

The first step we must take toward obtaining forgiveness is HEAR. How can we know that forgiveness is available if we do not hear the Word of God. Romans 10:17 tells us "*So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*". Hearing is necessary to complete the rest of the plan of salvation set forth in the scriptures.

Romans 10:17, also tells us once we have heard the Word of God, it should produce faith. What is faith? In Hebrews 11:1 we find God's definition of faith "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*". Faith is necessary for salvation. Faith is believing in something that you have not seen, it is what our hopes are made up of. I have faith there is a Washington DC, though I have never been there, I place my belief on the fact that others have been there and seen it. I place my belief in Jesus, even though I have never seen Him, on the fact that others have, and testified of Him in the New Testament. We must understand that hearing the Word of God and having faith in it is not enough. In James 2:20,26 we read "*Faith without works is dead*". Just stating that I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God is not enough. The Lord taught in Matthew 7:21 "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*". Many of the rulers of that time believed in Jesus, as evidenced in John 12:42 "*Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him*". It is painfully clear that more is required of us than belief.

Once we have faith in Jesus, it should cause us to repent of the sins of this world, and desire to live a godly life. Repentance is defined in Vine's Expository Dictionary as a "change of mind involving both a turning from sin and a turning to God". Repentance is a change of direction, realizing the direction we had been following in is sin, and changing our direction to follow the Word of God. It involves a change of mind that makes us choose to go the way of the Lord, not the way of the world. In Romans 12:2 we read "*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*". In this verse we see the necessity of changing our mind to not conform, or follow along, with the things of the world, but to set our minds on things higher, hence, following the will of God. We also need to understand that as necessary as repentance is, it is not all. We must do more than believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and repent of our sins.

## God's Plan of Salvation

Written by Tim Henderson

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Once we have this faith in Jesus and we have set our minds toward things holy, then we must confess our belief that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. In the account in Acts chapter 8, Phillip went down and taught the Ethiopian Eunuch. After Phillip had preached to him about Jesus, the Eunuch asked "*what doth hinder me to be baptized?*" Phillip said "*If you believe with all your heart you may.*"

" And the Eunuch answered and said, "

*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*

". It was necessary that he confess his belief in Jesus. The Lord said in Luke 12:8 "*whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God*"

". Confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is a very important step towards salvation. It lets others know of your faith, and teaches them by your example of the necessity of believing in the Lord. We need to understand, too, that confession is not enough. As we saw previously in Matthew 7:21 "

*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven*

". It takes more than just confessing He is the Son of God. The demons confessed Him as the Son of God (see Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:23,24; 3:11; 5:7; Luke 8:28; Acts 19:15) but they were not saved.

We have shown that belief by itself is not enough, repentance by itself is not enough, and confession by itself is not enough. When we put all three together is that enough? Many today would teach this very doctrine. They use many of the same verses we have talked about to prove their doctrine. Many teach that all you have to do "is accept Christ into your heart and say the 'sinner's prayer'". If this is the case why do we not find the "sinner's prayer" printed in the Holy Spirit inspired Word of God. Not once is a reference made to the "sinner's prayer". If you can find a reference please point it out to me. In the account of Paul we find that he was a believer, he was visited by Christ, he prayed, he fasted (this shows that he was penitent, he had repented of his sins), he was even of a clear conscience. But was he saved? If there were ever a case for a "sinner's prayer" this is it, but we find that there was something more he needed to do to receive forgiveness of his sins, and the gift of eternal life. In Acts 22:16, Ananias, told Paul "*Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord*" ". He still lacked something and needed the cleansing power of water baptism to "*wash away his sins*". He had already shown repentance, and was praying to God. Now if a "sinner's prayer" is all that was needed, why did Ananias command that Paul be baptized to wash away his sins? 1 Pet. 3:21 states "

*There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

" This antitype is referring to the ark which was built by Noah and in which eight souls were saved. Just as Noah was saved by the water that bore the ark, so are we saved by the water that puts us into the body of Christ. Through water baptism we receive the cleansing power of the blood of Christ.

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Baptism by itself does not save us, just like faith, repentance and confession are not sufficient alone. Yet when we put all of these together, we can obtain salvation. Can we stop here? NO! We must continue in the will of God. This is not a one time deal, we must continue to obey the will of the Father. Remember, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 7:21) Obedience to the Father is necessary.

Let us all set our mind to obey the will of the Father.

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