

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PLAN OF SALVATION TAUGHT AND OBEYED

From the beginning, God has had a plan for mankind (Ephesians 3: 10 – 11). The inspired apostle Paul says God, “is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9). God is desirous for all mankind to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Note again the passage says, “THE truth” just as we have discussed THE church and THE name of THE church. Thus, we conclude there is but ONE truth!

In this lesson, the PLAN OF SALVATION God designed is the discussion. Those of the world and/or religious affiliations of man made origin often look at the doctrine upheld by the church of Christ as being “too narrow minded.” We will devote space and time to discussing each part of that plan God designed and define it with scripture. In so doing, we will show it matters not at all whether man considers God’s doctrine “narrow minded” or “broad minded.” It is GOD’S Word, and no man has the right to alter His Word for any reason (Revelation 22:18 – 29). Except we adhere to the doctrine of Christ, we can not please God (Galatians 1: 6 – 10).

Just now, it will be helpful to review these facts:

1. The ONE church is built upon ONE rock (Matthew 16:18)
2. The ONE church had but ONE time and place of beginning in which ONE particular message was preached (Acts 2).
3. The ONE church has but ONE name distinguishing it from all other religious groups and giving honor to its owner: CHURCH OF CHRIST (Acts 20:28; Romans 16:18).

This ONE MESSAGE is the study of this lesson.

THE PLAN OF SALVATION TAUGHT AND OBEYED (Outlined Lesson)

Text: Acts 8:26 – 40

- I. What is TRUTH?
 - A. John 14:6; 17:17
 - B. Ephesians 4:4- 6
 - C. Matthew 28: 18 – 19
 - D. Mark 16:16
 - E. John 1: 1 - 3; 14 – 17
- II. The pattern of the plan set forth
 - A. Matthew 28:18 – 19; Mark 16: 15 – 16

1. Luke 24:47
2. The need is stated for a plan – Romans 10: 8 – 21
3. The need is to HEAR + BELIEVE+ REPENT + CONFESS + BE BAPTIZED for the remission of sins.
4. Acts 2:14 – 41

III. Defining the steps of the plan

A. Hear

1. Romans 10:17
2. Matthew 17:5
3. Accumulation of the facts and UNDERSTANDING them – Acts 8:30 – 31

B. Believe

1. John 8:24 – 32
2. Romans 10:10
3. Hebrews 11: 1 – 6

C. Repent

1. Luke 13:3; 5
2. Acts 17:30 (note the word “commands,” not “invite”)
3. 2 Peter 3:9
4. Defined as “turning away from,” “being sorry enough for something that you are never going to do it again.”
5. Isaiah 1: 16 – 18

D. Confess

1. Romans 10:10 – note unto is not into
2. Matthew 10: 32 – 33
3. Philippians 2: 10 – 11
4. Confession = “pronouncing the truth” (See Matthew 16:17; Acts 8:36 – 37)

E. Baptism

1. Mark 16:16
2. Galatians 3:27 – note into
3. Romans 6: 1 – 6 – note burial and planting
4. Colossians 2:12
5. 1 Peter 2:21
6. John 3:7
7. Acts 10:48 – note command and not invitation

IV. The pattern followed throughout the book of Acts

- A. Acts 8 – Samaria and Ethiopian eunuch
- B. Acts 9 – Saul of Tarsus
- C. Acts 10 – Cornelius – first Gentile: note – the PATTERN did not change.
- D. Acts 16 – Philippian jailor; Lydia

V. The pattern continued

- A. Romans 10:14

- B. In all the book of the New Testament following Acts, obedience to the plan of salvation is mentioned at least by the statement of one or more obeying the gospel.
- VI. Today the same pattern must be taught
- A. Galatians 1: 6 – 10
 - B. Note the “chain” started from Matthew 28: 19 – 20 – TEACH + BAPTIZE THOSE YOU TEACH + TEACH THEM (those you baptized) TO DO THE SAME THING.

Discussion:

Because this lesson deals with the SALVATION OF THE SOUL, it will be longer, more detailed and require a slower, more deliberate study from the student. This is *not to say* the other lessons are of less importance, for they certainly are not so! Nonetheless, if one fails to understand the doctrine of Christ (i.e. the plan of salvation), then that one fails to enter the church and subsequently, fails to receive heaven eternal.

Please note: if you are not presently a member of the Lord’s church, our desire to teach you what you must do to be saved is extremely keen! If you have obeyed the gospel, it is our prayer you will enhance this chapter of study with reinforcement of these truths.

