

Questions About Salvation

A Got Questions Ministries Bible Study



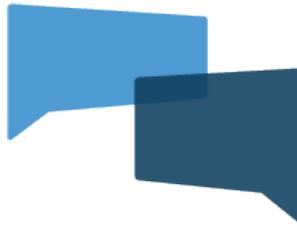


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How to Use This Bible Study

Welcome to the Got Questions Bible Study! We're so glad you're here!

In these studies you will find GotQuestions content, Bible search questions to dig deeper, and heartfelt questions to spark reflection and discussion. Whether you are a new or seasoned believer, using these Bible studies for personal study or as a small group/Sunday School resource, we hope you will increase in your understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ and that you will seek Him more passionately.

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.
– Jeremiah 29:13

These Bible studies are tools to help you grow in your knowledge of the topics at hand. However, knowing about God is not the same as actually knowing Him. God invites each of us to know Him personally and to have eternal life through Him.

Throughout this study, there will be information to read and questions to answer. Next to the questions will be icons. Here is your key to understanding them:



Content Qs



Engage Qs



Bible Look Up Qs



Reflection Qs

If we place our faith in Him, trusting in His death on the cross to pay for our sins, we will be forgiven and receive the promise of eternal life in heaven.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son so that anyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.
– John 3:16

If you have not yet trusted in Him for salvation or are unsure if you are saved, please visit: www.gotquestions.org/eternal-life.html.

May God richly bless you as you seek to study His Word and grow in your walk with Him (Joshua 1:8)!





Lesson 1:

Why do I need to be saved?

After their miraculous release from the Philippian jail, Paul and Silas tell their repentant jailer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Their words are one of many expressions of the underlying message of the whole Bible: God has provided salvation for the lost. Scripture is clear that all people need to be saved, and here are some reasons why that salvation is necessary:

– We need to be saved because we are totally lost in sin. It’s not that we need to save ourselves—we cannot do so—but that we need to be saved. The Bible teaches the total depravity of the human race; that is, every aspect of our being has been corrupted by sin. “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one” (Romans 3:10–12). We need the Good Shepherd to seek out the lost sheep and bring them home, rejoicing (see Luke 15:3–6).



Read the following verses. What do they reveal about sin and humanity?

Psalm 58:3:

Isaiah 64:6-7:

Jeremiah 17:9:

John 3:19:

John 8:34:

Romans 3:9-11:

Romans 8:6-7:

Ephesians 2:1-5:

– *We need to be saved because we are under God’s wrath.* We are “by nature deserving of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3). Without salvation, we stand condemned: “Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son”

(John 3:18). We need Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, to propitiate (appease the wrath of an offended person and be reconciled to him) the wrath of God and take the place of our judgment.



Have you ever done something bad and not received punishment for it? How did you feel? Why are we created to feel guilty for doing what we know is wrong?

– *We need to be saved because we are in danger of hell.* After death comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27), and, if we die without God’s salvation, we will meet the same fate as

the rich man who lifted up his eyes “in Hades, being in torment” (Luke 16:23). We need a Savior to rescue us from a fate literally worse than death.



Do you know where you would go– heaven or hell– if you died today and faced the judgment that awaits each person? On what basis do you know?

– *We need to be saved because we are spiritually dead.* Before salvation, we are “dead in [our] sins” (Colossians 2:13). Dead people can do nothing for themselves. We need resurrection. We need the life-giving power of Christ, who alone can conquer death.

– *We need to be saved because our hearts are hardened by evil.* “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). The unsaved “are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts” (Ephesians 4:18). We need a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit to fix our hearts and align them with God’s will.



The world tells us to “follow your heart.” Why is following our heart or our feelings not a sure guide?

– *We need to be saved because we are enslaved to sin and Satan.* “Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin” (Romans 3:9). In our natural state, we are

held in Satan’s snare and bound by his will (2 Timothy 2:26). We need a Redeemer to liberate us. In Christ we “have been set free from sin” (Romans 6:18).



Before salvation we are enslaved to sin (John 8:34) and dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13). How would seeing your sin in this light impact your response to your own sin?

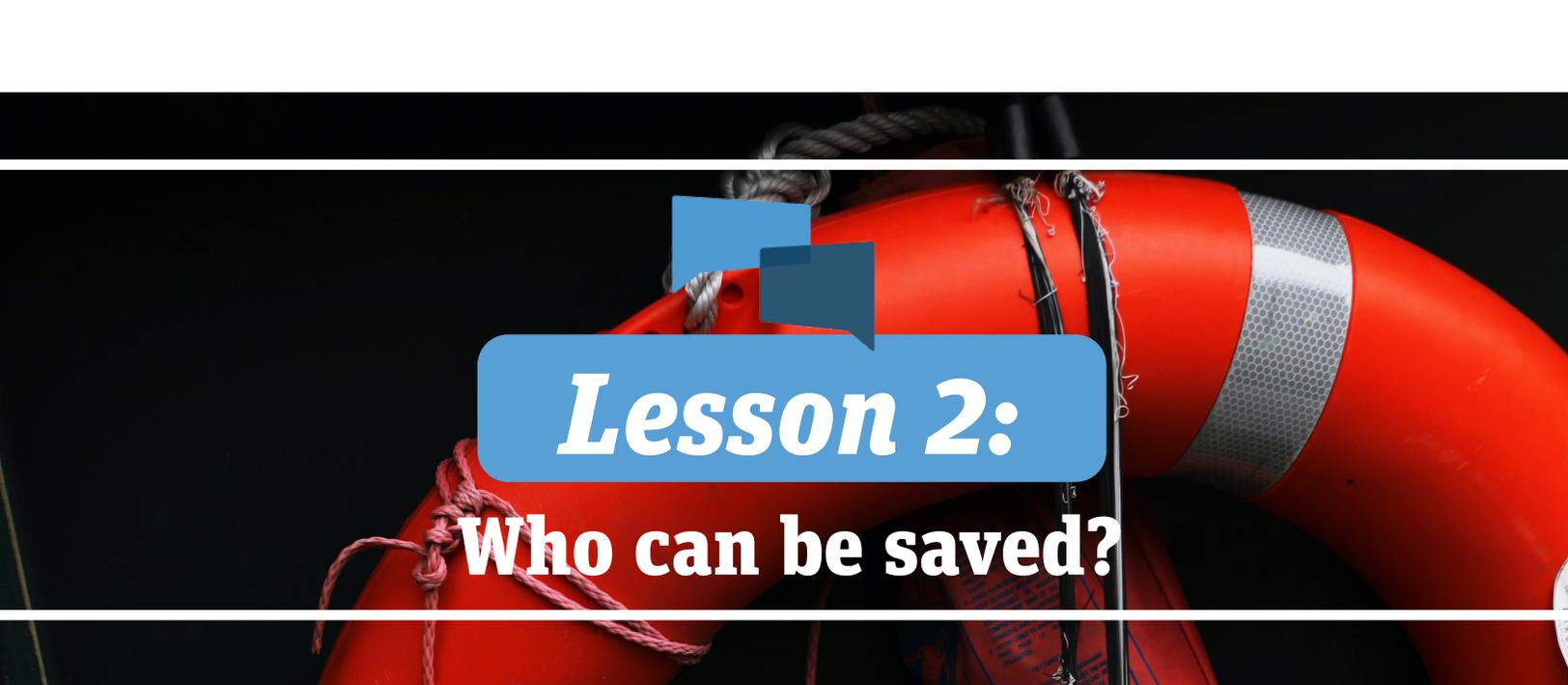
– *We need to be saved because we are at odds with God.* “The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:7–8). We need Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to reconcile us to God and bring us into the family of God as adopted sons and daughters.

