

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

FUNDAMENTALS OF FAITH

“Lesson 3: The Plan of Salvation”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey

The greatest question ever asked is, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30-31.

Welcome to our study of fundamentals of the faith. Today we're thinking about one of the most fundamental subjects and questions ever, what must a person do to be saved? We want to encourage you today to locate your Bible. Be ready to use it as we're going to look to the word of God to answer this great question. It was asked several times in the scripture. Acts 2, when the Jews realized they had killed their own Messiah, their own Christ, they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts 2:37, when Saul of Tarsus, who is intent on doing harm to the Lord's church, is confronted with Christ on the road to Damascus, Saul asked, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" Probably the clearest and most concise question of all, as it relates to salvation is found in Acts 16:30-31, where the Philippian jailer says, "What, sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Consider your own salvation experience. If you're saved, then I want you to think about that experience. I want you to think about what you did. I want you to think about where you are. I want you to think about what steps you took by which you knew you were saved. All we ask today is that as you think about that, hold that up to the word of God today. let's make sure that we've done what God says one must do to be saved.

What does the Bible teach a person has to do to be saved? There are five basic steps as it relates to salvation. First, the Bible teaches, "I've got to listen to or hear God's word to be saved." With each of these steps in the plan of salvation, I want you to see that in your own Bible. Look in your Bible in Romans 10:17. The Bible teaches we must hear the word of God, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." To have faith, I've got to hear the word of God. Now you may say, 'Okay, that's all good and well, but I don't know that I see the essentiality of all that.' Let me back up and show you. First of all, the essentiality of faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith, it's impossible to please God, for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him." And so, from Hebrews 11:6, we clearly learn that you can't please God without faith. If that's true, then whatever way by which I get faith is essential to salvation, right? How do you get faith? Notice Romans 10:17 again? "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We want to emphasize the importance of listening carefully to what God says. Luke 8:18, "Take heed how you hear." Mark 4:24, "Take heed what you hear." Mark 9:7, 'this is my beloved son, hear Him.' And then there's that refrain that occurs in every one of the letters to the seven congregations in Asia Minor: "To him that has ears to hear, let him hear." As we think about the idea of hearing God's word, it is so essential that we listen carefully to exactly what God says.

When we think about the idea of hearing, it's one of the most basic steps in salvation, but it's also one that we kind of rush through without really thinking about what it means. What does it really mean to hear the word of God? I would submit to you that two very important things are emphasized in the scripture as it relates to hearing. Hearing the word of God means I've got to recognize the authority of God's word alone, its final authority. Let me illustrate that for you. Mark 9, Matthew 17. Jesus takes Peter, James and John up on that high mountain. He is there transfigured before them; his clothes begin to shine. These three men are beside themselves as it were. Peter, because he's afraid. He doesn't know what to say. He blurts out, "Lord, it's good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles. One for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." One of the accounts tells us before he even got those words completely out of his mouth, a voice from heaven came down saying, "This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased, hear him." Hearing the word of God means that I recognize Jesus's voice. The New Testament of Christ is our authority that we've got to follow today. Jesus has all authority. Matthew 28:18,

"Whatever I do in word or deed, I'm to do in the name of or by the authority of Jesus Christ." Colossians 3:17, it's that authority of Christ that's going to be my judge and yours. John 12:48, Jesus said, "He who rejects me "and does not receive my word has that what judges him. The word that I've spoken will judge him in the last day."

Then there's a second idea involved in hearing. Not only must I recognize the sole authority of Jesus and the New Testament on salvation, I've got to prove that what I am hearing is from the word of God. Let me give you a perfect illustration of what it means to hear correctly. Acts 17:11, the Bible says, "Oh, the Bereans, these were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness and searched the scriptures daily to see if these things were so." When we think about God's word as our authority, Paul gives us an illustration of what that means. Imagine this scenario: Paul comes to the door in Berea. He knocks on the door and he says, 'I've got a message from Jesus Christ. I'd like to talk to you.' What did those people do when they heard that? Did they shut the door in his face? No; they received it with all readiness. What's that mean? They said, 'Paul, come in and sit down.' Paul sat down. They sat down. He began to tell them about Christ, point them to the Old Testament scriptures. He did his best to persuade them that Jesus is the Messiah. What did they do next? Did they automatically accept what he said, hook, line and sinker? No; they said, 'Paul, we're glad you came by today. We've listened to what you said. We've taken notes. Now we're going to check it according to scripture.' They searched the scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Hearing the word of God correctly means we prove what we're being taught or what we're being told is true to the word of God. That's what God wants us to do. 'Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.' The reason being many false prophets have gone out into the world. And thus, we've got to test the spirits to see if they are of God. And so, to be saved first, I've got to listen to God's authority. I've got to hear what his word says on salvation.

