Christ's Plan of Salvation

Compliments of Brethren
of the
Church of Christ

Complied and Prepared
by
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Before a discussion of salvation can begin, there are several questions you must ask yourself:

A. Do you believe that God is the only divine power in existence?
B. Do you believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God?

If you do not believe either of the above statements, the words that follow in this booklet are not likely to be of any benefit to you. We do not intend with this booklet to offer the arguments for or against these two questions. This booklet is designed for those who already believe the above and want to know more.

Since you believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, please read the following selection from II Tim. 3:16,17 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." It is only then through a study of the scriptures that we will be able to move towards that perfection and have all knowledge necessary for salvation.

Let us use the scriptures as our guide. They will tell us things that we may not know or understand. Scriptures will inform us of events past, present, and future that affect our lives. An important past event is that Adam, the first man, because of his disobedience to God, brought sin to all of mankind. (See Rom. 5:14) Romans 5:18,19 reads, "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgement came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the

obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Rom. 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." In Rom. 6:23, the Apostle Paul explains, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Adam disobeyed many years ago and we continue to disobey today. If we choose to disobey as a way of life, then we have nothing to look forward to but death, because the reward of sin is death. If, on the other hand, we choose to obey God, then we are pleasing to Him and promised eternal life.

We would be doomed if it were not for the love of God that gives us a way to avoid eternal condemnation. What is this way? Rom. 10:1-4: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." It is God's desire that all mankind be saved. However, many wish to be saved on their own terms. They want to be Godly, but they do not look to the scriptures for guidance. Instead, they set their own standards and try to be righteous in their own sight. They have zeal, but not according to knowledge. They have not submitted themselves to God's righteousness, and that is the only righteousness that will save us.

God has a master plan governing the establishment of His righteousness. Part of this plan is that he appointed one to oversee the operation of it. The appointment was given to His Son, Jesus Christ, through whom eternal life is to be given. We turn to Matthew 17:5

to read of this appointment: “While he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (I Tim. 2:5) “Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) Christ explained the relationship between Himself and His Father: “Verily verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 5:24; 14:6)

The Apostle John sums up everything that has been discussed thus far in John 3:16-18, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

We just read that no man (or woman) can go to the Father except through Christ. We must then listen to Christ for directions. Listen to his words as recorded in John 3:5,7 “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” The obvious question then is, **What is the process of ‘being born again’?** Let us look to the scriptures for guidance.

Turn with me to Romans 10:13-15,17 “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This is contrary to the belief of many that faith is a “mystical” experience. There is no mystery about it. Faith comes only by hearing or reading the inspired word of God and the account of Christ and his teachings as revealed to us in the New Testament scriptures. John 20:31 . . . these are written that ye might believe . . . Our faith is a firm persuasion that what we have read or been told is true.

In what then do we place our faith?

A. We do not place our faith in the law Acts 13:38,39
B. We do not place our faith in the works of the law Gal. 2:16
C. We do not place our faith in man Acts 4:12
D. We do place our faith in God Mark 11:22
E. We do place our faith in Christ Acts 20:21

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him . . .” (him is God) Our faith in God is a firm persuasion in our heart and mind that God exists and that he rewards all people who obey Him. Whatever he commands us to do, whether through his Son or the Apostles, we do because our faith in God assures us these actions are right. Anything, then, we do without this faith (authorization of God) is sinful. (Romans 14:23)

Our study so far guides us to know what faith is, and that we need it to please God. But faith alone is not enough to save us. Why? James gives readers several good reasons: James 2:19-20 “Thou believest that there is one God; Thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” The devils believed in Christ’s existence and power. They were afraid of him and of his power over them (Refer to Matthew 8:29, Mark 1:24). If faith had been enough, the devils would be saved. James also assures us that faith without works is dead. When something is dead, it is useless or of no benefit to anyone. Faith is the same way. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (James 2:26,17) Our faith causes us to do works which is merely obedience to God’s instructions. It is our way of showing God we have faith. Christ asks, “And why call ye me Lord and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46) Recorded in Matthew 7:21, Christ explains the same principle again by saying, “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.” Faith and works, however, are still not enough; they are only several parts of the whole. Our faith begins our journey towards salvation and bolsters our spirit in times of doubt. As Paul told the Ephesians to, “take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked”, we do the same thing today to keep from being misled. (Ephesians 6:16)

Up until the time of Christ, people that were not Jews did not know God. They were ignorant (without knowledge) of God’s requirements. When Christ, by God’s authority, revealed the Gospel to the world, there

was no longer reason for ignorance. Paul tells the men of Athens, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30)

What is repentance? To understand this principle, we must lay a foundation. The mind controls all thought and decisions which lead to actions. There is nothing man does that is not preceded by a thought to do it. So must repentance also begin in the mind. Repentance is a change in the original thought, which leads to change in the action. What causes the repentance? Paul says, “For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation.” (II Cor. 7:10) We understand by studying the scriptures and through hearing God’s will that we are disobedient (Rom. 3:23). We are sorry for the way we have lived in the past and decide to live a more godly life in the future. This is God’s will and we must submit ourselves to it or be lost. Christ tells us in Luke 13:5, “Nay but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Repentance causes us to give up our own thoughts and ways and look to God for his guidance. But faith and repentance are not enough. If you stopped here, you may become a better person, but you would not have fully submitted yourself to God’s will.