When Jesus told Nicodemus, “You must be born again,” He spoke of necessity (John 3:7). Being saved—receiving the new birth—is not just a nice idea or a divine suggestion. It is the deepest need of the human soul: “You must be born again.”



Have you turned to God for the forgiveness of sins? If not, we encourage you to read the following article: www.gotquestions.org/how-can-I-be-saved.html. Wrestle through what it means to be saved and the implications of what it means to reject salvation.

If you are saved, what made you realize your need to be made right with God? Remember with joy the day of your salvation (Psalm 51:12).



Lesson 2: **Who can be saved?**

Jesus clearly taught in John 3:16 that He will save anyone who believes in Him: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” This “whoever” includes you and every other person in the world.



Look up 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 4:10; Titus 2:11; and 2 Peter 3:9. Who does God desire to be saved according to these verses? For whom is salvation?

The Bible says that, if salvation were based on our own efforts, no one could be saved: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Psalm 143:2 adds, “No one living is righteous before you.” Romans 3:10 affirms, “There is no one righteous, not even one.”

We cannot save ourselves. Instead, we are saved when we believe in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 teaches, “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.” We are saved by God’s grace, and grace, by definition, cannot be earned. We do not deserve salvation; we simply receive it by faith.



Is it difficult for you to understand that there is nothing you can do to save yourself except to accept God's gift by faith? Why or why not?

God's grace is enough to cover all sin (Romans 5:20). The Bible is filled with examples of people who were saved from sinful backgrounds. The apostle Paul wrote to Christians who had formerly been living in a variety of sinful conditions, including sexual immorality, idolatry, adultery,

homosexuality, thievery, greed, and drunkenness. But Paul tells them that, upon salvation, "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).



Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. What hope do you receive in knowing that God can save anyone, from any sinful background? What hope can you offer to others in knowing this?

The apostle Paul himself had been a persecutor of Christians, approving of the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1) and arresting Christians and throwing them into prison (Acts 8:3). He would later write, “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst” (1 Timothy 1:13–15).

God often chooses to save unlikely candidates to serve His purposes. He saved a thief on a cross with only minutes to live (Luke 23:42–43), a persecutor of the church (Paul), a fisherman who had denied Him (Peter), a Roman soldier and his family (Acts 10), a runaway slave (Onesimus in Philemon), and many others. There is no one beyond God’s ability to save (see Isaiah 50:2). We must respond in faith and receive His free gift of eternal life.



Do you see yourself as the unlikely recipient of salvation? How so? How has God changed your life since salvation?

Who can be saved? One thing is for certain—you can, if you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior! If you are not certain you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, you can respond right now. Saying a sinner’s prayer is simply a way of declaring to God that you are relying on Jesus Christ as your Savior. There are no “magical” words that result in salvation. It is only faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection that can save us. If you understand that you are a sinner and in need of salvation through Jesus Christ, here is a

sinner’s prayer you can pray to God:

“God, I realize I am a sinner and could never reach heaven by my own good deeds. Right now I place my faith in Jesus Christ as God’s Son who died for my sins and rose from the dead to give me eternal life. Please forgive me of my sins and help me to live for you. Thank you for accepting me and giving me eternal life.”



Praise God for saving an unlikely candidate as yourself. Turn to Him in worship, perhaps singing the song “Amazing Grace” for the reminder that you were lost, but now you’re found; blind, but now you see.

***Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.***

***’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.***

***Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.***

***The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.***

***Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.***

***The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.***

***When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.***



Lesson 3:

What are the essentials of the gospel?

The word gospel means “good news,” which is the message of forgiveness for sin through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It is essentially God’s rescue plan of redemption for those who will trust in His divine Son in order to be reconciled to a just and holy God. The essential content of this saving message is clearly laid out for us in the Bible.



How have you heard the gospel presented? What do you remember about what was said or how it was presented? If it was a compelling presentation, what made it compelling?

In the apostle Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he lays out the content of the gospel message, “Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to

you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1–4).



Read 1 Corinthians 15. What are the key elements of the gospel?

In this passage, we see three essential elements of the gospel message. First, the phrase “died for our sins” is very important. As Romans 3:23 tells us, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” The reality of sin needs to be acknowledged by all who approach the

throne of God for salvation. A sinner must acknowledge the hopelessness of his guilt before God in order for forgiveness to take place, and he must understand that the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Without this foundational truth, no gospel presentation is complete.



Is it easy or difficult for you to recognize your own sin? Why is the realization of our sin and our inability to fix the guilt that comes with it a crucial element of the gospel?

Second, the person and work of Christ are indispensable components of the gospel. Jesus is both God (Colossians 2:9) and man (John 1:14). Jesus lived the sinless life that we could never live (1 Peter 2:22), and, because of that, He is the only one who could die a substitutionary death for the sinner. Sin against an infinite God requires an infinite sacrifice. Therefore, either man, who is

finite, must pay the penalty for an infinite length of time in hell, or the infinite Christ must pay for it once. Jesus went to the cross to pay the debt we owe to God for our sin, and those who are covered by His sacrifice will inherit the kingdom of God as children of the king (John 1:12).



How was Jesus' sacrifice sufficient to pay for the sins of the world? Why does it matter that Jesus is fully God and fully man as it applies to salvation?

Third, the resurrection of Christ is an essential element of the gospel. The resurrection is the proof of the power of God. Only He who created life can resurrect it after death, only He can reverse the hideousness that is death itself, and only He can remove the sting that is death and the victory that is the grave's (1 Corinthians 15:54–

55). Further, unlike all other religions, Christianity alone possesses a Founder who transcends death and who promises that His followers will do the same. All other religions were founded by men and prophets whose end was the grave.



Look up the following verses. What do we learn about the resurrection and its implications?

