

23 Things That Save Us From Sin

Which one(s) will *you* leave out?

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Brethren often talk about “the five steps of salvation,” in reference to man’s part in his response to the gospel. Although there is value to this concise list, the Bible never speaks of “The Five Steps Of Salvation” as it is typically used today. Don’t misunderstand me, I believe in what is typically referred to as “the five steps” because you can put clear Bible verses after each of the “steps!” My concern is that constant reference to “man’s part,” may make man’s response more important in some people’s minds than “God’s part.” The formula, though *useful*, can also be *limiting*. For example, I am not alone in expressing concern that nowhere in “the five step formula” is the grace of God mentioned!

In discussing the plan of salvation with others, I believe it is important that we need to be careful about narrowing down the plan of salvation to certain elements and leaving out other important elements. Clearly, all *the elements of salvation we find in scripture* are important. If not, why not? Surely beloved, the Holy Spirit would not have chosen to reveal anything to us if they did not matter!

Further, it seems to me, that instead of starting at man’s response, we should start with the story of Jesus and His sacrifice, the revelation of God’s grace and His love, and the amazing nature of God’s eternal plan, etc. First and foremost, I sharing the gospel, we should start with sin, and how serious it is, and how Jesus is the only resolution to our sin problem. People first need to understand why it was necessary for Jesus to die, etc. *before* we begin talking about man’s response to Christ and try to get people in the water!

Let me illustrate it this way. We all understand that it would be foolish to begin talking about the wedding on a first or second date. Talk about scaring a prospect for marriage off, and making him or her run for the hills! Sadly, I fear that immediately discussing baptism with a lost person may be very similar to the aforementioned scenario. We may be, well meaning, but our overzealous approach becomes counter-productive. Similarly, our intentions of jumping quickly into the five steps, and even placing them on our church business cards as our very first approach in many cases, may be good, but often, the long term impact is not what we hope for. Obviously, before we talk about marriage and a possible future wedding, *first* we must have *fallen in love* with the person, we must have come to a point where we respect and *believe in* the person, and truly have *faith* in them, then and only then are we in an appropriate stage of our relationship to propose and start to make wedding plans!

Over the years in teaching people the gospel, I have found it beneficial to go way beyond and be much *more expansive* than the simple, standard, five step approach. I think we ought to be careful to lay out *everything* God has said about salvation, and *first* make sure individuals understand God’s part in the plan! After all, “we love Him because He first loved us” (I John 4:19)! Only after God’s part is clear, and

what the Godhead has done for us in providing a Savior, should we begin to talk about man's response to the fact that *my Jesus died for me!*

If you look at the scriptures carefully, you will find that **God has specified 14 things that have some part in our salvation from sin.** This list is not original with me, I first saw them catalogued in this way in a tract by Royce Bell, who has used this approach successfully in presenting the gospel to prospects in his local work. A list of this sort is very simple to arrive at yourself, just use a concordance! The different elements will quickly be made evident to even the novice Bible student. Here are the 14 elements of God's part:

1. **The Father** (Isaiah 12:2, Titus 3:4-5, Romans 6:23; 8:33, 1 Timothy 4:10, Ephesians 3:8-19).
2. **The Son** (Jesus Christ) (Matthew 1:21, 1 Timothy 1:15, Hebrews 5:8-9, Luke 19:10).
3. **The Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 6:11, John 14:26, 16:7-13, Ephesians 6:17).
4. **God's Grace** (Acts 15:11, Romans 3:24, Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 2:11-12).
5. **God's Love** (John 3:16; 1 John 4:7).
6. **God's Mercy** (Titus 3:5).
7. **Hope** Romans 8:24; Titus 1:2
8. **Life of Christ** (Romans 5:10).
9. **The Cross** (Christ's sacrifice) (1 Corinthians 1:18; Galatians 6:14).
10. **The Blood of Christ** (shed on the cross) (Matthew 26:28, Romans 5:8-9, Ephesians 1:7, 13-14, Hebrews 9:22, 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7).
11. **The Name of Christ** (His authority and dominion) (John 20:30-31; Acts 4:10-12; 10:43).
12. **The Gospel** (contained in the New Testament of the Bible) Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:23).
13. **Preachers/Messengers of the gospel of Christ** (Mark 16:15; 1 Corinthians 1:21; 2 Thessalonians 2:14).
14. **Truth** (John 8:31-32, 2 Thessalonians 2:10).

Similarly, the Bible shows we are to **respond to the gospel in 9 ways.** Each of the following are specified as being effectual in our salvation. Here's the list, numbered and with scripture citations.

