



# GOD'S PLAN THE ONLY PLAN

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**T**he religious environment in which we live is a confused one because there are so many denominations, each, though using the same Bible and supposing to be worshipping the same God, have its own doctrine or teaching and conditions for membership. As a result, many sincere, good, deeply religious men and women mistakenly think that because they are accepted in a church as members, they are saved and accepted by God as Christians. However, meeting the conditions that a church or denomination sets, being accepted by and meeting the condition Christ sets for the removing of your sins are two completely different things. The lesson being taught by the Holy Spirit in Romans 10:1-3, about men and women who go about establishing their OWN righteousness and rejecting God's righteousness, is on this very issue and is meant to be a warning to men and women to make sure that they learn and accept God's conditions for forgiveness, or His plan of salvation from sin.

1. It must be kept in mind that no church, or denomination or religious leader (bishops, priest, minister, pope, arch-bishop, etc) has any God-given right or authority to CHANGE, ALTER, or MINIMIZE the necessity or importance of any condition that God has set as part of man's salvation. No angel from heaven has the right or authority to ADD, TAKE-AWAY, ALTER, or REJECT any New Testament requirement or condition delivered to us by the Apostles of Christ, (Galatians 1:8-9) Too, God's will, plan of salvation, or conditions for sinners' salvation was delivered once (Jude 1:3); not each person or denomination getting his own vision, revelation, at different times thereby becoming an authority to him or itself. It was once delivered for all. It is important that you and I be not blinded by denominational teaching, man-made religious tradition, or doctrines which we have come to accept and equate with the revealed truth of God, but which is condemned by God. (Matthew 15:22-3, 7-9,13-14).You will

notice that from (Matthew 15:9, 13-14) many good, religious, sincere regular worshippers of God will be condemned and be lost in the eternal hell on the day of judgement, for no other reason than that their worship and religious life had been guided and directed by man-made doctrines. Notice that they were worshippers of Christ, but were lost nonetheless. That could either be you or me. I, therefore, need to examine my church's religious practices and beliefs to make sure that there is a New Testament "thus sayeth the Lord," for all my religious beliefs, practices and doctrine (Matthew 15:9, 14). If you or I, or any man or woman is going to be saved from sin and eternal condemnation, we are going to be saved the very same way, all or each obeying the very same steps, believing the very same thing and walking by the very same religious rule or doctrine. (1 Cor. 1:10; Gal. 6:6; Eph.. 4:4-5; Phil. 3:16) If you are taught that baptism is necessary and important to your salvation, and I am taught that it is NOT, something is dreadfully wrong with the teaching one of us is receiving. If, I am taught that God in Christ is going to be saving people from the various and different denominations regardless of their teachings (doctrines) and practice, and you are taught that every man and woman must seek and find the true church because Christ is going to save only those in the one true church who live by His will, then something is dreadfully wrong with the teaching one of us is receiving. We need to find out where the error is. One simple and practical way to understand God's plan to save you, or the conditions which every person must meet, is to examine each case of conversion in the book of Acts because it is that book which tells and records how and what people had to do to be saved. As you study each case of men and women becoming Christians in the book of Acts, note if those were the very same things you did to become a Christian and if those are the very same steps or conditions your denomination emphasizes or requires for membership. The true church follows the Bible pattern and examples. Man-made denominations invent their own. Remember too, that your or my acceptance or rejection of anything commanded by God does not determine its importance. What the New Testament teaches or the conditions or requirements it lays down upon which I can obtain forgiveness and be accepted by God is important and

binding. It is never how it looks to me, but is based solely on the fact that Christ, our Lord has commanded it. If He requires it, or sets it as a condition for my forgiveness and fellowship with Him, then it becomes His will for me (note: Matt.7:21).

From a careful study of the book of Acts you will realise that before anyone was ever considered or accepted as a Christian or a child of God, either by God, or the Apostles, there are certain steps or conditions which FIRST had to be taken or met. They are:

1. They had to be taught the truth about their sinful and condemned state or condition, and about Jesus, the Christ. The Christian religion is a taught religion; men and women must first hear or be taught the truth based on the New Testament teachings (Matt. 13:15, 23; St. John 6:44; Eph. 1:13; Col. 2:7; Rom. 10:14, 17) In Matthew 13:15, 23, eyes, ears, understanding are involved in the conversion process. In John 6:44-45, the process is that you must hear, learn before you can come! Men and women MAY NOT believe every religious dogma and doctrine and still be pleasing to Christ, our Lord. For this reason, men and women wanting to please God must be taught the specific things about Jesus, the Christ, their sinful condition, and God's plan to save them. It is this New Testament truth, TAUGHT and LEARNED, which leads or directs sincere men and women to take the other step.
2. After having been taught or after having listened to the truth, they believed or expressed faith in Christ and His truth. St. John 3:16, which expresses this step, is often misunderstood because some have taken it to mean that faith or belief is all that is necessary. But faith is only ONE OF the steps or conditions to salvation. It is absolutely important that you accept your sinfulness, and believe in Jesus as the Saviour who alone can deal with your sin and ungodly ways and thoughts. To believe in Christ is to accept God's estimation and verdict on my state as a sinner needing divine help. Faith or

belief is important and necessary because it is through faith that my attitude toward my sinful self, toward Christ as my Lord and Saviour, and toward the real purpose of my life is changed. But mere belief or faith alone does not save or accomplish much for my sinful, condemned condition.

