

Growing in Christ

Salvation: The Only Solution

Lesson #4 for October 27, 2012

Scriptures: John 2:25; Jeremiah 17:9; Titus 1:1,2; Romans 3:19-24; Acts 2:36-38; Luke 7:47; Ephesians 2:1-5.

1. This lesson focuses on the enormous problem of sin and what God has done to deal with it. (Romans 8:3)
2. When talking about the sin problem, we must recognize that sin began in heaven—right next to the throne of God in the heavenly sanctuary! (Revelation 12:1-12) It did not start in the Garden of Eden.
3. Sin has been described in many ways. The scriptural definitions of sin are found in 1 John 3:4; James 4:17; and Romans 14:23. No doubt, Paul's definition in Romans is the most fundamental of all. Paul said that whatever takes us farther away from God is sin. The only thing which brings us back to God is faith. Every time we sin, we are saying that we know better than God does what is best for us at that moment! If we do it too often, it becomes a habit. Our sense of right and wrong is damaged.
4. The Greek word *pistis* translated faith, trust, belief, or confidence is the only basis for salvation. (Acts 16:31; compare Hebrews 11:1,6) And what is faith?

Faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a Person well known. The better we know Him, the better the relationship may be.

Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in God—based on the more-than-adequate evidence revealed—to be willing to believe what He says—as soon as we are sure He is the One saying it—to accept what He offers—as soon as we are sure He is the One offering it—and to do what He wishes—as soon as we are sure He is the One wishing it—without reservation for the rest of eternity. Anyone who has such faith would be perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven.

Faith also means that, like Abraham and Moses, God's friends, we know Him well enough to reverently ask Him, "Why?" (A. Graham Maxwell)

5. Dr. Edward Heppenstall who was a great theologian, university professor, and theological seminary teacher pointed out on various occasions that sin can never be stamped out no matter how hard we try. Sin can only be crowded out by filling our lives with God and godly activities which focus our lives on how we can live more like Jesus Christ. Elbert Hubbard said, "Men are not punished for their sins, but by them." And Matthew Ronald responded, "If you're headed in the wrong direction, God allows U-turns."
6. *Salvation* means healing. And God can heal all the damage done if we just allow Him to do so. But, God's solution is much larger than dealing with sin on this earth. The questions and accusations raised by Lucifer/Satan against God must be answered, and all doubts about God must be resolved even among the loyal two-thirds of the angels and other members of the universe. God had to prove before the eyes of the universe that He was the One who could be trusted rather than Lucifer/Satan. But, the same evidence used to convince angels and the beings in the rest of the universe is also what convinces us if we are willing to consider it carefully. *Justification*, *sanctification*, even *salvation* are long Latin terms which many do not fully understand. However, it may not be necessary to understand all the nuances of these terms. Every one of them happens by faith. Our part is not the justification, sanctification, or salvation but the faith. If we can come to trust God, He can and will do whatever is necessary to heal and save us.
7. We live in a world awash in sin. It is all around us, and it seems to be getting worse all the time. But, God has promised that He can deal with the sin problem even on this sinful planet. The whole universe is watching to see what God will do. (1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 1:7-10; 3:9,10; Colossians 1:19,20) The angels are to learn something about God from us! We are His teaching aid!
8. Even though God is in no way responsible for sin, He knew it was coming since He has foreknowledge. His plan to deal with sin was already in place when sin occurred even in heaven. (Revelation 14:6,7; Titus 1:1,2; Ephesians 1:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Revelation 13:8)

As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. Christ knew that He would have to suffer, yet He became man's substitute. As soon as Adam sinned, the Son of God presented Himself as surety for the human race, with just as much power to avert the doom pronounced upon the guilty as when He died upon the cross of Calvary.—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1084.8; *FLB* 75.4; *AG* 23.6; *RH* Mar. 12, 1901, par. 5

