

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

By Paul O. Nichols

The term "the plan of salvation" is ordinarily used to refer to the steps of obedience that God requires of the alien sinner for the remission of sins and that he might be added to the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. But actually the plan of salvation is much broader and more inclusive than just the five steps of obedience. In this article it is in the broader sense that this term is used.

God originated the plan because man could not save himself. The prophet Jeremiah declared, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Because of man's helpless condition and inability to save himself, it was necessary for God to make the way of salvation accessible by a divine scheme of redemption. The Bible tells us, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16, 17). We are informed

by the apostle Peter that "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

To make the plan of God effective Christ died on the cross and shed His innocent blood. We are told "... God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). He said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38.) "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians. 2:8). "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9:22). And we are told "...Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:9).

God's plan of salvation is for all men everywhere. There is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile (Romans 10:12). We are told in Acts 10:34, 35, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."

The apostles were chosen by Jesus to be His ambassadors to the world and were sent out to preach the gospel "to every creature" in "all nations" (Mark 16:15, 16; Matthew 28:19, 20). The apostle Paul writes, "For after the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). We are told by the inspired writer of the book of Romans, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Then he poses the question, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:13-15).

The apostles understood their commission, "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). The apostle Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our

sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

With reference to those who preach the Gospel, the apostle asked this question. "How shall they preach except they be sent?" The answer is in 1 Timothy 3:15. He refers to the church as "the pillar and ground of the truth," meaning that the church is the source of support for those who dedicate their lives to the preaching of the Gospel to the world. "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel". (1 Corinthians 9:13, 14). The church is the source of support and the sending agency of those who "have the power to forbear working" so that they are free and able to go wherever they are needed (1 Corinthians 9:6). This is God's divine arrangement.

Finally, in the plan of salvation when the facts of the Gospel are presented to the alien sinner in a clear and adequate manner, sufficient for him to understand, then God expects him to do something about his sinful condition. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be

saved" (Mark 16:16). Sinners on the day of Pentecost, after hearing the Gospel cried out, "What shall we do?" The answer was, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38). The sinner in Acts the eighth chapter asked the preacher what hindered him from being baptized. He was told, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." He confessed his faith in Christ – "I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God" (Acts 8:37). Immediately he was baptized. The preacher and the convert "went down into the water, and he baptized him" The sinner who has obeyed the Gospel and is in a saved condition is then "added to the church" by the Lord (Acts 2:47).

This is the Plan of Salvation that God has given to save man from his sins and to give him the hope of eternal life. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). "Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 3:7, 8).

Paul O. Nichols has served the Church of Christ faithfully for over sixty years.

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