

How Do People Get Saved

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

When we consider the question of how people get saved, many of us will be sure that we know the answer, because we have heard an answer to this question articulated many times before, whether in a church service, a Sunday school class, or somewhere else. And that answer, which has been embraced by many, is that we must, as an act of our own will and volition, choose to believe in Jesus Christ and “accept Him” as our personal Lord and Savior.

There are Scriptures that would seem to agree with that answer, if these Scriptures were to be isolated from many other passages in the Bible. But when we consider all that the Bible has to say about the salvation of men, is this really what the Bible teaches about how people get saved?

There can be no better way to begin to answer the question of how people get saved than to consider the Parable of the Sower, which is recorded in each of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, and Luke 8:1-15). A proper understanding of this parable is essential to understanding how people get saved, and in fact it is essential to understanding all the parables that Jesus gave to us (Mark 4:13).

The Parable of the Sower is probably the best illustration of the results that God will bring forth from the preaching of the Gospel of Christ in the hearing of men. In Matthew’s account of the parable, Jesus first gave this teaching to the crowd that had gathered to hear what He had to say, as we read in Matthew 13:1-9. He gave the teaching in the form of a parable, using analogies or metaphors to convey His message, and then later we see that He explained the meaning of the parable to His disciples in Matthew 13:18-23. Between these two passages, Jesus

revealed to His disciples that the understanding of His teachings has been hidden from many (Matthew 13:10-17, and especially 13:11).

Speaking to the crowd as recorded in Matthew 13:1-9, Jesus taught using the analogy of a farmer sowing or spreading seed over the ground, expecting to later reap a harvest from the plants that spring up from the seeds. The sowing of the seed is the metaphor that Jesus used to symbolize the proclaiming of the Gospel message, which is the outward call for men to repent and put their faith in Him for the forgiveness of their sins and reconciliation to God. Many hear this proclamation of the Gospel, or this outward call, but as we can see from many other Scriptures, it has only been granted to God's elect to be able to come to Christ (Matthew 22:14, others), and only those who come to faith in Christ will bear spiritual fruit to the glory of God (Matthew 7:15-23, John 15:8).

In this parable we see that the "seed" of the Gospel message fell on different types of "soil", and the different types of soil symbolize different people who hear the message. But *the only place where the seed bore fruit is where it fell on the "good soil"* (Matthew 13:8, 23). The "good soil" in the parable symbolizes God's elect, or Jesus' sheep, those to whom it has been granted to hear His voice and follow Him (John 6:65, 10:1-9).

God's elect are those whom God chose before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:4). They are those who have been predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29-30). They are those "who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood..." (1 Peter 1:1- 2). They are those who have been "appointed to eternal life", and therefore they believe the Gospel message (Acts 13:48). They are those who receive mercy from God, while all the rest are hardened (Roman 9:1-24). They are those whom the Father has given to His Son, and they will all come to Him (John 6:37).

When the "seed" of the Gospel message "falls" upon the hearing of God's elect, these individuals will all, by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), and in His time, hear it and understand it, and they will all be brought to faith in Christ. As a result, they will all bear fruit to the glory of God. Through the hearing of the Gospel message (Romans 10:17), God's elect will all be effectually called to faith in Christ (Acts 2:39, Romans 8:29-30, Hebrews 9:15), and they will all come to Him. None will refuse, and in fact none can refuse.

When we consider whether an individual can refuse this effectual calling of God, we should consider the calling of Saul of Tarsus to faith in Christ on the Damascus Road, even when he was still hostile toward the Gospel message and intent on persecuting the church (Acts 9:1). Saul's conversion is recounted three times in the book of Acts: in chapters 9, 22, and 26, and we should not miss the lesson here about how people get saved. The conversion of Saul, who would become the apostle Paul, stands as an example to every believer of how God intervenes in our lives as His elect to overcome our stubborn wills (Romans 8:7) and effectually bring us to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, apart from our own will and decision in the matter.

