

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

Ephesians 1:7

My Relationship with God— Salvation (Part 1)

Theme: What is a personal relationship with God

Review of Lesson 10

The 70th week of Daniel will be exactly seven years long and fulfilled in the future. That week is called the Tribulation because it will be a very difficult time on the earth. The Tribulation begins when a powerful ruler signs a peace treaty with Israel. This ruler is called the Beast (because he acts like one) and the Antichrist (because he opposed to Christ). The first half of the Tribulation will be bad enough, but in the middle of the Tribulation the true nature of the Antichrist will be revealed when he goes into the Temple and claims to be God demanding to be worshiped. Anyone who will not take the mark of the Beast will be persecuted and/or killed. The Lord will announce His Second Coming after the Tribulation with astronomical disturbances which are very clear to all. The time period around the Second Coming is referred to as the Day of the Lord. The Age of Grace will be over, then God's wrath will be seen. This all is designed by God to accomplish the impossible; that is, to bring Israel back to Him in true faith.



Bible Truth

Introduction

Having a personal relationship with God is the most important part of any person's life. Does that mean a person has to be a super Christian that never sins?

Lessons 6 and 7, *God's Design of Humans*, taught that each human has a body, soul, and spirit. Our soul is our mind and emotions. Our spirit is that part of us which knows there is a God and desires a relationship with Him. No animal has a spirit. So no matter how smart, it is impossible for an animal to even have an inkling of God. The spiritual aspect of humans is the most

important part of who we are. No evolutionary theory can explain or account for the human spirit (or any creative act); it was a special creative act by God and given only to humans.

Discussion: A tree has one dimension, the physical. Animals have a second dimension, the soul, which means they have a mind and are aware of themselves. We are three dimensional: body (physical), soul, and spirit. Only humans have the ability to understand (due to our spirit) there is a God and desire to know

Him. Does this help you see how much different we are than animals?

This lesson will discuss God's plan for our spirit. For our spirit His plan is salvation (other terms are: new creation, regeneration, new birth, born again, etc.). Salvation is also referred to as being "saved" (Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation is given to us by God's grace; it is an instantaneous act of God and it lasts forever. Salvation makes us new spiritually; we become a new creation in Christ. So how is salvation acquired?

Everyone Knows There is a God

All humans, in every age and in all countries, know there is a God. Psa. 19:1-3 reads, **"THE heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language, Where their voice is not heard."** From verses like these we realize that the natural world is used by God to reveal His existence. The heavenly bodies declare that there is a God. The creation teaches us the truth of His power, existence, and eternal nature. There is no speech or language where the testimony of the heavenly bodies is not known. At any time in history, if a person recognized the existence of God through the testimony of the heavens and wanted to know more about Him, God assured they got the information they needed (Matt. 7:7-8).

The Scheme of Satan

Satan will do all he can to prevent us from knowing more about the Almighty and having a relationship with Him. In some people, he has been very successful to the point that they reject Him very early in life. Their hearts (spirits) have grown cold. They grow up desiring not to have anything to do with God even though deep down they know He exists. People learn

while young to not glorify him as God, they are not thankful, and their minds are corrupt. They think they are wise, but they become fools in God's eyes. **"Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things"** (Rom. 1:22-23). Unbelievers have typically changed the truth of God into a lie and have worshiped created things more than the Creator, Romans 1:25. This is the sad story of most humans around the world today and throughout history.

Satan's main goal is to win the battle in the eternal struggle between himself and God. He will do all he can to prevent people from responding to their own spiritual needs to seek God. He will try (often succeeds) in tricking humans into believing a lie (any lie that will keep them from Christ). It is because of this eternal struggle that God had to keep a secret from the very beginning. God had to keep our entire Age of Grace (which goes from the first century until now) a secret in order to win the battle. At just the right time (first century), He revealed this secret to the Apostle Paul (Eph. 3:2-9).

Lesson 9, *Time Traveling with God, part 2*, discussed the ultimate strategy of God to outwit Satan and win the eternal battle. Lesson 9 (referring to 2 Cor. 2:8) reads, "Imagine this, if God had revealed the Age of Grace sooner, Satan and his rulers would not have crucified Christ. No crucifixion means no sin would be forgiven, and no one could be saved. This would have been Satan's victory... It was only by keeping our Age a secret that God was able to blind the evil rulers of this world to what was actually going to be accomplished. Not only were they blinded, but they were totally 'out foxed' (fooled) by the greatest secret plot in all history."

