

DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO TO BE SAVED?

By Roelf L. Ruffner

Christians often emphasize baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) when teaching what one must do in order to be saved. This is necessary because the religious world often ignores, de-emphasizes and twists this command. But what about the other steps in God's Plan of Salvation: Hearing, Believing, Repentance and Confession?

HEARING THE WORD

This dying world needs to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the beginning of salvation; the ignition of faith. "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). I do not recall when I heard my first sermon. As a child I heard the Plan of Salvation many times. But millions have never heard the word of God preached in its fullness. They may "go to church" every Sunday but are only entertained or fed a false gospel delivered by a cursed person (Gal. 1:9). Some brethren seek to hide it with funny stories, weepy testimonials, and motivational talks. But the starving spirit needs spiritual food, the thirsty soul needs the water of life and the lost need direction. The eldership and/or the men of church need to ask themselves, "Are we hearing the word of God or something else?" "Are we providing opportunities for the Gospel to be heard by others: sermons, Bible studies, Gospel meetings, tracts, lectureships, newspaper articles, radio and television programs, the internet, etc.?"

BELIEVING THE WORD

Our world and even some congregations of Christ's brethren are filled with unbelievers. Unbelief comes in many forms: atheists, agnostics, religious people who say they are Christians but are not, followers of false gods, followers of men, and apostate Christians. Some like the Pharisee (cf. Luke 18:9-14) thump their chests and proclaim, "I believe in Jesus." But their lives and works betray their unbelief (Mat. 7:21-23). Other self-professed "believers" hold to the false doctrine of eternal security and maintain that they ONCE believed in Jesus as the Christ and were saved by "faith alone." But belief or saving faith is a continuous action verb. "*He that believeth.....shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). We must believe the Gospel and continue to believe it in order to be saved. If we stop believing in Jesus as God's Son, fail to obey

His word and continue in that state of unbelief, we won't be saved. "...*but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:16). Some maintain that belief in Jesus is all that is necessary for salvation. But faith without works of obedience is "dead" or lifeless (James 2:26) and won't save even a church mouse. "*He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (John 3:36 – ASV).

REPENTANCE

In Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost A.D. 30 an all Jewish audience heard the apostle Peter and the eleven other apostles inspired of the Holy Spirit proclaim that they were guilty of rejecting and murdering the Son of God. They exclaimed, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" (Acts 2:37). His answer was in the form of a command, "*Then Peter said unto them, 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). They had heard the word of God. But the next step was a change of mind and action – repentance. It was a step that at least 3,000 would take. There were many in that audience who believed in Jesus and felt guilty for this injustice but they chose not to repent of their sins. Sorrow for sin is only the beginning of genuine repentance (2 Cor. 7:10). But unless one acts on that guilt and repents of their sins salvation does not follow. "*But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir, and went not*" (Mat.21:28-30).

Our world needs to repent of so much! If each of us were able to remember the sins that we have committed before obeying the Gospel it would be a long list. "*For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*" (Rom.3:23). But few sinners want to take that necessary step of repentance and acknowledge that God is right and they are wrong. When David was confronted by the prophet Nathan concerning his sins of lust, adultery and murder he cried: "*I have sinned against the Lord*" (2 Sam. 12:13).

CONFESSION

Our Lord stated that confession of Him was essential to salvation and we must continue to confess Him to this dying world (Mat. 10:32, 33). In Jesus' day many religious leaders believed that Jesus was the Christ but they failed to confess Him before others (John 12:42-43). Confession of Jesus is as necessary to salvation as any

other of the steps in God's Plan of Salvation. Denominations often have someone recite or agree to a man-made confession of faith before accepting them as members. But the one example in the New Testament which records confession before one was baptized for the remission of sins. *“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:36, 37). The Ethiopian was merely affirming the Gospel he had heard from Phillip – Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Confession is no ritual and has no magical words or phraseology involved, only an admittance of one's agreement with the obvious (cf. Mat. 16:13-17; Rom.10:9, 10). It is the “good profession before many witnesses” (1 Tim.4:12) that Jesus is whom He claimed to be. *“Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?”* (Mark 14:61-63).