Saul had heard the Gospel message; he knew what it was about, and he was opposed to it. But Saul was indeed one of those whom God had chosen before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him (again Ephesians 1:4-5), and in God's time *he was brought to faith in Christ apart from His own will and decision in the matter*. Any insistence by man that one's own will and agreement is necessary in the matter of salvation is something that is not contained in the Scriptures. Rather, it is an idea that man has added to the Scriptures.

We should note that there is nothing in the Bible to suggest that apostles get saved contrary to their own will, as did Saul (again Acts 9:1), while everyone else must agree to "accept" Jesus Christ as their own personal Lord and Savior. The Bible teaches that all people, in their unregenerate state, are totally depraved and opposed to the Gospel message (Genesis 6:5, Romans 3:10-18, Romans 8:7); they will not believe in Christ unless and until God intervenes in their lives to bring them to faith in His Son (John 6:44), just as He intervened in the life of Saul of Tarsus when the time came for his conversion.

Saul's "agreeing" to believe had nothing to do with it. After Saul was confronted by Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road, the only possible response was to get up and obey the One who had just revealed Himself to be Lord, and to do the things that had been appointed for him to do (Acts 22:8-10). It is also significant to note that Saul understood the voice of Jesus speaking to him, but the others who were with him did not. (Acts 22:9; also consider Matthew 13:11, 23.)

"Choosing" or "deciding" to believe in Christ is not the thing that one must "do" in order to get themselves saved (again Ephesians 2:8-9), rather believing in Christ is *evidence* that God has already intervened in an individual's life to bring them to faith in His Son. And God calls all of His elect to faith in His Son in His time (John 6:37, 44, 65, 10:2-3, Romans 8:29-30), just as He did with Saul of

Tarsus. The reason that all the others do not believe is because they cannot hear and understand His voice, and therefore they cannot believe (John 8:43, 47, 10:24-26, 12:37-40).

So, when we consider the question of just how people get saved, and how do people come to faith in Jesus Christ, we should go to the Scriptures for our answers and consider only what is written there. We should refrain from adding any other thought or condition that is not stated in the Scriptures, no matter how many times we may have heard these thoughts and conditions declared by men, and no matter how confidently we have heard them declared.

We know from the Scriptures that God's elect, or those whom He foreknew (1 Peter 1-2), are those who were predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). And we also know that "these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified" (Romans 8:30). ***All of the actions mentioned in this chain of events in Romans 8:30 are God's actions, and man's action or cooperation is not mentioned at all.*** (Consider Romans 9:16). Notice also the "link" in this chain of events where Paul wrote: "***these whom He called, He also justified***". This link makes it clear that there is an effectual calling of God, and that those who receive this calling ***will*** be justified and ultimately glorified.

This effectual calling of God is the "drawing" of an individual to faith in Jesus Christ that we see mentioned in John 6:44, where Jesus taught that those who are drawn to Him by the Father ***will*** be raised up at the last day. And again, in John 6:44 we see no mention of man's action, cooperation, or agreement whatsoever.

Speaking of salvation through faith in Christ, Paul wrote: "So then ***it does not depend on the man who wills*** or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." (Romans 9:16, emphasis added). An individual's salvation does not depend on their own will, desire, decision, or effort of any kind, but on God, who shows mercy to those whom He wills (Romans 9:15.18). Those who receive God's mercy are ***all*** effectually called to faith in His Son, and they ***all*** come to Him, as we see revealed in John 6:37, 6:44, Romans 8:29-30, and other passages as well.

The Bible teaches that God calls His elect to faith in His Son Jesus Christ through the hearing of the Gospel message (Romans 10:17), and He does so in His time. Having heard, they all come to Him, and none refuse (John 6:37). God's calling of an individual to faith in His Son is not a "take it or leave it" proposition, with the individual's consent and agreement being necessary for salvation. This

lesson was made very clear to Saul on the Damascus Road, and none of us should miss this lesson. To state it another way: When God calls, you come!