

Salvation in Christ

Introduction

This lesson is called Salvation in Christ. At this point the word salvation needs little explanation. We have seen how man has been separated from God by sin. This condition is sometimes described as being lost. When a person is delivered from that lost condition he is said to be saved. Salvation then is the condition of being saved.

I am sure you can see the progression in our lessons. We looked at the Bible in lesson one how it is put together. Then the second lesson showed our need for help because of sin. The substance of the third lesson was provided by God's careful fulfillment of His promise to Abraham resulting in Jesus' death and resurrection with the offer of forgiveness for all.

I tried to emphasize that God underlined the basis on which He would accept us. Not our merit or achievement but Jesus' perfect life given and sacrificed for us. This fourth lesson presents carefully the response we must make to God's love. Jesus once looked out over Jerusalem knowing that within days he would die outside her walls and that forty years later she would be smashed to ruins by the Romans.

Looking across the great doomed city he lamented O Jerusalem Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her how often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were unwilling. You can read that in Matthew 23:37. His desire for Jerusalem was so rich and generous but there was just one problem. They were to use Jesus' word unwilling.

Well Jesus has provided a wonderful life for us but we must be willing to respond to His love. We must be willing to love him in return. Remember the words from the movie The Moulin Rouge your lips may be near but where is your heart. Jesus wants our heart. At this point though it is not just a question of willingness to respond to Jesus but one of knowledge. We must know how to respond how to love Him.

You have probably heard the beautiful song from the Gospel Rock presentation Jesus Christ Superstar I don't know how to love Him. In an unbiblical setting it puts these words on the lips of Mary Magdalene but the song states a truth of exceptional importance. Most people today don't know how to respond to Jesus' love how to love Him. I want us to read some passages together to see how we are to respond to God's love for us. Then we will notice briefly some of the amazing advantages in coming to God.

How to Use This Lesson

We have got a different procedure with this lesson from the others. We have provided blank spaces beside the passages we will be reading so that you can write in the appropriate

information. I will give you time to examine each passage and write the information. Although you will find the information in the passages cited I will be careful to provide it in my remarks as well. Why write the information out for yourself. Because it helps you personally search the passages and because it helps emphasize the points we are making. It helps you make the information yours.

Hear and Learn

Turn please to the Gospel of John chapter six verses forty-four and forty-five. That is of course the big book of John the one that contains Jesus' life Matthew Mark Luke John. In this passage some Jews were having trouble seeing how Jesus could on the one hand be part of a human family and on the other have come down out of heaven. Jesus told them in effect that they could not understand that consequently they could not come to Him unless they had let God teach them. Let's read those verses.

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets and they shall all be taught of God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. You know if you read verse 44 on its own you may think well that leaves me out. I cannot come to Jesus because I have not felt God draw me. But the very next verse tells us how God does it.

Jesus says it is written in the prophets that they will all be taught of God. Then he says that the person who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Him. That is how God draws men to Jesus don't you see. He provides for them to be taught. You need to write the two key words from verse 45 in the space. Hear and learn. They really tell a vital truth, so often today people think that God is going to call them in a mysterious super spiritual way. No He calls us by having us taught about Him. Just as is happening through this study.

I am always amazed at the responsibility he gives us to listen and to learn with open hearts. The second scripture we will turn to is just a page or two further on in John chapter eight and verse twenty-four. Now immediately before this John records that Jesus told them He would be going away. And they would seek him but not find him. And Jesus said they could not go where he was going because they would die in their sins. The Jews were pretty confused about that and even wondered if he would commit suicide.

Believe

Jesus said they were not looking at things from God's point of view. Then he said and please read John 8:24 with me I said therefore to you that you shall die in your sins for unless you believe that I am He you shall die in your sins. You see the reason they could not go to heaven where Jesus was going was that they were going to die in their sins. The only way they could avoid dying in their sins or dying as condemned people was to believe in Jesus.

