

# THE GOSPEL LESSON 1 – INTRODUCTION

## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to our new study, “The Gospel of Your Salvation.” We are going to spend a good bit of time together letting Scripture speak clearly on the most important message any of us will ever hear.

We anchor the entire series in one verse from the Apostle Paul. “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13, NASB 95). Paul writes to people who have already heard the message, believed it, and received the Holy Spirit’s seal. He calls that message “the gospel of your salvation.” That phrase alone tells us the gospel is not merely good advice or a call to a better life. It is the announcement that actually saves.

## **THE CONTROVERSY IN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY**

You may have noticed that those who the Bible do not always agree on exactly what this gospel is or requires. Some differences are minor, but others touch the very heart of how a person is saved, whether that salvation can be lost, and what “true” faith actually looks like. Let me let some well-known voices speak for themselves so you can hear the distinctions in their own words about initial salvation, maintaining salvation, and final salvation.

John MacArthur, a leading voice for what is called Lordship Salvation, writes, “The gospel call to the sinner throughout Scripture is a simple, succinct command—repent and believe.” He is careful to define repentance: “Biblically its meaning does not stop there. As metanoia is used in the New Testament, it always speaks of a change of purpose, and specifically a turning from sin.” For MacArthur, genuine faith includes commitment to Christ as Lord from the start, and it will always produce works. “Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance... Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration.” In this view, initial salvation and final salvation are tied together by visible surrender and perseverance. Without that turning from sin and ongoing fruit, the faith was never real.

John Piper speaks directly to what he calls final salvation. “These works of faith, and this obedience of faith, these fruits of the Spirit that come by faith, are necessary for our final salvation. No holiness, no heaven... We are finally saved through sanctification—that is, through a real change in our hearts and minds and lives without which we will not see the Lord.” Piper carefully separates justification (by faith alone) from final salvation, which he sees as including the confirming evidence of a holy life.

Reformed theology, often summarized in “the doctrines of grace” (TULIP), teaches that salvation is entirely from God—initial, sustaining, and final. The Westminster Confession states that those whom God has elected and effectually called “can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.” If someone falls away, it simply shows they were never truly regenerated. Perseverance is guaranteed by God’s decree.

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Arminian theology, on the other hand, stresses human response and the real possibility of falling away. Election is conditioned on God’s foreknowledge of who will believe. Grace is available to all but can be resisted. A person who truly believes can later turn away and lose salvation if they continue in unbelief or unrepentant sin. John Wesley warned that continued sin or unbelief can lead to spiritual death: “he cannot retain the grace he has received; he cannot continue in faith, or in the favour of God.”

These are not obscure debates between theologians. They shape how people preach, counsel struggling believers, and understand salvations, security, and assurance. Some leave church wondering, “Did I repent enough? Have I surrendered fully? Am I really one of the elect? What if I fall into sin or have doubts?” Others rest in a simple promise they heard years ago. The question that drives our whole study is this: What does the Bible actually say? Not what any system infers, not what a respected teacher concludes, but what the text itself states plainly in its normal reading to its original audience. We will use the Literal Grammatical Historical Method throughout. We will observe exactly what is written, understand the author’s intent, correlate it with the rest of Scripture, and apply the clear principle of the message of Jesus Christ to the current hearer.

## **SYLLABUS OVERVIEW**

Here is a quick syllabus so you know where we are headed. The schedule is subject to change if the Lord leads us to linger on a particular passage, but this is our plan.

### **Part 1 – What the Gospel Is (Sessions 1–6)**

1. Introduction – “The Gospel of Your Salvation” (today)
2. The Content – Who Jesus Is
3. The Content – What Jesus Has Done
4. The Content – What Jesus Promises
5. The Nature of “Believe”
6. Why We Present the Gospel This Way

### **Part 2 – How to Communicate the Gospel (Sessions 7–9)**

7. Biblical Responsibilities and Motivation
8. Methods That Honor the Message
9. Words That Matter – Precision in Proclamation

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## Part 3 – What the Gospel Is Not (Sessions 10–28)

Lordship Salvation (Sessions 10-14) – history, hermeneutics, and point-by-point exegesis of its major tenets.

Calvinism / Reformed Theology (Sessions 15-21) – development, TULIP, and biblical response.

Arminianism (Sessions 22-26) – development, five points, and biblical response.

Eternal Security and Apostasy (Sessions 27-28) – positive presentation plus the question of a believer who stops believing.

## **EXEGETING EPHESIANS 1:13**

Let us close today by looking more closely at our key verse in its context. Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long sentence of praise to God for every spiritual blessing we have in Christ. Paul traces God’s plan from eternity past (election and predestination, vv. 4-5) through the work of Christ (redemption and forgiveness, vv. 7-8) to the present experience of these believers. Then he writes in verse 13: “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

Pay close attention to the verb tenses in the Greek, because they show us exactly when and how salvation happens.