Let us first acknowledge the TRUTH: what it is and why we are obligated to obey the truth. Perhaps a better question is WHO is the truth? Jesus said of Himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” (John 14:6) Jesus also said in His prayer to God, “Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) To some, it may appear Jesus spoke a contradiction. Such is *not* the case, as He is correct when He stated, “I am the truth” at John 14:6, and further stated the truth saying, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Proof is found at John 1: 1- 3. Note the inspired words of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Verse 14 of this chapter reads, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” It is Jesus who in the beginning had the name Word. As we continue reading at verse 17, we find, “For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ is TRUTH and called the WORD in the beginning. We can say honestly JESUS CHRIST is THE WORD OF TRUTH! You can see when one obeys the TRUTH, he obeys the WORD; and when one obeys the WORD, he obeys JESUS CHRIST. No one can obey one without obeying all three simultaneously!

This pattern is well established in the second chapter of Acts. We have already studied Acts 2 concerning the fulfillment of prophecy regarding the coming of the church of Christ. Although Luke recorded these facts after the church began, the facts are true! Paul's writings speak of the need to preach the gospel which is the plan of salvation (Romans 10: 8 – 21). Every case of conversion found in the book of Acts, which is the history of the Lord's church from its beginning on earth, will show the same pattern. For the sake of time and space, we will examine but one case: the case of the Ethiopian eunuch recorded in Acts 8:26 – 40. We urge the student to read and study each case of conversion in the book of Acts. See the following chart:

EXAMPLES OF CONVERSION

Read: Matthew 28:19 – 19; Mark 16:15 – 16 and 1 Corinthians 15: 1- 4

GOSPEL PREACHED	BELIEVED	REPENTED	CONFESSED	BAPTIZED	SAVED
PENTECOST – JEWS ACTS 2:14 – 41	17	38		41	47
SAMARITANS & SIMON ACTS 8:5-12; 13	12-13			12-13	
ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH ACTS 8:26-39	36-37	37	37	38	39
SAUL OF TARSUS ACTS 9:1-18; 22:6-16; 26:13-19	26:19			9:18 22:16	2:16
CORNELIUS – GENTILE ACTS 10:1- 6; 14 – 48	43			48	ACTS 11:28
LYDIA ACTS 16:12-15	14			15	
PHILIPPIAN JAILOR ACTS 16:25-34	31	30		33	
TWELVE AT EPHESUS ACTS 19:1-7	4			5	

It is equally important we examine the meaning of two different words commonly used in talking about obedience to the gospel. The words are **invitation** and **command**. The word "invitation" is not found in the New Testament. While many preachers and teachers will use the word, they can not verify its use with scripture. On the other hand, the word "command" is found in the New Testament and directly associated with obedience to the gospel, i.e. the plan of salvation. Note the following passages:

1. Acts 8:38 – “commanded” the chariot to stand still”
2. Acts 10:33 “all here present ... to hear all things (words) that are commanded thee of God.”
3. Acts 10:48 “And he commanded them to be baptized”
4. Acts 17:30 “commandeth all men every where to repent”

These passages show clearly one does not surrender to an **invitation** of the gospel, but rather complies with the **command** of God. No one that declines an invitation receives punishment. For example, if I should invite you to attend a gathering at my home and you decline, you would miss the happiness and benefits of that gathering, but I would have no right to inflict some form of punishment upon you for declining. There may well have been circumstances beyond your control that prohibited your acceptance of my invitation. On the other hand, should I **command** you (provided I have the authority to command) and you decline, then I have every right to inflict punishment. God has the authority to **command** (Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 15:27). When His commandments are not obeyed, He has the right to inflict eternal punishment (2 Thessalonians 1: 7 – 9). Please read that passage carefully and note that He **will** punish those who obey not the gospel. The reason is simple: they failed to heed the **command**.

Read Acts 8:26 – 40. You will note the guidance of the Spirit informing Philip of this man who was studying the scriptures. The place in the scriptures from which he was reading was Isaiah 53. By virtue of the fact he was reading the scriptures, indicates his sincere attitude toward rightful things. This is another point we often overlook in studying these conversions: Each one has a desire to please God from the start of their obedience! No place tells of trying to convert a sinner against the sinner’s will. Each convert showed an interest in at least listening to the words containing the plan of salvation. When the preachers in the book of Acts taught those who declined to obey, they nonetheless were teaching truth to individuals that would listen! It is a shame that so many after hearing do not obey. The point is the **converts** listed in Acts are souls who first desired to HEAR God’s Word, and expressed a willingness to accept it as is related!

Philip asked the eunuch, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” To HEAR, obviously does not mean “hear a noise,” but rather “to understand.” The eunuch answered, “How can I except some man guide me?” Philip began at the same scripture and preached unto the eunuch Jesus (verse 25). Thus, the first step of conversion was being accomplished: **HEAR**.

