GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

(Matt. 11:28,29)
INTRODUCTION

The goal of these studies is to impart to each camper a knowledge of what God's word says about salvation, to make them aware of their own personal need of salvation, and of what the Scriptures say they must do both to be saved and to stay saved. When they finish this 5 lesson course, each camper should know there is a plan of salvation and what it is. They should know how tragic the human condition is; how awful it is to be lost, severed from God forever. They should also know how wonderful God's infinite love is in extending to us salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ; how glorious it is to be saved, to be a part of God and His spiritual family forever, to spend eternity in heaven!

These five lessons are intended to set forth the basic teachings of the Scriptures in regard to the salvation from the death and damnation which are the certain consequences of the sin which we are all afflicted with. "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Rom. 3:23). "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (I Jn. 1:18). The recurrent theme of the Bible is the universality of sin, the inevitability of God's punishment for sin both here and hereafter, and the love of God in making a way of escape from sin's awesome consequences. The following simple statements from God's word set forth succinctly our problem and God's solution:

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:6).

"...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God." (Rom. 5:8-9).

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 6:23).

"You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin." (I Jn. 3:5).

"and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." (II Cor 5:15).
SPIRITUAL VOCABULARY

Along the way the students will encounter several large words which are not commonly used in today’s English. It is very helpful in their learning if they understand what these words mean and where they came from. Below is a list of key words about salvation and what they mean.

• Atonement/Expiation – Payment or reconciliation for a wrong. The atonement in salvation is the payment for our sin.

• Holy/Sanctified – To be set apart. Be different. When God tells us to “be holy as I am holy” He is saying to be different as He is different. The holy of holies was the place which was set apart even from the place already set apart. When we are sanctified we are made different, set apart. Made different from what? Everything else. Set apart for what? God and only God.

• Justification – To be made right before or with someone. When we justify our actions we are explaining why they were right. Our justification before God is to be made acceptable to Him.

• Propitiation – Not really used in today’s language. It means the offering of a gift to turn away punishment or anger. When Scripture says Christ is the propitiation for our sins it means Christ was the gift offered to God to turn away His anger and our punishment.

• Ransomed – In ancient times it was a practice of war to capture people of prominence then hold them prisoner until your enemy paid a large tribute. The prisoners were then considered ransomed and released. Jesus was our ransom from death and we are ransomed by Him.

• Reconciliation – To be reconciled means two things are made right with each other. In accounting to reconcile a balance means to explain the balance. To be reconciled to another person means some problem between the two of you has been resolved. In salvation when we are reconciled to God it means the problem of sin which separated us from God has been removed so we can be with God.

• Redemption – In the ancient language redemption meant the paying of a loan or debt to get back collateral. If you wanted to borrow money or owed a debt you would give over your coat, sword, goat, etc. as collateral for the debt. You could only get your goat back when you paid off the debt. When the debt was paid the collateral was considered redeemed to its owner. When redemption is mentioned in salvation is refers to the payment of the debt of sin by God so we are returned to Him.
LESSON I

OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN OF SALVATION

Objectives: Students will be able to define what salvation is, the need for it, and how to obtain it. Students will examine their own experience of, or need for salvation.

Key Verses: Romans 5:8-9 “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.”

I. What is salvation?
In His infinite wisdom, God knew that if He gave man freedom to disobey His laws, man would inevitably do so. Disobeying God is called "sin." “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.” (I John 3:4), and “For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.” (Romans 4:15). God gave man the freedom to choose whether he will obey Him or disobey Him. No man is forced to be saved, just as no man is forced to sin. God wants us to choose salvation. He said through Moses: “…I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,” (Deut 30:19) However, God doesn’t want us to choose salvation just for the sake of being saved, but God desires that our purpose in life is to love Him (Mat 22:26, 27). How do we love God? By keeping His commandments (John 12:49, John 14:15). When we choose to love God we are choosing to be with God and God will happily allow that choice. This is what we call salvation: God forgiving our disobedience and allowing us to be with Him because He loves us and we love Him. We’ll be looking more deeply into salvation and loving God in lessons three and five.

II. Why is Salvation Good?
If salvation is forgiveness of our disobedience and allowing us to be with God, then what is the alternative? To not be forgiven and not be with God. This is bad. Why? Because the result of disobedience (choosing not to love God) is spiritual death (Romans 6:23). In Matt 18:8, Matt 25:46, and Rev 14:11 we are told those who choose to be separated from God will be put into eternal torment.

