack of actions in this case
    - 1 Peter 4:4 – your life as a Christian should make those around you scratch their head. *“Why does he/she not participate in the things we do? This is strange.”*
  - As mentioned earlier, there are many who likely teach that belief and confession alone are necessary for salvation
  - I discussed previously that demons believe and are not saved, but note that demons have also confessed that Jesus is Lord with their mouth – but they are still not saved. They are still demons.
    - Acts 16:16-18, Acts 19:13-16, Mark 5:1-13, Mark 3:11, etc.
    - All these Scriptures prove that not only do demons believe (James 2:19), but they confess that Jesus is Lord – they know who He is. Yet they are still not saved.
  - God's plan of salvation continues. It does not stop with belief and confession. This is not my opinion, not my interpretation, this is sound Biblical doctrine (Titus 2:1).
- Once you've heard, believed, and confessed you must repent of your former way of life and submit your life to Christ
  - By definition, repentance is a turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion and a turning back to God. It is a change of mind that produces a change in action.

- **Luke 5:31-32** – *“Jesus answered them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’”*
- There is but 1 church (Ephesians 4:4 & Ephesians 1:22-23) and it is the Lord’s (Matthew 16:18) and the Lord’s church is not a museum but a hospital
- Jesus did not come to hang out with the righteous and then go back to heaven – He came to provide a way of healing for the sin-sick souls
- And when your soul is in that state and you realize it, if you want the gift of salvation then you must submit your life to Christ – not conforming to the pattern of the world any longer (Romans 12:1-2)
- It is also important to note that repentance is a gift (Acts 11:18)
- The only reason God has not sent Christ back to earth to redeem His own is because He wants everyone who will to come to the repentance that he has granted us (2 Peter 3:9)
- Other Scriptures that describe repentance as being necessary for salvation include the following
  - Acts 2:37-39, Luke 13:3, 2 Corinthians 7:8-11, Luke 15, Acts 26:20, Luke 3:8, etc.
- Once you’ve done all this, you must be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 22:16)
  - This is the step that many will leave out and claim that it is not necessary for salvation – again, to their own destruction though (2 Peter 3:16)
  - This is not my interpretation of Scripture, this is me pointing out what Scripture says
  - Many times you will hear that you are baptized **because** of the remission of sins (not **for** the remission of sins) or that baptism is not necessary for salvation but necessary for discipleship
    - Acts 22:16 is clear that this baptism is **for** the remission of sins not **because** of the remission of sins
    - Acts 2:38 is also clear on this matter – **for** the remission of sins, not **because of**
    - To the second point above, this logic dictates that one can receive the gift of salvation without being a disciple of Christ. This argument makes no sense and is not Biblical
    - Matthew 16:24-28
      - We are seeking Jesus for the gift of salvation as we’ve been discussing up to this point
      - Jesus says here in vs 24 *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*
      - Does this sound as if one can be in a saved state without being a disciple of Christ?
- **Acts 8:26-40**
  - The eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53
  - Invites Philip to come into his chariot and explain the passage
  - Vs 35 – *“Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.”*

- What did Philip teach him? We can't be 100% sure of everything that was taught, but we know *"the good news about Jesus"* was taught
- Vs 36 – *"As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?'"*
- What must we conclude based on these Scriptures?
- We must conclude that the good news about Jesus includes baptism
- Vs 37 – *"Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' The eunuch answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'"*
- Here, we have the answer to what many people ask about Mark 16:16. Why does the first part of the verse mention baptism, but the second doesn't?
  - 1 – do you believe the first part of the verse?
  - 2 – if one does not believe, therefore, one cannot have a legitimate baptism
  - A legitimate baptism that leads to salvation is for the remission of sins (Acts 22:16, Acts 2:38) to put on Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:27)
  - Any other reason is an illegitimate baptism, and therefore, did not start with the Biblical definition of belief
  - Therefore, the second part of Mark 16:16 does not need to state that lack of baptism leads to condemnation – it is a necessary inference from the context of Mark 16 and the many other Scriptures that discuss this subject
  - On the topic of legitimate baptism vs illegitimate baptism – we have Acts 19:1-7 to refer to
  - Acts 19:1-7 describes 12 men who were baptized by John's baptism (solely a baptism for repentance – not to get into Christ as well, as Christ hadn't died, been buried, and arose yet)
  - When Paul corrected them, they were baptized into the Lord Jesus
- Back to Acts 8, how do we know that baptism is immersion vs sprinkling, pouring, etc.?
  - Vs 38 – both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water
  - Vs 39 – they came out of the water
- This is the step that many tend to miss, so I will give one more example with details
- **Romans 6:1-11**
  - Vs 2 – we died to sin. How?
  - Vs 3 – through baptism we were baptized into Christ's death
  - We will not enter heaven in sin (Romans 6:23)
  - Christ physically died, was buried, and arose (1 Corinthians 15:1-8)
  - We cannot physically die, be buried, and rise from the dead today
  - So how must we rid ourselves of our old body of sin for the new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17)?