The next step is: **BELIEVE**. We note as they journeyed, they came to certain water and the eunuch said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (We will deal with the act of baptism shortly.) Philip said, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” Belief had to accompany the obedience. The only way that Philip would know if the eunuch believed was to ask him. In answering the question, the eunuch would also complete the third:

CONFESSION. The eunuch answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Not only was his belief confirmed, his confession was heard. The eunuch could not have been obedient, and Philip would have had no authority to baptize the eunuch as per his request, had the belief not been evident and the confession unmade. You will now need to refer to the outline lesson and note again the definition and the **command** listed to HEAR + BELIEVE + CONFESS. To this point, the eunuch has done all three.

Some question the eunuch’s **REPENTANCE** because there is no verse specifically stating he repented. If you examine verse 39, you find the eunuch **did repent**. It says, “and he [the eunuch] went on his way rejoicing.” Had he not repented, he could not have rejoiced. Remember, he was reading Isaiah 53 with great confusion, not knowing of whom the prophet wrote. Once learning the answer, he obeyed and did **not** return to the former confused thoughts and lifestyle. According to Isaiah 1:16 – 17, the God spoken definition of repentance says, “cease to do evil; learn to do well.” This is precisely what the eunuch did: he ceased to do evil and learned to do well. He now knew the truth and could teach that same truth to others.

Now we examine the subject of **BAPTISM**. How did the eunuch know to ask to be baptized when Philip had preached unto him Jesus (verses 35 – 36)? The answer is evident: To preach Jesus is to preach baptism. Jesus taught baptism (John 4:1 – 2) and was Himself baptized by John the baptizer in the Jordan River (Matthew 3). While Jesus was not baptized for the remission of sins, (for He had none to remit) He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He further commanded the apostles to TEACH + BAPTIZE + TEACH those they baptized to do the same thing (Matthew 28:19 – 20). According to Romans 6: 1-6 when we are baptized, we exemplify (do in like manner) the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So when Philip explained Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, as stated by Isaiah, he would have preached baptism. Obviously, the eunuch understood this and when the opportune moment arrived, requested to be baptized!

We must understand **HOW** the eunuch was immersed. There was no sprinkling or pouring. It was a burial in water. Verses 38 – 39 explain this reality. Note:

1. and **they** went down **both** into the water
2. **both** into the water
3. **both** Philip and the eunuch
4. and he (Philip) baptized him (the eunuch)
5. and when **they** were come up out of the water

As one faithful preacher asked, “Why would two grown men go out into the water to get a handful of it, if a handful was all they needed?” They did not go down into a small container of water, for such would have been impossible. It is obvious baptism is a burial in water. Study Colossians 2:12, Romans 6: 1- 6 and

other like passages. There is no other explanation! Those who followed this plan at Acts 2 were added to the church (Acts 2:47). We can rightly conclude the eunuch and all others who obey the plan of salvation receive the same blessing: “and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:47)

From this study, one easily sees all five steps to God’s plan of salvation are completed: HEAR + BELIEVE + REPENT + CONFESS + BAPTIZED. In every book of the New Testament following the book of Acts, salvation is mentioned at least in the sense of souls being obedient to the gospel. Whenever a description of their obedience is mentioned, the same plan is illustrated. NEVER IS THERE DEVIATION FROM THIS PLAN and for that reason can not be compromised in today’s world! Romans 10:14 stated the same pattern for obedience. Galatians 1: 6 – 10 warns against preaching any other gospel than what we have described. Yet, thousands of people in various and sundry man-made religions teach and practice something different. They can not prove their practice by the New Testament and therefore are in open opposition to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. While this sad item remains, they continue practicing what is not taught by divine truth. They can not possibly call themselves “the church that is acceptable before God,” because they can not prove their actions with the authority of God’s Word.

Following the questions to this portion of our study, you will read a discussion of FAITHFULNESS. The student should realize a full discussion of the PLAN OF SALVATION is not complete without this element. What we have seen is “how to rid our souls from sin.” What follows is “how to keep ourselves righteous before God.” Please note much more can be said of these matters. For example:

- a. Baptism puts one INTO Christ while belief and confession and repentance only bring one UNTO Him. Compare Romans 10:10; 2 Timothy 2:10; Galatians 3:27
- b. The obedient soul puts on Christ at baptism - Galatians 3:27
- c. We are baptized into one body – 1 Corinthians 12:13
- d. There is only one baptism – Ephesians 4:4 – 6
- e. Baptism is the only way souls are added to the church – Acts 2:47
- f. Baptism makes us new creatures, rising to walk in newness of life with Christ and God – 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6: 1- 6
- g. God’s plan for the church includes the plan of salvation – Ephesians 3: 8 – 10

1. List and define each step in the plan of salvation.

2. Give at least three examples of conversion in the book of Acts and list the steps taken in receiving the remission of sins.