John 11:25-26:

Romans 6:8-11:

1 Corinthians 15:21-22:

1 Peter 1:3-5:

Revelation 1:17-18:

Finally, Christ offers His salvation as a free gift (Romans 5:15; 6:23), that can only be received by faith, apart from any works or merit on our part (Ephesians 2:8–9). As the apostle Paul tells us, the gospel is “the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes:

first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” (Romans 1:16). The same inspired author tells us, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

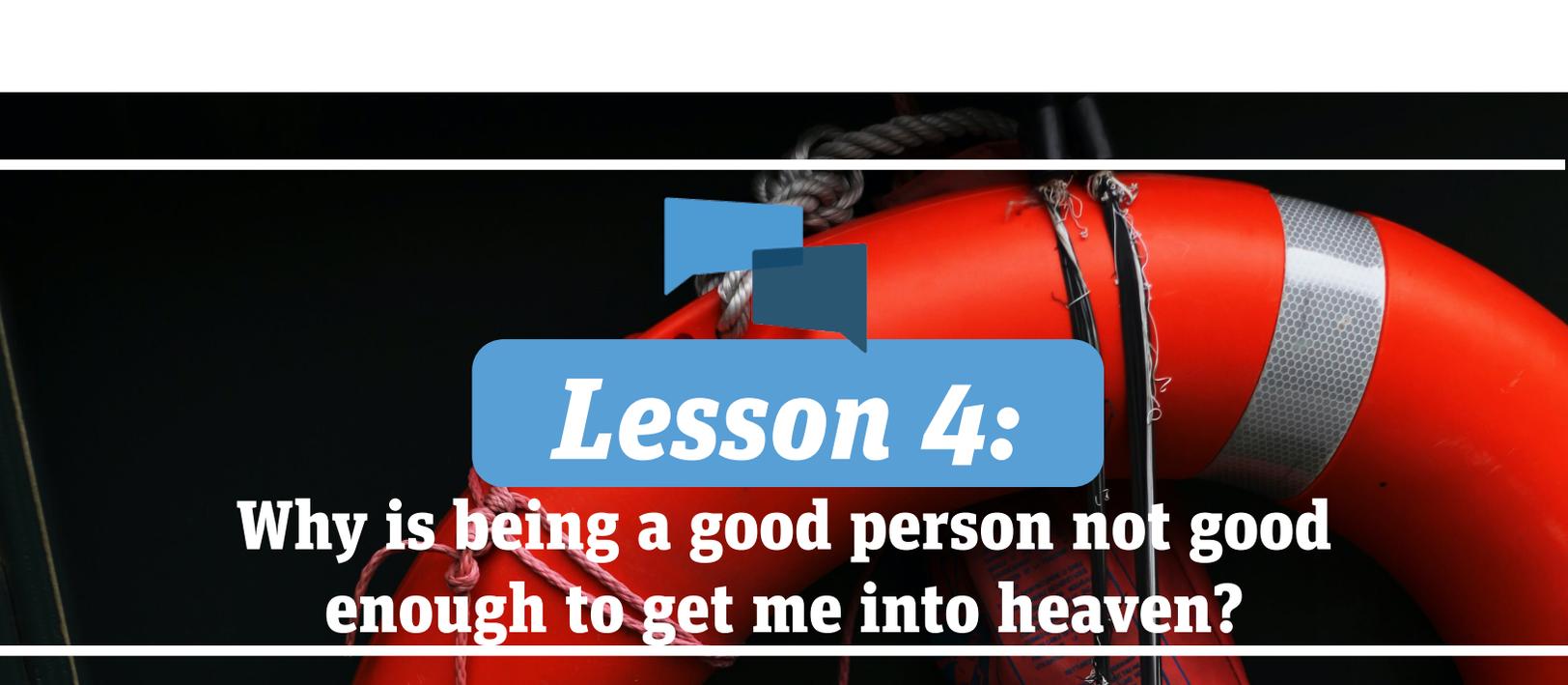


What must a person believe and do in order to be saved? Why is this message so simple yet so hard for some people to accept?

These, then, are the essential elements of the gospel: the sin of all men, the death of Christ on the cross to pay for those sins, the resurrection of Christ to provide life everlasting for those who follow Him, and the offer of the free gift of salvation to all.



Think through what you would lose if Christ had not come to save us. Think through what you gain because of His death and resurrection. How is the gospel the greatest news of all? Review the essential elements of the gospel. Ask God to reveal anyone with whom you can share the gospel this week.



Lesson 4:

Why is being a good person not good enough to get me into heaven?

If you ask most people what you have to do to get into heaven (assuming they believe in heaven or an afterlife), the overwhelming response will be some form of “be a good person.” Most, if not all, religions and worldly philosophies are ethically based. Whether it’s Islam, Judaism, or secular humanism, the teaching is common that getting to heaven is a matter of being a good person—following the Ten Commandments or the precepts of the Quran or the Golden Rule. But is this what Christianity teaches? Is Christianity just one of many world religions that teach that being a good person will get us into heaven?



Have you heard someone argue that they will get into heaven because they are a good person? What is faulty in this thinking?

Let’s examine Matthew 19:16–26 for some answers; it is the story of the rich young ruler.



Read Matthew 19:16-26. What does the passage reveal about humanity’s supposed goodness?

The first thing we note in this story is that the rich young ruler is asking a good question: “What good deed must I do to have eternal life?” In asking the question, he acknowledges the fact that, despite all his efforts to be a good person thus far, there is something lacking, and he wants to know what else must be done to obtain

eternal life. However, he is asking the question from the wrong worldview—that of merit (“What good deed must I do?”); he has failed to grasp the true meaning of the Law, as Jesus will point out to him, which was to serve as a tutor until the time of Christ (Galatians 3:24).



Look up Galatians 3:24-25 and Hebrews 10:1-10. Following the Law and sacrificial system could not gain us salvation. What were their purposes?

The second thing to note is Jesus’ response to the rich young ruler’s question. Jesus asks a question in return: why is he inquiring into what is good? Jesus gets to the heart of the matter, namely, that no one is good and no one does good except God. The young man is operating under a false premise: that a good person is able to earn his way into heaven. To make His point,

Jesus says that, if the young man wants eternal life, he should keep the commandments. In saying this, Jesus is not advocating a works-based righteousness. Rather, Jesus is challenging the young man’s suppositions by showing the man’s shallow understanding of the Law and human ability.



Read Exodus 20:1-17 and Matthew 5:21-32. As you go through these passages, ask yourself if you’ve committed any of those sins. How does reading through these passages convict you of your sinfulness?