Before this Jesus had been speaking of the fact that He was God's Son the light which was shining from God into the world. Those people knew many of the passages you and I have been

looking at. Passages in which God promised to send Abraham's descendant God's servant or Messiah into the world to save men. When Jesus came God expected people to believe in Jesus as that one. He still does. In the space provided write what God expects us to do when we hear about Jesus. That is right. Believe or believe in Jesus or something else to that effect.

Repent

I am convinced God has been careful to unfold the story of redemption in such a way that sincere people can honestly say I believe Jesus is God's Son the Savior He promised. Acts 17:30 is the next reference for us to turn to. Aren't you pleased with the greater ease with which you are finding most of the passages now. It is always exciting for me to see people becoming better acquainted with the Bible and able to find their way through it. In Acts 17 there is a speech that Paul made in Athens.

He told the people that there is one God and that he is not honored if we worship idols of wood or stone since he made all these things anyway. Then he said that God had turned a blind eye to this past ignorance but now had a specific demand of all. Let's see what it is in verse thirty. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent. I am sure you see the word there that belongs on the third line. Repent.

This word is not too rare but the people who truly understand it are. Yet it commands the response that is really the turning point God is looking for in people who hear, understand and believe the story of Jesus. Some people think to repent is to be sorry. No, the Bible says the right kind of sorrow, godly sorrow, will cause us to repent. But it is not repentance. Others think repentance is changed behavior. John the baptizer who prepared the way for Jesus told the people to show from their changed behavior that they had repented. That shows that changed behavior is not repentance but results from it.

Well what is repentance? It is a change of mind, a change of heart. When a person learns he sinned against God and decides to turn to God that is repentance. When a person hears about Jesus and believes that He is God's Son and he decides to accept Jesus' gift of salvation and let Jesus be his master, that is repentance. You have seen the old movies. A beloved family member struggling through the night with a dangerous fever. All the family is there amidst tears and tension. Finally the fever breaks. The doctor bears the news to the family and sighs of relief and smiles abound.

Well in God's struggle for our recovery from sin sickness the fever breaks when we repent when we decide to follow Jesus to do what He requires regardless of cost or consequence. Now let's turn to Romans ten nine and ten. Of course Romans is the first book after Acts. The book of Romans is a superb treatise of salvation through grace of how God has been able because of Jesus to fully accept man in spite of man's sinfulness.

Confess Jesus as Lord

In this passage Paul shows that the story of Jesus' awesome power to save is really intensely personal and must be responded to personally. He says that there is to be not only a necessary belief in Jesus but a stated commitment to Him. Look at the passage that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes resulting in righteousness and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation.

We earlier saw that a person must believe that Jesus is the one he claimed to be if he wants to be free from his sins. We also saw that a person who believes this must decide to follow Jesus, must have a deliberate change of heart, or repentance. In New-Testament times, when people reached this point they openly confessed their beliefs that he is God's son, the Christ. They confessed him as Lord. In the space number four then you might write confess Jesus as Lord or something similar. By the fifth space we have two references Matthew twenty eight nineteen and Acts eight thirty five to thirty nine.

Be Baptized

We are going to turn only to the reference in Matthew and I would appreciate if you would turn to it right now. Matthew twenty eight nineteen. You will find rich reward from reading the passage in Acts in your spare time. It is the thrilling account of how a man from Ethiopia became a follower or disciple of Jesus. The passage shows that after the man had been told about Jesus by a preacher called Philip he saw water and immediately he wanted Philip to immerse him in it. We will find out why this thought came to his mind when we read from Matthew twenty-eight nineteen. This verse tells what Jesus after he was raised from the dead told his special messengers or apostles to do. Let's read the verse.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Well that explains why the man from Ethiopia wanted to be baptized doesn't it. Jesus had commanded it. Philip told him about Jesus so he must have told him that Jesus wanted people to be baptized. It also tells us what we need to write in the space, be baptized. Incidentally while you are still in Matthew 28 you might read verse 20 where Jesus said what the apostles were to teach those who were baptized, teaching them to "observe all that I commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." You see once they'd enter the relationship with Jesus, they were to live by his every command. He would be their master and Lord. At this point, we're going to pay a little closer attention to the subject of baptism.