3. Have YOU obeyed these commandments of salvation? If yes, when and where? If no, why not? By what authority do you decline the commands of God?

“BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH”

All too often the subject of faithfulness is not included when discussing God’s plan of salvation. Preachers and teachers often leave the impression there is nothing more required of a soul following baptism, than to attend a few worship services. Such an attitude simply is not in agreement with the scriptures. This discussion is as important as the first five steps we just studied. To have done them and then fail in being faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10) would be eternally tragic. The scriptures are very plain regarding this necessity.

BE THOU FAITHFUL Outlined Lesson

Text: Revelation 2:8 - 11

Introduction:

1. Study the letter written to the church at Smyrna.
2. The original text implies: “‘be thou faithful’ though it may cause thy death”.
3. Faithfulness requires more than occasional attendance and contribution to appease some of the brethren. Faithfulness must be in accordance with the commandments of God.
4. Knowing God’s commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:3), we must do all things through Christ (i.e. by His authority –

Colossians 3:17; Matthew 28:18) which strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

5. Faithfulness must be our chief desire and never considered a burden.

- I. Defining Faithfulness
 - A. Faithfulness is more than occasional desire. The word itself shows “being full of faith.”
 - B. 2 Peter 1: 5 - 11
 - C. Hebrews 11: 1- 6
- II. Obtaining Faith
 - A. Romans 10:17
 - B. 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 4: 11 – 16
- III. Retaining Faith
 - A. 2 Corinthians 5:7
 - B. 2 Corinthians 4:16
 - C. Galatians 2:20
- IV. Faithfulness Must Be Exhibited Even In Death
 - A. Revelation 2:10
 - B. Revelation 14:13 – “die IN the Lord”
- V. Challenges Face Us Every Day
 - A. 1 Corinthians 10:13
 - B. 1 Timothy 3:12
 - C. James 1: 1 – 27
- VI. Increased Faith Is Essential
 - A. 2 Peter 3:18
 - B. Ephesians 6: 10 – 17
 - C. 2 Corinthians 4:16

Discussion:

Faithfulness is not a game played by members of the church and corrected by frequent visits of the elders or preacher. It is a life lived by each member, each day; a life stating first and foremost, “I’ll ask first, ‘What would Jesus do?’ and act according to the answer found within God’s Word.”

Baptism is not the end of the plan of salvation. It is the beginning. As we saw in the former part of this chapter, we rise to walk in newness of life. There must be a directive in the life lived thereafter: a directive stating “be thou faithful.” Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17), and must be increased daily (2 Corinthians 4:16). Peter says it must be in us strongly; coupled

with diligence we are to add virtue (courage), knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity; each in succession to the other so that we are not with one and without the other (2 Peter 1: 5 – 11).

Paul says we are to walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:17) and so the more walking we do in Christ, the more faith we require. It is also rightly concluded if we do not walk by faith, we stand still and/or stand lost. (1 John 1: 5 – 10). To stand still is to quit marching forward and according to Paul, we can not back up (Philippians 3: 13 – 14). It is evident how important **faith** is to the Christian who is determined to make heaven his eternal home!

Many “measure” faithfulness by the number of times they assemble for worship and/or how much they give into the treasury. Such a falsehood is untaught in the sacred writing. Nonetheless, it is not often refuted by preachers and teachers desirous of large crowds and bulging coffers! WE CAN NOT LEAVE THE IMPRESSION MONEY CORRECTS LACKING FAITH It must be taught long and loud and extremely fervently: FAITHFULNESS IS LITERALLY “THE STATE OF BEING FULL OF FAITH!” To use the Hebrew writer’s definition, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) It comes only by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). It is **not** obtained by occasionally assembling with the saints; **not** by the giving of some money rather than giving as one has prospered (1 Corinthians 16: 1 – 2). Paul described faithful living in this fashion: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

As a Christian, one must constantly increase faithfulness in oneself. It is done by study (2 Timothy 2:15), by growth in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), and must be completed daily (2 Corinthians 4:16). This allows us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Ephesians 6: 10 – 17). So great is the need for faithfulness, John was told to write the following: “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, sayeth the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” (Revelation 14:13) Did you notice where the dead die? **IN THE LORD** Thus, it is not enough to just be faithful unto death: we must be faithful into death!

Let us be perfectly clear as to the PLAN OF SALVATION. We must **HEAR + BELIEVE + REPENT + CONFESS + BE BAPTIZED + BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH + DIE IN THE LORD**. There simply is no other way to please God!

The student is urged to seriously consider the context of this study and be able to answer some serious questions:

1. How much faith do you really have?
2. While you may fool the people and perhaps yourself, there is no deceiving God. How much faith do you REALLY have, and is it enough?