9. When sin occurred here on this earth, God needed to take immediate action because apart from Him we are dead. (Isaiah 59:2; Acts 17:28) “Every pulsation of the heart is a rebound from the touch of the finger of God.” (*RH*, December 2, 1890 paragraph 15) Moment-by-moment, in every way—physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually—we are dependent upon God.
10. So, what was God’s plan? God has always hoped to save every one of His own children, even Lucifer/Satan. However, He knows that will not be possible. However, God has put in place a plan to save everyone who is willing to cooperate. It is His ultimate goal for all of His children to live together in peace, love, and harmony for the rest of eternity. Theoretically, God could save everybody; He would have to turn heaven into a giant penitentiary and put each of us into a solitary cell so we could not hurt each other!
11. There are many passages in Scripture suggesting that sin is deadly, and there is nothing that we as human beings on our own can do about it. (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 5:12; Revelation 22:11; Genesis 3:15; 4:4; 12:1-3; Exodus 25:8) The entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament was supposed to teach them that sin is very deadly. Unfortunately, being surrounded by sin every day, we become familiar with sin and begin to feel that it is almost normal.
12. Alexander Pope wrote those famous words: “Vice is a monster of such frightful mien. That to be hated needs but to be seen, but seen too oft, familiar with her face we first endure, then pity, then embrace.”
13. How can we deal with that deadly disease? Sooner or later, left by ourselves or perhaps to the devices of Satan, we would destroy each other. In fact, Satan claimed that every human being who is born on this earth will sooner or later become a sinner. Jesus proved him wrong. Satan claimed that everyone who died—even in the first death and certainly in the second death—belonged to him. Jesus once again proved him wrong.
14. Why does the life and death of Jesus solve the sin problem? How does the cross affect my salvation? Was He paying a debt incurred by our sin and required by our righteous or offended or even angry God? Or, was there some larger reason why He came to live and die on this earth? Read Luke 18:9-14; Isaiah 53:4-7; Romans 3:19-28; Zechariah 3:1-5. The tax collector in Christ’s story realized his need and asked for the help that God was more than willing to give. The Pharisee got no help because he felt no need.
15. *Salvation* means healing and includes much more than forgiveness of sin. It includes a restoration to a right relationship with God. That takes place when we come to realize the truth about Him, His character, what He has done for us, and how He runs His government. Christ’s punishment came from the Devil and human beings and was certainly not sent by God!

Dikaioo—[the word translated justification] - to cause someone to be in a proper or right relation with someone else—‘to put right with, to cause to be in a right relationship with.’—Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (451). New York: United Bible Societies.

16. If we exercise our faith in God, He will *set us right* (justification) and He will *keep us right* (sanctification). (See #21 of the handout for Lesson #2.) Notice that neither of those things is anything that we do. It is something that the Holy Spirit does in us if we give Him opportunity. As we exercise faith in God, we learn that God can and will save and heal all who trust Him. Those are the kind of people—the ones who trust God—that He can safely accept into His future kingdom.
17. There are many steps that have been suggested as part of the salvation process: repentance, confession, forgiveness, justification, and sanctification are just a few of the steps mentioned in Scripture. We as human beings do not need to understand all the details of each of those steps. If we come to God and are willing to spend time with Him in Bible study and prayer, God is forgiveness

personified. He is just waiting to do whatever is necessary to help us if we give Him the opportunity. He can set us right (justification) and keep us right (sanctification) only by faith; that means we have to be willing to spend time with Him in Bible study, prayer, and witnessing.

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross. {DA 83.4}

18. The book of Romans—especially the first eight chapters—are the clearest presentation of the plan of salvation in all of Scripture. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith we cannot please God. Romans 2:4 suggests that it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. And repentance—true repentance—would lead to justification. (Romans 2:4) But, once again, remember that all of this is based on faith. And where does faith come from? Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God or the preaching about Christ. If we continue to trust in God, we will receive salvation. (Luke 7:47; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 4:7) God will accept us back as His children. (Romans 5:16,18; Romans 8:1) If we continue to grow in this relationship called faith, we will eventually receive eternal life. (Ephesians 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 5:17)
19. If we doubt God's ability to heal and save because we feel that our past has been too sinful, then we are literally challenging God's ability as a healing Physician. God can heal any problem that we might have if we are willing to give Him the opportunity. Our past life might seem like nothing more than "filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6) But, when Christ comes and we accept His plan for our lives, He will remove those filthy rags and place on us the robe of righteousness. (Zechariah 3:1-5)
20. Christ's life and death answered all the questions. God cleared up everything in the eyes of the onlooking universe. Because of the cross and what it represents, they have come to fully trust Him again. All of Satan's accusations have been refuted. There are no more questions or doubts left in the minds of the beings in the rest of the universe. Now they are in full agreement with God's plans, and they are all watching to see what will happen here on planet earth. (1 Corinthians 4:9; DA 764)
21. How can we be changed from being unrepentant sinners to being children of God? Such a radical change is described as the new birth. (John 3) But, if we are willing to spend time with God and His Word and having conversations with Him in prayer, by that very behavior we will be changed. (*Great Controversy* 555.1)
22. When we return to faith in God, we no longer need to be concerned about God's wrath. As we have stated many times before, God's wrath is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequences of their own rebellious choices. The lost are those who refuse God's plan of healing—they are incurable rebels.
23. Unfortunately, while many claim to be Christians and want to experience eternal life, far too many of us are too busy, too concerned with our own progress at work or school, etc. to find time to spend with God. Remember that we cannot actually change ourselves. God is the One who does the changing. We just need to give Him the opportunity.
24. Anything that separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2) is deadly, and not just this sleep death that we know about. Sin can separate us eternally from God. The cross was God's way of demonstrating His own righteousness. (Romans 3:25,26) If we understand all that happened in the Garden of Gethsemane and later on the cross, we will recognize that God is the One who has told the truth in the great controversy. The Devil has not told the truth. This should lead us to place our complete trust in God.
25. What actually happens when we repent and confess our sins? Does God's attitude toward us need to be changed? Absolutely not! He has always loved us. (John 3:16) We have always been His children, and He is waiting for us to come back. It is our attitude toward Him that needs to change. Does our legal standing before God need to change? Who determines what our legal standing actually is? Is there a law even above God that He must comply with when saving sinners?
26. Superficially, it may seem like a simple thing to choose God and reject the Devil. However, remember that one-third of the angels living in the very presence of God were deceived and followed Satan, and