Baptism Requires Much Water

Rather surprisingly, baptism is a subject of considerable controversy amongst religious people. I say surprisingly because as I think you will agree after we have looked at the next few verses the Bible is pretty straightforward on the subject. We begin by seeing just how baptism was carried out in Bible times. You may be aware that in our day the words used to describe pouring or sprinkling of water on the head, or immersion of a person in the water. First, let's see what was needed for the administering of Bible baptism. Please turn to John 3:23. We will be looking

at a passage that opened the window on the work of Jesus' predecessor, John. The passage will tell where John was baptizing and why he chose that spot, John 3 23. John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim because there was much water there and they were coming and were being baptized.

Now what according to this passage does baptism call for. I think you have got it. If you would write that in the space provided please. Much water. We are now going to see why much water was needed in order for people to be baptized. Romans six three to five will be our first source of information. Now the book of Romans you will recall is immediately after Acts which in turn follows John. John Acts Romans.

Baptism as Death, Burial, and Resurrection

Paul begins the chapter by countering a false notion that some might hold—that since God accepted them through His "grace" they might add half-heartedly to the sin element of their lives so He'd add more to the "grace" column. "May it never be!" cries Paul. Then beginning at verse three he tells them they should realize Jesus died, was buried, and was raised again. When they were baptized they died and were buried with Jesus through that baptism. They'd been crucified with Him, if you please. Then they were raised to newness of life with Jesus. So they must be careful to pursue that new life.

Romans 6:3–5 – Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

You may have already written down what baptism is described as. If not, would you write it in now please: Death, burial, and resurrection. Were it not that many sincere people accept sprinkling or pouring as baptism, it probably wouldn't even be necessary to point out that baptism in the Bible is IMMERSION. It's pretty obvious when Paul says they were buried with Jesus through baptism. And that explains, doesn't it, why John needed much water in which to baptize people.

But the most powerful evidence that baptism is immersion is unfortunately hidden from readers of the English Bible. Our English New Testament is a translation from the Greek language in which the New Testament was originally written. The Greek word for "baptized" means plunge, dip, or immerse. Rather than translate the word, our translators merely made it an English-looking word—"Baptize"—out of the Greek word. How simple it would be if they'd told us that John was immersing in Aenon near Salim because there was much water there. And what needless confusion could have been avoided.

Break

You might like to take a break, this is a long lesson. Then we will continue the lesson at your leisure.

The Purpose of Baptism

We'll complete our brief study of baptism by looking at its purpose. Why be baptized? It's important that we understand the why as well as the how of baptism. In Ephesians 4:5 it says there's just one baptism, so we need to be careful that we submit to that baptism.

At the beginning of Acts 19 we read of some men who'd been immersed but not in obedience to Jesus and they were immersed a second time. You see until we're immersed with Jesus' baptism we've not experienced God's one baptism. Let's notice now what takes place at the point of baptism. 1 Peter 3:21.

We'll read this passage now and you might like to read Mark 16:16 also mentioned on the sheet at a later time. It teaches the same thing. You're probably already near the back of your Bible looking for 1 Peter after Hebrews and James but before 1 John. 1 Peter 3:21.

Peter's just referred to the great flood that gave Noah and seven others a purified world to live in. Then he says and let's read it. And corresponding to that baptism now saves you not the removal of dirt from the flesh but an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now what happens when we're baptized? Yes we're saved. You might write that in the word saved. You'll notice Peter didn't want us to think water was washing dirt from the body but that we were appealing to God for a good conscience in our baptism through Jesus' resurrection.

Next Acts 22:16. We've been reading a lot from Paul's writings. Well here we read about his baptism. Before he became a Christian Paul or Saul as he was then known fiercely opposed the Gospel of Jesus. One day though as you can read earlier in this chapter Jesus appeared to Saul.

Stunned and realizing he'd really been fighting God Saul asked what he should do. Jesus told him to go to the nearby city of Damascus and he'd be told. After three days of praying and soul searching in Damascus Saul was told by a man called Ananias that God had special work for him to do.

