

If There Is Anything We Can Do To Help

At the end of every sermon and before we dismiss our Wednesday night services we invite people to obey the Gospel. This is often called extending the invitation. Jesus invited people to follow Him in Matthew 11, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Verses 28-30). In the Book of Acts, chapter 2, we read of Peter answering the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (verse 37) Peter responded in verse 38, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." This was an inspired answer provided by the Holy Spirit as Peter and the other eleven Apostles had earlier received the Spirit, Acts 2.4.

Reading on in Acts we read of various conversions, people being added to the Lord's body, Acts 2.47. We do not read of an "invitation" being given in the recorded word but we do read of people hearing the Gospel (Acts 2), believing in the Word of God and Jesus being the Son of God (Acts 8.37), repenting of their sins (Acts 2.38), confessing Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 8.37), and being baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2.38; 8.38; 10.47; 16.15; 18.8; 22.16). We don't know if those preaching actually gave an invitation and then sang a hymn as people responded or if the audience responded like those in Acts 2.37 wanting to know what to do. We know they made their desire to

become a Christian known, they did what the inspired men said to do, and they were added to the Lord's body, Acts 2.47.

Therefore, today we extend the invitation as a way to encourage those wanting to become a Christian to do so. One does not have to obey the Gospel at the end of a sermon or on Wednesday night. It can be done anytime, any day of the week. In fact, most of the conversions I have been a part of or witnessed have been outside of our meeting times.

I was editing the audio file of a sermon the other day and heard "If anyone here wants to obey the Gospel and be baptized into Christ at this time; or if you have any question, or if there is anything we can do to aid you in your obedience. Let us know." My observation is, most people who obey the Gospel at the end of a sermon or Bible Study, already had their mind made up before coming to the building. After one sermon a young lady came forward and wanted to be baptized. I asked her if she made her decision to do so before services. She replied in the affirmative. While I like to think my invitations are thought provoking I realize most of the time it has little to do with a person's obedience.

Another observation is there are times a person procrastinates their obedience due to some unforeseen reason. It may be not understanding the phrase "Hear, Believe, Repent, Confess Christ, and be Baptized." If you are unsure about those words we would like to sit down and talk with you.

We all know what the word “Hear” means. It means to listen and consider what is being said. In this case, it means to hear about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, 1 Corinthians 15.4. One must believe those facts are true and not a fairy tale. One does not have to know everything in the Bible in order to obey the Gospel of Christ. Those on the Day of Pentecost did not know the organization of the church or the qualifications of elders, etc. Those facts were not yet revealed but they knew Jesus and about His life, death, and resurrection.

Repent means to turn away from sin and toward God. It means to leave behind sin and strive to live righteously. It does not mean you will be perfect as we all stumble from time to time but on those occasions, we ask God to forgive us, 1 John 1.7. Don’t wait until you think you are perfect for that will never happen.

To confess Christ means to say that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus says we must confess Him before men, Matthew 10.32. This “confession” is not just a one-time event but a life of confessing Christ by the way we live.

To be baptized literally means to be immersed. The element used in the Bible is water. “And the eunuch said, ‘See here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’” (Acts 8.36). It is not the water which saves us but the blood of Christ. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1.7). This idea is expressed in Acts 22.16 with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away

your sin, calling on the name of the Lord.” In our baptism we come in contact with the blood of Christ and our sins are washed away. In every case of conversion in the Book of Acts we read the people were baptized into Christ. They were not in Christ before their baptism but as a result of that act.

My purpose of this article is not to pressure anyone into baptism but to help those who may be contemplating becoming a Christian. If you have some other reason and would like to discuss it, let me know.

– Dennis Tucker