

Lesson 1

Salvation

The Need for Salvation

The entire Bible centers around salvation. From beginning to end the Bible is a story of redemption — of God reaching down and saving a sinful and fallen world. It is a story of mankind's need for salvation and God's promise of salvation (Old Testament), His provision for salvation (Gospels), our appropriation of salvation (epistles) and the ultimate consummation of salvation at the Last Day (Revelation). Any study of God's Word must begin with a study of this foundational biblical concept. In fact, none of Scripture makes any sense apart from it.

As you might expect, the story of salvation begins in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 1:26 it tells us that God created us in His own image. This doesn't mean we were made to look like God, but that we were given the ability to communicate, to love, to reason and to fellowship with God. Read Ephesians 4:24. What other characteristics of God were given to man? _____ and _____. Mankind was certainly distinctly different from all the rest of God's creation. God made us with a specific purpose in mind, and He made us to have intimate fellowship with Him.

Because of God's holiness and righteousness, there was only one thing that could sever the relationship between God and man — only one thing that could destroy the blissful paradise He had created. That one thing was sin. You see, God created mankind with a free will. How much easier it would have been if God had simply made us like robots —people who would automatically love and obey Him. But love constrained is really not love at all. God loved us enough that He created us with the ability to choose to love Him in return. Unfortunately, inherent in free will was also the possibility that man would choose *not* to love and obey God. And that is exactly what happened. The first willful, defiant sin is described in Genesis chapter three.

Read Genesis 3:1-24.

What had God commanded Adam and Eve *not* to do? (2:17)

Who tempted Eve?

How did the serpent cast doubt on God's goodness and credibility?

Why would it have been appealing to Eve to "be like God" (3:5)?

What was the sin Adam and Eve committed?

Although the circumstances and specifics may change, the temptation is always the same. Satan still tempts people to doubt God's express words by making us believe "you will not surely die." He makes sin look appealing and desirable. He also tempts us with being "like God," or being in control of our own destiny and decisions. Sin is deliberately breaking a known law of God, but it begins in the heart — with not believing the truth of God's Word and with wanting to be in charge of your own life. Eve's sin began with doubt and ended with direct disobedience.

What were the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin?

Genesis 3:8 (Hint: What did they do and what does that indicate?)

Genesis 3:16-18

Genesis 3:22-24

Something within man was severely damaged from this time on. Sin had entered man's heart. Fellowship with God was broken. God could not permit man to live forever in this condition. Sin was and is a serious thing with a holy and just God, and He doesn't tolerate it. What do these verses reveal about God's attitude toward sin and the penalty for sin?

Genesis 6:5-7

Numbers 15:30-31

Habakkuk 1:13a

Romans 6:23a

Read carefully Romans 5:12-21 and answer the following questions:

Did Adam's sin affect only himself? (Romans 5:12, 18a, 19)

What one word sums up the effects of sin? (Romans 5:13, 14a, 17a, 21a) _____

We all became sinners because of Adam and Eve's sin against God. Each of us is missing the inner righteousness and holiness with which we were created and, instead, are prone to sin. We are all born as sinners and naturally tend toward sin. This is what is commonly referred to as "original sin" or "inherited sin." Perhaps you are thinking that surely there must be some who live up to God's standards and who have never willfully violated a known law of God. What do the Scriptures say?

Romans 3:9-12

Romans 3:23

Isaiah 64:5-6

Read the following verses and write down some of the sins mankind is guilty of.

Romans 1:21-32

Galatians 5:19-21

Ephesians 5:3-5

Colossians 3:5-9

Titus 3:3

1 Peter 2:1

1 John 2:15-16

The Provision for Salvation

It seems then that mankind is hopelessly lost. Sin has destroyed communion with God and has led to corruption and depravity of every kind. Man cannot escape the power and control of sin. We are born that way and unconsciously choose to live that way. But right from the beginning God had a plan — a plan to forgive man for his sins, a plan to free man from the power of sin, and a plan to pardon man from the penalty of sin. The only way to do this was for someone to pay the price — death — for our sins. The promise was given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15 that God would send one who would be the seed of the woman (not the seed of the man, which was the usual way of referring to one's offspring) and who would crush the head of the serpent (signifying the defeat of sin and death).

Write out Genesis 3:15

Throughout the Old Testament the promise is repeated and defined, with the ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

In the meantime, though, God would have to make temporary provision for man's sin and would have to somehow prepare man for the work that Christ would eventually do on the cross. Physical death had been introduced, but the penalty for sin also included spiritual death (being denied access to the tree of life). Out of His love for man, God allowed a substitute to take on man's sin and die in his place. The book of Leviticus details the use of sacrifices for unintentional sins, but the precedent was set right here in Genesis after God pronounced judgment on Adam and Eve and the serpent. What did God do in Genesis 3:21? _____ In order for clothing to be made of skins, what would have to happen? _____

In a perfect world where there had previously been no bloodshed (see Genesis 1:29-30), this event must have been earth-shattering. The principle was clear: God demanded a high price for sin — something had to die.

Write out Hebrews 9:22

God could not simply overlook man's sin. A payment had to be made. Every time a sin was committed, the blood of an animal had to be shed as a substitute for man's own death as punishment. If you were to read through the Old Testament, you would see that the sacrifice of animals was a very important part of Jewish religious life. God's people were constantly made aware of their own sinfulness, their need for atonement, and God's requirement of the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins. They scrupulously kept God's laws concerning sacrifices, but they were meant to be temporary — to point men to something greater. What do these verses say about the sacrifice of animals for the atonement of sin?

