

## Steps 1 – Rethink Salvation

**\*\*Bumper Video –**

**41000**

We never shy away from controversy. Your Bible is the most controversial book ever written. Every time I look within the word of God it confronts my actions, my thoughts...

I want to prepare you... This is going to get confrontational today... it's going to challenge... it's going to be a little controversial... It may be uncomfortable...

Ephesians 4:3-6 (NIV) Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

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There ought to be unity – there is 1 body, 1 Spirit, 1 hope, 1 Lord, 1 Faith, 1 baptism, 1 God & Father.

There ought to be unity – yet there are approximately 41,000 Christian Denominations & Organizations. The Church has splintered over the years... but splinters have splintered and splintered again to a huge crazy mess.

The church seems better at splitting and dividing than adding and multiplying.

**IT SHOULDN'T BE THIS WAY**

What I find very sad about this separation in the church is that one of the main divides is Salvation.

What ought to unite has divided us. It shouldn't be this way! I've come to confront it.

41000 Denominations with big disagreements of salvation...

When investigating a church you have to figure out what brand of salvation they preach...

IT SHOULDN'T BE THIS WAY! There is only one brand name for salvation... there is only one standard for salvation – It is the Lord Jesus Christ. ACTS 4:12

Salvation is found in no one else (JESUS), for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Today I'm asking you to re-think salvation. Don't define it according to denominational lines...

Don't pick and choose a few scriptures but look at the entirety of Scripture.

If you do an internet search for "salvation steps" or "what do I need to do to be saved" you get a lot of different results...

It's human nature to want an instruction manual with quick easy answers. "Just give the quick salvation for dummies steps..."

We see this in Islam – they have the 5 Pillars of Islam. You must do these 5 things and do them well for God to be happy with you. And in the Roman Catholic Church they have 7 Sacraments. Many people find the idea of a step by step process to salvation appealing... So they form requirement lists...

### Requirement List

Salvation is not a requirement list...

There is so much wrong with this perspective of a requirement list. Here are a few..

#1 Requirement lists become about us and our action rather than about Christ and His actions... the Gospel – the Death the burial and resurrection.

#2 A requirement list is always looking for the bare minimum. It seems like an attempt to barter or haggle for the lowest price. This church says I need to do 5 things... but I found one that says I only need to do 3 things... I found a better salvation deal...

You aren't buying a car... this is your salvation.

#3 it leads to a salvation by works where we try to earn our salvation.

Salvation is a gift and gifts are not earned.

Salvation is not a requirement list!

**Salvation is Jesus**

Salvation is about Jesus... Embracing Jesus, Choosing Jesus, Being Close to Jesus.

The opposite is true... Damnation is about rejecting Jesus...

If we live out our faith according to a requirement list it becomes about missing Hell and making Heaven... rather than the foundation be that you are so in love with the Lord Jesus that you choose him above everything.

**Salvation isn't about Heaven or Hell – Salvation is Jesus.** Salvation isn't a denomination it is Jesus.

His Gospel is salvation. His presence, His Holy Spirit is salvation. His word is salvation. His blood and forgiveness is salvation. His Grace & Mercy is salvation.

Let me be clear when I say this... If you have Jesus you have everything!

This series is called **Steps**, but it isn't about a checklist or a todo list... It is about taking STEPS to be closer to Jesus the source of salvation, joy, peace, happiness, everlasting life, strength, hope...

I studied the writings of others in preparation for this series. More than one took this curious stance.

They took the stance that any church that teaches you that there are any requirements to salvation are wrong and captured by legalism. Many people say there are absolutely no requirements... Then they would rundown other denominations and their doctrinal stances... they said baptism isn't a requirement for salvation... an encounter with the Holy Spirit isn't required... Turning from sin through repentance is not required... They even said confession isn't required...

There are no requirements... All you need to do is believe...

Smack my head... It made me want to scream... wait a second... you do have a requirement... You just said we need to believe... that's a requirement...