Then Ananias said as we're going to read from Acts 22:16 And now why do you delay? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on His name. What did Ananias say would happen to Saul in baptism? Would you please write that in the space? Sins washed away.

Incidentally did you notice that again we read that baptism is an appeal or calling on His name? Baptism without trust in Jesus for cleansing would be meaningless but baptism with such trust becomes an appeal or a plea to God. We'll go now to the second chapter of Acts for our final two passages on baptism.

First Acts 2:38. Thousands of people have just learned that the Jesus they had helped crucify was the Lord their promised Christ. Many of them were guilt-stricken. They wanted to know what

they should do. We're going to read the instruction of Peter a special messenger or apostle of Jesus. Acts 2 verse 38.

And Peter said to them Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Notice again the connection between sin and baptism. It's the same connection as we see between sin and Jesus' blood. Jesus said His blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins Matthew 26:28.

Would you please write that down? You could write sins forgiven sins remitted or anything that expresses that thought. Before we go to the final verse on baptism Acts 2:47 we're going to read verse 41. This tells about the amazing response to Peter's commands.

Added to the Church

So then those who had received his word were baptized and there were added that day about three thousand souls. Verses forty-two to forty-six describe the life of these new disciples of Jesus. It's exciting. Then verse 47 if you'll read it with me please.

Praising God and having favor with all the people that's the disciples of Jesus he's talking about and the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. Now in verse 38 Peter had told the people how to be saved but what according to verses 41 and 47 happened when they were saved?

Certainly the Lord added them to the group of followers elsewhere called the church. You may write something like added to the number added by the Lord or added to the church. Well this helps us see just how we may respond to God's love and Jesus' gift. We certainly can't say I don't know how to love Him since He's told us just how we may respond to Him.

Blessings in Christ

We've spent quite a while considering the response God wants us to make to His love. Already we've seen exciting reasons to come quickly to Him in faith. But we're going to spend a few minutes closing this lesson with special notice of good things God provides through Jesus. Our third study showed the magnificent truth that in Jesus people are brought near to God.

And regardless of whether they're Jew or Greek male or female in Christ they're one. Now we'll look at specific things that are said to be available in Christ. And I'd like you to continue writing the information from the verses in the spaces provided. First let's turn to 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Acts Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians now chapter 5 verse 17. Therefore if any man is in Christ he is a new creature. The old things passed away behold new things have come. What's said of a person in Christ is clear isn't it? He's a new creature. That of course belongs on the appropriate line a new creature.

So often today the change people demand even at the point of a gun is change by others that will change external physical conditions. The more important change the one which every responsible person should undergo is the transformation to a new person a new creation. That change Paul says belongs to the person in Christ.

While it's true that much about ourselves will never change it's also true that when a person has a change of heart and calls on God an exciting change is triggered. This is a change that puts him in God's new world where everything's different in Christ. Would you now thumb slightly towards the back of your Bible please to the Book of Colossians?

Redemption and Forgiveness

After 2 Corinthians comes Galatians Ephesians Philippians then Colossians. Colossians 1 and 14. We'll read verse 13 first to get the context. Please be looking for what the passage says we gain in Christ for He delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. In whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins.

You have a choice there of what to write don't you? Either redemption or forgiveness of sins. Perhaps you'll write both. Remember the word redemption from the last lesson? How it described the person freed from slavery? Here it's applied to people in Jesus they're forgiven of or freed from their sins.

How easy it is to read this verse and miss its real significance. In Jesus I'm free at last. What incentive to make anyone want to be in Christ? We read about the next rich advantage to being in Jesus in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 10. Only the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy separate Colossians from 2 Timothy.

Salvation and Eternal Glory

That was easy wasn't it? 2 Timothy 2 and verse ten. For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. Notice that here Paul yes he's the writer again Paul shared the same incentive in Jesus with the people he was serving.

What was it? Two things really but one grew from the other. The first salvation the second eternal glory. What would be worth surrendering salvation and eternal glory for? What hope's greater than that of being forever at peace with God? Jesus once asked a question that's never been satisfactorily answered.

