

# THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

On one occasion, my family and I were shopping at an Old Navy clothing store. This is quite an ordeal for my family since we have three small children. At the time of this event, our son, Jacob, was about five years old, and our middle child, Sarah, was about three years old. While we were shopping, something very disturbing happened. We looked around and Sarah was not in sight. My wife was instantly very excited, but I thought we would quickly find her and remained calm. She went to the exit to stand and watched for her, and I began to search all over the store. At this point, I expected to find her in my first trip around the store, but I did not. I searched all departments, the dressing rooms, and the restrooms, but I could not see her. I went to the front to see if Julie had seen her, she had not. Now Julie, Jacob, and myself were all in a state of panic. We alerted the store employees and began to tearfully and fearfully search again. Several trips through the store and several minutes passed with no success. Your mind instantly begins to imagine the possible dangers which could come to your child. Had someone stolen her? If so, did they intend to hurt her and will I ever see her again? Then, finally, she emerged. She had crawled inside a clothes rack and was having a wonderful time playing house. She never even knew that we were looking for her. We were obviously so relieved to find her.

This story reminds me of a spiritual lesson. Sarah was separated from her family, and there are many in this world who are separated from God. Because they choose to live in sin without regard for Him, they are separated from His wonderful family (Isaiah 59:1-2). Also, while Sarah was separated from her parents, she was in terrible danger. We were so fortunate that there were no predators nearby to take advantage of her situation. Yet, those who are separated from God are in even greater danger. Satan, the worst predator of all, has attacked their souls and brought them into the worst danger of all—the danger of hell. Billions of souls in this world live in a lost condition from God. Millions, even this day, will die in that condition and then be eternally lost. And do you know what worst of all? Many of them, like Sarah, do not realize that they are lost. They are happily going along without realizing the danger of their spiritual condition. There is no greater tragedy in this life!

John wrote, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). God recognizes that the world is perishing. He knows the danger of our souls and has done something about it. He so loved us that He was willing to send His only begotten Son to die for us. His Son suffered all of the punishment that we deserve so that we might be set free. We have freedom from death and the hope of eternal life because of His sacrifice. Still, we must react to this gift. We must accept it to benefit from it.

So then, the most important question any person will ever ask is this one, "what must I do to be saved?" This is a spiritual question which deserves a scriptural answer. There are many questions which we will never be able to answer, but we must answer this one. We must answer it in the same way God would answer. We can do this by going back to the Bible for the answer.

Think about that question for a moment. Think about the word "must." It reminds us that in matters of salvation we are not free to follow our own opinion. The word "must" carries the idea of obligation. I am not free to choose the manner in which I want to be saved. I "must" conform to God's will about salvation.

Think about the word "I." This reminds me of my personal responsibility when it

comes to salvation. My friends and family cannot be saved for me. It is my decision. If I make my decision according to God's will I will be saved; if I fail to make my decision according to God's will I will be lost. I must work out "my own" salvation and save "myself" from this crooked society (Philippians 2:12; Acts 2:40).

Now think about the word "do." It reminds us that action is involved in salvation. God has done His part which we do not deserve. Still, He demands that we "do" our part as well (James 2:24).

Have you done anything to ensure that your soul is saved? If you have, are you sure it was what God commands? Can you go to the Bible and confirm the steps you took? When the answer to those questions is "yes," then you can be confident that you will be saved. You will be forgiven of all of your sin. You will be reconciled to God becoming His child and His friend. You will be bound for heaven with all of its glory when life is over. So, let us turn to the Bible to answer this most important question. In fact, we can find occasions when this very question was asked in the Bible. These texts provide the best place for us to search for an answer to this question.

One such occasion of this question is found in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost following the Lord's death (Acts 2:37). On this day, Peter was preaching to the very same people who demanded the crucifixion of Christ. Peter caused them to realize that they were guilty of the blood of Jesus (Acts 2:36-37). Can you imagine the fear which swelled in their hearts at this truth? Who would want to stand in judgment before God with the blood of Jesus on His hands? The Bible says that these men were "cut to the heart." This is an indication that they believed what Peter has preached. Men are not cut to the heart by matters which they do not believe. Peter had preached the existence of God, they believed. Peter had preached that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, they believed. Peter preached to them the word of God, they believed this also. If we will be saved, we must believe the same things. A person who does not believe in God, Jesus, the Son of God, and the Bible, the word of God is doomed to be lost eternally (Acts 16:31). Yet, faith is a key step in the process of salvation, but it is not the final step. Though they already believed, they were still seeking sal-

vation.

These men, realizing their lost condition, asked "what shall we do?" Peter answered, "...*repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). Here is the answer to the "do" part of our question.

To be saved, we must repent. To repent means to change, and salvation demands drastic changes in our hearts and actions. In our lost state, we were only concerned about pleasing ourselves. To be saved, we must determine to learn how to serve God and our neighbors. In our lost state, we loved ourselves selfishly. To be saved, we must resolve to love God with all of our lives and love our neighbor as ourselves. In our lost state, we were led by our own desires. To be saved, we must be directed by obedience to the word of God. To be saved, we must be willing to make the effort to change.