From James 2:17-18.20, we learn that faith ALONE does NOT meet God's condition for the forgiveness of sin. Faith must be backed up or followed with obedient action (Heb. 5:9, 11:7-9). Abraham's faith was not made perfect and complete until he obeyed or acted in keeping with God's command. So must we.

3. The other step or condition laid down by Christ is repentance. Every sinner (and we are all sinners, in spite of our goodness, niceness and decency) seeking God's forgiveness and eternal life in Christ must repent or turn from sin and ungodliness. Read Luke 13:3-5; Acts 2:37-38; 17:30. Repentance as demanded by Jesus the Christ means to alter my course or way of life- from self, sinfulness and ungodliness to Christ and holy living. It is in repentance that I change my conduct, so that it conforms to the will and holiness of God. Every man and every woman offends God by the things we do, say, think, by the right things we fail to do, and by our refusal to give up sin and accept Christ. Therefore everyone needs to repent.

Too, in Rom. 1:28-31, we are given a list of some of the ways that, knowingly or unknowingly, we offend God and therefore – needing to meet His conditions for forgiveness. When men and women truly believe or have faith in Christ and His way of holiness and right living for life, that faith ALWAYS leads to repentance or a change of life and conduct. You MUST repent (Acts. 17:30-31).

4. The steps or conditions of being TAUGHT, FAITH and REPENTANCE having been taken or met, the penitent prospective child of God must be willing to confess his or her faith in Christ as Lord. Read Acts 8:37 and Romans 10:9-10. We must confess with our mouth our belief in Christ as Lord.
5. The final step or condition which stands between the sinner and a saving relationship with Christ is Baptism. If you are sincere and serious enough about your eternal salvation and about knowing God's requirements for your forgiveness, study carefully, all the cases of New Testament conversion in the book of Acts (chapters 2, 8, 10, 16, and 19) and without exception you will notice that no man or woman, boy or girl, was ever accepted by the Apostles, the early church, or by Christ until AFTER baptism or immersion in water. Baptism is the final act of obedience which changes the STATE or RELATIONSHIP of a person from that of sinner to saint. (Heb. 5:8-9) Before God can save any man or woman in Christ, he asks for a CHANGED ATTITUDE which faith accomplishes. Too baptism is important and absolutely necessary to one's salvation because it is in baptism that God unites the sinner with Christ in his redemptive acts. In order to redeem sinful men and women Christ had to DIE, BE BURIED, and BE RESURRECTED. So, in Romans 6:2-7 God requires that in order to be saved from sin and eternal condemnation, every sinner MUST symbolically DIE with Christ, be BURIED with HIM (therefore burial in water or baptism), and be RESURRECTED with Christ (therefore being raised from the water to live for Christ and not for sin.)

According to God's word, baptism always comes before the removal of sin and salvation. A wise, sensible and sincere person knows that it is not your church or my church, your denomination or my denomination which sets or determines the

conditions or importance of any requirements which God through Christ in His wisdom demands of us. Men and women, therefore, who take it upon themselves to be spiritual lawyers to argue with God, and with conditions such as baptism which He has set for our salvation, are foolish. God is a 'heavy-weight' and every man a 'light-weight'. We cannot enter the ring with or argue against His will and come out the winner. Too, we must ever keep in mind that it is not how you or I feel about the things Christ demands of us which determines its importance. The test of our faith, loyalty and humility is the extent to which we WILLINGLY believe, accept and obey what Christ requires, however foolish it may look to us (1 Cor. 1:25). If God asks that it be done, that alone makes it important and necessary, if for no other reason than that God requires it.

- A. Too, God's or Scriptural baptism has a specific mode. In other words, sprinkling, pouring, or christening is not scriptural baptism and therefore is not accepted by God. This may qualify us as members of a denomination, and religiously comfortable but leaves us in a disobedient, unsaved and ungodly condition.

The Bible reveals that Christ's baptism is a burial, or immersion (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12, Acts 8:38). You are not scripturally baptised until you are buried or immersed in water. You must be buried in water as Christ was buried in the tomb.