Satan thought he had won the battle by having Christ crucified; but instead, God used that terrible event in a way Satan never dreamed (to have a new Age in which people are saved through faith alone). God actually defeated Satan and sin by the death of Christ. This teaches us that to have a relationship with God He had to first sacrifice His own Son. This was an unbelievable plan of sacrifice and love for us.

Discussion: We have learned all people really know there is a God and that He has clearly revealed Himself through the created world and through His Word. To be saved, we need a personal relationship with Christ. What does "personal relationship" mean to you?

Having A Personal Relationship

We have discussed that each person knows there is a God. In addition, the Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit and creates the understanding that we need Him (Eph. 1:17-18; 1 Cor. 2:9-12). The Bible clearly teaches that we can easily have the relationship He desires. It does not require anything special from us. We do not have to be sinless; in fact, His desire is to save sinners. He has already done all the work of providing for our salvation. All we have to do is believe that Christ paid the penalty for our sins (Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:21). This is where "personal" comes into play.

"Personal" means each one of us has to recognize that "Christ died for me." It is a private matter between each person and the Lord. Many people have a "head" knowledge of Christ which means they know the facts about His life and death. That is good, but faith comes from the heart which is the very central part of who we are—our spirit (Rom. 10:10; 2 Tim. 2:22). The word "personal" describes a faith that is private and true. Yes, He died for everyone, but personal means I have to see how I fit into this whole

matter. Getting beyond knowing the facts is important; that is, getting beyond knowing that God exists and that Christ died and rose again. Each of us has to get to the point of understanding how those facts relate to me—that He died for me! Indeed, Satan knows the cold, hard facts, but he does not (perhaps can't) relate the facts to himself.

Understanding how I am involved in the whole issue of salvation is what makes it personal. **"Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind' "** (Matt. 22:37). It is personal when you believe God loved you before you were born, and **that you are the sinner for whom He died.**

A personal faith means a person knows he/she does not get saved by being part of a special group or organization—being a member of a church, saying certain prayers, partaking in sacraments, or being water baptized. We have to grasp that it means Jesus died specifically for me. That is what makes it personal. When a person believes Christ died for him/her, that person is saved and has a new relationship with Christ (we become one with Him). When we are saved, we are given a new spiritual nature; however, our old sinful nature is still alive and desires to lead us into sin. There is a struggle between the two natures, but the believer has the Holy Spirit to give him/her victory over sin (if they follow Him).

There was an older man in his late 60's who had a personal faith in Christ for years; he was truly saved. One day during his devotions, the Lord helped him see that not only did Christ die for him, but he was the man that drove the nails into Christ's hands and feet. He wept in sorrow when he realized the depth of God's personal sacrifice for him. While this man was saved, this understanding at the personal level made

his relationship with Christ much sweeter and meaningful. Each of us needs to see that in a spiritual sense I crucified the Lord of Glory because of my sins.

Similarly, there is a famous painting of a modern man (it could have been a woman) kneeling at the foot of the Cross with a wooden mallet in his hands. The man has just driven a spike into the feet of Christ. He is kneeling and weeping with a broken heart and with unbearable grief. This is the picture of a modern person who finally comes to realize that he/she was the one that put Christ on the Cross because of his/her

sin. The picture portrays an individual that all of a sudden awakens to the spiritual understanding of what Christ accomplished on the Cross. It may have been 2000 years ago when Christ died, but this man realized it was his sins that really put Christ on the Cross. If no one else had ever lived, Christ still would have had to die for this man or for you! Each of us must believe it was because of my sins, and mine alone, that Christ died. When each of us gets to this point in our faith, we have a personal relationship with the Lord.

Life Applications

A personal relationship means, "I see how I caused Christ's death and how He died specifically for me." When He hung on the Cross, He had "me" on His mind. Roman soldiers drove the nails into His hands and feet, but it was my sins that required He die. Each of us is responsible for His crucifixion just as though we drove the nails ourselves.

