

Di223 We Believe

Lesson Di223-11 God's Great Salvation

Every culture has rules or laws people agree on to maintain a peaceful society. Usually some kind of punishment is given to a person who is found guilty of breaking one of those laws. A chief or group of elders often act as judge and jury to determine the person's guilt or innocence and their penalty. Someone may be able to pay the fine or penalty for that person, but only the judge can grant a pardon. A pardon says, "Although you are guilty, you do not have to pay the penalty for your crime."

Paul and Silas brought the gospel message to a city named Philippi. As a result they were accused of crime and brought to the authorities. They were stripped, severely beaten, and thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to guard them closely. He put them in an inner cell with their feet in stocks. At midnight, the prisoners heard prayers and singing coming from the inner cell. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.

The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself. He thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." The Philippian jailer brought Paul and Silas into his home and washed their wounds. Then he and his whole family accepted Jesus as Savior. They were all baptized in water and filled with great joy. What an amazing night! (Acts 16:22-32)

Salvation is a personal event of great blessing. God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ is intended to restore mankind to fellowship with him. Salvation is kind of like taking a bath and putting on clean clothes inside. Our part in salvation is to accept what God has provided.

The first step is for a person to admit their sin. The Holy Spirit first convicts us, that is, he makes us aware that we have done wrong. We must respond when we are convicted and admit we have sinned. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).

Secondly, a person has to believe Jesus is God's Son, who died for our sin. We must have faith in Jesus. We can't please God without faith. Anyone who comes to God for salvation must believe that he really exists and has done all that the Bible says he has done for our salvation.

The third step is to repent and ask God's forgiveness for our sin. The apostle Paul puts it this way, "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. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved" (Rom 10:9-10). After you repent you will realize you have been forgiven of your sin and saved from its punishment. You will want others

to know that Jesus is your Savior. You declare Jesus as Lord and Savior through your words and by the way you live.

All sin is disobedience against God, and sin must be judged. Sin, in God's eyes, is worthy of death, but true heartfelt repentance will bring his mercy. God's act of pardon is called 'justification.' Justification is a term meaning "to declare righteous." God is the righteous Judge. A sinful person comes to him, admits his sin, believes in Jesus, and asks forgiveness. Then the Judge says, "I declare you righteous." The past is forgiven and relationship with God is restored. Instead of a sentence of condemnation or judgment, the person is justified.

Justification is more than a pardon. A pardoned criminal is not regarded as being righteous. He is only pardoned from the penalty of his crime. Justification declares one to be righteous, just as if he had never sinned. The apostle Paul wrote that we "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24).

Paul also tells us what really happens at salvation. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2Cor 5:17) God recreates sinful people at salvation—by his Holy Spirit. The result is a radical change in the nature, character, and desires of the transformed person. We call this 'conversion'—the life change in which the sinner turns from sin to follow Christ.

Conversion is the outward change in our lives that corresponds to the inner change. Conversion refers to "a turning around, an observable change." We are able to see that a saved person is changed by the way he begins to act. Although the new creation happens inside first, it affects the conduct seen by all. Even a good person will have a different attitude after accepting Christ as Savior. He or she will begin to act differently.

Some churches teach that saints are those Christians who lived holy lives and did good deeds. The church has declared them to be saints. The Bible, however, calls *all* who have accepted Christ, saints. The word 'saint' means we are 'sanctified, separated, or set apart.' Through salvation, we are separated from sin and set apart to God. We are saved by grace, through faith, not by our good deeds. And, even our faith is a gift from God.

Our *Statement of Faith* for this lesson is: "We believe mankind's only hope of salvation is through the shed blood of Jesus, the Son of God. The gift of eternal life is received when we repent of our sins and confess our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." Our memory verse says: "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

This lesson is **important** because, using the story of the jailer, it teaches the simple steps to receiving salvation. Every person who admits his sin, believes in Jesus, and asks forgiveness, is declared righteous by God. That is being justified. Only God can pardon your sin on the basis of Christ's shed blood. He sees you as if you had never sinned. We have all sinned, and we can all be justified by God's grace.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God already made a way of salvation for all who will believe and receive Christ as their Savior. Salvation is evidenced by both an inner and an outward change in a person.

Let's **review** this lesson:

1. What is the purpose of God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ? [Pause.]
A. If you said, the purpose is to restore mankind to fellowship with God, you are correct.
2. By what means are we convicted of sin? [Pause.]
A. If you answered, "The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin," you answered correctly.
3. What three steps are man's parts of salvation? [Pause.]
A. If you said, "Admit your sin, believe Jesus is God's Son, and confess your sins to receive forgiveness," you are correct.

Your **assignment** is to practice until you can say the first five *Statements of Faith* and the memory verse for this lesson: "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Ask God to help you find two other people who have not accepted Jesus as their Savior. Share with them the story of the jailer in Philippi and explain to them how they can be saved.

Statement #1: We believe the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God. They are the revelation of God to man, the unchanging rule of faith and conduct.

Statement #2: We believe the one true God has revealed himself as the eternal Creator of heaven and earth and the Savior of mankind. He has further revealed himself as one being in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Statement #3: We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, as revealed in the Scriptures by his virgin birth, his sinless life, his miracles, his death on the Cross, his bodily resurrection from the dead, and his position at the right hand of God.

Statement #4: We believe that human beings were created in the image of God for a loving relationship with him. They chose to disobey God, however, and thus experienced physical death and separation from God.

Statement #5: We believe mankind's only hope of salvation is through the shed blood of Jesus, the Son of God. The gift of eternal life is received when we repent of our sins and confess our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.