"What Must I Do to be Saved?"

by Aaron Risener

In the book of Acts we read, "Repent you therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

The change in a person's life resulting in his becoming a Christian is called in the Bible, conversion, and the Bible teaches that conversion is necessary for a person to be saved. Christ likened this change to a birth and taught Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Of the 27 books comprising the New Testament, there is one book which is particularly helpful in understanding the nature of conversion. This book is Acts of the Apostles which tells of the conversions of many different people. In Chapters 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 18, and 22 are eight key examples of conversion and from these examples certain universal principles of conversion can be understood.

First, conversion is dependent upon the acceptance of the Word of God by the sinner. Jesus said, "The seed is the Word," and conversions mentioned in the book of Acts bear out the necessity of both the presentation of God's Word to the sinner and his acceptance of it (Romans 1:16). The presentation can be either public or private; through words either spoken or written, but their acceptance always results in belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. (Romans 10:17) We also read, "They believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 8:12); and in Acts 18:8, "And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized."

Second, faith in Jesus Christ, produced by the testimony of the Word of God, leads to a change in a sinner's attitude toward his own transgressions. With faith comes an understanding of God's love to man. This, in turn, leads the sinner to  determine to turn away from sin, for we read, "Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). An example of this part of conversion is found in Acts 2 in response to Peter's preaching of Christ. The Bible says, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in the heart and said unto Peter, 'Men and brethren what shall we do?' Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:36-38).

Third, this change in a person's heart must lead to certain actions before conversion is complete. One of these actions is confession that Jesus is the Christ, for we read, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9,10).

Finally, a person must be baptized in the likeness of Christ's death and burial (Romans 6:4) in order for God to forgive him of past sins. The Bible says, "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). And we also remember in the scripture we read only a moment ago that in Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, he said that both repentance and baptism are necessary in order to receive the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Later, Peter echoed this same thought again when he said that "baptism doth also now save us" (I Peter 3:21).

When a person believes in Christ, repents of sin, confesses Christ and is baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, he is converted. Only then has he been born of water and of the Spirit as referred to in John 3:3-5. Then the Lord adds him to the body, the Church, the Kingdom of God (Acts 2:47).

If you have not obeyed these commands of the gospel, you are encouraged to do so today, and if you would like to discuss the subject more fully, please feel free to email us and request more information. We will be glad to assist you in studying this vital subject more fully.