

How are sinners saved?

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How do sinners obtain God's gift of eternal salvation?

The Bible says: "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:13-15).

This passage clearly shows us the steps in the process of salvation.

First, someone is sent out with the gospel.

Second, the gospel is preached.

Third, the gospel is heard.

Fourth, the gospel is believed.

Fifth, people call on Christ for salvation.

Core of the Gospel

The gospel is central. So what is the gospel? Again, we turn to the Bible. The apostle Paul said in another letter: “The gospel I preached to you (...) by which you are being saved: (...) that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

This short passage teaches us a few important things about the Gospel. The Gospel is about Christ. Christ died for our sins. Christ conquered death. And all this was God’s plan. That is the core of the Gospel.

Only hope

Paul says we need to believe the gospel in order to be saved by it. What does it mean to believe the gospel? It does not just mean that we believe that Jesus existed, died, and rose again. Even the devil believes facts about God, but it does not save him (see James 2:19). Therefore, more is needed than just believing facts.

Peter said it this way when he was preaching the Gospel to unbelievers in the temple: “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). So, to repent is a change of mind. You get new thoughts about God, realizing He is the creator whom you should worship and obey. You get new thoughts about yourself, realizing you have sinned against God, and that your sins have earned you eternal punishment in hell. As a result, you get new thoughts about Christ. You realize that his death on the cross is the only hope for sinners to obtain eternal life.

Because of this change of thought, there is also a change of direction. “Turn back” in this verse means turning away from sin and turning to God. Sinners turn to God, because they know Christ’s death on the cross is their only hope for forgiveness of sins and Christ’s resurrection is their only hope for eternal life on the new earth that the Lord prepares for all His children. That is the fifth step in the process. ‘Calling on Christ’ is not just a prayer for salvation. It is a total surrender to Christ, a total trust in Christ, based upon an understanding of the Gospel.

New direction of life

Earlier in Romans 10, Paul wrote “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). Here we see the same thing: a conviction about the truth of the Gospel, combined with a new direction of life, in which Christ is Lord and we trust and obey Him.

To summarize: what should someone do to obtain God’s gift of eternal salvation? First of all, he should make sure that he hears the gospel. Second, he should believe the gospel is true. Third, he should surrender his life to Christ who will be his Lord and Savior.

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