Because of sin the human race has been ruined. All the suffering and agony of the death process has been visited upon us and the world turned into just one big revolving graveyard. The solution: Salvation through the death of Jesus Christ for our sins, His resurrection for our entry into Heaven. This salvation depends upon our identifying ourselves with that death and resurrection through baptism into Christ's body, the Church, and our continuing as faithful Christians and members of His Church until death. We will be looking more closely at sin, what it is, and its result in lesson two.

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (I Corinthians 15:22).

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4).
“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

“... Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10b).

“... But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 10:22).

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9).

III. How is Salvation Obtained?

- The Scriptures Describe How We Are Saved
  Asking “How are we saved?” is like asking, “How do we graduate from high school?” There are a plentitude of parts and pieces to the puzzle. Proposing purification is by God’s grace and mercy is paramount. To say we are saved by the blood of Christ is true. To say we are saved by our faith is true. To say we are saved by baptism is also true. But saying we are saved by only one of these things is false. All of these are essential components to our salvation. God wants us to be saved. So the Scriptures tell us clearly the plan of salvation.

  God is either a just, impartial God or He isn’t. If He isn’t then we’re all pretty much left hoping He likes us and will let us in on what He wants. If He is just and impartial then He would have given a way for everyone to know what He wants. Scripture is that way. It’s something we can all look at, see, read, and learn. It’s not invisible, uncertain, or changing like feelings or blind instinct. Scripture is something two people can sit down, study together, and come to a mutual understanding because they’re seeing the same thing. They may not agree on what it says, but at least they can agree it says something, and what they are reading applies to them both. God doesn’t need to change or update Scripture because He has told us everything we need to know already (2 Tim 3:16, 17). Try to name one problem we face which Scripture doesn’t address.

- The Scriptures Describe Only One Way to be Saved
  Many people today believe it is possible to love God in a way He accepts without doing it the way Scripture lays out. They believe Buddhism, Islam, Wicca, etc. are different, but equally effective ways to love God. However, there are not multiple plans of salvation; there is one, and only one. There is only one “narrow gate” and “hard way” that leads to life (Matt. 7:13-14).

  “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6).

- Jesus Our Example
  Christ willingly came into the world to become the sacrificial “Lamb of God.” Yet this was according to the will of His heavenly Father. His death was an act of obedience. His life also serves us as an example of obedience. All He said was spoken in obedience to the Father, to obey Him, and by this to teach us obedience to God. In His teaching and through His apostles' teaching He gave us the word the Father had given Him to give to us, that we might obey it.

  “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.’” (John 4:34)
“So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, Truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing of his own accord but only what he sees the Father. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise’”. (John 5:19)

“‘I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.’” (John 5:30)

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.’” (Matthew 3:13-17)

- **Jesus Our Teacher**
  God sent Jesus to teach us how to live. What He said came directly from God. That kind of makes it what scholars call “authoritative.”

  “The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment — what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” (John. 12:48-50).

  “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.” (John. 14:10).

  “For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ... I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ... Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” (John. 17:8,14,17).

- **Jesus Our Salvation**
  Salvation is not possible because of anything we do, but what Jesus has done. We’ll be studying more on Jesus’ part in salvation in lesson four. (Rom 6:23, John 3:16, Heb 9:14, Heb 10:12-14, Rom 8:1-4, Rom 5:18-21)

- **Our Part**
  If we gain salvation because of what Jesus has done do we have to do anything? Romans 6 answers this question thoroughly. It speaks of dying to disobedience (sin), being baptized into Jesus, and living for God. What we do in salvation will be studied in lesson five.

Questions:

1. If eternal life is so important, why do people choose to neglect making adequate
preparations for eternity?

2. What about good people who do not accept Christ, will they be all right anyway?

3. Why are the Scriptures the only safe guide to know who is and who is not saved?

4. How can the gospel be “obeyed?”
LESSON II

SIN: WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT DOES, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Objectives: Students will be able to define what sin is. Students will understand how sin operates in the world. Students will examine both the temporary and eternal consequences of sin.