- Vs 4 – *“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”*
    - If we have been united with Christ in death in the form of baptism, only then will we be raised with Him in newness of life (vs 5-10)
    - Only baptism does that. Belief and/or confession alone do not do this. They are a part of the plan of salvation, but there’s more – neither one or both combined cannot put our old self to death
    - Does this sound like the work of man? What man could possibly think of this?
  - There are many other Scriptures that state that baptism is necessary for salvation
    - Matthew 28:19-20, John 3:5, Acts 2:37-39, Acts 16:11-34, Acts 10:46-48, Acts 9:17-19, 1 Peter 3:18-22, Colossians 2:9-12
- Once you’ve done all this, you must not turn your back on Christ – you must continue to serve him faithfully until you are no longer in this world
  - **Revelation 2:8-11**
    - The church at Smyrna was about to suffer persecution
    - Jesus says that those who remain faithful through it will be given the crown of life
    - It is possible to leave God once you’ve taken all the necessary steps of salvation
    - Of the people who do this though, they are equated to a dog who returns to its vomit or a clean sow who has gone back to the mud (2 Peter 2:21-22)
    - You must guard yourself from falling away
- In conclusion, many will read this and say I’m teaching works salvation
  - 1 – what I’ve just laid out is taken directly from the Bible, this contains none of my own interpretation of anything – simply the unadulterated words of the Bible
  - 2 – this is not works salvation, this is the gospel of Christ
  - Obedience to this gospel is essential for salvation (2 Thessalonians 1:8)
  - I just discussed 1 example of a conversion from Acts, but the book of Acts is full of conversions that begin with belief and end with baptism – Acts 2, 8, 10, 16, 18, 19, 22
    - Repentant believers heard the gospel and obeyed it by being baptized
    - This is not my opinion nor interpretation of anything – this is me pointing out the Scriptural truth
  - When we meet God’s terms for obtaining the gift of salvation, we still do not deserve salvation
  - **Ephesians 2:8-9**
    - This does not teach that there is nothing that we must do to be saved
    - Rather, it teaches that we can’t earn salvation – it is only obtained by God’s grace through faith (vs 8-9) which is complete by obedience to the gospel (James 2:22)
    - Consider the following example: I tell you I have \$100 in my pocket – all you must do is stand up, walk to me, and I will give it to you

- Do you believe me? If so, would you not take the necessary action to receive the \$100 if you wanted it
    - If you don't take the necessary action, would you receive the \$100 whether you provide me with your mental assent or not?
    - If you do believe and take the action to receive the \$100, did you earn it or was it a gift from me?
    - The plan of salvation is no different – we must not throw aside all logic when it comes to Biblical principles
  - The irony comes when those who will claim that I am teaching works salvation must apply their same logic to what they are teaching
    - The one that I've heard numerous times is that baptism = work, work does not = salvation, therefore baptism does not = salvation
    - John 6:28-29 – belief is a work
    - By this logic, belief is not necessary for salvation
    - However, we all know that it is necessary for salvation according to many Scriptures we've discussed in this sermon
    - But so are the other steps: hearing, confession, repentance, baptism, and living faithfully
    - Therefore, this logic is flawed and a misinterpretation of Ephesians 2
- Still others will say "What about the thief on the cross? He was not baptized and yet we are told that he would be with Christ in paradise."
  - 1 – how do you know the thief wasn't baptized? There is no indication in Scripture that confirms or denies his baptism
  - 2 – Jesus Himself performed this – He is the judge (John 5:26-29, 2 Timothy 4:1)
    - His plan of salvation for us today has been discussed in this sermon
    - At this time though (Jesus was not dead yet), the old law of Moses was still in effect (Hebrews 9:16-18)
    - The new law is what governs us now and went into effect at Jesus' death (Hebrews 9:16-18)
    - We live under the new law (Romans 7:1-6) and will be judged by it (Romans 2:2, 6-12, 16)
- In conclusion, the plan of salvation is simple
  - 2 Kings 5:1-14 describes the story of a man named Naaman who had leprosy
    - vs 10 – Elisha (as directed by God, of course) tells Naaman to wash 7 times in the Jordan River to rid him of his leprosy
    - Naaman did not like this direction – thought he should be healed by doing nothing on his part (vs 11)
    - Vs 12 – he thought he should be healed in his own way
    - None of this would have worked
    - Vs 13 – Naaman receives wise advice from his servants



- *“My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed’!”*
- The Bible describes a simple plan of salvation – just follow it
  - Naaman was cleansed of his leprosy only after he was obedient to Elisha’s instructions – nothing else would have led to his cleansing
- Similarly, we must follow God’s plan of salvation today as described in the Bible