many of the others had significant questions about God until the cross. They were not sure who could be trusted! Someday, Satan will again appear in human form pretended to be Christ and claiming that he can save us. Will we be able to clearly distinguish between the true Christ and the false christ?

27. The only way to distinguish between a counterfeit and the true is to know the truth so well that we cannot be deceived. God has only asked us to do three things: 1) To study our Bibles, contemplating especially the life of Christ; 2) To pray; and 3) To witness. The reason why we need to study our Bibles and pray should be obvious. That is how we carry on our conversations with God. And we need to be as honest as possible with Him. Witnessing is necessary because it is only when we have to explain things to someone else that we get it clear in our own minds!
28. Our Bible study guide says that we must be very clear in distinguishing between subjective and objective atonement. What is the difference?
29. *Salvation* means healing. Why do we need to focus so much on the first steps in the plan of salvation without going on to see what happens next? When will we move on? (Hebrews 5:11-6:3; Ephesians 4:11-16) How many of us, like Job, have experienced the full healing that God offers?
30. Satan has been incredibly successful at misrepresenting the character of God and deceiving angels and human beings here on this earth. We have believed all sorts of awful things about God. How are those issues to be straightened out? The only way was for God Himself to come and live and die the way He did. Jesus was fully God. For 33 years, we had an opportunity to see what it would be like to have God here among us. No angel could correctly and fully represent God; only God could do that.
31. The beginning Christian should stand at the foot of the cross and be moved by Christ's great sacrifice for each one of us. As we mature in our Christianity, we need to ask more in-depth questions: Why did Jesus have to die? How can His death 2000 years ago impact my life in the 21st century? Did He need to die to produce a change in God's attitude toward us? Or, our attitude toward Him? Or both? Or, perhaps for some legal reason?
32. The great controversy is not over some legal technicality. It is a war over real differences: Who God is versus what Satan claims about Him. God's government operates on love; Satan's government operates on selfishness. Satan believes that given the opportunity each one of us would choose to be selfish.
33. Sin is a rebellion against God. [1 John 3:4] In heaven sin began with Lucifer's rebellion against God (Isa. 14:12-15, John 8:44). On earth, it began with the disobedience of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3, Rom. 5:12). "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). [Sin is rebelliousness.] Thus, sin is not simply a wrongful act—as in driving through a red light—but an actual revolt against God (Ps. 51:4, Isa. 1:2). Moreover, it is both a refusal to be subject to Him (Rom. 8:7) and a choice to live in enmity with Him (Rom. 5:10, Col. 1:21). (*Adult Teacher's Bible Study Guide*, p. 52)
34. Jesus came to deal with sin. (Romans 8:3) Through Jesus Christ, God was reconciling us to Himself. (2 Corinthians 5:19) God's love for us has never changed. We are the ones who need to learn the truth about Him, return to our trust in Him, and be reconciled to Him.
35. Through faith in Him, we have forgiveness of sin and redemption (Eph. 1:7-8), justification (Gal. 2:16), and "righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30, NKJV). Nothing essential to a new life is spared, and we become the children of God (Rom. 8:14). We receive the gift of eternal life (Rom. 5:21, 6:23; 1 John 2:25). (*Adult Teacher's Bible Study Guide*, p. 52)
36. This requires cooperation on our part. By beholding we become changed. We allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives and in our minds. We cannot make these changes. Only God can. But, even He cannot do anything without our cooperation. Are we willing to give God that opportunity?

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