Key Verses: Romans 3:23-25 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”

I. What Is Sin?
In Romans 3:23 we are told, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” We are all sinners and in need of Christ. Therefore we all need to understand exactly what sin is and the role it plays in our lives. The word translated “sin” in our Bible means “to err; to miss the mark; to go astray”. Sin is a violation of God’s law. It is disobedience to God. When God created the world, He made a perfect paradise. There was no sin, until Satan deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'? "And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.” (Genesis 3:1-7)

Sin can be classified into two categories.
1. **Sins of commission**: This is doing what God has told us not to do. Examples of this come from Colossians.

   “But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices.” (Colossians 3: 8-9)

2. **Sins of omission**: This is failing to do what God has told us to do.

   “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” (James 4:17)
Sin is everywhere in our world today. We see it on TV, in magazines, the Internet, etc. Why is it so popular? Sin is seductively beautiful and offers thrills, pleasure, and immediate satisfaction. It has a powerful appeal and caters to our pride. It centers entirely around what we want, not what is good. Sin can be summed up in the phrase “If it feels good, do it.”

Sin is not just a “going out and doing.” It also comes from attitudes. Did the serpent actually lie? From a point of view, no he didn’t. Adam and Eve did not instantly die and they did know good and evil. Also, look at Matt 4. In 4:3, 4:6, and 4:9 Satan spoke the truth. It wasn’t the truthfulness of the statements, it was the intent (Isaiah 29:13). Jesus spent a lot of time in Matthew 5-7 explaining it wasn’t enough to not actually murder someone. If your attitude towards them is one of hate and you wish harm to come to them then you have essentially murdered them because that is where your heart is.

II. Why is it bad?
1. Sin is not good for us now. Look at the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. Doing the things we are told not to do or not doing the things we are told to end up in misery for ourselves and others. Imagine what would happen if God allowed us to kill each other freely or permitted us to disrespect Him. There are many verses which tell how God loves us. One of the ways He shows this is by telling us how to live in a way which is good for us.

2. Sin is not good for us in the future. God can’t just ignore our sin. He is a God of love, patience, and mercy. However, if He just let us slide on sin He wouldn’t be a God of justice. He must punish sin. There is no middle ground. If you’re not going to play on His team, you’re on the other team. There are no sidelines or bleachers. Do you really want God to be against you?

“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21)

“Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.’” (John 8:34)

“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”. (Romans 6:23)

III. How does sin work?
1. Cause and effect is a good way to show what sin actually can do to a person. King David, a man after God’s own heart, sinned and had consequences because of it. He murdered another woman’s husband in order to cover up an adulterous affair with her, and when she gave birth to the child he had fathered, it died. David realized all of this when the prophet Nathan pointed out his sin. How does our sin today affect our life or the lives of others? Babies born to single mothers, sexually transmitted diseases, addictions, murder, robbery, lying, etc. are all
consequences of sin.

2.) “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” (Galatians 5:9)
   Sin in our lives acts this way. We sin “a little” and do not think about it. Gradually we become accustomed to it. We sin more and more and still we do not think about it. Just like a little yeast will affect a whole loaf of bread and cause it to rise, sin does the same thing in our lives. Eventually we can become deadened to the effects of sin, we learn to accept it as being OK. 1 Timothy 4:1,2 and Hebrews 3:13 give warning on how sin can gradually deaden us to God.

3.) Fooling ourselves. Many people attempt to justify disobedience by calling it a small sin. Acts 15:20, 15:29, 21:25, 1 Corinthians 6:18, 10:8, 2 Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:5, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, and Hebrews 12:16 all have the same basic message: “don’t have sex with someone you’re not married to.” However, many Christians try to justify their sex life to people they are not married to by calling it a small sin or saying it’s OK because they love each other. We try to work around God’s commandment by telling ourselves, “because I’m not hurting anybody God won’t mind. It’s not like I’m murdering anyone.” Remember the serpent and the fruit? When God’s commands are violated someone always gets hurt, God and usually us. Remember, God gave us the “Thou shalts” and the “Thou shalt nots” for our benefit. (May want to go into how fornication does hurt the people involved).

IV. How do we not sin?
1.) Encouragement. Hebrews 3:12, 13 explains encouragement is a great way to keep each other from sinning. Pick your associates carefully for this task. What they encourage you in will help determine what you do. Paul warns, “Bad company corrupts good character.” (1 Corinthians 15:33). Is it easier to not sin here or at school? This is one reason why going to worship is so important. Hebrews 10:23-35.

