



How To Know If You Are Saved

Acts 9:1-9; 17-18

- Overview of the Book of Acts
 - Luke wrote to Theophilus with a detailed account of the life and ministry of Jesus. Then the second volume was focused on the ministry of the church after Jesus ascended to Heaven.
 - It is a continuation of the mission that Jesus gave His disciples.
 - It is not an exhaustive account of all the details following the growth of the early Church. This book encompasses 30 years of history.
 - But we do learn a lot about the mission of the church, the growth of the church, the organization and development of the church, how to respond to issues that

come up at church, and how we see the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of Christians.

- This is a unique period in the history of the church – the Revelation of God’s Word was not complete at this time. They had the OT scriptures and there were some early NT writings that started to circulate. But there was a focus on the ministry of the apostles as they were led by the Holy Spirit. They were sent out for the purpose of establishing the work and mission of the church.
- One of the amazing things we see in Acts – thousands of people come to know the Lord and believe in the Gospel.

Main Point: What can we look for in our lives to know if we have been saved?

- We are experiencing a spiritual battle today. Satan can’t take away your salvation, but he can help you doubt it or question it. A little over a decade ago one of the presidents of an SBC seminary said that he believed as much as 50% of SBC baptisms are actually rebaptisms.¹
- There are lots of questions people may have about salvation. We hear of stories like Paul on the road to Damascus and wonder – should we need to experience something like this? Paul didn’t change his name here. He was known as Saul and Paul, depending on the context. ACTS 13. Jewish and Roman name. We may hear stories of others and wonder – should I feel the same way they felt?
- Unfortunately, much of this is driven by our obsession with emotion and sensationalism. There’s no doubt – accepting Christ will probably cause a rise in emotions. **But that is not the main element we look for in understanding salvation.**

¹ <https://jbensimpson.com/the-problem-of-rebaptism-in-sbc-churches/>

“About a decade after Pepsodent went on sale, competing toothpaste companies launched a massive project to figure out why it was such a success. Eventually they tripped over something interesting: the Pepsodent recipe.

Unlike other toothpastes of that period, Pepsodent contained citric acid, as well as doses of mint oil and other relatively exotic chemicals. Pepsodent’s inventor had used those ingredients to make his toothpaste taste minty and to make sure the paste wouldn’t become gluey as it sat on shelves.

But those chemicals had another, unanticipated effect as well: They’re irritants that create a tingling sensation on the tongue and gums.

When researchers at competing companies started interviewing customers, they found that people said that if they forgot to use Pepsodent, they realized their mistake because they missed that cool, tingling sensation in their mouths. They expected—they *craved*—that slight irritation. If it wasn’t there, their mouths didn’t feel clean.

Claude Hopkins, it turns out, wasn’t selling beautiful teeth. He was selling a sensation.²”

Main Point: What can we look for in our lives to know if we have been saved?

I. Confession

- a. Paul responds to Jesus – “Who are you, Lord?” This does not mean that Paul immediately understood this person to be Jesus.
- b. The word here for Lord is a generic term that could simply mean Sir.
- c. It’s more likely that Jesus appeared to Him in a divine manifestation that was overwhelming to experience.
- d. There seemed to be something that the people around him could hear, but they did not have the same revelation that Paul did.

² <https://slate.com/culture/2012/02/an-excerpt-from-charles-duhiggs-the-power-of-habit.html>

- e. There is a shift in how Paul responds to the Lord from his first reaction to Him and then after He reveals exactly who He is.
 - i. His response is simply – “What do you want me to do?” The first time he calls him Lord – he recognizes someone with power. But the second time he calls him Lord – he confesses this is the power of God. He is trembling and astonished.
- f. This conversion experience is retold by Paul in Acts 22 and Acts 26. Both times the story is consistent with what is shared here in Acts 9.
- g. Notice what also happens here as expanded upon in these other passages of Acts. Paul reflects upon his life before this conversion.
- h. He realizes just how wrong he has been, and how much he needs to follow Jesus as the Way.
- i. He confessed being there at the stoning of Stephen. He confessed to going after Christians and persecuting them one by one.
- j. The same must be true for us if we call out to the Lord for salvation.
 - i. Confess that we have wronged and sinned.
 - ii. Confess Jesus Christ is Lord

II. Obedience

- a. Interesting phrase Jesus says to Paul – “It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” A goad was a tool used to poke at animals to get them to go in a certain direction.
- b. Jesus pursues a relationship with Paul. Paul was passionate and zealous. But his zeal was misguided. In persecuting Christians, Paul was fighting the plans of God.

- c. Jesus took this personally – I am Jesus the one whom you are persecuting.
- d. There is a story of obedience from both Paul and a man named Ananias. The Lord was at work in both of their lives. One a new convert and the other a believer in the Lord with a good reputation among other Christians. **Where would Paul's ministry even have started without the help of Ananias?**
- e. He knew the reputation of Paul.
- f. They are to meet in Damascus – the place where Paul was determined to go and persecute Christians. About 160 miles from Jerusalem. But the place that could have been a place of persecution became a place of salvation.
- g. It reminds me a great deal of the life of Patrick of Ireland.
 - i. Faithful Christian pastor from the 5th century. Had been brought to Ireland as a slave when he was a teenager. He escaped back to his home. But he was called by God to go back and share the Gospel with them.
 - ii. Those people? Who enslaved me and persecuted me? Who would want to go there?
 - iii. God led him to start 200 churches and over 100,000 people came to know the Lord in Ireland.
 - iv. As the Roman Empire crumbled around them – Ireland became the place that saved Western Civilization and many of the ancient manuscripts of the Bible we have today were preserved in the monasteries in Ireland.

v. In the history of the church, Patrick is probably the next great missionary after Paul. No one else had shared the Gospel with that many people since Paul.³

h. What could have been a place of persecution – was redeemed for the Lord's glorious purpose of salvation.

