

HOW SALVATION WORKS

Acts 2:36-42

People spend their lives asking all kinds of questions. One of the questions we ask is: How can I make a lot of money? When we make our money, we ask: How can I make myself more beautiful or handsome and desirable? The next question is: How can I be sure that I will live long enough to enjoy my money and my popularity? The final question man asks is: What kind of legacy can I leave behind that will ensure that people will remember me after I am gone? Not a one of these questions really addresses what is most important in life?

The Bible offers us two questions that are of eternal significance. These are the two questions that man should be asking. The first is found in Mt 16:15, *“Who do you say that I am?”* God answered it this way: *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*, Mt. 3:17. Peter answered: *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*, Mt. 16:16. Our eternal destiny rests on how we answer that question!?

The second question is found in verse 37 of this text, *“What shall we do?”* The question they are asking is this: **“What must we do to be saved?”** This was the same question that was asked by the Philippian Jailer in Acts 16:30. This is a question that arises out of a heart touched by God. It is this question that gets to the heart of man’s greatest need.

You see, man doesn’t need more money. Man doesn’t need more things. Man doesn’t need better health or longer life. What man needs is to be saved! He needs to be in a right relationship with God!

In Acts 2:36-42 Peter preaches the first Gospel message. He explains in detail how a person is saved. He tells us How Salvation Works. As Witnesses for Jesus we need to help searchers ask this question. If we can get them that far then this passage has all the answers you need.

V. 37a THE FIRST STEP IS CONVICTION

What does it mean to be convicted? The Bible says that those who heard Peter’s sermon were “pricked in their heart.”

The word “pricked” means “to be pierced through, to be stabbed, to be greatly agitated or troubled.” What they heard that day caused them to be troubled in their hearts. This is what conviction is all about. They were convinced of the truth of what Peter was preaching! When they heard what Peter was preaching about Jesus, they were convinced that it was true, and they were touched deep in their hearts. Let’s look at what convinced these men that day!

V. 14-21 Convinced by The Fulfillment of God’s Word - Peter merely reminded them that God had said that this day would come. They were convinced by the fact that God has kept His Word.

V. 22-36 Convinced by The Fruitfulness of God’s Work - As Peter talked about Jesus, He was talking about a man of whom they had all heard much. They had heard of His claims to be the Messiah. They had also heard that He had been crucified. But there were rumors all over Jerusalem that this man had risen from the dead! After all, there were over 500 people running around that claimed to have seen Him after His resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:6. Now, these followers of Jesus are all filled with the Spirit and telling everyone that He had indeed risen from the dead.

The Day of Pentecost came exactly 50 days from the day Jesus raised from the dead. It was only 10 days separated from the His ascension back into Heaven. For 40 of those 50 days, Jesus had lived with, worked among and instructed His disciples. Oh, the crowd had all heard the rumors. Rumors of stolen corpses, empty graves, terrified disciples and frightened Jewish leadership. Now, one of Jesus’ followers is telling them that this same Jesus they had killed was risen again and some in the crowd are convinced!

V. 15, 32 Convinced by The Faithfulness of God’s Witnesses - This crowd had certainly heard about the terrified disciples hiding in the upper room. Now, they see them standing boldly and preaching in the power of the Spirit of God! This crowd saw the change in these people. They also understood the risk these disciples were taking by standing up to proclaim Jesus Christ.

So, what is conviction? It is God bringing you to the place where you can see yourself as a lost sinner in need of a Savior and where you can see that Jesus is your only hope. It is God bringing you to the place where you cry out, *“What must I do to be saved?”*

V. 37b-41a THE SECOND STEP IS CONVERSION

After these people are convicted, Peter tells them how to be converted. He tells them how salvation is brought about!

V. 38a Conversion Involves Changing the Mind - Peter tells them to “repent”. Repentance is “a change of mind that results in a change of action.” Up until now, these Jews had believed the party line concerning the identity of Jesus, Peter tells them it is time to change their minds concerning Jesus. That is the plea of verse 40.

Genuine repentance is an essential ingredient in salvation. When you repent of your sins, you forsake your sinful ways. You will think like God thinks, will go God’s way and work for Him with zeal and delight. You see, repentance is more than just feeling sorry for your sins. It is more than sorrow over being “found out” in your sins. Repentance is an absolute changing of the life! It is a renunciation of the old life in sin and the embracing of the new life in Christ, 2 Cor. 5:17. Repentance means changing one's mind, so that one's views, values, goals, and ways are changed, and one's whole life is lived differently. Mind and judgment will and affections, behavior and lifestyle, motives and plans: all are involved. Repenting means starting to live a new life.

V. 38b Conversion Involves Confessing the Master - Peter then calls on these people to be *“baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”*

Baptism follows repentance and it is AT THIS POINT that we have remission of our sins. We do not receive forgiveness by believing alone, or confessing alone, or repenting alone. We must do all those things and then the culmination is to put on Christ in baptism for the purpose of having our sins washed away by His blood.

V. 39-41 Conversion Involves Claiming the Message - The Bible tells us that they *“gladly received his word.”* That is, they accepted the Gospel message and openly identified themselves with Jesus. It is about hearing the truth of the Gospel and receiving it by faith.

V. 41B-42 THE THIRD STEP IS CONTINUATION

We are told that these people, after they were saved *“Continued steadfastly”* in their new way of life. This phrase means “to persevere, to give constant attention to someone or something.” Once they were saved, they begin a new life. After they were saved, they continued in that new life. Nothing makes the clear statement that you are saved more so than your steadfast continuation in the things of God! Notice the things they held to after they were saved.

A. They Continued In *“The Apostles Doctrine”* - That is, they lived by the Word of God. They made the teachings of the Bible the centerpiece and guiding influence of their lives. This is always evidence of genuine salvation, 1 John 2:3; 3:24. Your obedience to the Word of God is proof of your love for the Savior, John 14:15.

B. They Continued in Right Associations - They also continued in the *“fellowship”*. That is, there was a new love for the brethren and a desire to be with them. Again, this is proof of a converted life, 1 John 3:14. If you love the brethren, it is only because you have the love of God within you, 1 Jn 4:7! However, the absence of love for the brethren, signals an absence of genuine salvation in your life, 1 John 4:20-21.

C. They Continued In Keeping Appointments - When the Bible refers to *“the breaking of bread”*, it is speaking of the gathering of the saints at the Lord’s table for worship and to observe communion. It is talking about the gathering together of the saints for worship. In other words, they went to church! Your desire for and involvement in worship says a lot about your commitment to the Lord Jesus!

D. They Continued In Prayer - Last we are told they continued in *“prayers”*.

These people took the time to get into the presence of the Lord on a personal level. Again, your desire for a personal relationship with God is an indicator of your spiritual condition! Saved people want to be near the Lord often!

Conclusion

What must we do to be saved? Those are the simple steps that teach us how salvation works.

When Peter preached his message 3,000 people were saved. I don't expect that to happen today, because not that many people are present.

However, I do believe that the gospel can save the soul of anyone who is willing to accept what God says.

As we are out and about let us live our lives in such a way as to force others to see Jesus in us. When we live in that way people will ask us why we believe what we believe. Then we can share this simple lesson from Acts 2 with them.