2.) Study. Deuteronomy 17:19 shows where God commanded the king to study daily so he may, “learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them.” In 2 Timothy 2:14 Paul tells Timothy to be someone who “correctly handles the word of truth.” How is he going to do this without study?

3.) Prayer. Jesus told the apostles to pray so they may not enter into temptation (Mat 26:41).

4.) Love God. If we really love God we will find ourselves not wanting to do things which hurt or displease Him.

V. Summation
Did God give us all these “rules” to just help us find ways to mess up? What is the point of them? God made us in His image. Scripture was given to teach us how to be more like His image. Why? Because God loves us and being more like Him is good for us. When we sin (disobey/wrong God) we are choosing to not be like Him and hurting ourselves. This hurts God b/c we are refusing to be with Him and also because He does not like to see us hurt. At the end if we have refused to be like God and refused to be with Him He will grant us what our actions have been asking for and put us in a place where He is not.

Questions:
1. If all sins are just the same, why are there differences in consequences for different sins?

2. How could David, a man after God’s own heart, get enmeshed in murder and adultery? What does this tell us about the temptations we face?

3. Why would encouragement, study, and prayer help keep us from sinning?
LESSON III

ONLY TWO POSSIBILITIES

Objectives: Students will be able to describe and contrast eternal life and eternal death. Students will understand how salvation and church membership are the same event.

Key Verses: II Corinthians 5:10-11: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the lord, we persuade men"

I. What Happens After We Die?
A central idea in the gospel is the concept of a resurrection after death.

"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." (I Corinthians 15:20).

"The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (I Corinthians 15:42-44).

"Jesus said, ‘Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.’” (John 5:28-29).

What kind of bodies we will have is not very clear. Probably because it involves things we can’t understand in this life. Try explaining electricity or the Internet to someone who lived in Jesus’ time. You might be able to get some ideas across, but they would never be able to completely understand it. What we do know is the people who refuse to love God and do things God’s way will have bodies in which “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48). The bodies of the saved will be eternal bodies like Christ’s. They will be "spiritual bodies." They will be glorious bodies, imperishable bodies, heavenly bodies, fitted for the heavenly kingdom they will inhabit forever.

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” (Phil. 3:20-21).

After we die everyone gets a new body. What exactly will it be like? We don’t exactly know. However, we do know whether you loved and served God or not, your new body will not die again. So then what? There are only two possibilities.

II. Possibility One: Punishment
God wants us to choose Him, love Him, and be with Him (2 Peter 3:9). However, as the God of love He will respect our choice to not be with Him and as the God of justice He will punish our disobedience. "Salvation" means deliverance from sin and its effects and consequences in this
world and the world we will be in after we die. Sin brings alienation, sorrow, and suffering. But, the pain and shame it brings here is nothing to be compared to the agony of Hell. Jesus has "delivered us from the wrath to come" (I Thessalonians 1:10). God's love is infinite, but God's wrath is also infinite. Those who have ignored their responsibilities to Him and who have disobeyed His righteous laws will be banished from His presence forever and condemned to imprisonment forever in the lake of fire and brimstone,

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18).

Jesus continually warned of hell, where the "fire is not quenched, and the worm never dies" (Mark 9:48). Peter, on Pentecost and throughout his preaching, warned and pleaded, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation" (Acts 2:40). Paul said that those who do not obey the Gospel will be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (II Thessalonians 1:9).

An idea has been floating around for a long time which says after you die if you will not be with God in Heaven then He will just zap you out of existence. There is actually no Hell or eternal suffering, you are just no more. This idea is called annihilationism. God annihilates you for sinning. However, there is no such thing as cessation of existence. If there was why did Jesus mention the torment in Mark 9:48 and John go into so much detail about lakes of fire and darkness in Revelation? Every one will exist forever somewhere, and in some state. Death, in the Scriptures, is not extinction, but utter ruin; not loss of being, but loss of well-being. Spiritual life is conscious existence in spiritual union with God; spiritual death is conscious existence in a state of total separation from God. The death of the soul is its severance from God and is called "the second death," as distinguished from physical death which is the severance of the soul from the body (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8)

III. Possibility Two: Being With God
If we are faithful to God He will not forget us.

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that Gods has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:12)

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:1-3)

In Revelation 21 John describes Heaven as a beautiful place of purity and unending day. There is no need for a temple because God and Jesus are its temple. The author was using metaphors to describe a place we do not have the words to correctly describe. A place where there is no death, no suffering, no sin. A place where we are with God Himself. Not a bad way to live forever.