Also, Peter told the multitude to be baptized. The baptism of which he speaks is an immersion in water. This act when carried out in the name of Christ enables a person to contact the blood which Jesus shed in His death. Thus, in baptism, the blood of Jesus washes away all the sins of the penitent believer. Baptism does not occur after salvation occurs. It is the point when salvation occurs (Romans 6:3-4). It is in the watery grave of baptism that the old man of sin is put to death. It is in baptism where we are raised in the newness of life. So then, Peter told these people to be baptized.

Friend, are you lost or saved? Are you asking what must I do to be saved. The answer to that question is as follows. Believe in the Lord Jesus with all of your heart. Repent, by determining to serve Him to the best of your ability. Confess the faith that you have in Jesus. Then, be baptized in water in Jesus' name that His blood may wash away your sins. Friend, nothing in this world is more important. If you are not confident about your soul, we would love to study with you and encourage you further. If we can help you in any way, we urge you to please contact us today!

-Brent Arnold

### **WHERE IS HEAVEN?**

One Sunday morning a faithful Bible class teacher was teaching her class about heaven. She asked the question, "Where is heaven?" And one happy little boy replied, "It's in our home since my daddy became a Christian."

"...*he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*" (Proverbs 29:18)

**FOR THIS CAUSE I BOW MY KNEES—3**

Third, Jesus taught His apostles to petition on behalf of forgiveness. There is nothing for which man should be more concerned than forgiveness of sin. Why is that the foremost concern of mankind? Because without forgiveness, man is destined to be separated from God eternally. The impurity of sin cannot enter or abide in the presence of a holy God, and God recognized that fact. All the way back in Genesis 1-2, when God created man, His purpose was for man to dwell continually in His presence, and thus instructed man as to the means by which that was possible (Genesis 2:17). However, by man's betrayal of that Divine command, sin entered the world forfeiting man's ability to dwell with God. Thus a means of redemption had to intervene to take sin out of the way, once again allowing man to enter God's presence. And that means of redemption is the forgiveness of sin made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ. A forgiveness that is perpetual as much as man is penitent. If man refuses to be penitent, forgiveness is withheld (II Corinthians 7:10). It is with that penitent attitude that the Christian can approach God in prayer and seek that cleansing power to again redeem their souls and forgive them of sins. This blessing is illustrated to us in scripture in the form of one called Simon, formerly a sorcerer. In Acts 8, after Philip had gone to Samaria and preached the gospel to the citizens in that city, a number were obedient to the gospel, being immersed for the remission of their sins, and were added to the body of Christ. However, shortly thereafter, Peter and John were sent by the other apostles at Jerusalem to bestow the miraculous measure on those new believers, and upon seeing the power they were able to transmit, Simon offered them money if he too could have that power, thereby falling into sin. After rebuking Simon for his less than honorable desire, Peter instructed Simon to, "*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee*" (Acts 8:22). This is exactly the ability that Jesus stated in His model prayer that children of God have, to penitently petition God for forgiveness. However, note that our forgiveness is not only conditioned by our penitence, but also by our willingness to forgive others. How could a soul unwilling to forgive possibly seek forgiveness? Jesus stated that we only have the right to seek forgiveness if we "*also forgive every one that is indebted to us*" (Luke 11:4). So, when humbly bowing to your knees in prayer, take advantage of the marvelous opportunity to seek forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

Then, fourth, Jesus taught His apostles to seek the spiritual guidance and strength provided by God. James would later indicate in his epistle that "*God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*" (James 1:13). That, though, does not mean that man does not face temptation. God does not tempt man, but He allows man to be tempted according to his free moral agency. And while it is not a sin to face temptation (see Matthew 4) nor is temptation always a bad thing (see James 1:2-3), temptation is a step closer to sin if we are not careful. Therefore, the ideal life would be one in which temptation is never faced, whereby sin could be more easily avoided. But, while God does not promise that temptation will never be faced, He does promise that temptation will never be more than can be bore. One of the most comforting verses in all of the Bible is I Corinthians 10:13, which states, "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*" That is the strength and guidance mentioned by Christ in His model prayer. The strength to withstand and the guidance to avoid sin when temptation does arise. And on both counts, the strength and the guidance we need to withstand temptation is found in the scriptures. When, in Matthew 4, Christ was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, each temptation was met with this righteous response, "*It is written.*" That was the Divine means by which Christ was delivered from evil—the shelter of truth. Similar to this thought is Solomon's statement regarding the name of the Lord being "*a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe*" (Proverbs 18:10). Thus, when falling to your knees in prayer, remember to seek the spiritual guidance and strength of God to withstand evil.

While obviously far more detailed attention could be paid to specific abilities we have regarding prayer, these four points outlined by Christ generally illustrate what our attention should be given to in prayer. And by these four points it is obvious that prayer is to be approached with God, others, and self in mind. We pray for the will of God, for the souls and health of others, and for the physical and spiritual well being of self. Such petitions strengthen and encourage us to daily seek the favor of God in life and in death. And it is for this cause I bow my knees.

-Andy Brewer  
to be continued