Just because you are holding to 1 requirement doesn't mean there are no requirements...

You wanna talk requirement...?

Jesus Christ fulfills all the requirement... The wages of sin is death... Sin requires death and Jesus fulfilled that requirement with His death. Only sinless blood can atone for sin and the blood of Jesus has fulfilled that requirement.

Jesus Christ fulfills everything we need... He is the requirement...

But there is nothing wrong with saying some things are required of you...

**YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING**

Jesus fulfills the requirement but there are still some things required of you. There are a growing number of doctrines that in one way or another deny that man plays a role in his own salvation. The doctrines of Monergism & Irresistible Grace are such doctrines... They claim that God saves man without man's cooperation... It is a denial of free will.

Philippians 2:12 - Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

This relationship with Christ, this salvation requires a continued work from you. Fear & Trembling – You should take this seriously.

How can we reconcile these 2 ideas...

The idea that **Salvation is a free gift** & the idea that **we must continue to work out our salvation...**

We have to understand that **Jesus is our salvation**. Your Church membership isn't your salvation, Jesus is! Your acts and deeds aren't your salvation, Jesus is.

**Salvation is a person.** You must have a relationship with this person... You can have this relationship with Jesus the savior... and that is a free gift we don't deserve...

But how many know that relationships take work... This is what Philippians 2:12 was talking about... It says it is a continued work...

**If Jesus is our salvation then every step towards Jesus is a salvational step.** Every act of surrender to Jesus is salvational. Salvation is a continued working...

This will clear up a lot of questions...

Do I need to repent? Will it take you one step closer to Christ? Yes it will! So repent!

Do I need to be baptized? Will it take you one step closer to Christ? Yes it will! So be baptized!

It's no longer about fulfilling an obligation or requirement... It's about taking the next step toward Jesus.

**Jesus is our salvation and every step towards Jesus is a salvational step.**

**Is there a moment of salvation?**

Well there are a lot of disagreements in this question... I've got 2 things to say about it...

#1 The majority of Churches end every service with a time for people to accept Christ as their personal savior and pray a "sinners prayer." This is orthodoxy in the Church today... but it is nothing like how the New Testament Church operated. There is no such terminology on praying a salvational "sinners prayer" or "accepting Christ" in your Bible... But upon publicly praying a repeat after me prayer the ministry of the church proclaims that everyone who said that prayer is saved.

I find this very troubling. I find this unbiblical.

I've tried to share Jesus with people whose lives are a complete wreck... no evidence of a spiritual life or relationship with Jesus. I've been stopped by these same people as I'm trying to share the gospel... "Your wasting your time. I'm already saved. I accepted Christ as a child."

They are claiming salvation based on fulfilling a requirement as a child... and not on a relationship with Jesus.

Many times they might reference a scripture like John 3:16 or Romans 10:9

We absolutely believe these scriptures but is it the moment of salvation...?

#2 Jesus says ENDURE

**Matt 24:13 but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.(NIV)**

According to Jesus, the moment of salvation comes when we have endured to the end.

Believing & confessing isn't the moment you are saved... It is the moment of your 1<sup>st</sup> step.

I love to see this 1<sup>st</sup> step taken! It's exciting. But it is the starting line not the finish line.

There are other steps. As believers we must continue to work out salvation. Continuing to take steps toward Jesus is part of this enduring Jesus is talking about.

Let's look at the birth of the Church in Acts 2.

The Holy Spirit was poured out on 120 believers in the upper room. Peter starts telling a crowd of unbelievers about Jesus.

**Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."(NIV)**

**Acts 2:37**

**When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"(NIV)**

Wow – this is a big question. In this one moment they are believing that Jesus is Lord & Messiah. In this one moment they became believers, but they didn't just stop there... They felt convicted for their sin and wanted to make things right between them and God... They are asking – What can we do? How can we be saved?

How will Peter respond?

