**THE CONDITIONS OF SALVATION VERSUS THE PLAN OF SALVATION**

I have long believed – and preached – that we need to revise our way of teaching about salvation. When I first began preaching, whenever the topic was “The Plan of Salvation,” you could almost guarantee that the sermon points would be: 1) Hear, 2) Believe, 3) Repent, 4) Confess, and 5) Be baptized. Since that time, many preachers, including myself, have thankfully improved upon that sermon model.

Before I go any further, I’d like to say for the record that the five-point outline above is perfectly Scriptural! That is exactly what we must do to be saved (cf. Rm.10:17; Ac.2:38; Ac.8:35-38). This article is **NOT** about removing those essential duties from our preaching! These things must be taught, and I continue to teach them to every sinner who will listen. But the point I want to make is that ***this is NOT the plan of salvation!*** Instead, these five things are the ***conditions*** of salvation for the alien sinner. When we call those five things “the ***plan*** of salvation,” we have left out of lot of necessary information – and we’ve misrepresented the true plan of salvation! Will you open your mind and think with me about this?

If I may just get to the point, ***“The PLAN of Salvation” is Jesus on the cross!*** Note: “For ***the message of the CROSS*** is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being ***SAVED*** it is the power of God;” then later, it says, ***“it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to SAVE those who believe”*** (1Cor.1:18,21). In other words: without Christ, without the cross, without the shedding of His blood, the five conditions of salvation would be powerless to save anyone! When we stress the conditions, without mentioning their connection to the cross, it should not surprise us when some accuse us of trying to “earn” our salvation by works – because that’s exactly what it sounds like! Keep in mind that I’m talking about others’ ***perceptions*** of what we say. So, if I may be sold bold, I would like to suggest a better outline for teaching sinners about salvation:

**I. The NEED of salvation (sin)**

 A. *Definition* of sin – transgression of God’s law, by commission of omission (1Jn.5:17; Jm.4:17)

 B. *Cause* of sin – NOT an inherited trait, but a deliberate choice to do evil (Ezk.18:20; Jm.1:13-15)

 C. *Extent* of sin – EVERYONE becomes guilty of sin at some point in their lives (Rm.3:23; 1Jn.1:8)

 D. *Result* of sin – sin results in eternal “death” (note the contrast with “eternal life,” Rm.6:23)

**II. The PLAN of salvation (Christ)**

 A. God provided *a sacrificial lamb* as a substitute for our punishment (cf. Jn.1:29)

 B. The life (blood) of Christ was *the ransom price* paid to free us from sin (Mt.20:28)

 C. *If it were not for the shedding of His blood, there would be NO salvation!* (cf. Hb.9:22)

 D. His selfless sacrifice is designed to *“compel”* repentance and faithfulness (2Cor.5:14-15)

**III. The CONDITIONS of salvation**

 A. *Hear* and *believe* in Christ (Jn.8:24; Rm.10:17)

 B. *Repentance* from all our sins (Lk.13:3,5)

 C. *Confession* of our faith in Christ (Ac.8:37)

 D. *Baptism* for the remission of sins (Ac.2:38-39)

**IV. The RESULT of salvation (church)**

 A. Those meeting the conditions of salvation are *added to God’s church* (Ac.2:38,41,47)

 B. As God’s people, the church has one mission: *to glorify God* (Ep.3:20-21; 1Tm.3:14-15)

 C. We glorify God by *doing what HE says*, rather than doing what WE want (Mt.5:16)

 D. This would include working with other saved people in a *local church* (Hb.10:24-25)

The above is outline can certainly be improved upon. But don’t you think it is a much more comprehensive treatment of the plan of salvation, rather than just looking at the conditions of salvation? So, the next time someone asks you about the plan of salvation, tell them the ***whole*** story!

--Lanny Smith