

God's Plan of Salvation

The Bible teaches that you and I are sinners (Romans 3:10,23). As such, we are displeasing to God (Psalm 5:5). Our sins, like a brick wall, separate us from Jehovah (Isaiah 59:1,2). They separate us from the One who is going to judge this world, the One who has the power to cast us into eternal hell or take us into eternal glory in heaven at Judgment (Matthew 7:21-23; 25:31-46).

Certainly all of us desire to avoid the punishment of hell and to go to heaven, but how can we accomplish this desire if we are sinners who stand separated from God? Were it not for the grace of God, we could not accomplish it at all (Matthew 19:25,26; Titus 2:11).

Ephesians 2:8 states, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."* That *"gift of God"* is *"eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Romans 6:23). Prompted by His perfect love, God gave His only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, as a sacrifice for our sins (John 3:16). The penalty for sin has to be paid. Because of God's grace and love, He does not want us to have to pay that penalty (though we hasten to mention that God's perfect justice demands that those who do not obey the Lord be punished – Deuteronomy 32:4). The blood of His Son that was shed on a cross on the hill of Calvary nearly 2000 years ago paid the price for sin.

Our sins **CAN** be forgiven. We **CAN** be pure in the sight of God **IF** we will be washed in the soul-saving blood of Christ that is made available to every sinner. But how are we washed in this blood? God's grace saves us, but His grace alone does not save. It is by His grace that everyone has the opportunity to be saved and it is by His grace that some will be saved, but not everyone will be saved in eternity (Matthew 7:13,14). Only those who obey the Lord's Gospel and thus are washed in the blood of Christ will have the hope of eternal life (Revelation 1:5).

Again referring to Ephesians 2:8, we learn that faith plays a part in our salvation. By His grace, God provides salvation but **WE** must do something to receive it. We must believe (have faith) not only in Him (Hebrews 11:6), but also in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (John 8:24). **BUT**, faith alone is not sufficient to save us from our sins (James 2:24). James 2:19 says that the devils believe, but they are not saved. Faith that is not put into action is a dead faith that is useless (James 2:20).

The New Testament very clearly tells us how to act on our faith so as to secure the blessing of forgiveness of sins. With the faith that we gained from God's Word, the Bible, firmly planted in our hearts and minds (Romans 10:17), we learn from the Bible of our sinful state. Knowing that we don't want to continue our lives as lost sinners, the next logical step for us to take is repentance. To repent means to change one's direction, to turn from one's devotion to Satan and turn to a devotion to God. Jesus stated that we all **MUST** repent (Luke 13:3). Peter indicated the same in Acts 2:38 and 3:19.

Faith and repentance are still not enough to secure Divine forgiveness. In the New Testament book of Acts, sometimes called the book of conversions, we have an example of a believing, penitent sinner making a public confession of Christ. *"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,"* he declared. (Acts 8:37). Jesus had earlier stated that confession of belief in Him was necessary

(Matthew 10:32,33). The apostle Paul later wrote that confession is made unto (in order to receive) salvation, "*for the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*" (Romans 10:10,11).

Faith, repentance and confession still fall short of the blood of Christ. II Timothy 2:10 says that salvation is **IN** Christ Jesus. The alien sinner has to get **INTO** Christ somehow, but nowhere does the Bible say that we can believe into Christ. Nowhere does Sacred Scripture tell us that we can repent into Christ. The Divine record contains not one statement that says we can confess into Christ. How then can we get into Christ and be washed in the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb of God (Hebrews 9:13,14)?

One passage of the Bible answers this question for us. Galatians 3:27 speaks of people who had been baptized (immersed) *INTO* Christ. Verse 28 speaks of them being **IN** Christ Jesus. They got there by virtue of their immersion into Christ.

The absolute necessity of immersion to be saved is taught in several New Testament passages (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3ff; I Peter 3:21). This immersion is to be the one authorized by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in God's Word (Matthew 28:19). It is the one immersion mentioned in Ephesians 4:4-6, namely, immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ.

Faith, repentance, confession and immersion for the remission of sins form man's part of being saved. These are not man-made works, for no one shall be saved by works that man creates (Ephesians 2:9). These are acts of obedience that God has mandated in His Word, acts that we **MUST** do if we want to break down the wall of sin that stands between us and Him.

Following these steps of salvation and rising up from the waters of immersion, not only is one a new creature (II Corinthians 5:17), but he is then a member of the Lord's church, the one and **ONLY** one Jesus promised to build (Matthew 16:18). The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47).

His church is not a denomination but is the one body into which all who want to be saved in eternity must come (Ephesians 1:22,23; 4:4-6; 5:23; II Timothy 2:1). Only those who have obeyed the Gospel and thus become members of the Lord's church can be called Christians (Acts 11:26).

Won't you, dear reader, read the scriptures that have been cited, examine them carefully and let them sink deeply into your heart? Won't you then muster the courage to obey the Lord? Your sins will be washed away, you will become a servant of the Lord (Romans 6:17,18) and a part of His family (Ephesians 3:10-15) and you will have the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:1,2; I John 2:25), a hope that will become reality in Judgment if you will only continue to follow the Word of God exclusively all the days of your Christian life on earth (II Timothy 4:7,8; Hebrews 10:36). May God bless you as you do His will.