The young man's response is telling. When told to keep the commandments, he asks Jesus, "Which ones?" Jesus continues to gently show the man the error of his ways by giving him the commandments that deal with our relationships to other people. You can almost sense the frustration in the young man's response when he tells Jesus that he has kept all of these since his youth—he insists that he's been a good person. The young man's response is ironic. In saying he has kept all those commandments since his youth, he has broken the commandment regarding false witness. If he were truly being honest, he would have said that, as hard as he has tried to keep the commandments, he has failed. He has not been a totally good person. He has a shallow understanding of the Law and an inflated opinion of

his own ability. Also, he has that feeling that he is not a good enough person, and he asks Jesus, "What do I still lack?"

Jesus then confronts the young man's self-righteousness. He tells him that, if he wishes to be perfect—a truly good person—he must sell all that he has and come follow Him. Jesus has perfectly diagnosed the man's "lack"—his attachment to his wealth. The man's great wealth has become an idol in his life. He claimed to have kept all the commandments, but in reality he couldn't even keep the first one, to have no other gods before the Lord! The young man turned his back on Jesus and walked away. His god was his wealth, which he chose over Jesus.



How do you guard against self-righteousness and idolatry?

Jesus then turns to His disciples to teach them a principle: "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24). This was shocking to the disciples, who held the common idea that riches were a sign of God's blessing. But Jesus points out the obstacle that riches often are, in their tendency to fuel self-sufficiency. His disciples ask, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus answers by reminding the disciples that salvation is of God: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Who can be saved? If left up to man alone, no one! Why is being a good person not enough to get you into heaven? Because no one is a "good" person; there is only One who is good, and that is God Himself. No one can keep the Law perfectly. The Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The Bible also says that the wages of our sin is death (Romans 6:23a). Fortunately, God did not wait until we somehow learned to be "good"; while we were in our sinful state, Christ died for the unrighteous (Romans 5:8).



Look up Matthew 7:17-18 and Galatians 5:16-26. How do you remind yourself that you are not good enough to save yourself and that you still need God's goodness and the Holy Spirit to produce good fruit in you?

Salvation is not based on our goodness but on Jesus' goodness. If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved (Romans 10:9). This salvation in Christ is a precious gift, and, like all true gifts, it is unearned (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9). The message of the gospel is that we can never be good

enough to get to heaven. We must recognize that we are sinners who fall short of God's glory, and we must obey the command to repent of our sins and place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Christ alone was a "good person"—good enough to earn heaven—and He gives His righteousness to those who believe in His name (Romans 1:17).



Ask God to reveal any areas of self-righteousness or self-idolization in your life and repent. Reflect on what it means for only God to be truly good, and ask Him to help you grow in His goodness.



Lesson 5:

How can salvation be not of works when faith is required?

Our salvation depends solely upon Jesus Christ. He is our substitute, taking sin's penalty (2 Corinthians 5:21); He is our Savior from sin (John 1:29); He is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). The work necessary to provide salvation was fully accomplished by Jesus Himself, who lived a perfect life, took God's judgment for sin, and rose again from the dead (Hebrews 10:12).

The Bible is quite clear that our own works do not help merit salvation. We are saved "not because of righteous things we had done" (Titus 3:5). "Not by works" (Ephesians 2:9). "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). This means that offering sacrifices,

keeping the commandments, going to church, being baptized, and other good deeds are incapable of saving anyone. No matter how "good" we are, we can never measure up to God's standard of holiness (Romans 3:23; Matthew 19:17; Isaiah 64:6).



What is faulty in the thinking that being "good" is good enough to be saved? Why are our works not good enough for salvation (See Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:8-9, and James 2:10)?

The Bible is just as clear that salvation is conditional; God does not save everyone. The one condition for salvation is faith in Jesus Christ. Over one hundred

times in the New Testament, faith (or belief) is declared to be the sole condition for salvation (e.g., John 1:12; Acts 16:31).

One day, some people asked Jesus what they could do to please God: “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus immediately points them to faith: “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has

sent” (John 6:28-29). So, the question is about God’s requirements (plural), and Jesus’ answer is that God’s requirement (singular) is that you believe in Him.



Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Micah 6:8, Matthew 7:12, 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-33, Romans 13:8-10, and Galatians 5:14. What do we learn from these verses about the Law and what God requires of us?

Grace is God giving us something we cannot earn or deserve. According to Romans 11:6, “works” of any kind destroys grace—the idea is that a worker earns payment, while the recipient of grace simply receives it, unearned. Since salvation is all of grace, it cannot

be earned. Faith, therefore, is a non-work. Faith cannot truly be considered a “work,” or else it would destroy grace. (See also Romans 4—Abraham’s salvation was dependent on faith in God, as opposed to any work he performed.)



Read Romans 4. Looking at Abraham’s example, what do you notice in the relationship between faith and works regarding his salvation?

Suppose someone anonymously sent you a check for \$1,000,000. The money is yours if you want it, but you still must endorse the check. In no way can signing your name be considered earning the million dollars—the endorsement is a non-work. You can never boast about becoming a millionaire through sheer effort or

your own business savvy. No, the million dollars was simply a gift, and signing your name was the only way to receive it. Similarly, exercising faith is the only way to receive the generous gift of God, and faith cannot be considered a work worthy of the gift.



What stands out to you from the above illustration? How does it help you understand the relationship between faith and grace? Or what questions does it bring up for you?

True faith cannot be considered a work because true faith involves a cessation of our works in the flesh. True faith has as its object Jesus and His work on our behalf (Matthew 11:28-29; Hebrews 4:10). To take this a step further, true faith cannot be considered a work because even faith is a gift from God, not something we produce

on our own. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44). Praise the Lord for His power to save and for His grace to make salvation a reality!



Think through the moments in your life where you thought you were being good. What was the motivation behind those actions? Reflect on how even at your best, it isn't perfect. Thank God that He sent the perfect, sinless sacrifice so you may be forgiven of your sins and made right with God. Thank God that your salvation is not dependent on your “goodness” but rather on His perfect goodness. Ask Him to help you grow in goodness as a result of your salvation not in attempt to earn it.



Lesson 6:

Can a Christian lose salvation?

First, the term Christian must be defined. A “Christian” is not a person who has said a prayer or walked down an aisle or been raised in a Christian family. While each of these things can be a part of the Christian experience, they are not what makes a Christian.



What is a true Christian?



Look up John 1:12-13, 3:16, Galatians 2:20, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 John 4:13-16, and 5:1-4. What do these verses say about being a believer?

A Christian is a person who has fully trusted in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and therefore possesses the Holy Spirit (John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Ephesians 2:8–9).

So, with this definition in mind, can a Christian lose salvation? It’s a crucially important question.



When have you struggled with the assurance of your salvation?

Perhaps the best way to answer it is to examine what the Bible says occurs at salvation and to study what losing salvation would entail:

A Christian is a new creation. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone,

the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV). A Christian is not simply an “improved” version of a person; a Christian is an entirely new creature. He is “in Christ.” For a Christian to lose salvation, the new creation would have to be destroyed.