III. Repentance

a. It's interesting this house Paul and Ananias meet at was called Straight. It come from the Greek word EFTHUS. It means immediately or at once.

b. Paul is called to immediately turn from his wicked ways and follow the Lord.

c. There is total repentance. Paul fasted and prayed as he waited to meet Ananias. Surely, coming to terms with the weightiness of all that he had done wrong and a recognition of what needs to change.

d. VERSE 20 – Immediately he preached Jesus in the synagogues that He is the Son of God.

e. Some of the best evangelists are those who have just recently believed in the Lord.

f. If you are saved – there is a change of desires. You start to desire the things of this world less, and you start to desire the things of God more.

g. Paul was zealous for the wrong things. When He met Jesus He was zealous for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

³ <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/people/patrick-11629684.html>

- h. You may or may not have an overly emotional experience in salvation like Paul.

Emotional responses are not always a characteristic of salvation in Acts. But repentance is.

Peter began with what God did (2:16–36) and finished with what man must do (2:38).

About 3000 Jews

- heard (2:6, 14) and then initiated their salvation process (2:37).
- repented (2:38). This means to change one's mind about sinful behavior.
- confessed (2:21). Calling on the Lord's name includes confession and can stand for the entire process (cf. 22:16).
- were baptized for the remission of sins (2:41). "For" (Greek *eis*) means "in order to obtain." *Eis* is found 1173 times in the New Testament and is never translated "because of" (cf. [Matthew 26:28](#)).
- received forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38).
- were added to the church/kingdom (2:47; [Galatians 3:27](#); [Colossians 1:13](#)).
- continued in the apostles' doctrine ([Acts 2:42](#); [Revelation 2:10](#)).
- enjoyed fellowship with each other and favor with outsiders (2:44–47).

Conversion 2: Samaritans (8:5–13). Philip began with what Christ did (8:5, 12). They heard (8:5–6), believed (8:12), and were baptized (8:12–13).

Conversion 3: Ethiopian Treasurer (8:26–39). He heard (8:30–31, 35) and then initiated the salvation process (8:34, 36). He believed (8:37), confessed Christ (8:37), and was baptized (8:38). He "went on his way rejoicing" (8:39). This shows the following three things about baptism:

- "Here is water" shows baptism's medium—water (8:36).
- "Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water" shows baptism's mode—immersion (8:38).
- "What hinders me from being baptized?" (desiring immediate baptism) (8:36) shows conformity to baptism's purpose—forgiveness (2:38; [Matthew 28:19–20](#)).

Conversion 4: Saul of Tarsus ([Acts 9:1-18](#); [22:6-16](#); [26:12-23](#)). Saul heard (9:4), believed (9:4, 6), repented (indicated by fasting) (9:9), and was baptized (9:18). He asked two questions of eternal significance: “Who are You, Lord?” (9:5; cf. [Matthew 3:17](#); [16:15-16](#)); and “What do You want me to do?” ([Acts 9:6](#); cf. [2:37](#); [16:30](#); [22:16](#)). Every person’s eternal destiny rests on how he answers these questions.

Conversion 5: Cornelius and His Household (10:1-48). Peter used the keys Jesus gave him ([Matthew 16:19](#)) to swing salvation’s door open to the Gentiles (cf. [Acts 2:39](#)). Unlike Moses’ Law ([Deuteronomy 10:15](#)), God now shows no favor to any racial or national background. All people are on equal footing in receiving the gospel, as He honors all who fear and obey Him ([Acts 10:34-35](#)). Cornelius heard (10:33-44), believed (10:43), and was baptized (10:47-48).

Conversion 6: Deputy and Other Gentiles (13:6-52). These heard (13:7, 42-44) and believed (13:12, 48). No detail is given of what was preached or practiced. It does not say they repented, confessed, or were baptized.

In a few places in Acts (4:1-4; 17:34), as here, “believe” is used as a summary or a synecdoche. *Synecdoche* is “a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole.”¹ When Moses said not a “hoof” shall be left behind ([Exodus 10:26](#)), he used a synecdoche, as does a cattleman who says he has “ninety head of cattle.” Jesus used synecdoche in [John 3:16](#): “Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” He permitted belief, which is only one condition of pardon, to stand for all the conditions.

This does not make repentance or baptism unnecessary any more than God’s granting Gentiles “repentance to life” ([Acts 11:18](#)) makes belief unnecessary.

Conversion 7: Lydia and Her Household (16:13-15). These women meeting for prayer heard the gospel (16:13) and were baptized (16:15).

Conversion 8: The Philippian Jailer and His Household (16:26-34). When Paul and Silas met a demon-possessed girl, they cast out the demon, which got them cast into prison.

After an earthquake, Paul stopped his jailer from committing suicide. The jailer asked what to do to be saved (16:30).

Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (16:31). To understand this, one must consider the context and full response (16:22–24).² The jailer was a Roman. He was at best irreligious, and at worst a pagan.

Why would Paul say, “Repent and be baptized for remission of sins” to one unfamiliar with God, Jesus, penitence, baptism, sin, and forgiveness? Paul gave the short answer and then taught him what belief involved.

The jailer then heard (16:31–32), believed (16:34), repented (implied by washing their stripes) (16:33), and was baptized the same hour (16:33). He rejoiced after being baptized (16:34).

Conversion 9: Crispus and the Corinthians (Acts 18:8). They heard, believed, and were baptized (18:8).

Conversion 10: Ephesian Disciples (19:1–7). They heard (19:2–4), believed (19:4), and were baptized (19:5). They received gifts of the Spirit (19:6).⁴

⁴ <https://housetohouse.com/i-want-to-be-saved-like-they-were-in-acts/>