Hebrews 9:9-10

Hebrews 10:1-4

Hebrews 10:11

Romans 3:20

Instead of people having to sacrifice a spotless lamb every time they sinned, God had something more satisfactory in mind. He planned for an ultimate sacrifice — one that would once and for all pay for the sin of every person for all time. Read the following verses. What do they reveal about this perfect sacrifice?

John 1:29

Romans 3:25a

Romans 5:8-9

Romans 8:3-4

2 Corinthians 5:21

Hebrews 7:27

Hebrews 9:12-14

Hebrews 9:26

Hebrews 10:12-14

1 Peter 1:18-19

1 John 4:10

Christ was sinless, so He did not have to die for His own sins. Instead, He took on our sins and died in our place. He was fully human, so He could atone for the sins of humans. He was fully divine (God incarnate), so His sacrifice could bring forgiveness for all men for all time. He was the perfect sacrifice. But unlike the animal sacrifices, Christ was victorious over sin and death. The grave could not hold Him and, on the third day after His crucifixion on a Roman cross, He “crushed the head” of Satan by rising from the dead. His victory ensures that we, too, can have victory and be possessors of eternal life through Him. This is the essence of salvation.

The Plan of Salvation

So, how do we become “saved”? Is salvation something we can earn by being good enough? We’ve already read how all have sinned and are guilty before God, but, knowing that, can we change ourselves and please God? How are we saved according to these verses?

Acts 15:11

Romans 3:23-24

Romans 3:28

Romans 4:13, 16

Ephesians 2:8-9

Read John 3:1-18. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, one of the religious elite of his day. Pharisees were noted for their external piety and legalistic ritualism. But Jesus lets Nicodemus know that it isn’t more religion that man needs, but a spiritual rebirth.

Write out John 3:3,

What must a person do to have eternal life and to be saved from the penalty of sin? (3:15, 16, 18)

“Belief” doesn’t mean merely mental assent, agreeing to specific doctrines. The word connotes trust, active faith, and commitment. What are some other necessary elements of salvation?

Acts 2:38

Acts 3:19

John 3:36

1 John 1:9

John 1:12

Romans 10:9

Before we go on to examine the life of a Christian, you must understand that there is only one way to salvation. Christ isn't just one of many ways. He is the only way that God has made for us to be forgiven, for our debt to be cancelled, for us to be freed from sin's dominion. Write out the following verses to remind you of the exclusivity of Christianity:

John 14:6

Acts 4:12

1 John 5:12

The Life of Salvation

Several things happen when you surrender your will to God's — when you confess your sins, turn from them and receive God's gracious gift of salvation. First, your sins are completely forgiven. Psalm 103:12 says "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he

removed our transgressions from us.” You get to start over with a clean slate. All your past sins are covered under the blood of Jesus. Because of this forgiveness, you are legally declared righteous — put back into a right relationship with God. This is something theologians term “justified” (“just-as-if-I’d” never sinned). You are legally pardoned and can therefore have fellowship with God.

But more happens in salvation than just being forgiven. Something happens *in* you. What do these verses say happens to you when you give your life to Christ?

2 Corinthians 5:17

John 1:12-13

Titus 3:5-6

Ephesians 2:19

Colossians 3:10

1 Peter 1:3-4

2 Peter 1:4

Not only are we pardoned, but we receive new life as children of God. We are born again and are given a new life with power to *not* sin. This is known as “regeneration” because we are remade from the inside out. Because we have been regenerated, we live a different kind of life than we did formerly. What are some characteristics of the Christian life?

Romans 12:9-21

Colossians 3:12-17

Ephesians 4:25-5:1

Galatians 5:22-24

By now you should be realizing that being a Christian involves more than just making a onetime decision to follow Christ. It is a life-style, a daily walk with the Lord. It is a relationship with Christ that must be cultivated and maintained in order for you to be saved. Read the following verses or passages to see what they teach about the contingency of salvation.

John 15:1-10

Romans 11:20-22

Colossians 1:22-23a

Hebrews 10:26-27

1 John 2:24

2 John 1:9

The Assurance of Salvation

You have now learned the lion's share of what it means to be a Christian and to be "saved." Maybe you have already prayed a prayer of faith and asked Christ to come into your life, cleanse you of your sins, and guide you in your daily walk. But how can you be sure you're really saved? Is it possible to know that you're really part of God's family? In 1 John 5:13, the apostle states, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you _____ that you have eternal life."

There are basically two ways to be sure you have eternal life. The first is through the witness of the Holy Spirit. Write down your insights from these verses:

Romans 8:16

2 Corinthians 1:22

Ephesians 1:13-14

1 John 3:24

God's Holy Spirit comes and dwells within us the moment we believe in Him. He gives us assurance that we are His. But you shouldn't confuse this inner witness with mere feelings. Salvation is a matter of fact, not emotion. That's why there's a second test to determine if you're really saved: examine your life. What do the following verses say?

2 Corinthians 13:5

Matthew 7:21-23

Romans 8:13-14

Galatians 5:24

2 Peter 1:10

1 John 2:3-6

1 John 2:15-17, 29

1 John 3:9-10

1 John 5:1-5

If you are walking in obedience to God, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, and growing daily in your love for, and commitment to, the Lord, you can be fully assured that you are saved. If you fall, God will be there to lift you up, but your life should be one of constant striving to *not* sin. True Christians do not habitually practice sin as a matter of choice.

If you are new in your faith, you can trust God to help you overcome sin and to live a victorious Christian life. God is much more patient than we can ever imagine. What do these verses reveal about God's ability and willingness to keep us on the path to eternal life?

1 Corinthians 10:13

2 Corinthians 9:8

Ephesians 3:20

Philippians 1:6

Philippians 2:13

Philippians 4:13

2 Timothy 1:12

Hebrews 2:18

Jude 24a