IV. The Kingdom Now
The “kingdom of Heaven” isn’t something we only get to be a part of after we die. It is now as well. While conversion is a personal matter, involving acceptance and action by the individual, it
makes us a part of the Church or body of Christ. This makes us a participant in a covenant and compact binding us forever not only to God through Christ, but also to all other individuals who have been admitted to the body. Everyone’s admittance to the body depends on their acceptance of the rules of the covenant. That covenant is the New Testament of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (A covenant is a contract between people. In this case God and us.)

The terms and conditions set forth in the New Testament for salvation and our entrance into the new covenant, are identical with the terms and conditions for membership in the Lord's body, which is His Church. To be saved is to be a member of the Church, and to be a member of the Church is to be saved. The Greek word we translate as “church” is ekklesia. Ekklesia means a gathering or assembling. But gathering/assembling of what? Christians. What are Christians? Those who follow Christ and receive the promise of forgiveness, salvation. In other words the church is a gathering of people who follow Christ and are forgiven. It is not possible to be part of the ekklesia without being saved because then you would somehow have managed to be a follower of Christ, received forgiveness, but not salvation.

How do we get into the body? Romans 10:14 begins it with hearing and believing. Acts 2:38 finishes it with repenting, acknowledging Jesus is Lord, and being baptized. When we are baptized we become a part of Christ (Galatians 3:26, 27) and receive forgiveness (Acts 2:38, 22:16). We’ll be studying more about baptism in lesson five.

Various religious denominations of the earth teach that salvation, baptism, and church membership are different things occurring at different times, however from what has just been pointed out, they are different aspects of the same thing and take place simultaneously.

Questions:

1. What difference does it make whether God really punishes some people eternally in hell?

2. If there were no Heaven or Hell would you still serve God? Why? Why not?

3. What is “the church?”
LESSON IV

JESUS CHRIST IS GOD’S WAY OF SALVATION

Objectives: Students will be able to understand the central place Jesus holds as God’s only way of salvation. Students will understand the importance of the death of Christ on the cross. Students will appreciate the love of God shown through the death of Christ.

Key Verse: John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

In lesson one we looked at how Jesus is our teacher, our example, our salvation, and our only route to God. Now we are going to look at why those things are true.

I. The History of Salvation

In Ezekiel 18:4 and Romans 6:23 we are told the consequence of sin is death. This has always been true since and because Adam and Eve ate the off-limits fruit (Romans 5:12). They didn’t die immediately, but they did die. However, God was not willing to let humans just fall off the map. He had a plan before the beginning of the world to allow us to be forgiven (2 Timothy 1:9b, 10).

From the time of Adam to the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai is called the “Patriarchal Age.” It’s called this because, while we are not sure exactly what God expected of humans during this time, from the examples we have it seems the male head of the house, the patriarch, was in charge of spiritual matters. They effectively acted as a priest for their family to offer sacrifices to God (Genesis 22:1-19, Job 1:1-5, 42:7-9). While we don’t know the conditions of the sacrifice, we know they were made as early as Cain and Able (Genesis 4:3, 4b). While not stated, it seems the purpose was a way of gaining forgiveness from God (Job 1:1-5, 42:7-9). During this time God spoke directly to His people and His people to Him. However, there were also priests and prophets. Melchezidek is called a priest (Genesis 14:18) and Balaam was a prophet, a corrupt one, but still carried out the duties (Numbers 22-24).