Secondly, for a person to be saved, you absolutely must believe Jesus is the savior of the world. Open your Bible to John 8. Jesus is here speaking and notice what he says in John 8:24. "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins, for if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins." What do we know about Christ and salvation? If I don't

believe in Jesus, there's no way I can be saved. Acts 8, Philip is in that chariot, riding down the road, teaching the Ethiopian eunuch, and in the distance, he sees water. "Here's water; What hinders me?" What was the hindrance to that man being saved? "If you believe with all your heart, you may," Acts 8:37. We know belief is essential. A lot of people will say that all you've got to do is believe to be saved. Don't believe that lie. Now don't misunderstand what I'm saying. Is belief essential to being saved? Absolutely; but does the Bible teach faith only saves? Does the Bible teach I am saved at the point of belief? That's not what the Bible says. In fact, the only time the Bible uses the words "faith only" or "faith alone," God teaches that that alone will not save us. James 2:24 the Bible says, "You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only."

Isn't that amazing? When God speaks about 'faith only,' God says we're not justified by faith only. We're not talking about being justified by meritorious works, meaning that I can do enough good works, I can say enough things, I can be righteous enough on my own, and that my works will account. That's not the idea. In the Bible, there are meritorious works, which Jesus clearly taught would not save, and then there are conditional works. Did you know, belief is a conditional work from God that you must follow, but it alone won't save? John 6:29, this is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom he sent. Belief is a work. We've got a condition to meet. I can't beat my chest and look up to heaven and say, 'God, now I've earned salvation.'

And so yes, I must believe, but belief alone won't save. In fact, let me give you an illustration of how belief alone won't save. If this idea is true, if the idea that belief alone will save, anybody who just believes will be saved, right? That's not the case in the Bible, and we see a clear example of it also found in James 2:17-19. Jesus said, "Even the demons believe and tremble." If I take the doctrine, that belief only saves, logically I'm going to have to say the demons are saved. Why? Because they believe, yet they don't act on that. They just believe and shudder in terror. Does the Bible teach you've got to believe, or the passages that say you've got to believe to be saved? Sure. Are there passages that say you've got to repent? Are there passages that say you've got to be baptized or confess Christ? Sure, there are passages that may emphasize one idea, but we've got the entirety of God's word, Psalm 119:60. We've got to put the entirety of God's truth together on this subject.

Now let's then think about the third step in salvation. I also, not only do I have to hear, not only do I have to believe, Jesus taught to be saved, I've got to repent. Look in your Bible in Luke 13:3. Jesus said this. "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you'll all likewise perish." Some people came to Jesus and they were saying, 'What about these people who died at the time of sacrifice? What about these people who were walking down the road and the tower falls on them?' In essence, they were saying, 'Weren't they worse sinners than everybody else?' And Jesus said, "No, unless you repent, you'll all likewise perish." For a person to be saved, the Bible clearly teaches you've got to repent. Acts 3:19, "Repent and be converted or turn, that your sins may be blotted out." Repentance is a changed way of thinking that leads to a changed way of acting. It's a changed will that leads to a changed way. If I'm going to repent, I've got to change my way of thinking. I've got to change my way of acting. I know that's the case for John said to certain people who came out to be baptized just because everybody else was doing it. In Luke 3:8, he said, "Brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" And then he said, "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." Real repentance is indicated by a change of lifestyle. Not only do I know it's wrong and I'm sincerely sorry about that, but I changed my lifestyle with that as well. And so, if a person's going to be saved, he must repent of sin.

Then the Bible teaches a fourth step. I must confess Christ as Lord and as savior. Romans 10:10 says, "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." When we talk about this idea of confession, we're talking about verbally saying what is taught to be said when one recognizes Jesus is Lord. Let me give you some examples of that. Acts 8, you remember we mentioned Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch? He's riding down the road. "Here's water; What hinders me?" "If you believe with all your heart, you may," "I believe Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God," Acts 8:36-37. Jesus taught acknowledging that was essential to salvation. Listen to Jesus's own words in Matthew 10:32-33. Jesus said, "If you won't confess me before men, neither will I confess you before my father who is in heaven. But if you will confess me before men, I'll also confess you before the father who is in heaven." Timothy made that good confession, 1 Timothy 6:12-13. If people are going to be saved today, they've got to confess with their mouth, "Jesus is the Christ, the son of God."

Now let's think about what else the Bible teaches a person must do to be saved. A lot of people will say that this step is not essential, but the Bible clearly teaches to be saved, not because you are saved, to be saved a person must be baptized. Let's look at the words of Jesus together. Mark chapter 16:16. Let's notice what the word of God says together. Jesus said this, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe shall be condemned." The Bible reads very clearly here to be saved, I must not only believe, I must be baptized. Does the Bible say he who believes and is baptized will be saved? If it does, why would we ever say baptism is not essential to salvation?