“After listening” (akousantes) is an aorist active participle—completed action. They heard the message at a specific point in time.

“Having also believed” (pisteusantes) is another aorist active participle—another completed action. The moment they were convinced that the message was true, something decisive took place.

“You were sealed” (esphragisthēte) is an aorist passive indicative. This is something that was done to them at a definite point in time; they were not gradually sealed or progressively sealed. The passive voice tells us God is the one doing the sealing.

All three actions—listening, believing, and being sealed—cluster around that single moment of faith. There is no ongoing process required before the sealing happens, and no additional conditions listed that must continue afterward for the sealing to remain.

The word “sealed” (from sphragizō) carried a rich meaning in the first century. A seal on a document or a jar meant ownership, security, and authenticity. The Holy Spirit Himself is called the “Spirit of promise” (v. 13), and Paul immediately adds in verse 14 that He is “a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.” The sealing guarantees the future inheritance, but the sealing itself occurs the instant a person believes.

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This matches what we see across the New Testament. Eternal life is presented as a present possession the moment a person believes (John 5:24, 3:36). We will unpack those passages in coming weeks. For now, notice how Paul's grammar reinforces the simplicity and certainty of the gospel: hear the message of truth, be convinced it is true, and you are sealed—saved, owned by God, and guaranteed an eternal inheritance.

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## Course Description and Purpose

This study begins at square one and lets. We will not start with any theological system, denominational tradition, or modern teacher. Instead, we will read every passage with the Literal Grammatical Historical Method: observing exactly Scripture define the gospel in its own words what the author wrote, understanding his intent for the original readers in their historical setting, correlating the truth with the rest of Scripture, and drawing clear principles that apply to us today.

Evangelical Christianity contains real differences on this central issue. Some voices tie initial salvation to repentance defined as turning from sin and surrender to Christ's lordship, with ongoing works as proof of genuine faith. Others speak of "final salvation" that includes the evidence of holiness and perseverance. Reformed theology stresses God's unconditional election and guaranteed perseverance for the elect. Arminian theology emphasizes conditional election, resistible grace, and the possibility of losing salvation. These views affect how people preach, counsel, and live with assurance.

Our goal is simple: discover what the Bible actually says about the gospel of salvation so that we can proclaim it clearly, recognize additions to it, and rest securely in what God has promised.

## Course Objectives

By the end of this study, you will be able to:

1. Explain the gospel from Scripture alone—who Jesus is, what He has done, what He promises, and what it means to believe.
2. Communicate that message clearly and biblically in everyday conversations.
3. Recognize and respond graciously to common additions or conditions placed on the gospel.
4. Answer questions about Lordship Salvation, Calvinism, Arminianism, and eternal security directly from the text.
5. Rest in the assurance that belongs to every believer the moment they trust Christ.

## Teaching Approach

Each session follows the same inductive process:

- Key original-language insights (Greek or Hebrew lemma with simple transliteration)
- Historical and grammatical background only as it helps us see what the text actually says
- Careful exegesis of relevant passages
- Clear comparison with the plain statements of the gospel
- One focused application for life and witness

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## Course Outline

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2. The Content – Who Jesus Is
3. The Content – What Jesus Has Done
4. The Content – What Jesus Promises
5. The Nature of “Believe” (pisteuō / pistis)
6. Why We Present the Gospel This Way

### **Part 2 – How to Communicate the Gospel (Sessions 7–9)**

7. Biblical Responsibilities and Motivation
8. Methods That Honor the Message
9. Words That Matter – Precision in Proclamation

### **Part 3 – What the Gospel Is Not (Sessions 10–28)**

#### **Lordship Salvation (Sessions 10–14)**

10. Historical Development and Hermeneutics of Lordship Salvation
11. Repentance as “Turning from Sin” – Exegetical Examination
12. Faith Includes Commitment / Surrender to Lordship
13. “True Faith” Produces Works / Perseverance as Evidence
14. Assurance, the Gospel Call, and Final Summary

#### **Calvinism / Reformed Theology (Sessions 15–21)**

15. Historical Development and Hermeneutics of Calvinism
16. Total Depravity / Inability
17. Unconditional Election
18. Limited (Definite) Atonement
19. Irresistible Grace / Effectual Calling
20. Perseverance of the Saints
21. Summary – Strengths, Weaknesses, and the Core Hermeneutical Issue

#### **Arminianism (Sessions 22–26)**

22. Historical Development and Hermeneutics of Arminianism
23. Conditional Election and Prevenient Grace
24. Unlimited Atonement and Resistible Grace
25. The Possibility of Losing Salvation
26. Summary – Strengths, Weaknesses, and the Core Hermeneutical Issue

#### **Eternal Security and Apostasy (Sessions 27–28)**

27. The Biblical Doctrine of Eternal Security
28. What Happens When a Believer No Longer Believes?