The period of time from the Law was given to Moses to Jesus’ resurrection is referred to as the “Mosaical Age” or “Levitical Age.” Mosaical because the Law was given through Moses. Levitical because the Law describes the duties of the people and priests, the Levites, in relation to each other and God. Here Scripture gives very explicit instruction on what was to be done and why (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). From Exodus to the time of Jesus God communicated to the people through prophets. The word prophet was not meant to mean someone who told the future, but someone who carried a message from God. The priests were put in place to act as go betweens from the people to God. They offered sacrifices on behalf of the people. Also, during this time a “holy of holies” was setup to represent the presence of God among the people. The “holy of holies” was separated from everything else by a very thick curtain, approximately 3 feet thick. It was there to show a separation between God and the people. (The Hebrew word for curtain or veil actually means separation.) The High Priest was the only person who was permitted to enter the presence of God and only once a year. Anyone else and at any other time would be killed.

From the first sin onward the consequence of sin remained the same, death. God provided sacrifice as a way for the people to make up for their sin (Hebrews 9:22). The animal was killed on their
behalf. He also provided a means of communication between Himself and them, the prophets and priests. However, there was a key problem: the prophets and priests were still imperfect and the sacrifices, though offered repeatedly, weren’t enough to get full forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 10:1-4). Because of this the veil, separation, between God and the people had to remain in place. God was the God of love and mercy to give the people a way to postpone the price of their disobedience. However, as the God of justice one of two things would have to eventually happen. Either He collects on the postponed sentence or He provides a way to completely forgive sins.

II. Jesus is God’s Answer to the Problem

- **Jesus the Better Prophet**
  In Deuteronomy 18:15-19 God promised another prophet like Moses who would tell the people everything He was commanded. If they did not listen God Himself would deal with them (for the record, that’s a bad thing). Jesus says this about Himself in John 12:44-50 and in Acts 3:22-26 Peter explains Jesus was this prophet. Paul explains Jesus brought a better law from God (Romans 3:19-26). Because of these things Jesus is the perfect promised prophet. The message He brought from God is one which can forgive our sins.

- **Jesus the Better Priest**
  From the beginning God allotted ways to approach Him, usually through the priests. However, they were human and were unable to remain in God’s presence or offer perfect sacrifices. Hebrews 4:14-5:10 and 7:20b-8:13 explains how Jesus is the perfect High Priest because He understands our struggle with sin; is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, and exalted above the heavens; will not die; He does not need to offer sacrifices for His own sins; has entered the “holy of holies” (presence of God) forever; and was appointed High Priest not by the Law, but by an oath. Because of these things He is able to be the perfect go between for us and God and is able to offer up a sacrifice which can forgive sins.

- **Jesus the Better Sacrifice**
  Now we have a better message and better messenger. Now we have a perfect High Priest. Everything for forgiveness is almost in place. Everything except a perfect sacrifice. Animals can’t do it (Hebrews 10:4). A person’s death would only be enough for their own sin so it’s not possible for them to die for anyone else. Hebrews 9:11-28 explains since Jesus was blameless He was able to offer Himself as a sacrifice which was sufficient to purify us all.

- **Jesus the Resurrection**
  Romans 6:1-10 explains since Jesus was raised from the dead we can also be raised from the dead (forgiven of our sins). Without Jesus’ resurrection His message, priesthood, and sacrifice are pointless (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

III. Summation
Through Jesus we have someone who is able to explain to us perfectly what God requires of us. We have someone who understands our struggles with disobedience because He was here. He can now be the perfect person to go from us to God. We have someone who was perfectly obedient so He can both offer a sacrifice which finally forgives and be the same sacrifice. We have someone who was raised from death and lives forever with God. Now because of Him we can be raised and live with God forever as well. We can finally be in the actual presence of God (significance of the veil and its tearing at Jesus’ death). Because of all these things Jesus is the pivot, the center, of our
salvation.

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised for the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him. The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God.” (Romans 6:3-10).

God loved us so much He planned this from the beginning (John 3:16, 1 Peter 1:20, 21).

Questions:

1. Why are animal sacrifices not conducted in the church today?

2. Why couldn’t a mere human not have offered the sacrifice for our sins?

3. Has anything changed in the way God communicates with us, the way we communicate with God, and the way sin is dealt with? If so what? If not what hasn’t?
LESSON V

RECEIVING GOD’S GRACE

Objectives: Students will be able to define what grace is. Students will understand how grace is essential for salvation. Students will understand the divine conditions required to receive God’s grace.

Key Verses: Ephesians 2:8-10 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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

I. What are Grace and Faith?
In Ephesians 2:8, 9 we are told,

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves it is the gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast.”