Here is what he doesn't do... He doesn't say congratulations – You are a believer, You believe that Jesus is Lord & Messiah – You are saved.

He does not say “Do you verbally accept Jesus as your personal savior?”

He does not lead them through a sinners prayer...

He doesn't try to get them to join his newly founded denomination...

Peter's response to their 1<sup>st</sup> step is to reveal some next steps...

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "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.(NIV)

Peter was not giving them a to do list to earn salvation... He was saying there are some more steps past believing.

Believing is a great first step! We celebrate it when people make that step! But there are steps beyond believing and your Bible says you need to take them!

As good as Believing in God is James 2:19 says

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.(NIV)

In Acts 2:37 people asked for more steps and in Acts 2:38 Peter gave them more steps to take them closer to Jesus. Here they are...

Repent! Is repentance salvational? Peter thought so.

Repentance is turning towards Christ, turning away from sin.  
Repentance will take you closer to Jesus!

**HAVE YOU TAKEN THIS STEP?**

Peter tells them to be Baptized! Is Baptism salvational? Peter thought so. When they asked “What can we do to save ourself from killing the messiah?” Peter told them to be baptized.

Water Baptism identifies you with Christ – I can think of no better public confession that Jesus is your savior than to be baptized in His name.

Peter goes further than confession with baptism... He says it is for the remission, the erasing, the forgiveness of your sins. Does that sound salvational to you?

Baptism is definitely a step towards Jesus! So what else do you really need to know? Jesus is our salvation and any step towards him is something that we need.

**HAVE YOU TAKEN THIS STEP?**

Peter tells them that they will receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Is the Holy Spirit salvational? Is that a step we should take as believers? Peter thought it was!

Salvation isn't about a list of requirements... It's about getting closer to Jesus...

There is a way to get so close to Jesus that His Spirit is living inside you and empowering you!

**HAVE YOU TAKEN THIS STEP?**

To argue your need for a step toward Jesus is to say... I'm close enough to Jesus.

To say... I don't need to be baptized, or repent, or experience the Holy Spirit is to say I'm close enough... To say that would be to live by a requirement list and not a relationship with the savior.

Have you ever regretted taking a step toward Jesus? If you had a chance to do it all again wouldn't you make the same steps toward Jesus? Wouldn't you have done them sooner and life? There is nothing better in life than taking a step toward Jesus.

TAKE A STEP! If an

### So am I saved?

This is an important question. Let me ask you this?

Do you believe that what Jesus did on the Cross was for you? Do you believe that you can't be saved outside of Jesus?

Are you walking toward Jesus? Are you actively pursuing Him? Are you continuing to work out this salvation relationship?

Do you love Jesus? Do you want to be with Jesus in this life and the next? Are you going to endure to the end?

Are you going to walk out every step He gives you? If you receive new information from the Word of God are you going to walk in it or resist it?

Salvation is Jesus... DO YOU HAVE HIM? Not a list of requirements... do you have Jesus?!

You may have received new information today... are you going to resist it or embrace it and walk in it?

## MUSICIAN

### What Day Is It?

2 Cor 6:2 ...now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

How important is today if today is the day of salvation? This Altar...?

Should you be fortunate enough to wake up tomorrow... (Tomorrow is not guaranteed) When tomorrow comes and you take your Bible and open up 2 Corinthians 6:2 you know it will say tomorrow...?

NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION.

I have never opened the Bible and it told me Tomorrow is the day of salvation... It has never said yesterday was the day of salvation...

Salvation is always TODAY.

We hear often this phrase... I got saved back in 1998... If we live by a requirement list then salvation will always be yesterday...

God wants you to know that Salvation is today!

That is good news... On my worst day... Salvation is available.

In my current struggle salvation is available.

What if you lived life today like you needed Jesus to save you? Because guess what... You do need Jesus to save you today!

We focus too much on the first steps of salvation that we forget to take the **NEXT STEP**.

What is your next step?

Everyone has a next step...