

Lesson Four: Salvation



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DOODLES

Having seen a brief description of who God is, we are left to respond. In this lesson we will look at what happens when we encounter a perfect God and yet are still sinners. Examine your heart as you go through this lesson so that you can have clarity on where you stand with the Lord.



"What is Sin?"

Taking God's Place

The Bible tells us that God is our creator so His rightful place is as our source of life and our authority. We learned in the last lesson that God is the standard of good and evil. The Bible also tells us the story of the first people having a beautiful relationship with God. However, they give in to a lie and temptation to become like God through rebelling against His command to them. This brought into their nature shame, guilt, and fear for the first time. Their relationship with God and each other was now broken. This sets up our understanding of sin. Sin is any attempt to take God's rightful place. It affects our relationship with God and others and our view of ourselves.

Cause and Effect

Ultimately, we are faced with a choice in life: our way or God's way. When we pursue our way and ignore His, we are in sin. We often concern ourselves with whether or not a specific thing is sinful or not, but sin is not some external thing—it is an internal state of the heart.

Sometimes we think that something is wrong if it causes some harm. The world's moral standard is often that one should do what makes one happy as long as no one is hurt. We believe so-called "victimless crimes" are not crimes at all. In our legal system if someone attempts to kill another person and the person does not die, the perpetrator can be charged with only attempted murder. If the victim were to die from injuries even days later, the charge is upgraded to murder.

However, Jesus taught (Matthew 5-7) that God looks not at the results of a sinful heart but at the heart itself. He says that not only is adultery a sinful act, the lust that precedes it is. Not only is murder a sin, the hate that leads to it is. Sin is the status of our soul, not specific things we quibble over looking for loopholes, easy forgiveness, and ways we are not as bad as the people we've harmed

Sin is not sin because of its effect but because of its cause and the cause is a heart that is bent to rebel against God.

Jeremiah 17:9
The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Similarly, we sometimes think of sin primarily as something that is bad for us. But that again is an outcome, not a cause. In fact, as we will see in the next lesson, Jesus calls us to sacrifice and to live not necessarily with our own best interest in mind. Things that are not what is best for us are not necessarily the problem—actually seeking our best interest above all is part of the heart of sin.



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State and Status

After Adam and Eve, the first people, sinned against God, all their descendants (everyone) is born with a passed-on state and status of sin. As a state, sin has corrupted our nature and God's original design for us. What we do now is bent, twisted from what it should be.

This does not mean that people who do not come to Jesus for salvation are not capable of doing noble or helpful things. But those things do not save that person or make them "good." Likewise, we cannot undue the effects of sin with good actions. For example, if you steal and then give money to charity, it does not undue your theft. The things we do now are tainted by selfishness, fear, pride, greed, anger, and self-preservation. Sadly, trying to be good will only lead to frustration or delusion: frustration at not being able to be good enough or delusion into thinking that we are good people.

Sin is also a status. We are either seen by God as His adopted and beloved children who are fully righteous and obedient—even though we don't always behave—or as rebels against the King of everything. If you are in rebellion against a king, trying to take the throne for yourself by force, it doesn't help you to offer to paint the castle wall.

Idolatry

When reading the Bible, especially the Old Testament, you will often hear about idols. Idols in that time were man-made statues to worship as gods. However, even if we do not worship statues, we may still be practicing idolatry by bowing ourselves to anyone or anything but the true God.



What areas in others and in yourself do you see taking the place of God?

Slaves to Sin

One of the terms that the Bible uses to describe those who are not yet saved is as a "slave to sin". This term perfectly describes our sin nature as one of bondage. Oftentimes people use the excuse that they don't want to become Christian because they like having freedom, but in actuality they have never known freedom. They do not have the strength to resist sin or temptation, they cannot do good. The heart's core motivation is for themselves. We see the true depth in this sinful perversion as we truly desired to be like God, for His very nature and core motivation is for Himself. It can be said that an unsaved person is like a wild animal. They may be able to be trained to a limited degree. They may become domesticated given enough time. But their instincts don't change. They are slaves to their desires and they act mostly off instinct. The only thing we can do apart from God is this; to indulge in our own passions and desires. There is no freedom in sin, for the only option is sin.

John 8:34

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."



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Romans 6:20–21 (New Living Translation)

When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom.