In the previous lessons we’ve seen Jesus is the one who has done all the heavy lifting in our salvation. He brought a better message from God, He is the perfect go between for us and God, He offered the perfect sacrifice to God, He is the perfect sacrifice to God, and because He was raised we can be too. If we are saved by grace because of what Jesus has done and not what we do, does this mean we have to do anything at all? Are we given a free ride to salvation? To understand what is being said we need to understand what the words used mean. In this passage the key words are grace and faith.

Grace comes from the Greek word charis which means a gift. Gifts are given, not earned. If they were earned they would be called payment or reward. So to say we are saved by grace is to say God gives us salvation as a gift. We can’t earn it. Using this alone it sounds as though we have to do nothing at all? Are we given a free ride to salvation? To understand what is being said we need to understand what the words used mean. In this passage the key words are grace and faith.

Looking at Hebrews 11:1 we learn faith means a belief, based on evidence, of something not seen or received. In James 2:14-17 it is further explained without action to back it up, our belief is useless. So Paul is explaining we are saved by an unearned gift. This gift is able to save us because of our belief. Our belief is made real and alive by what we do. Looking at it in reverse, if we do nothing our faith is useless, unreal, dead and grace cannot save us. What we do matters in our salvation.

II. 007 License to Sin
If we receive salvation by grace and not by what we do, is grace a license to sin? As the old limerick goes, “Salvation by grace, oh blessed condition, I can sin all I want and still get remission.” What does God have to say? All of Romans 6 is dedicated to this question.

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” (Romans 6:1, 2)
“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Romans 6:15, 16)

Some people like to use grace to justify their disobedience. However, that is the wrong attitude, and there lies a greater problem. In Matthew 22:24-40 Jesus explains the greatest command is to love God and the 2nd greatest is to love others. He went further and pointed out every law God gave and everything the prophets said were based on these two things. In John 14:15-21 Jesus told the apostles whoever loves Him will keep His commandments. Someone who tries to weasel out of obeying God by using grace as an excuse doesn’t love God as much as they love themselves. They are like those Isaiah described,

“The Lord says: ‘These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.’” (Isaiah 29:13)

If you stop and think about it when you love God not sinning is actually very easy. Why? Because when you love God you find yourself wanting to please Him. Not because He has ordered you to, but because you want to. In time you begin to see this way of life is much easier than doing it your way and you begin to appreciate God even more. When you love God and mess up, you find yourself getting back up and trying to do it right. Not because you are afraid of punishment, but because you want to love Him. Think about how hard you may try to win the approval of your parents or peers. This is how you begin to feel about God. People who love God do not try to find loopholes around His commandments so they can do what they want.

III. “Once Saved, Always Saved”

The Bible teach in many places that men can be in a state of grace and divine favor, and then fall from grace, backslide, and be again alienated from God so they will be eternally lost.

The churches of Galatia were told by the Apostle Paul those who sought to be justified by the Law of Moses had "fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:4) One could not fall from grace unless he had once been in a state of grace. Therefore, the Scriptures say plainly that one can fall from grace. Thus, the doctrine of "Once in grace, always in grace; once saved, always saved;" is untrue.

Over and over again, we are told that one can be written in "The book of Life," and then, because of sin, be blotted out of it (Exodus 32:33; Psalms 69:28; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 22:19;). There are many passages in the New Testament which warn against apostasy, and which teach that many will fall away from the faith and be lost. Some of them are:

- Matthew 7:15-23
- Matthew 24:11-12
- I Corinthians 9:27; 10:12
- Galatians 5:4
- Colossians 1:23
- II Thessalonians 2 (entire chapter)
- I Timothy 4:1
- II Timothy 3:1-14
- Hebrews 3:12
- Hebrews 6:4-6
- Hebrews 10:38
- II Peter 1:10
- I Peter 2:20-22
- II Peter 3:17
- Jude (Entire book)
- Revelation 7:17
Our new birth in Christ is a beginning. This new life provides, through God’s grace, all we need to enjoy eternal blessing of being with the Lord. God lets us choose if we will be with Him or not. He won’t stop allowing us to choose until the Judgement. Until then if we choose to be with Him then later, by our actions, choose not to, He will allow us to leave. In other words if we become saved then decide to go back to how we were we’ll no longer be forgiven.