When we were without God, our actions and words showed we were the servants of sin. But when we heard the word of God, and faith grew within us, causing us to repent of our past ways, we find ourselves servants to a new lord and master. As we serve our new master, we cannot conceal our belief and be pleasing to God. “For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” (Rom. 10:11). Since we are not ashamed of our new master, we are willing to publicly announce our belief that Jesus Christ is God’s son and appointed agent through whom eternal life is to be given. (Acts 4:12) The

apostle Paul told the Romans, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Rom. 10:9,10) “Unto salvation” means **towards** salvation. So it is clear that a confession of our belief is not merely a public show of our faith, but a mandatory step on our way **toward** salvation. Christ, himself, said, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 10:32) By turning to the eighth chapter of Acts, you may read an account of a man who made such a confession: 8:37 “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.**” But if you read the entire account, you will plainly see that confession alone did not save him. There yet remains one last step before salvation can be claimed.

This last step is mentioned many times in the New Testament, but is the one most often ignored. It is probably the most neglected step into salvation because it is the least understood. This final step is baptism. The man mentioned in Acts 8 (above) was baptized and so must all others who are born again. Please refer back to John 3:5; Christ says, those who enter into the kingdom of God must be born of water and the Spirit. Water is used by God as an instrument of cleansing or separation. A study of the Bible shows how God cleansed the earth from sin and separated Noah and his family from the unrighteous by water (Gen. 8). A continued study shows how Naaman was cleansed or separated from his disease of leprosy by water as directed by the prophet,

Elisha (2 Kings 5). Baptism is the name given to the act of symbolic cleansing from sin and separation from evil things and ways (sanctification). Referring to Noah, the apostle Peter says, "the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 3:21) Peter says baptism saves us. Not by itself, but because of our new attitude towards God and the fact that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Our new attitude towards God is shown by our faith, repentance, and confession, while the baptism shows the final separation from the world. By our going completely under the water (a watery grave) and coming out of the water, we signify death of our sinful self and rebirth (born again) of our spiritual self. We are also signifying Christ's death and resurrection which he did first for mankind as God's assurance that He will do the same for us.

The apostle Paul asks, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:3-4)

The second chapter of Acts has recorded for the world to read what a person must do once he realizes his sinful ways. Let us begin reading from verse 37. The question these sinners asked was, ". . . Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said, "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." Remission means forgiveness. Sins are forgiven so that we are clean. When we are clean, we are acceptable to God. (Please recall the beginning of this

study where it was established that man's sin caused man to be unacceptable to God and destined for death.) We have now come full-circle. Remission of sins (forgiveness) makes us clean in God's sight and reconciles us back to Him so that now He can look upon us as a new creature (born again) and without spot. Paul says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:17,18)

Baptism is what finally puts us into Christ's Body or into the Church. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about 3000 souls." (Acts 2:41) Baptism is essential and without it we fall short of entering the Kingdom of God. Christ said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16) Recorded in John 3:18 is a further explanation, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Notice that belief alone did not save, but neither did it condemn. But unbelief stops a person from going any further. If you do not believe, there is no use in repentance, confession, and baptism; you remain dead in your sins.

Christ our Lord and Savior addressed the eleven disciples before he left earth to join his Father. Among his last words to them were, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . ." (Matt.

28:18-20). Remember Christ's warning that not everyone that calls on him will be saved, but he that does the will of his Father in heaven (Matt. 7:21). We have just studied that will. ***We either obey it or we are lost.***

As you can see there is no lack of scripture dealing with baptism. Why is it, then, that so few teach and obey the **true gospel?**

The reasons are many:

A. The most common fallacy is: I know I'm right with God, I feel it in my heart. These people have faith, but "faith without works is dead." (James 2:26) But if 'faith only' saves us, then the devils will be with these people through eternity. ". .. the devils also believe" (James 2:19)
B. Another fallacy is: Baptism does not save us, so why should I be bothered? I Peter 3:21 says: " ... baptism doth also now save us .
C. Another is: No one ever rejected God by not being baptized. In Luke 7:30: "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being **not baptized of him.**"
D. Some say, "I don't have to be immersed, sprinkled is fine." But in Col. 2:12 we're told: "Buried with him in baptism ... " and in Matt. 3:16 "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water :..." also in Acts 8:39 "And when they were come up out of the water ...”
E. Another favorite is: All baptisms are the same. In Eph. 4:5 "One Lord, one faith, **one baptism.**"

Christ's parting words also give us direction for our Christian walk. (Matt. 28:18-20) As Christians, we are to teach others and baptize them when they become subjects for baptism. Then we are to teach the new

converts all things which have been commanded by Christ's words or the words of the Apostles which were inspired by God and are recorded in the New Testament.

The reason for the majority of error in understanding and applying the scriptures is the temptation to look for and use scriptures that fit a preconceived idea. But we cannot, in good conscience, choose certain verses and throw away others just to prove a point. Once you read the Word of God, you are obligated to consider all verses, put them together in a reasonable manner, and try to decide what God's intention and will is towards mankind. It is with this attitude that these verses were compiled and this booklet prepared.

Most denominations will not acknowledge repentance, confession, nor baptism as essential elements for salvation. Why not? Are they above God's ways? Are they afraid they will lose donations and contributions? Do they fear ridicule from others? The whys are unknown and perhaps go back several hundred years into a denomination's history. If these teachers cannot see and use all scriptures they must be blind. Christ said that if the blind lead the blind (without knowledge), they will both fall into the ditch. (Matt. 15:14).

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