For what will a man be profited he asked if he gains the entire world and forfeits his soul. Matthew sixteen verse twenty six. First John five eleven is a passage with a very similar promise to Second Timothy two ten. I wonder if you have turned to the back of your Bible for 1 John. Not too much before Revelation but it's after 2 Peter.

1 John 5. Would you look please to verse 11. And the witness is this that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. Yes eternal life is in Christ. Have you ever thought that when a person comes into Jesus he begins a relationship that need never end. In life or death he'll be at peace with God.

That's why Jesus could say he who believes in me shall live even if he dies. John 11:25. What do you know of that's worth holding onto at the expense of eternal life? We're now going back to a book we're becoming quite familiar with Ephesians. Ephesians 1 and verse 3.

I guess we could say that this verse sums up what all the others have been saying. Ephesians 1 and verse 3. Let's read it. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Now what's God blessed man with in Christ? Every spiritual blessing.

That's worth writing down isn't it? When we consider it's the spiritual values that survive regardless of our physical fortunes that's some incentive. And not just a few but all spiritual blessings are available in Christ. Whether it be hope forgiveness of sins peace of mind the love of fellow Christians or any one of a hundred other good things they're all to be found in Christ.

Who'd be anywhere except in Him? Ephesians 2:13 and 16 are the final two verses to show what can be found in Christ. We read both of them in the last lesson. But we're reading them again now verse thirteen. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Verse 16. And might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross by it having put to death the enmity. In verse thirteen Paul says they were brought near in Christ. In verse sixteen he says they were reconciled to God in one body. Our last study revealed that being in Christ amounts to the same as being in His body.

We may write in here either brought near or reconciled to God and we'll be close to Paul's thought. Anyone who's aware of the tragedy of being separated from God either in this life or eternally will recognize the great advantage of being in Christ. Anything else is spiritual death. We have now completed the passages that describe blessings in Christ.

Outside of Christ

We're going to conclude the study by looking at two verses the first from the same chapter of Ephesians from which we have been reading chapter two. Verse 12. It will help us see what it means to be out of Christ. It describes the Gentiles' condition without Jesus but it also aptly describes anyone today who's not in Christ.

Ephesians 2:12. Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world. You'll find several things in that verse to write in the spaces provided. For example without Christ that puts us back where we started doesn't it?

Aliens what a cold word that is. Without hope. You know living without hope's not living. Without God. And that my friend is the ultimate nightmare. Without God. I guess to put it mildly we could say there's no future in being out of Christ. We've been looking at the rich life and plentiful blessings available in Christ and the tragedy of being outside of Christ.

How We Get Into Christ

That makes it really important that we know how we may get into Christ doesn't it? Which brings us to the final passage on our study sheet Galatians 3:27. Of course Galatians is immediately before Ephesians. The verse not only shows how we're to get into Christ but it ties in with the first part of our lesson about how we must respond to God.

Galatians 3:27. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. I'd like you to write that in the arrow please. How we get into Christ? How we pass from the outside in if you please. Now that's not surprising is it since we earlier saw that at the point of baptism we're forgiven by God and added to the church.

No surprise then to find that men get into Christ by being baptized. Well this study shows the clear choice Jesus offered people of the first century. As truly as he still lives that choice still exists and it's yours today. I'm sure you'll have been comparing the difference between being in Christ and out of Christ.

Conclusion

At this point in the study people often desire either to confess Jesus and be baptized or to talk with someone about these matters. If you have either such need why not talk about it to the person who's supplying you with these lessons. An aspect of both the teaching and response to Jesus that we see in the Book of Acts is the urgency of faith.

It impresses me that people wasted no time in responding to the gospel of Jesus and his teachers although they urged careful evaluation of their claims never encouraged delay. Rather their attitude was what are you waiting for? Our final two lessons will look at the special community Jesus provided in which his followers could grow honor God and serve others. It was called the church.

It's now time to use the evaluation sheet to check your understanding of this lesson. Just be persistent won't you as you study these exciting and important issues.