IV. Baptism
- What is baptism?

So where does baptism fit in? There are those who believe baptism does not matter in salvation because it is a “work” and we are saved by grace. However, in lesson three we learned to be saved we must hear what God has said, believe what God has said, turn away from a life of disobedience (repent), confess Jesus is Lord, and be baptized. Hearing what God has said, believing it, obeying, and confessing Jesus are easy enough to understand the how and why. What about baptism? What is baptism? Baptize comes from the Greek word baptisma which means to be immersed or drenched. (If time permits explain why the word baptism was written as baptism and not immersed or drenched.) Immersed or drenched in what? In Matthew 3:16, Luke 3:16, John 1:26, 3:23, and Acts 8:36 it is shown baptism involves immersion in water. In the case of John 3:23 a lot of water. It is possible to be baptized with other things: Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16, Acts 1:5), fire (Luke 3:16), and Jesus (Romans 6:3, 4). Acts has been called “The Book of Conversions” because of the many detailed accounts of people becoming Christians. So Acts is a great place to look and see what baptism involves. In the book of Acts there are two places where it specifically mentions acceptance of Jesus was accompanied by a baptism in water (Acts 8:36, 10:47). The other places conversion and baptism are mentioned (Acts 2:41, 8:12, 13, 9:18, 16:15, 33, 19:5, 22:16) makes perfect sense if water baptism is assumed. Some would argue the command to be baptized refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit (being immersed in the Holy Spirit), not a water baptism. However, in the conversion of Cornelius in Act 10 the Holy Spirit came upon, or immersed, them first then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the gift of the Holy Spirit just as we have.” (Acts 10:47). In Acts 8:14-16 Peter and John prayed the believers receive the Holy Spirit, but after they had already been “baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.” If the commanded baptism refers to immersion in the Holy Spirit why did Peter order the family to be baptized after they displayed the presence of the Holy Spirit and why did Peter and John prayer for the believers to receive the Holy Spirit after being baptized? It appears clear the sign of acceptance into the ekklesia (body, gathering) was a water baptism and not baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- What happens in baptism?

1.) Romans 6:3, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27 - We are immersed in Jesus, become a part of Him, a part of the body.

2.) Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12 - We are immersed in His death and as a result, because we are buried with Him, we are raised with Him.

3.) 1 Peter 3:21 - The pledge of a good conscious toward God.


- Why baptism?

At this point it’s reasonable to ask, “Why water baptism? If the blood of bulls and goats was unable
to forgive sin what can water do? Is there some mystical properties of the water which works a kind of spiritual magic?” The answer is no, there’s nothing special about the water itself. Evil people will not suddenly start to boil and burst into flames if they fall into a baptistery (though we may be fairly certain some might…). If there’s nothing special about the liquid then why do it? There’s two very important reasons.

1.) In Matthew 26:26-29 Jesus setup the Lord’s Communion. The word communion means to be a part of. By eating the bread and drinking the fruit of the vine we are symbolically acknowledging we are a part of Christ (John 6:51-58). By being baptized in water we are symbolically acknowledging we have died, are buried, and raised with Christ and in Christ. It’s at this point God accepts us into the body and forgives us.

2.) 2 Kings 5. Would Naaman have been cured if he had washed in any other river but the Jordan? No. Was there anything special about the water of the Jordan? No. So why did it make a difference? Because God said so. Are we willing to set aside our pride and dignity with the desire to do something great and humbly do something simple for no other reason than God told us too? Our pride wants us to earn our forgiveness by doing something fantastic. However, forgiveness comes by grace not great works. We must do it Gods way even if it means doing something so simple it may offend our pride because it may not make sense to us. Bottom line: if God says do this to get forgiveness that’s the only ways it’s going to happen. It doesn’t have to have a reason when God commands it. Do you love Him enough just to do it?

Questions:

1. What is the difference between God’s love and God’s grace? Is there anyone God does not love? Is there anyone who does not have God’s grace?

2. Do faith and repentance earn our salvation from God? If yes, how? If no, then why are they required?

3. If baptism is a “new birth” that “washes away sins,” what does this tell us about those who are not baptized?

4. Can baptism provide salvation without faith and repentance? What does this tell us about infant baptism?

5. Why would anyone who understands what the Bible teaches about salvation not do what God requires to receive the “new birth”?