How is becoming a new creation different than just becoming an improved version of yourself? How have you seen God transform you into a new creation?

A Christian is redeemed. “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:18–19). The word redeemed

refers to a purchase being made, a price being paid. We were purchased at the cost of Christ’s death. For a Christian to lose salvation, God Himself would have to revoke His purchase of the individual for whom He paid with the precious blood of Christ.



To redeem means “to buy out” and is used specifically in reference to the purchase of a slave’s freedom. Our condition prior to salvation was one of slavery to sin. God has permanently purchased our freedom, and we are no longer in bondage to sin. How is our redemption precious and an assurance of our salvation?

A Christian is justified. “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). To justify is to declare righteous. All those who receive Jesus as Savior are “declared righteous” by God. For a Christian to lose salvation, God would have to go back on His Word and “un-declare” what He had previously declared. Those absolved of guilt would have to be tried again and found guilty. God would have to reverse the sentence handed down from the divine bench.

A Christian is promised eternal life. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Eternal life is the promise of spending forever in heaven with God. God promises that if you believe, you will have eternal life. For a Christian to lose salvation, eternal life would have to be redefined. The Christian is promised to live forever. Does eternal not mean “eternal”?



Read the following verses. What do they tell us about God’s unchanging character?

Numbers 23:19:

Psalms 119:89:

Psalms 119:160:

James 1:17:

1 Peter 1:23-25:

A Christian is marked by God and sealed by the Spirit. “You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13–14). At the moment of faith, the new Christian is

marked and sealed with the Spirit, who was promised to act as a deposit to guarantee the heavenly inheritance.

The end result is that God’s glory is praised. For a Christian to lose salvation, God would have to erase the mark, withdraw the Spirit, cancel the deposit, break His promise, revoke the guarantee, keep the inheritance, forego the praise, and lessen His glory.



In the Old Testament, the Spirit would come and go from the saints, empowering them for service but not permanently remaining with them (see Judges 15:14, 1 Chronicles 12:18, Psalm 51:11, and Ezekiel 11:5). Following Jesus’ ascension and sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, when an individual accepts Christ as his or her personal Savior, the Holy Spirit permanently indwells the believer and confirms that he or she belongs to the Lord (Romans 8:15–17). The indwelling Spirit also seals the believer unto the day of redemption so the believer’s arrival in the Lord’s presence is guaranteed after this life (Romans 8:11, Ephesians 1:13–14).

What else does the Holy Spirit do in the believer’s life? See the verses below: Romans 8:14, 26-27:

1 Corinthians 2:12:

1 Corinthians 12:4-11:

Galatians 5:16, 22-23:

A Christian is guaranteed glorification. “Those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified” (Romans 8:30). According to Romans 5:1, justification is ours at the moment of faith. According to Romans 8:30, glorification comes with justification. All those whom God justifies are promised to be glorified. This promise will be fulfilled when Christians receive their perfect resurrection bodies in heaven. If a Christian can lose salvation, then Romans 8:30 is in error, because God could not guarantee glorification for all those whom He predestines, calls, and justifies.

A Christian cannot lose salvation. Most, if not all, of what the Bible says happens to us when we receive Christ would be invalidated if salvation could be lost. Salvation is the gift of God, and God’s gifts are “irrevocable” (Romans 11:29). A Christian cannot be un-newly created. The redeemed cannot be unpurchased. Eternal life cannot be temporary. God cannot renege on His Word. Scripture says that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2).



If you struggle with the assurance of salvation, what makes it difficult for you to take this truth to heart?

Two common objections to the belief that a Christian cannot lose salvation concern these experiential issues: 1) What about Christians who live in a sinful, unrepentant lifestyle? 2) What about Christians who reject the faith and deny Christ? The problem with these objections is the assumption that everyone who calls himself a “Christian” has actually been born again. The Bible declares that a true Christian will not live a state of continual, unrepentant sin (1 John 3:6). The Bible also says that anyone who departs the faith is demonstrating that he was never truly a Christian (1 John 2:19). He may have been religious, he may have put on a good show, but he was never born again by the power of God. “By their fruit you will recognize them”

(Matthew 7:16). The redeemed of God belong “to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God” (Romans 7:4).

Nothing can separate a child of God from the Father’s love (Romans 8:38–39). Nothing can remove a Christian from God’s hand (John 10:28–29). God guarantees eternal life and maintains the salvation He has given us. The Good Shepherd searches for the lost sheep, and, “when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home” (Luke 15:5–6). The lamb is found, and the Shepherd gladly bears the burden; our Lord takes full responsibility for bringing the lost one safely home.



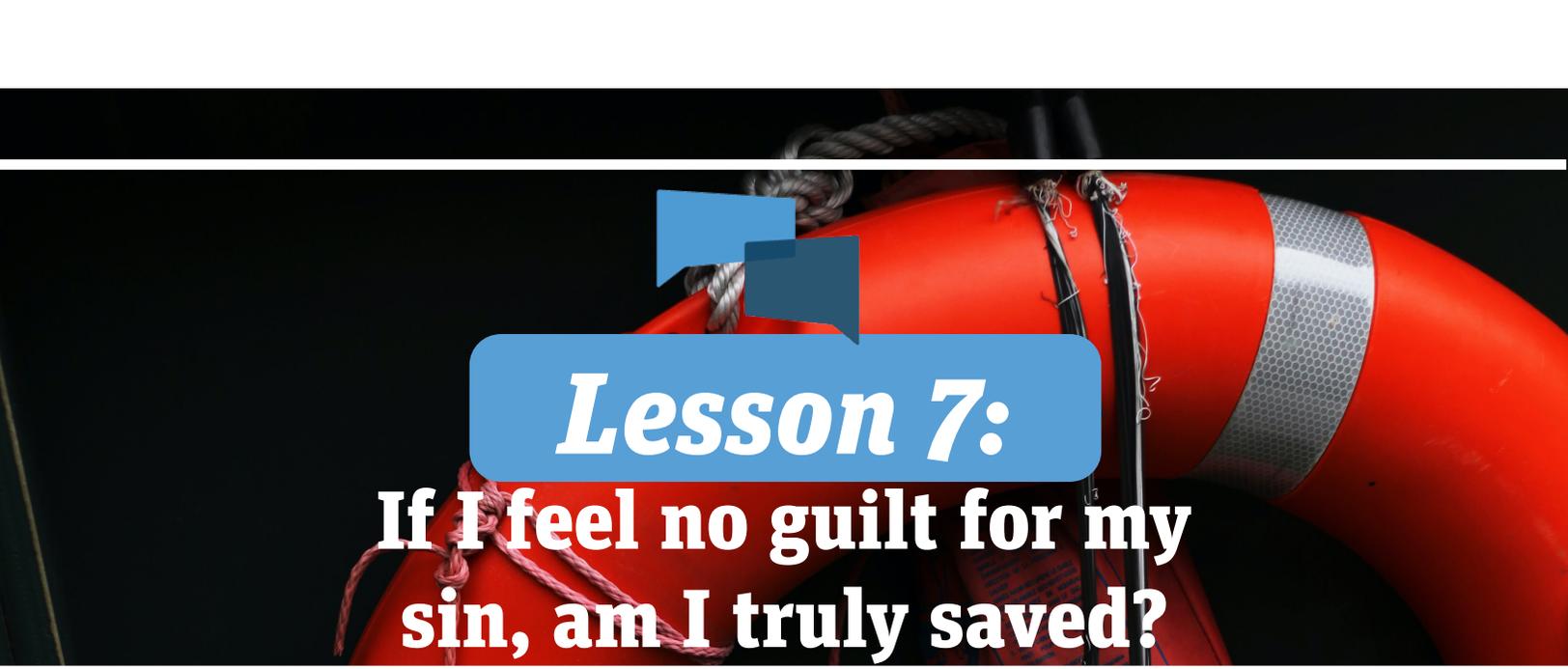
Look up John 6:37-40 and John 10:7-15, 27-29. How do we see the assurance of our salvation, based on Christ and not ourselves, in these verses?