	What is new or different to you about these descriptions of sin?
DISCUSS	



"Jesus the Savior"

Trading Places

When Adam and Eve originally disobeyed God it was to try to take on His role and be like Him. But after rebelling against Him they become separated from Him and have a marred relationship with God and each other. Our sin separates us from a holy God (Rom. 5:10). Since we failed to be like God by taking His place, God came from His place to take ours (Philippians 2:6-8). Jesus lived the life of a man but did it better than any of us, being sinless and loving others completely. He represents God the Father to us and also represents us before the Father. Jesus went to the cross not only for us but as us. He represented us on the cross as though He went there with your nametag on. Jesus takes on our identity as sinners to give us His identity as the Righteous One (II Cor. 5:21). We are given the righteous status of Christ, a standing of grace (Rom. 5:2). Our standing changes from one of sinner to saint and from rebel against the King to honored nobles ruling with Him, from slaves to beloved children.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

God is the source of all life and all His ways give us fuller life. Moving away from God is moving toward death. Sin is so serious that it causes death in some form—the death of all people when God did not design us to die, the death of sacrificial animals before Jesus came, empty lives when we reject God, Jesus' death as a perfect sacrifice for us, and death in separation from God and eternal punishment for those who reject Him forever.

If God who is perfect ignored rebellion against Him, He would not be good. If He only punished it, He would not be merciful. Because He is both, God the Son (Jesus) allowed Himself to be punished for us.

Romans 3:26

It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.



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Accounted Righteous

When God justifies us He calls us right with Him. He puts righteousness in our account and views us as though we were always obedient. While He still works on the problems in our character (more on this in a later lesson), the person who puts their total trust in Jesus is given a status of being right with God that never changes. Trusting belief is what God requires to make our account say "righteous." On the cross, Jesus said "It is finished," using a term meaning "paid in full." Not only is the punishment of our sin paid for by Jesus's sacrifice of Himself, He calls us righteous forever. We are seen by God just as righteous as Jesus is. If we say Jesus went to the cross with our nametag on, we can also say that we have His debit card.

Romans 4:5 (New Living Translation)

But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners.

Not of Us

The Bible repeatedly makes clear that our salvation is a gift from God and not something we can gain for ourselves. The Bible describes us as being dead before Christ gave us spiritual life. Nothing about our salvation is anything we can do for ourselves. A dead person cannot will themselves to life. Salvation is all about what Jesus has done for us.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:1-2

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.



Does anything in this lesson change how you have approached God? Do you need to come to Him on different terms now?

What we are saved from?

Damnation, Death, Separation from God

When the Old Testament talks about being saved it tends to mean being rescued from danger in this world. But when the New Testament talks about being saved (e.g. Matthew 1:21; Acts 2:21, 47) it means being rescued from spiritual death and punishment. While we still die when our bodies wear out, we are not doomed to punishment.

FRESH FAITH

NOTES
DOODLES

LESSON Four: Salvation

• Sin's Punishment, Power, and Presence

Another way to look at what we are saved from is to say that we are first saved from sin's punishment, then throughout our lives from its power over us, and when we die and enter God's presence, we are saved from sin's presence as it will no longer be a factor in our existence.

Self

We can also say that when we follow Christ we are saved from ourselves. Our natural inclination is to set ourselves up as the authority in our lives. We seek to have our way and to get glory for ourselves. But we will find that no one but God can fill that role. We will rule our lives and seek to rule in other people's lives in a tyrannical way. We even tyrannize ourselves! To be saved by Jesus is to be saved from our own brokenness in exchange for His perfect rule in our lives.



What are some things about the Christian idea of salvation that are different from what most people believe?



"Our Response

When we see the Bible's teaching on salvation we are forced to respond in some way. We may turn away or accept Jesus as our Savior from our sins against God.

DISCUSS

What are reasons people would reject Jesus and what are reasons they would accept Him?

What do we do to be saved?

As we saw in this lesson, there is a sense in which we don't do anything to be saved, God does the saving. However, we are responsible to respond. The Bible talks about "obeying the gospel" (Rom. 10:16; II Thess. 1:8; I Pt. 4:17). How do you obey "good news"? You believe it and respond with action. Our belief of the gospel message becomes an action response when we.

