

"FOLLOWING JESUS WITHOUT DENOMINATIONALISM" **Accepting The Call of The Gospel**

INTRODUCTION

To ensure that we are truly members of Christ's body, the church (i.e., His "called-out" ones), let us be sure that we have answered the call of the gospel, by which He adds us to His Church (and not some denomination begun by man) - **Acts 2:41,47**. And let us follow the example of the early church, who "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (**Acts 2:42**). An important key, then, is that we properly answer the call of the gospel. For through the gospel Christ is calling us into His church. And when we accept the gospel call, by God's grace we receive salvation and the Lord adds us to His church. However, we must make sure that we do not give in to a "perverted" gospel. Unfortunately, today many pervert the gospel by the manner they call upon people to respond to the gospel, leaving out the proper response as taught by Christ and His apostles. For this reason, it is important that we understand the gospel of Christ, and how to properly accept the call of the gospel.

An evangelist named Walter Scott who was born in Scotland (1796), who came to America and proclaimed the gospel throughout Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Kentucky summarized the gospel as containing (1) Facts to be believed; (2) Commands to be obeyed; and (3) Promises to be received. Indeed, accepting the call of the gospel involves a person accepting the "facts," "commands," and "promises" contained in the gospel of Jesus Christ

In this study let us examine this summary of the gospel in further detail.

I. BELIEVE THE "FACTS" OF THE GOSPEL

A. THAT JESUS WAS "CRUCIFIED" FOR OUR SINS...

1. The death of Jesus for our sins is a fundamental part of the gospel
- **1 Cor. 15:1-3**
2. It was foretold by Isaiah - **Isa 53:4-6**
3. It's necessity is seen in that all are sinners, and the wages of sin is death
- **Rom. 3:23; 6:23**
4. But in love, God sent His son to be a propitiation (atoning sacrifice) for our sins - **1 Jn. 4:9-10; cf. Rom. 5:6-8**

B. THAT JESUS WAS "RAISED" FROM THE DEAD...

1. Together with His death and burial, the resurrection of Christ is fundamental to the gospel - **1 Cor. 15:4**
2. In the first gospel sermon recorded, Peter centered his message around proving that God raised Jesus from the dead - **Acts 2:22-32**
3. Without the resurrection of Christ, the gospel is meaningless
- cf. **1 Cor. 15:14-19**

C. THAT JESUS IS "EXALTED" AS KING AND SAVIOR...

1. So Peter proclaimed at the climax of his first gospel sermon
- cf. **Acts 2:33-36**
2. All have been put under His feet, and made subject to Him
- **Eph. 1:20-22; 1 Pet. 3:22**
3. Therefore He is truly "the ruler over the kings of the earth"! – **Rev. 1:5**

D. THAT JESUS IS "COMING" AGAIN...

1. As prophesied in the Book of Revelation - **Re 1:7**
2. As proclaimed by the "two men in white apparel" when Jesus ascended to heaven - **Acts 1:9-11**
3. The purpose of His coming? To execute judgment and be glorified!
- **2 Thess. 1:7-10**

II. OBEY THE "COMMANDS" OF THE GOSPEL

A. "BELIEVE" THE GOSPEL CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST..

1. Unless one believes the gospel, there is no hope – **Mk. 16:15-16**
2. The gospel is God's power unto salvation, but only to those who believe
- **Rom. 1:16-17**
3. Faith (along with confession) is a necessary step leading to salvation
- **Rom. 10:9-10; cf. Heb. 11:6**
4. Do you lack faith? Then I direct you to the four gospels (Matt, Mark, Luke, and John)
 - a. For they were written to produce faith - cf. **Jn 20:30-31**
 - b. For faith comes from hearing the Word of God - **Ro 10:17**

B. "CONFESS" YOUR FAITH IN JESUS AS LORD...

1. In addition to the command to believe, there is the command to confess Jesus as Lord - cf. **Rom. 10:9-10**
2. This means to acknowledge that you believe Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords"
3. An example of such a confession is found in **Acts 8:37**
4. Without confessing Jesus before men, we have no hope that He will confess us before His Father in heaven - cf. **Matt. 10:32-33**