Jude 24–25 further emphasizes the goodness and faithfulness of our Savior: “To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to

the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”



Reflect on the truth that once you are saved, no one can snatch you from the hands of the Father. Your salvation is sure. Read Jude 24-25 and respond in praise to the joy that comes from knowing that once you are saved, your sins are fully and permanently forgiven, that you are a child of God and belong to Him, and that your salvation is sure for now and for eternity.



Lesson 7:

If I feel no guilt for my sin, am I truly saved?

A true believer will yield certain evidences of his faith through his actions and attitudes, but we should not determine our spiritual status based on our feelings, including the feeling of guilt. A Christian will naturally be sensitive to sin and willing to confess it (1 John 1:9), but feelings of guilt are not a true measure of one's position before God.



Why are feelings not a good measure of our position before God? When have your feelings led you astray?

Feelings are temporary and often irrational. They change frequently. Our salvation is a position of righteousness God places us into by His power (John 1:11–13) by indwelling us with the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9–11). The level of guilty feelings or contriteness one experiences is too subjective of a barometer to gauge whether one has been regenerated by God's Holy Spirit.

If we try to gauge the authenticity of our salvation by how guilty we feel about our sin, then we're faced with

a question: How much guilt is necessary for us to feel to guarantee our place in heaven? Even the most contrite person might not feel guilty enough—but who's to say? The Bible is clear that faith in Jesus Christ is the only criterion for being counted as one of God's children (John 1:12). Biblically, true faith will be accompanied by several godly attributes. Chief among those are the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:20–22). If you are questioning the genuineness of your faith, checking for that fruit may be a good place to start. Then, read the book of 1 John.



Read 1 John 3:19-24. What encouragement do you receive from these verses about what is greater than our feelings? What is a better measurement of your faith rather than feelings of guilt or lack thereof?

If you are largely unchanged in behavior and attitude since your conversion, you may need to reassess your sincerity concerning the faith you claim. The same is true if you never feel guilty about anything and can sin with impunity. But keep in mind that your salvation is God's doing; it's not a level of behavior you need to strive to attain (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Maturing as a Christian involves an increased sensitivity toward sin; we won't want to sin (see Psalm 19:12-13; 39:1). As we become more Christlike, the Holy Spirit will shape us into useful vessels for advancing God's kingdom on earth. Increasing our inhibitions against sinful behaviors and thoughts is facilitated by becoming intimately familiar with God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17).



Read the following verses. Knowing you cannot lose your salvation, how can you use these verses as a measurement for the impact your salvation is having in your heart, mind, and life?

Galatians 5:22-25:

1 John 1:5-10:

1 John 2:3-6:

1 John 2:9-11:

1 John 2:15-17:

1 John 3:6-11:

1 John 4:7-12:

1 John 5:2-5:

1 John 5:18:

At the same time, we need to make sure we are defining correctly what we call “sin.” It’s possible to categorize something as sin that is not sinful, thereby creating false guilt. Our view on this topic may depend on our background and who is currently influencing us. Some churches are legalistic in nature, and their leadership requires members to follow strict, extrabiblical

standards to free themselves of guilt. The result is inevitably more guilt. We must rely on Scripture to define sin, and we must differentiate Old Testament requirements from New Testament principles. It is important to rightly divide God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15).



What is sin? Look up Joshua 1:18, James 1:14-15, and 1 John 3:4 to help you with your answer.

God wants us to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Love should be in our hearts, along with joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We should not feel guilty over sins that have been confessed and forgiven. “There is no fear in love.

But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18). We will never be perfect in this life, but believers’ lives should be characterized by actions and attitudes that please God.



How do you view your sin? If you have grown numb to or complacent in your sin, ask God to give you a proper view of your sin and the Holy Spirit to convict you of sin (John 16:8). Whether you feel guilty of your sin or not, pray that the truths of God’s Word would direct your feelings rather than allowing your feelings to direct what you feel is true.



Lesson 8:

Will God continue to forgive me if I commit the same sin over and over again?

To best answer this question, we're going to look at two powerful passages of Scripture. The first is found in the book of Psalms: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). One of the most effective tricks Satan plays on Christians is to convince us that our sins aren't really forgiven, despite the promise of God's Word.



What is your reaction to the sin you see in your life? Have you ever struggled with believing the truth that God really forgives your sin?

If we've truly received Jesus as Savior by faith, and still have that uneasy feeling wondering whether or not there is true forgiveness, that may be coming from demonic influences. Demons hate it when people are delivered from their grasp, and they try to plant seeds of doubt in our minds about the reality of our salvation. In his vast arsenal of tricks, one of Satan's biggest tools is to constantly remind us of our past transgressions, and he uses those to prove that God couldn't possibly forgive or restore us. The devil's attacks make it a real challenge for us to simply rest in the promises of God and trust His love.

But this psalm also tells us that God not only forgives our sins, but removes them completely from His presence. This is a profound thing! Without question, this is a difficult concept for humans to grasp, which is why it's so easy for us to worry and wonder about forgiveness instead of just accepting it. The key lies in simply giving up our doubts and our feelings of guilt and resting in His promises of forgiveness.



Read Psalm 103. How do you see God’s response and actions toward sin for those who trust in Him? How does this impact your thinking of God’s response to your sin?

Another passage is 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” What an incredible promise! God cleanses His children of their sin if only they come to Him and confess their sins to Him. Even when we stumble, we can still be cleansed.



