

# *Bible Correspondence Course*

## *Lesson 5*

### **HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN**

*“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, “Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee WHAT THOU MUST DO” (Acts 9:6)*

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, later called Paul, and still later known as the Apostle Paul, is recorded in three different chapters of Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament. It was in the ninth chapter of Acts that he asked the same question that millions are asking today, “Lord what will thou have me to do.” The Lord did not tell Saul he was saved even though he was the Saviour, but rather instructed him to go into the city where he would be told what he MUST do.

It is the answer given Saul that we are concerned with at this time. The answer that was given him is also the answer that will be given to all men who ask the same question. Everyone must recognize that only a Biblical answer will bring salvation. Sad, but true, men have given many answers that are not scriptural, but rather an opinion or tradition. These answers must be avoided. All men must obey the commandments of the Lord in order to become a Christian like the Apostle Paul. When Paul obeyed that answer, he obtained salvation from his past sins.

### **What Is Salvation**

Some confuse salvation with various testimonies, experiences and mysterious feelings, but the Bible expresses salvation in simple terms. There is nothing mysterious about salvation as far as man is concerned, for God has revealed what man needs to know in order to obtain salvation.

This same Paul we have studied about, wrote “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). Apparently then, salvation is here for all men by the grace of God, and all men have access to that grace through faith (Romans 5:2).

### **For Salvation**

Salvation means “saved,” and in our study, means salvation from sins. Man has never been able to remove the stain of sin from his soul, and it was only through the grace of God that provision was made to save man from everlasting punishment. Therefore, to all

men who want to be saved from their sins, Christ Jesus has shed his blood. Do you want salvation?

## Salvation and You

Just what is your relationship with God today? Have you been saved from your past sins? Do you believe you have sinned? It may be that you feel as if you have never done anything very bad and therefore have not sinned. Be not deceived, Paul said, “All have sinned” (Romans 3:23). The first thing anyone must do, is to recognize his guilt of sin, and then realize he cannot save himself but must depend on the grace of God. When a person reaches this conclusion he will freely give himself to God obeying whatever the Lord commands. Have you?

When Saul of Tarsus came into the city he was instructed to “Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16). What this man did all men who are saved must do. There is no “short cut” to salvation from past sins. There is one way and all men must walk that way if they are to be saved. This is NOT to say that baptism was the only thing Paul did to “wash away his sins,” but rather this was the final requirement God made of him, and all men since that time who want salvation.

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Let us, in our search for salvation, note the examples in the New Testament where people became Christians, or were “saved” version, we should keep in mind the words of Jesus when he said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15,16). Now notice the following chart:

### EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE BECOMING CHRISTIANS

Scripture	Hearing	Faith	Repent	Confession	Baptism
Acts 2:36-42 Pentecostians	X	X	X		X
Acts 8:4-13 Samaritans	X	X			X
Acts 8:26-39 Eunuch	X	X		X	X
Acts 22:1-16; 9:17-20 Saul of Tarsus (Paul)	X		X		X
Acts 10:25-48;	X				X

11:12-14 (Cornelius)					
Acts 16:13-15 (Lydia)	X				X
Acts 16:23-34 (The Jailor)	X	X			X
Acts 18: 4-11 (The Corinthians)	X	X			X
Summary	X	X	X	X	X

Perhaps someone wonders why all these examples are found in the book of Acts. It should be remembered that Acts is a book of history relating HOW people became Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and in the very beginning of the Church. Since the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), was preached for the first time on the day of Pentecost, then examples of conversion could not be found before that time, therefore they are recorded in this book. Moreover, since the “letters,” (Romans through Jude, were written to “Christians” the examples of conversion could NOT be found there. We conclude then that what one MUST do for salvation is found in the book of Acts.

### **You Must...**

In the summary of the chart we find that in order for a person to be saved he must “hear” the gospel, “believe” it, “repent” of his sins, and “confess” Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and be “baptized” for the remission of sins. Though men often eliminate some of these requirements, Jesus said the saved were those who obey the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21-23).

Not all of the squares are checked in the chart because the people were not commanded to do something they had already done. For example, look at number (4): Saul was not commanded to believe, or have faith, because he had “talked” with the Lord en route to Damascus. As a result of this conversation he now believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. You will notice that repentance and confession were absent, but as you study the account you will note Paul fasted and prayed for three days and nights. This action is certainly indicative of repentance. He was told to “Arise and be baptized and wash away his sins” (Acts 22:16).

The same principle applies today. All people must hear the gospel. After hearing and believing one must repent, confess, and be baptized for the remission of sins, but if a person already believes the gospel, it would be unnecessary to tell him to believe again. When a person manifests an attitude of repentance, he is not instructed to repent; and so on down the commandments until complete obedience is attained. Have you done this?

## Hearing and Baptism

There are two subjects in the chart where every example is checked, hearing and baptism. We pointed this out because no person can become a believer until he hears, and no person can have his sins forgiven until he is baptized “FOR” the remission of sins.

What should one hear? The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), hence, this is what a person should hear. We do not “hear” Moses, or the prophets, we hear Christ. Christ Jesus died for all men, therefore he is the only one to hear. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

The subject of baptism is not something to be slighted or exalted. It is, however, essential to salvation and no person is saved without being baptized. (Infants being excluded because of their sinlessness). With but few exceptions all religious bodies professing to be followers of Christ, practice some form of baptism. This proves that most people believe it is needed.

There are two main problems facing the student today concerning baptism. One is that many have been taught that “sprinkling” or “pouring” is baptism. The other is the fact there is only ONE baptism. The sad part is that God will accept ONLY the baptism of the Bible. It is very important then that we learn exactly what God requires.

A good illustration from the chart can be cited in number three where the eunuch was baptized. The Bible says BOTH Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized (buried) him (Acts 8:38, Colossians 2:12). If Romans 6:3,4 did not say, “We are BURIED with him by baptism into death,” we might accept sprinkling, but the Bible DOES say buried and this makes void any substitution.

A great many people have been sprinkled during their infant years believing in later years they had been scripturally baptized. The truth, according to the Bible, is they have NEVER been baptized because sprinkling is NOT baptism. What about your friend?

There is also one purpose for being baptized. This one purpose is FOR the remission of sins. In the chart of examples every person was baptized in order to have their sins “washed” away (Acts 22:16, Acts 2:38). Since most religious groups accept baptism as being needed, but not necessary, they tack it on sometime AFTER a person has supposedly been saved. For this reason many people who have been immersed or buried, believe that they have been baptized for the ONLY purpose, but have they? If the Bible teaches, and it does, that a person is still in his sins until he is baptized to wash away those sins (Acts 22:16), those who teach salvation before baptism oppose the shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). He did NOT say he that believeth is saved and can be baptized when he pleases.

The purpose of baptism is to complete the requirements for salvation. It is the act where we come in contact with the blood of Christ. It was in his death he shed his blood, and if

we die with him, and are raised with him (Romans 6:3-6), we become new creatures (II Corinthians 5:17). This is what Jesus taught Nicodemus saying he must be born again (John 3:5). Then since Paul said there is only “ONE BAPTISM” (Ephesians 4:5), it means every person must be baptized for the one purpose (remission of sins) with that one baptism. Have you?

**WILL YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN?** Now that you have learned “What thou must do” to become a Christian, will you obey Christ? If you have NOT obeyed exactly the commandments you have studied, then you are not a Christian. What will you do?