C. "REPENT" OF YOUR SINS...

1. To "repent" means to have "a change of mind", in which case you make the decision to turn from your sins and turn toward living for God
 - a. It is brought about by a "godly sorrow" for your sins - **2 Cor. 7:10**
 - b. And it will produce a visible change in one's life - **2 Cor. 7:11**
2. Jesus said that "repentance" should be preached in His name among the nations – **Lk. 24:46-47**
3. Indeed, the apostles Peter and Paul both stressed repentance in their gospel preaching - cf. **Acts 2:37-38; 17:30-31**

D. BE "BAPTIZED" FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS...

1. Baptism is clearly a part of the gospel message that Jesus wanted His disciples to proclaim – **Mk. 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20**
2. Peter proclaimed baptism for the remission of sins in his first sermon - **Acts 2:38** (It is a burial in water – Rom. 6:4))
3. Paul related that he was commanded to be baptized "to wash away sins" - **Acts 22:16**
4. Baptism ("baptizo") is simply the point of time in which God by His grace unites us with Christ in His death, and by His working in conjunction with our faith raises us to walk in newness of life!
 - a. **Rom. 6:3-6** describes baptism as the point in time we are united into the death of Christ at which point we die to sin and thereby raised to newness of life
 - b. **Col. 2:11-13** reveals that in baptism we are buried with Christ and then raised through faith in God's working who makes us alive in Christ by forgiving us of our sins!

E. BE "FAITHFUL" UNTO DEATH...

1. The need for continued faithfulness is paramount:
 - a. Jesus exhorted His church in Ephesus: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." – **Rev. 2:10**
 - b. For believers can develop an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from God – **Heb. 3:12**
 - c. And believers become partakers of Christ only "IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end" – **Heb. 3:14**
2. Therefore the need for such exhortations as the one given by Paul - **cf. 1 Cor. 15:58**

III. RECEIVE THE "PROMISES" OF THE GOSPEL

A. THE REMISSION OF SINS...

1. As stated by Jesus, remission of sins was to be proclaimed among all nations – **Lk. 24:47**
2. Faithful to the Lord's charge, the early Christians offered this wonderful promise to those who would heed the commands of the gospel - **cf. Acts 2:38**

B. THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT...

1. Jesus had also spoken of those who believe in Him receiving the Spirit in a special way - **cf. Jn 7:37-39**
2. Thus Peter offers the gift of the Spirit to those who will obey God - **Acts 2:38-39; 5:32**
3. The blessing of having the Spirit in our lives is related to His indwelling... - **cf. 1 Cor. 6:19; Rom. 8:9,11-13, 26-27; Eph. 3:16, 20-21**

C. THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE...

1. The expression "eternal life" is an interesting one, evidently used in two different ways in the scriptures
 - a. It is used to describe the reward of the faithful, received only at the end, on the day of judgment – cf. **Matt. 25:46; Rom. 6:23**
 - b. It is also used to describe the spiritual life we now enjoy by virtue of our knowledge of (or fellowship with) the Father and the Son –cf. **Jn 17:2-3; 1 Jn. 5:11-13**
2. Thus the gift of eternal life is one that has "promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (to borrow a phrase from Paul)

CONCLUSION

These wonderful promises (and there are many more) can be received by anyone who is willing to heed and accept the call of the gospel of Christ. Those who do, will not only receive these blessings, but they will also be added by the Lord to His church, that great assembly of "called-out" ones who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. This is not possible in denominationalism for it is built on a "perverted gospel".

**** Much of this outline was adapted from outlines by Mark A. Copeland, a preacher in the Church of Christ**

(Questions compiled by instructor)

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss how so many are misled and do not accept the proper call of the gospel and thus end up in denominationalism.
2. In reference to denominationalism discuss this rationale: "A building is no stronger than the foundation that it's built on". (cf. Matt. 7:21-27).
3. In New Testament times everyone who was saved accepted the call of the gospel the same way. Discuss some of the ways now that it is "accepted" by many who claim to be "saved". Does this say anything about the power of Satan (cf. Rev. 12:9)