• **Believe (John 6:29).** Believing in Christ is putting a desperate trust in Him to save us. For someone to be saved they do not need to understand everything about the Bible, but to believe that Jesus is all of who He says He is (John 6:29). We trust God first for salvation but still continue to be called to trust Him with all areas of our lives.

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DOODLES

LESSON Four: Salvation

- Repent (Rom. 10:9-10). Repentance is the act of turning from my own way to follow the way of Christ. Our salvation comes when we first repent, but we also will have times throughout our life following Christ when we will need to turn back toward Him after straying away, whether in small or large ways.
- Confess (Rom. 10:9-10). Confession is declaring your faith in Christ openly, agreeing with God that you need His salvation, and letting others know of your new allegiance to Him. This does not mean that someone is not saved until they share with others about Jesus. Instead, it means that we acknowledge to the Lord our need for and faith in Him and are saved right away. Later, we do share with others also.

The bottom line is this: when we put our desperate trust in Jesus and what He has done for us and in nothing else, we are forgiven of our sins.

How do we show our salvation?

- **Baptism.** Baptism is a way to show others that the old us is dead and gone and God has made us new and that we want to tell the world we follow Christ now. Baptism is a form of confession since it tells others of our need for Christ. We are baptized not to be saved but to publicly proclaim how Christ has made us new creations (Rom. 6:4).
- **Works.** Good works do not lead to salvation but salvation does lead to good works (Eph. 2:10). We live a life of response to what God did for us and in us (Phil. 2:12; Col. 1:10; Matt. 3:8).
- **Words.** Our words show what is in our hearts (Matt. 15:18). Our words should be gracious (Col. 4:6).
- Character. Those who are saved are transformed into a new person (Rom. 12:2) and God develops our character so that we are more and more like Christ (Gal. 5:22-23). More on this later.



None of these is a way we get saved or a way to make us more loved by and acceptable to God. We already have that as a free gift. Instead we do these in response.

DISCUSS	Look at Luke 8:4-8. What are some ways people may go through some Christian motions but not truly accept Jesus?

Responding to Jesus requires complete surrender on our part. We lay ourselves at Jesus' feet and allow Him to do whatever He sees fit in our lives. It begins a life of following Him and responding to His work in our life. We will go over that in more detail later. For now, please reflect on whether you have fully and completely put your trust in Jesus as your Savior who forgives your sin and your Lord who leads your life. Take some time to thank Him in prayer and ask Him to help you if you are uncertain.



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		One of the most difficult things that many Christians grapple with is how we know if we are truly saved. When we talk about those who go through the motions and yet do not have a true saving faith in Jesus, we can become concerned that this may describe us as well. There are several ways we can be assured of our salvation. Our assurance of salvation should be a mix of these things.
		By our lives God is a person and when we get to know Him more and more we are changed. Our mind, words, and actions are transformed. When we are renewed by God we will see His work in our lives and others should see it as well. The longer we follow Him, the more we will see His faithfulness, answers to prayer, and changing of our character and perspective. If no one else sees the change Christ has made in your life, you should consider why.
		By trust In one way, we have assurance of salvation by stepping back and believing what the Bible says. Jesus tells us that we must believe in Him (John 6:29, 14:6). Do you trust Christ and His promise of salvation to the point that you have stopped trying to be acceptable to Him and simply believed what He says? If you are still holding onto your doubt, your ways, your own goodness, or even what you can see, you are not fully committed in faith in Christ. Trusting what the Bible says is extremely simple and extremely difficult. But we can rest assured in what is written in the black and white for us in Scripture.
		By the Spirit Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." This means that God the Holy Spirit lives in us and assures us that we are indeed God's children because He has grace for us. As we live with the Lord, we get to know His voice which affirms our relationship with Him. If you are in doubt about your salvation, ask the Lord to speak to you.
DOOD	LES	By the resurrection The Bible never asks for empty belief. Jesus' resurrection is proof to us that we also will not be demolished by death but have eternal life with God to look forward to. See the appendix for reasons why we can believe in the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection is our way of seeing that "salvation works". Otherwise, Jesus would simply have died and we would have no hope when we look at our own death.
		With the help of the video, define these terms in your words
		Grace Justification



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	Memory Verse: Romans 6:23 (Sa	
	For the wages of sin is death, but th Jesus our Lord.	ne free gift of God is eternal life in Christ
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