We can apply what we have learned by telling others of God's incredible plan of salvation. To help clarify what we have learned, please answer these true or false questions.

1. (True or False). *When a person trusts in Christ, there will be some sort of special signs or feelings to confirm your new salvation.* (Nothing will happen around you and there are no visible or audible signs. How a person feels after trusting in Christ varies from person to person, but feelings and emotions are not indicators of your salvation. However, something happens in your spirit (heart), which is very personal and private, **"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"** (Rom 8:16). This is all done without signs.) (Answer: False)

2. (True or False). *The believer can be confident that even when things are going wrong he/she is still saved.* (Your salvation does not rely on your feelings, sins you commit, or doubts you may have. It relies 100% on the Lord, and He says it is a completed deal. **"In Him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance..."** (Eph. 1:13-14a). Your salvation is safely sealed and guaranteed. You cannot lose your salvation regardless of how you feel or sins you may commit. However, some suffering in life is to be expected and is often the result of our salvation.) (Answer: True)

3. (True or False). *Salvation gives us an inner comfort and peace with God knowing our sins are forgiven.* (As His child, you have a secure future. In addition, He fills the void in the deepest depths of your being that shouts, "Something is missing." **"Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all"** (2 Thes. 3:16). (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20) (Answer: True)

Take 2 Heart

Summary

God designed us and had a plan right from the beginning to buy us back once we went astray. The Bible clearly states that everyone in the world, in all of history, has an internal understanding that there is a God. If they seek Him, they will be shown what they need to know. No one has an excuse for not knowing about God. However, Satan does all he can to keep us from coming to Christ in faith and teaches lies about God. God had to hide from Satan our entire Age of Grace; had he known of it and all the people that would become saved, he would not have worked to have Christ crucified. If He were not crucified, then no one in any age would be saved (because there would be no payment for sin). Salvation requires personal faith in Christ—"belief that Christ died for me." It is a private matter between each person and the Lord. Personal faith gets beyond the fact that Christ died and applies the significance of that death to the individual. Thus, true faith realizes that I put Him on the Cross and He died for me.

Gospel

A young girl lived in a poor family which could not afford to buy her many toys. She wanted a pretty doll, but had to make her own. It was made of a stocking stuffed with rags, buttons for eyes, yarn for hair, cross-stitched smile, and handmade clothes. Other kids did not think much of her doll, but she loved it more than anything. One day the family went to town and she took her doll. In the confusion of helping her mom, she set her doll down and forgot about it until they were on the way home.

"Oh no," she cried, "I left my doll in the store." Her parents went back to the store but someone had taken her doll. The girl was heartbroken and cried

over her loss. Months later she saw a doll that looked just like hers for sale in another store. She went in and examined it; sure enough it was her doll. She told the store owner, "That is my doll, I lost it months ago." The store owner replied, "It can be your doll again if you pay for it."

She told her mom all this and her mom explained to the store owner that the doll really was her daughter's lost doll. The store owner replied, "It can be hers if she buys it." The daughter gathered all the money she had and paid for the doll. Then clutching the doll to her chest the girl exclaimed, "This is my doll twice. Once because I made it and twice because I bought it."

That is how we should consider redemption (God buying us back). **"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"** (Eph. 1:7). God made us for Himself, but unfortunately, we got lost in a world of confusion and busyness. We got separated from Him. He wanted to get us back because He is our maker; His Son, Jesus Christ, died on the Cross to pay the price to set us free so we could again belong to Him. It is as if God were saying to us, "You're mine twice, once because I made you and twice because I redeemed you." Once we see salvation from this perspective we are making it personal and real. (Patterned after the story in *"Holiness without the Halo,"* by Stuart Briscoe.)

Encouragement

God's plan is to bless us through the Lord Jesus Christ. He will save us, transform us, and glorify us. However, sometimes we don't feel so blessed and the biblical words seem hollow. We all have times when we grow weary of trying, only to be criticized or

misunderstood. Being a teen is especially hard, not only is there suffering for Christ, but other teens and adults put pressure on you. Thankfully, salvation requires only simple faith and enables you to have a new start in life. Adults appreciate and are encouraged by teens who have a personal relationship with Christ. Your faith is a precious thing and a testimony to the world.