Now, I want to emphasize this really clearly. From the word of God, we learn that baptism saves and is essential to salvation. I want you to understand why it's tied into salvation. It is the death, the sacrifice, and the blood of Jesus that pays the price for sin, right? Hebrews 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood, there's no forgiveness of sin." Jesus said in Matthew 26-28, "This is my blood, shed for many, for the forgiveness of sins." So, the death, the sacrifice, and the blood of Jesus saves us from sin, right? I need that blood applied to me spiritually to have every sin removed. Why is baptism tied into that? Because God chose that we contact the death and the blood of Jesus in the waters of baptism. When did I contact Christ's death? When does Christ's death become applicable to a person, spiritually speaking? Look in your Bible in Romans 6:2. "Shall we continue in sin?" Paul says, "That grace may abound? Certainly not. How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" Now notice, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus," watch this, "Were baptized into his death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, "even so we also should walk in newness of life." There's no doubt it's the death, the sacrifice, and the blood of Jesus that saves, but when does the Bible say, I contact His death? "Buried with Christ in baptism, wherein we contact His death." Over and over, the Bible teaches a person has to be baptized to be saved. First gospel sermon that was preached, Acts 2:38. They cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And the answer was so clear. "Repent and be baptized every one of you." Why? "For the forgiveness of sin." The blood of Jesus is what forgives us of our sin. I have to be baptized to be forgiven of sin. Therefore again, that's where I contact Jesus's blood.

You can know the exact moment in time from the account of Paul when one is saved. In Acts 22:16 Ananias comes to Saul of Tarsus, who's

been praying and he says to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." I call on the name of the Lord and my sins are washed away in the blood of Christ at the point of baptism, where I contact His death. 1 Peter 3:21 says 'baptism does now also save us. Not the washing away of the filth of flesh, but the answer, a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' Baptism saves us. Why? Because that's where I contact the saving blood of Christ, and God told me to. Jesus said it so clearly. John 3:3-5, Jesus said, "Unless a man is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." How do I get in God's kingdom? I've got to be immersed in water to get into His kingdom.

As you think about the essentiality of baptism, the Bible teaches all spiritual blessings are in Christ. Ephesians 1:3 clearly teaches that. The Bible says in Titus 2:11-12, "Salvation said Christ." How do I get in Christ, where all spiritual blessings and salvation are? Galatians 3:27 says this, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." If salvation's in Christ, I've got to be in Christ, right? How do I get in Christ? I'm baptized into Christ. I want to be a part of the Lord's church. How do I get into the Lord's church where salvation is? 1 Corinthians 12:13, the Bible says, "By one spirit, we're all baptized into one body." We're baptized into the body of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

Let's come full circle, okay? We asked you at the outset of this lesson to consider your own salvation experience. How old were you? What did you do? What steps did you take? By what did you know you were saved? As we've seen from the Bible today, does what you did match up to the five steps of salvation that we saw today? If they don't match up, why not make that right? Here's what the Bible teaches. 1 John 5:13 says, "These things we write to you, who believe in the name of the son of God, that you may know you have eternal life and that you may continue to believe in his name."

The Bible teaches we can know that we're saved. How can I know, based on God's word, that I've done what the Bible says? If you're not sure today, maybe you didn't do some of those things. Maybe you left out some of the steps that God teaches are essential to salvation. Why not be sure by doing what the Bible teaches you've got to do to be saved?

And then, if you have obeyed the gospel, do what else the Bible teaches and that is, as Romans 6:4 says, "We want to continue to walk in newness of life every day."

If you're not a Christian, we want to encourage you to become one. If you haven't obeyed God's plan of salvation, we're begging you today to do what the Bible says to be saved. We love you. God loves you more than anything in the world. We want you to go to heaven.

If as a child of God, maybe you've strayed from that plan and that path, you can always come back home. You can make that right. You can do what God wants you to become a Christian and make sure that your life is being lived in such a way that you always bring glory and honor to all mighty God.

Fundamentals of Faith Lesson 3 Study Questions:

1. What great question is asked in Acts 16:30-31?
2. According to Romans 10:17, how do I get faith?
3. According to Hebrews 11:6, what must we have to please God?
4. According to Mark 9:7, who are we to hear?
5. How is rejecting Jesus described in John 12:48?
6. According to John 12:48, what will judge us?
7. According to Acts 17:11, what made the Bereans more fair minded?
8. According to James 2:24, can faith only save?
9. What did the people have to do in Luke 13:3?
10. According to Mark 16:16, what must we do to be saved?