

Salvation: Becoming a Christian

By Grant Knisley

Salvation is the gift of God to all who will accept it. Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches that we are saved by grace, through faith. Many churches teach that salvation comes by faith alone. However, the Bible does not say, "faith alone." The Bible teaches that there is more to salvation than just having faith. Faith is necessary, yes, but a more detailed study of Scripture uncovers that sincere faith should motivate you to acting upon that faith. As such, salvation comes by sincere faith, expressed through confession, repentance, and baptism into Christ.

This is not "works salvation." It is a response to genuine faith. Faith, confession, repentance, and baptism are all specifically mentioned in the Bible as necessary to a biblical understanding of salvation.

About Faith. If one is to become a Christian, he or she must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that he died for your sins. John 3:16 states that if we believe in Jesus, we will not perish but have everlasting life. So, faith is a must. If you do not have faith, nothing else matters. But just believing in God is not enough. James 2:19 tells us that even the demons believe that God exists and surely demons are not saved. So, there must be more to salvation than just believing.

About Confession. Romans 10:9-19 gives us additional information about faith, confession of faith, and salvation. The passage teaches that if we believe in our heart and confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and that he is risen from the dead, we will be saved. So, in addition to having genuine faith, confessing that faith is important. But again, that is not all the Bible teaches about salvation. There is more.

About Repentance. Repentance is more than saying you're sorry for sins. It is turning your life around and living it in a godly way. Think of it as making an about-face. Acts 3:19 tells us to repent and turn to God so that our sins will be wiped out. So, like faith and confession, repentance is tied to the forgiveness of sins. But it is not the end of the matter. There is still more the Bible has to say about salvation.

About Baptism. In addition to believing in Christ, confessing Him as Lord, and repenting of sin, the Bible teaches that we need to be baptized into Christ. Where does the Bible teach this? Jesus himself says it in Mark 16:16 in the form of an ultimatum. The text reads, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." In addition to Jesus' words, Peter also preached in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

So, a thorough exploration of the New Testament teaches that salvation is by grace, it is the gift of God. In accepting that gift and becoming a Christian, we must believe and confess that Jesus is the Son of God and that God raised him from the dead, repent of our sin, and be baptized into Christ.

What happens next? Once you are a Christian, 2 Corinthians 5:17 gives us encouraging words when it says, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"