Look up the following verses. What do they tell us about sin and forgiveness?

Psalm 86:5:

Psalm 103:12:

Isaiah 1:18:

Isaiah 55:7:

Micah 7:18:

Acts 3:19:

Ephesians 1:7:

Ephesians 2:1-10:

Colossians 1:13-14:

Hebrews 10:15-18:

In Matthew 18:21-22, we read, “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’” Peter was probably thinking that he was being generous. Rather than repay a person who had committed a sin against him with equal retribution, Peter suggested giving the brother some leeway, say, up to seven times. But the eighth time, forgiveness and

grace would run out. But Christ challenged the rules of Peter’s suggested economy of grace by saying that forgiveness is infinite for those who are truly seeking it. This is only possible because of the infinite grace of God which is made possible through the shed blood of Christ on the cross. Because of Christ’s forgiving power, we can always be made clean after we sin if we humbly seek God’s forgiveness.



How do you respond when you realize you’ve sinned? Is there anything that keeps you from humbly seeking God’s forgiveness? What helps you to humbly seek God’s forgiveness?

At the same time, it must be noted that it is not biblical for a person to sin habitually and continually as a lifestyle and be a believer (1 John 3:8-9). This is why Paul admonishes us to “examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5). As Christians, we do stumble, but we do not live a lifestyle of continual, unrepentant sin. All of us have weaknesses and can fall into sin, even if we don’t want to. Even the apostle Paul

did what he didn’t want to do because of the sin at work in his body (Romans 7:15). Like Paul, the response of the believer is to hate the sin, repent of it and ask for divine grace to overcome it (Romans 7:24-25). Although we need not fall because of God’s sufficient grace, sometimes we do because we rely upon our insufficient strength. When our faith grows weak and, like Peter, we deny our Lord in word or in life, even then there is still a chance to repent and be forgiven of our sin.



Read Romans 6:1-14. Why do we as believers not continue in sin even though God will continue to forgive us?

Another one of Satan's tricks is to get us to think that there is no hope, that there is no possibility that we can be forgiven, healed, and restored. He will try to get us to feel consumed and trapped by guilt so that we do not feel worthy of God's forgiveness any longer. But since when were we ever worthy of God's grace? God loved us, forgave us and chose us to be in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-6), not because of anything we did, but "in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:12). We must always keep in mind that there is no place we can go that God's grace cannot reach, and there is no depth to which we can sink that God is no longer able to pull us out. His grace is greater than all of our sin. Whether we are just starting to wander off course or we are already sinking and drowning in our sin, grace can be received.

Grace is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8). When we sin, the Spirit will convict us of sin such that a godly sorrow will result (2 Corinthians 7:10-11). He will not condemn our souls as if there is no hope, for there is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). The Spirit's conviction within us is a movement of love and grace. Grace is not an excuse to sin (Romans 6:1-2), and it dare not be abused, meaning that sin must be called "sin," and it cannot be treated as if it is harmless or inoffensive. Unrepentant believers need to be lovingly confronted and guided to freedom, and unbelievers need to be told that they need to repent. Yet let us also emphasize the remedy, for we have been given grace upon grace (John 1:16). Grace is how we live, how we are saved, how we are sanctified, and how we will be kept and glorified. Let us receive grace when we sin by repenting and confessing our sin to God. Why live a sinful life when Christ offers to make us whole and right in the eyes of God?



Look up the following verses. What do they reveal about grace? How does grace impact our salvation and our response to sin?

Acts 20:32:

Romans 5:1-2:

Romans 5:17:

2 Corinthians 9:8:

2 Corinthians 12:9:

Titus 2:11-14:



Ask God to reveal any area in your life where you are toying with sin or allowing yourself to indulge in sin. Ask for forgiveness if something comes to mind. Reflect on God's forgiveness and grace. How does His forgiveness and grace give us reason not to sin and to turn to Him immediately when we do?



Lesson 9:

Does salvation affect more than just the afterlife?

We often emphasize how salvation impacts the afterlife but neglect to consider how it should impact our lives right now. Coming to Christ in faith is life's watershed in so many ways—once we are saved, we are set free from sin and given a new life and a new perspective. As John Newton put it, "I once was lost but now am found, / Was blind but now I see." After salvation, everything changes.



What areas of life does salvation impact (both now and in the afterlife)? How do you see salvation's impact on your life?

In the Epistles we also find a consistent emphasis on daily living. According to Ephesians 2:10, the reason we are saved is not just to spend eternity in heaven but "to do good works, which God prepared in advance for

us to do." These "good works" are to be done here, in this world. If our eternal salvation isn't reflected in our daily lives, there is a problem.



What do the following verses say about how salvation changes our daily living?

John 17:15-19:

Romans 3:22:

Romans 12:1-2:

Galatians 5:16-26:

Ephesians 2:10:

Ephesians 5:1-33:

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5:

Titus 2:11-14:

1 Peter 2:9:

1 John 1:7:

James wrote his letter to encourage an applied faith. Our salvation ought to result in a controlled tongue (James 1:26) and other changes in our lives. Faith that purports to exist apart from the evidence of good works is “dead” (James 2:20). Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 that we should “live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.” A life that is surrendered and obedient to God is a natural outgrowth of salvation. Jesus taught that we are His servants, placed here to carry on His business while we await His return (Luke 19:12–27).

In the book of Revelation, God sends letters to seven churches (Revelation 2–3), and in each case there are specific areas of daily living that are either commended or condemned. The church of Ephesus was recognized for their labors and patience, and the church of Smyrna was commended for faithfulness in trials and poverty. On the other end of the spectrum, the church of Pergamum was rebuked for tolerating false doctrine, and the church at Thyatira was rebuked for following a false teacher into sexual sins. Obviously, Jesus considered salvation something that should affect one’s daily life, not just the afterlife.



If Jesus were to send you a letter or a letter to your church about what He recognizes as good or as a rebuke, what do you think He would say?

Salvation is the beginning point of a new life (2 Corinthians 5:17). God has the ability to restore and rebuild what was destroyed by sin. In Joel 2:25, God promises Israel that, even though He had brought judgment upon them for their sins, He is able to “restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten” (ESV), when Israel repents and returns to Him. A similar restoration is promised to Israel in Zechariah 10:6. This is not to say that

getting saved makes everything happy and trouble-free in this life. There are times that God chooses to allow hardship as a reminder of the high cost of sin or of our need to rely on Him more. But we face those trials with a new outlook and strength from above. In fact, the hardships we endure are actually gifts from God to cause us to grow in faith and to equip us to be a blessing to others (2 Corinthians 1:4–6; 12:8–10).



When has your new life after salvation impacted your perspective on a situation?

