

The Steps Of Salvation

If a baker decides to make a cake, he understands that he must follow certain steps in order to create the desired product. In the same way, I am afraid some members in the Lord's church, as well as people considering obeying the gospel view the plan of salvation in the same way. We commonly teach the steps of salvation as if it were a checklist, but unlike the baker's checklist to make a cake, the plan of salvation is something we should continually be involved in, rather than something we did in our past at one time.

Naturally, hearing precedes all other steps of salvation (Rom. 10:14) and leads people to faith (Rom. 10:17). We understand and accept this fact, but is listening to God's Word something we continually do as disciples, or learners, of Christ? The Bereans serve as a wonderful example to the Christian because they "*received the Word with great eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so*" (Rom. 17:11). They never stopped hearing and searching God's Word, and neither should we.

Belief follows hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:14) and is necessary for salvation (Heb. 11:6), but do we walk by faith continually? Paul told Timothy in 1 Tim.4:1 that "*the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith ...*" Paul specifically warns against having a faith that will not continue! As a positive exhortation, Peter also tells us to hold fast to our faith as a foundation for other attributes that will save our souls. Thus he says in 2 Pet. 1:5-7,10, "*... in your faith supply virtue ... knowledge ... self-control ... perseverance ... godliness ... brotherly kindness ... love ... for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.*" If we will continually hold fast to our faith and build on it with these attributes, we will be saved.

Peter tells us that repentance is necessary for salvation (Acts 2:38; 3:19), but never was there a suggestion anywhere in scripture that we should only repent once. As long as we sin, and we all sin, we will need to repent. This is by no means a license to sin (Rom. 6:1-2), and God will punish those who dare to use His grace in such a way (Heb. 10:26-31). If we only repented once, then we come dangerously close to the "once saved, always saved" doctrine.

Confession is readily accepted as a condition for salvation (Rom. 10:9-10), but is one confession enough? Jesus teaches us that our willingness to confess Him each time we are asked is the kind of confession that will save

us (Matt. 10:32f), even if it means facing death (Matt. 10:39). We should learn from the man born blind, who was ready to confess as many times as it took, for He said in John 9:27, *"I told you already and you did not listen."* Do we have this attitude of proclaiming Jesus as the Christ every day?

The Bible teaches that baptism is necessary for salvation (Acts 2:38; 8:12-13,36; 9:18; 10:47-48; 1 Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3f) and the action itself is a one-time event. The effects, however, are not a one-time effect. If we have been baptized into Christ, we have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27), and we never stop representing Christ. Romans 6:10-11 tells us that we died to sin, and are alive to Christ. Paul said it this way in Gal. 2:20: *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."* Paul had put to death his own life of sin in order to be pleasing to God. After we put Christ on in baptism, we never take Him off.

If we are continually hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and representing Christ through our baptism into Him, we are living faithfully.

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