1. **Hear the words of the gospel,** (Romans 10:14-17, Proverbs 28:9, Isaiah 55:3, Acts 11:14).
2. **Faith in Christ** (belief that He is the Son of God) (John 3:16, 8:24; Romans 5:1-2, Acts 16:31, Hebrews 11:6).

3. **Repentance of sin** (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; 17:30; 2 Corinthians 7:10).
4. **Confession of faith in Christ** (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 9:26; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:36-37).
5. **Baptism in water** (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:47-48; 1 Peter 3:21).
6. **Works that are specified by faith's action in obedience**—see #7, below (John 6:28-29, James 2:20-26, 1 John 3:24).
7. **Obedience (of faith)**—see #6, above (Romans 1:5, 16:25-26; Hebrews 5:8-9).
8. **Endurance** (faithfulness to the Lord's will) (Matthew 10:22; Revelation 2:10).
9. **Save ourselves** (nobody can do it for you)—if not you, then who? (Acts 2:40-41; 2 Corinthians 5:20; James 4:8-10).

In summary: There are 14 elements dealing with God's part, and 9 elements which deal with man's part; 14 plus 9 = 23 total things that save!

Now, which Of These 23 Things Should Be Left Out?

It should be clear that each person should be thinking for themselves, letting God's Word guide them. After all, it is the Word that will judge us all in the last day (John 12:48). That's why multiple scripture quotations have been listed after each of the 23 points. I want everyone to be able to see for themselves and possess their own faith, based upon God's word. Paul commands us: **"Be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of God is"** (Eph 5:17). God would not command us to do the impossible! You and I are expected and CAN know the will of God (Eph 4:3)!

Quoting from various popular creeds of men, here are some examples of what men say:

"God's eternal choice of His people unto salvation is by grace alone"

But, if this is true, what about the 22 other things, listed above? Oh, we know they give lip service to other factors, but does "alone" mean "alone"—or does it mean something else? Why on earth would anybody say that salvation is by anything "alone," when the Bible clearly states a number of very specific factors and not a single one of them is said to act "alone"? Here is another common idea taught today you may have heard:

"Justification by faith alone must be confessed and experienced ; it is a matter of eternal life or eternal death."

But, if this is true, what about the 22 other things listed, above? Not one of those things is said to be THE "only" factor in salvation. God does not even say that of Himself, nor Christ Himself or grace; even though we know the impossibility of salvation without them!

Clearly, salvation is the sovereign act of God and comes only to those who believe. But, the Bible flatly contradicts what men say about being justified by “faith alone.” The above statement says, “Justification by faith alone...” Now, read what GOD said about it:

“You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (James 2:24).

We must not let some spiritual charlatan tell us, “We’re saved by grace, not by works” without clarifying what he or she means! Remember, the “works” of James 2 are NOT works of human merit and self-righteousness (see Titus 3:5), but are the obedient works of faith! Anyone who teaches otherwise is not speaking “according to the words of God” (I Peter 4:11). Here another popular admonition of men taught today:

“Accept Jesus Christ as your Savior by praying this simple prayer.”

The prayer referred to is a so-called “sinner’s prayer.” But, if this is true, why did Peter say, **“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...” (Acts 2:38).**

Even if the statement was correct, how would the sinner know what to pray, since the Bible says nothing about the “sinner’s prayer”? **It is a dangerous salvation that ignores what God has said and replaces it with what some man thinks!** We should not be willing to gamble with our souls or take any chances. We must “try the spirits to see whether they are from God” (I John 4:1).

In Matthew 4:4, Jesus said: **“Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”** If some whom have been trusted religious sources, have not been speaking according to the Word of God, what then? If this is the case with you or your loved ones, perhaps it would be helpful to read #9 in the second list, above, again.

Concluding Remarks

Share these thoughts with those with whom you are sharing the gospel. I believe it will help them to have clear thoughts about what has become a very controversial subject.

Think about this: have you ever considered what you would do if God came to Earth and talked to you about your choices in life and in spiritual service? What if God said you were wrong? Would you change?

What if God said some of the people that have been well meaning in the past, have misled you? Would you abandon him or her and embrace the truth (Prov 23:23), or even better, after learning the truth, teach him or her out of their error?

What if God said that what you’ve always believed is not correct? Would you care enough to discover what is correct, and then just follow God?

May we all have the courage to study and examine the scriptures for ourselves so we can know and understand—and then to do—the will of God! May God bless us in this wonderful journey!