In Jesus' ministry, everyone who came to Him in faith was forever changed. The demoniac of Decapolis went home an evangelist (Mark 5:20). Lepers rejoined society, cleansed and rejoicing (Luke 17:15-16).

Fishermen became apostles (Matthew 4:19), publicans became philanthropists, and sinners became saints (Luke 19:8-10). By faith we are saved (Ephesians 2:8), and the change that salvation brings starts now.



How has your life changed since you became saved? How has your understanding or appreciation of life now and for the afterlife changed? Reflect on how your life has changed and what you would like to see continue to change. Praise God for how He's worked in your life thus far and ask Him for what He will continue to do in and through you!



Lesson 10:

Why doesn't God save everyone?

“If God loves us and wants us to spend eternity with Him, why doesn't He just save everyone now?” This question and others like it often keep people from seeking God further, as they assume that this question is the mountain that cannot be scaled. But the question itself is based upon some faulty assumptions. When those assumptions are corrected, the question of why God doesn't save everyone no longer carries the weight it once did.

Any time we ask a question about God from our limited earthly perspective, we are working under a handicap. In essence, we are tiny dust specks looking up into the universe and demanding that it make sense to our finite minds. Often, when we ask, “Why doesn't God just save everyone?” we start with the assumption that we are

more compassionate than God is, and that puts us on the wrong track from the get-go. God is perfect, and His ways are far beyond human comprehension (Isaiah 55:8–9). When we accept that reality and align our thinking with His perspective, we position ourselves for greater understanding.



When have you misjudged a situation? What helped you correct your thinking? What did you learn about faulty assumptions or limitations of understanding?

Knowledge begins in heaven with God (Proverbs 9:10). He is infinitely creative, and at some point, He created our universe (Genesis 1:1). He spoke everything into existence (Genesis 1) except man. When He created Adam, He got down in the dirt and formed his body from clay. Then He blew into the man's nostrils, "and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). It was the image of God that separated mankind from all other living creatures. That "living soul" was immortal,

meant to last forever. God had chosen to create a being so like Him that the man could reason, reflect, intuit, and have the ability to make decisions. Without that ability to choose, human beings would not bear God's image (see Genesis 1:27). God respects what He has created to such an extent that He will not allow even His overwhelming love to violate our will. Why doesn't God just save everyone? Because He will not violate the will He has given us.



What are some underlying assumptions and implications of the question: "Why doesn't God just save everyone?"

One astounding facet of God's human creation is that He made Himself emotionally vulnerable to us. He didn't have to do that. The triune God has forever been the very definition of joy, love, and peace; He is complete in Himself with no needs or unmet desires. Untold millions of created beings worship and serve Him day and night (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 5:11, 7:11; Isaiah 6:1-3). Yet He gives human beings the high privilege of bringing Him pleasure or sorrow. We can reflect His glory in ways unique to our design (Proverbs 16:7; Psalm 147:11, 149:4). Or we can reject His love and His commands (Ezekiel 8:17, 33:11; 2 Kings 22:17). God's act of creating us can be compared to a husband and wife who are perfectly happy and content in themselves, but they decide to have a child. That decision brings with it the potential for exceeding joy and exceeding sorrow. By simply having a child, a vulnerability now exists that was not previously there. As they love and

care for that child, they long for the child to love them back. But they won't force the love, because forced love is not love at all. Why doesn't God just save everyone? Because our love for Him must be voluntary.

God pours out His love and provision on this earth (Matthew 5:45), desiring that His human creations acknowledge His truth and love Him back. He makes Himself known in thousands of ways (Psalm 19:1, 97:6; Romans 1:19-20), working behind the scenes to bring us into a position to reach out to Him (Isaiah 46:10-11; Proverbs 16:33). He provides, protects, and blesses, giving mankind numerous opportunities to look up and find Him (Jeremiah 29:13; Romans 2:4). But He won't force salvation on the unwilling. Why doesn't God just save everyone? Because gifts must be willingly received.



What would be some negative results if God saved everyone?

God has given His very best—His only begotten Son—to settle our sin debt (John 3:16–18; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He does not take the rejection of that offer lightly. The Father did not spare His own beloved Son from torture or death for the benefit of the ungrateful mob that killed Him. He refuses to degrade that sacrifice by deciding

that it was not truly necessary or by saying there is some other way of salvation (see Acts 4:12; Isaiah 42:8). Why doesn't God just save everyone? Because salvation can only come through faith in Christ. "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12).



Look up 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 4:10, Titus 2:11, and 2 Peter 3:9. What is God's intention for salvation?

We err when we, from our earth-bound perspective, magnify the love of God out of proportion to His justice, righteousness, and wrath toward sin (Romans 1:18; Isaiah 61:8). Sin is serious, and the debt against our Creator must be paid (Colossians 2:14). We can accept Jesus as our substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21), or we can pay for sin ourselves in eternity (Matthew 25:46; Jude 1:7). C. S. Lewis has famously stated, "There are only

two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek, find. Those who knock, it is opened" (from *The Great Divorce*).



How do we see God's goodness in choosing not to save everyone but rather giving them the responsibility to respond to Him or reject Him?



If someone were to ask you why God does not save everyone, what would be your response?



Reflect on God's desire to save everyone but His choice not to. What is your heart toward those who have rejected Christ? Do you long for them to be saved? What can you do to point people to Christ? How can you rest in knowing that the Holy Spirit draws people to salvation, and that it is each person's responsibility to accept or reject the gospel?



Wrap Up

Now that you have studied ten lessons on questions about salvation, take some time to reflect on what you've learned and how you will put what you've learned into practice.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”
– Jeremiah 29:11-13



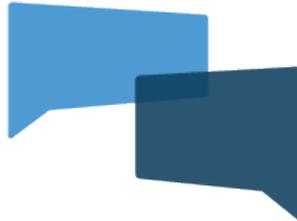
How has your understanding of salvation changed or expanded as a result of what you've learned through this study?



What will you change in your life as a result of this study?



Who in your life would you like to see come to salvation or grow in their understanding of salvation? Commit to praying for them. What will you share with them about what you have learned?



Reference List

Lesson 1: www.gotquestions.org/need-to-be-saved.html

Lesson 2: www.gotquestions.org/who-can-be-saved.html

Lesson 3: www.gotquestions.org/gospel-message.html

Lesson 4: www.gotquestions.org/good-person.html

Lesson 5: www.gotquestions.org/faith-work.html

Lesson 6: www.gotquestions.org/Christian-lose-salvation.html

Lesson 7: www.gotquestions.org/no-guilt-saved.html

Lesson 8: www.gotquestions.org/forgive-same-sin.html

Lesson 9: www.gotquestions.org/salvation-afterlife.html

Lesson 10: www.gotquestions.org/God-save-everyone.html

All Bible references are quoted from the NIV unless otherwise stated.