

The Simplicity of God's Plan of Salvation

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. The five steps to salvation described throughout the New Testament are an endless source of controversy among religionists today.
 - 1. Universal Salvationists discount all five steps.
 - 2. Calvinists take exception to the fifth.
- B. How a man accepts the grace of God... If I offer a child \$20 if he will come up and take it from my hand, he clearly has not worked to earn the money, but at the same time, he has complied with my conditions.
 - 1. God designed a system in which sinners hear and believe the Savior, repent of their sins, confess that faith, and enter the spiritually cleansing waters of baptism, and the sinner has not worked to earn his salvation any more than the kid holding my \$20.
 - 2. Both have what they desired by the grace of a benevolent benefactor.
- C. There are five steps to salvation described in the New Testament; we will discuss them today in hope that one will reach out and accept God's grace.

I. A PATTERN OF DOCTRINE

A. Patterns

- 1. A pattern is a form that can be followed over and over to produce the same results.
 - a. Examples include legal forms, templates, recipes, dress patterns and instruction books.
 - b. Ex. 25:9, 40
- 2. Noah and Solomon had patterns from God to build the ark and temple
- 3. Moses received a pattern from God on the mountain that created.
Judaism - Heb. 8:4-6
- 4. God designed a pattern of mercy to the most heinous of sinners, Saul.
 - a. 1Tim. 1:12-16
 - b. His faithful behavior became a pattern that Christians could follow in order to imitate Christ.
 - c. 1Cor. 11:1; Titus 2:6-8

B. Pattern of Salvation

- 1. We follow it from the heart - Rom. 6:17-18
 - a. "That form of doctrine" is a pattern produced by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and preserved by sound and constant teaching.
 - b. The pattern of salvation is one that must be strictly followed, as much as a template, legal form, or recipe must be followed to produce the expected results.
- 2. If Noah had tossed aside God's ark blueprints, his ark would have sunk.
- 3. Casting aside the New Testament pattern has the same effect on our pursuit of mercy; adherents end up looking much different and their faith fails to save them from the flood of sin.

II. THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD'S PLAN

A. Hear the Gospel

1. God could have forced men to believe him by possessing their minds and giving them no choice, but he selected a more difficult and honorable route, allowing them to exercise free will, choose to believe.
2. God created a plan of salvation that depends on the power of words - Rom. 1:16; John 6:68
 - a. Rather than an armed invasion as Mohammed led, salvation is obtained by something as intangible as an idea - John 8:28-32
3. God enables people to hear the message - Rom. 10:14-17
4. Before Jerusalem fell to the Roman armies in A.D. 70, the Gospel had been preached throughout the world - Matt. 24:14; Col. 1:6

B. Believe the Gospel

1. A small percentage of those who hear the message actually believe it, and they alone continue in the plan of salvation - John 3:13-21
2. Believing from the heart involves accepting Jesus as Savior, the son of God, born of a virgin, and raised from the dead to sit on David's throne.
 - a. For that original Jewish audience accustomed to living under the Law of Moses, it must have seemed almost too good to be true, for there had never been any way to remove the guilt of sin - Rom. 4:5-8
 - b. Faith is man's response to God's offer of grace when the individual realizes his own efforts at salvation have fallen short - Eph. 2:8-10; Isa. 64:6
 - c. It is the only means to live righteously, to be forgiven fully of iniquity and declared just - Rom. 3:21-26
3. But even demons believe that Jesus Christ is real; there must be something that distinguishes Christian faith from the ordinary acceptance of facts.
 - a. Faith is apprehension, trust, conviction, and commitment - 2Tim. 2:12
 - b. Salvation is by grace through faith, but faith is not belief apart from action - James 2:14-17
 - c. James is not working to earn his salvation; true faith won't allow inaction; it cannot be passive.

C. Repent of Sins

1. The people on the day of Pentecost had participated in the crucifixion of Jesus, and it was imperative, not only that they should change their opinion of him, but that they should repent of that sin - Acts 2:36-38
2. Repentance is logical, for it is sin that the plan of salvation is meant to remove, and sin cannot be removed if one clings to it stubbornly - Acts 3:19
3. The pattern develops as God no longer overlooks human ignorance - Acts 17:30
 - a. The very fact that time continues is evidence that the goodness of God waits for people to repent - 2Peter 3:9; Rom. 2:4

b. Repenting of sins is a necessary prerequisite to forgiveness -
2Cor. 7:10-11

4. If one is saved, it will be an escape from their sins, not an excuse to
continue living in them.

D. Confess Christ as the Son of God

1. When the Ethiopian eunuch heard the Gospel, he responded, "I believe
that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" - Acts 8:37

2. Timothy's confession was made before many witnesses - 1Tim. 6:12

3. Confession is a necessary part of the pattern.

a. Rom. 10:8-10; Matt. 10:32

b. There is no middle option between confession and denial -
John 12:42-43

c. Silence is denial, for it overcomes faith with carnal concern that
prevents salvation.

E. Be Baptized

1. A believer has the right become a child of God - John 1:10-13

2. He can be born again of water and the Spirit - John 3:3-6

3. Jesus made baptism part of the Great Commission - Mark 16:15-16

a. The people on Pentecost were told to be baptized for the
forgiveness of their sins - Acts 2:38

b. Many of the Corinthians heard, "believed and were baptized" -
Acts 18:8

c. Baptism was the next step after the Ethiopian eunuch made his
confession - Acts 8:35-38

4. Water baptism imitates the burial and resurrection of Jesus, binding the
believer to him in restoration of life - Rom. 6:3-7

Conclusion:

A. When a man has believed, he has done nothing to merit God's mercy.

B. When he has repented of his sins, he still deserves only their wages... death.

C. He may then confess Christ and be baptized for the remission of sins, but he
still has only accepted grace; he has done nothing to deserve the favor God
will show him.

D. These five steps only form the pattern by which God extends his mercy to you.