

God's Plan For Man

by Dee Bowman

“What must I do to be saved?” This is the most important question which could possibly occupy one's time or attention. The Bible teaches that when one comes to an accountable age, he becomes guilty of sin, “for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Sin is transgression of the law and is separative by nature (Isaiah 59:1-2). Sinners are not fit for association with God (Ezekiel 18:20). Man has not the power to save himself from his own sin. No deed performed, no price paid is sufficient for his salvation from the malady of sin.

The only way for his reconciliation and return to God is for him to be forgiven of his sin, pardoned for his iniquity. If one is to have this forgiveness he must comply with God's law of pardon. Only when he does what God says can he have remission of that which separates him from God. Failure to comply with God's wishes for salvation will inevitably result in his eternal damnation. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

What is God's plan for man? How is he to be pardoned and brought back to a right relationship with God? What does God require?

God requires faith (Hebrews 11:6). That is he must “believe that He is.” And he must believe that He “rewards them that diligently seek Him.” Faith is a conclusion reached based on evidence to support a fact presented. And so faith is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is the bed-rock foundation on which the entirety of the salvation of man rests. It does not come by some miraculous manifestation of some sort or in some mysterious operation of the heart of the hearer, but from hearing the word of God and the testimony it presents to show that Jesus Christ is God's son (Romans 10:17), and the “author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:5; 12:2).

God requires repentance. When a person comes to believe in Jesus Christ as God's Son, he sees that he has been living in direct rebellion. That realization results in what the Scriptures call “godly sorrow (II Corinthians 2:9), which logically results in repentance. Repentance is the change of a man's will with regard to sin. It is the springboard for a reformation of life, a sincere determination to right one's course. In the parable of the prodigal (Luke 15), the son who had wasted his life in sin, “came to himself.” It was then that he determined to go home. A man will not live differently until he decides to do so. The people who heard Peter's sermon on Pentecost, were pricked in their hearts (godly sorrow) and asked “men and brethren what shall we do,” an indication of a penitent attitude. There can be no salvation without repentance.

God requires confession. No man knows for sure what my convictions are until I tell him. The preacher in Acts 8 probably had a good idea that the Ethiopian believed, for he asked why he could not be baptized, but only when he confessed his faith and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God” (Acts 8:37) did he know for sure. It is so

that “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Romans 10:10). Notice, too, what the nobleman did not say: “ I believe that God for Christ’s sake has pardoned my sin.” Such a statement is nowhere to be found in the Scriptures.

God requires baptism. To deny that fact is to deny the Scriptures concerning salvation. To evade that fact is to engage in a foolish attempt, for both in command (Mark 16:15-16) and in New Testament examples of conversion baptism is commanded as necessary for salvation. Baptism saves (I Peter 3:21). It puts one in to Christ (I Corinthians 12:13). It washes away sins (Acts 22:16). It provides remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Now, in the face of such testimony, how can one possibly affirm that salvation has nothing to do with baptism, or that baptisms is merely the outward sign of an inward faith. Is baptism essential to salvation? What does the Bible say? If one desires forgiveness from sin, he must do what God says. And God says “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

God requires a faithful life. It is inconceivable that a person would obey the gospel only to return to a life of sin. Only in continued faithfulness can he obtain his salvation. He must continually be adding to his faith (I Peter 3:5); he must “work out his own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). He must the need to put aside worldly thoughts and subordinate his will to the Father so as to “lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Do you want to be saved? Then you must do what God says.