- B. The subjects for baptism are not infants or babies or an intoxicated, crazy, irrational person. Baptism is meant for those who are teachable and rational; it is for grown-ups who know wrong from right, and sensible and responsible enough to exercise his or her own will to accept or reject Christ and His conditions for pardon. Infants are not sinners; Christ used them as a symbol of innocence and purity (Matthew 9:13, 19:3 Luke 18:17).

- C. The purpose or reason for baptism is the remission or removal of sin (Acts 2:38, 22:16); that is the purpose or reason God attaches to true baptism. Men and women who truly believe in the wisdom of God and the Lordship of Christ will not seek to question the purpose He attaches to baptism (Luke 6:46). Christ promises that in baptism He will remove your sin. Faith does not question that; faith obeys it. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. Baptism is not an “outward sign of an inner grace”. Baptism is a burial in water, uniting the penitent sinner with Christ in His DEATH, BURIAL and RESURRECTION, and it is for the removal of sin (Acts 2:37-38; Rom. 6:22-5).
- D. There is only one true baptism for penitent believers today (Eph. 4:5). Holy Spirit baptism was meant for the Apostles (Luke 24:49), and fire baptism is for the disobedient and ungodly who will be covered or immersed in the fires of hell (Matthew 3:10-12).

There are many sincere but ignorant religious people today, including church leaders, who make false claims to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit; not understanding that while the Holy Spirit was meant for all true Christians (Acts 2:38; 4:31) only the apostles of Christ and the house of Cornelius experienced the baptismal measure. Too, many, not realizing that Matthew 3:12 is meant to explain verse 11 and what is meant by the baptism of fire (that is the fire that shall burn the chaff, meaning the ungodly), are now in their religious zeal and ignorance, praying for the baptism of fire. It is good to know that God in his mercy and wisdom will not grant their request, if they will obey His truth, and turn from ignorance and false beliefs.

- E. Another area of misunderstanding in regard to the topic of baptism is the name in which one ought to be baptised, and what does it mean to do something in one's name. In Matthew 28:19, Christ commanded that baptism be done in the NAME of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In

Acts 2:38; 10:48, we are informed that baptism was done in the name of "Jesus Christ" and in the "name of the Lord".

The First truth to be learned from these passages is that they are not telling us about something to be SAID but something to be or that was DONE. There is no evidence that some words or ceremony was said or repeated over a person being baptised in apostolic times. Too, when we are told by the scriptures that something was or ought to be done in someone's name, it simply means that the act or thing must be done on that person's COMMAND, POWER, and AUTHORITY or on that person's MERIT. Notice in Acts 4:7, 10 how the words 'by what power (authority)' and 'by what name', are used interchangeably (meaning the same thing). Therefore baptism in the name of Jesus Christ simply means by the COMMAND, POWER and AUTHORITY of the Godhead, or of Christ as Lord and Saviour. Some claim that Father, and Son are not names, but Christ in Matthew 28:19 claims that Father and Son are names. Too, father and son are names of relationships, like mother, daughter, etc.

We encourage you to obey the truth of Christ before it is everlastingly too late for you. Keeping in mind that baptism like any other command of God, when its God-given PURPOSE or DESIGN is rejected, it matters not WHO, WHEN or HOW one is baptised. Only when baptism is accepted for the purpose it was meant by God to serve, are you being obedient to Him. To attach your own purpose, design or reason for baptism is to set yourself up as being wiser than the Almighty God. Notice that the steps or conditions of being TAUGHT, exercising FAITH in Christ, REPENTING of your sin and ungodliness, CONFESSING your faith in Christ and getting BAPTIZED, do not necessarily take days or weeks, it can be done in an hour or a day.

## **CONCLUSION**



An interesting thing to note is how men and women were saved in the Old Testament dispensation and how they are saved in the New Testament dispensation, since the day of Pentecost. AFTER the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, notice that in almost every case in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke (Matthew 19:16, Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; 19:18) where the question, "What must I do to have eternal life?" was asked, the person asking was always directed BACK to the Old Testament system or that system or religious standard that was given to the Israelites (the Jews). However, after the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the day of Pentecost when the Old Testament system was nailed to the Cross (Col. 2:15-17) and abolished, men and women asking the same question, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 2:37-41; 8:12-13; 9:6; 16:227-33) were all given a completely different answer and was never referred to the law or the ten commandment system. None in the book of Acts, the New Testament book of conversion was ever told to keep the Sabbath, the Ten Commandments or directed back to the Old Testament system. This is not the way that God is saving mankind today. Not even one prospective convert after the Day of Pentecost was ever directed or encouraged to keep the Ten Commandments or the Sabbath, or to live by the Old Testament System. The reason for this is because that system or religious standard was abolished, having served its God-given purpose, and was nailed to the cross. Men and women were and are now under the New Testament system of Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16, 21).