

# TRUTH

“... Your word is truth” (John 17:17)

November 2024

## THE SALVATION OF GOD

Saddened and frustrated that the Jews in Rome, in general, rejected the gospel, Paul declared to them, “*Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it*” (Acts 28:28). Paul longed for the Jews and Gentiles alike to learn about and receive God’s great salvation.

We want to consider three aspects of the salvation of God: salvation *offered*, *received*, and *proclaimed*. These entail the God of heaven, His gospel, and humanity’s response to what He has to say.

God’s salvation **offered** – Salvation is available to mankind only through the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The Christ invites all men to come to Him, as He said, “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28). That is an invitation that has no national, racial, or economic limits.

Why would the Almighty Creator of the universe extend salvation to humans, who, for the most part, are ungrateful and unholy in their thoughts and deeds? It is because of His love, mercy, grace, and kindness. Without these, no one could be saved. We see all four of them linked together in Paul’s letter to the saints in Ephesus: “*But God, who is rich in **mercy**, because of His great **love** with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by **grace** you have been saved) . . . He might show the exceeding riches of His **grace** in His **kindness** toward us in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 2:4,5,7; emphasis mine, *rdc*).

It is through the gospel of the Christ that God’s salvation is revealed to mankind. That gospel serves as God’s power to save lost souls, as it is written, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek*” (Romans 1:16). God has one plan of salvation for all people in all places and cultures. It is wonderful, too!

According to the Bible, where does the Lord make His salvation available to us? It is “in Christ” (2 Timothy 2:10). In similar language, the Bible affirms that redemption, grace, and eternal life are found in Jesus (Romans 3:24; 2 Timothy 2:1; 1 John 5:11).

God’s salvation **received** – Salvation from sin is a

gift from God (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 6:23). It is a conditional gift, meaning that man must respond properly to God’s salvation offer in order to receive it.

Remember: conditional gifts are still gifts. God told Joshua that He would *give* the city of Jericho to Israel. In order to “receive” that city, the Israelites had to comply with God’s instructions (Joshua 6:1-5). When the children of Israel “by faith” marched around the city as He commanded, by His power and mercy God made the walls fall down (Hebrews 11:30).

Jesus said, “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). According to what the Christ said, what is the general requirement for entering the kingdom/being saved? It is to do the will of the heavenly Father.

When we read the book of Acts, we see the specifics of “doing God’s will.” God’s inspired messengers charged lost people to believe on Jesus (Acts 16:31) and to repent and be converted (Acts 3:19), that is, to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

As we already noted, salvation is in the Christ. According to the New Testament, how does one get into Him in order to receive God’s salvation? Using words that are simple to digest, the apostle Paul wrote, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” (Galatians 3:27). It is via water baptism that one makes the spiritual transition from being lost outside of Jesus to getting into His salvation.

God’s salvation **proclaimed** – Jesus charged His followers to preach the gospel to each person on our planet (Mark 16:15,16). Today there are more than eight billion of us. It is not good enough for us to *know* about God’s salvation. We must go forth and *proclaim* it to those who are lost! Let us not forget: Jesus “*is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world*” (1 John 2:2).

The early disciples of Jesus would not stop talking about Jesus (Acts 4:20). They went everywhere proclaiming His word (Acts 8:4). God implored them not to be silent about His salvation (Acts 18:9). Let us step up and imitate their spirit and their urgency!

-- Roger D. Campbell

## TAKEAWAYS FROM EXODUS 25-31,35-40 (The Tabernacle)

This portion of Exodus regarding the tabernacle is organized according to God's command (Exodus 25-31) and Israel's response (Exodus 35-40). God went further than telling Israel what He wanted from them; He provided the design for it. We see this in His words to Moses, "*According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it*" (Exodus 25:9). The Hebrew word for "pattern" pertains to the building and the items associated with it. By inspiration, David received such a pattern for the building of the temple and passed it to Solomon, who oversaw its construction (1 Chronicles 28:11-19).

Everything we read in chapters 25-31 deals with the gathering of materials needed for the construction of the sanctuary and its furnishings, plus specific instructions for the making of every item. Then, an additional six chapters, 35-40, are dedicated to the carrying out of those instructions, the construction itself. A total of 13 chapters, almost a third of the book, will be dedicated to the subject of the tabernacle. This must mean these details are of great importance. So much so, that we will be reading most of them twice. This repetition makes a point: to reveal to us the importance of these instructions, that they were not up for interpretation, that He expected them to be followed exactly — and they were! Another reason for the repetition, perhaps an even more important theme, is that the presence of God came to dwell in the midst of His people! Without the repetition of the last few chapters, especially chapter 40, we would not know how the cloud descended to cover the tabernacle and the glory of the LORD filled it. Could it be these chapters are about to reveal to us the very purpose for the Book of Exodus? Let's pay attention to what is contained there.

In chapter 25, we find instructions regarding the free-will offerings from which the structure, all of the furniture and tools, and the garments of the priests were to be made. Three of the items housed in the tabernacle are delineated: the ark of the Covenant, the table for showbread, and the golden lampstand. The ark and the table were to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. The lampstand was to be made of pure gold.

Chapter 26 reveals the pattern for the structure of the tabernacle itself. Each part of the structure is laid out with the details of how it is to be made.

Chapter 27 brings us the pattern for the bronze altar, made from acacia wood and overlaid with bronze. The court of the tabernacle is also detailed with materials and dimensions. Pure olive oil for the

lamp was to be collected from the children of Israel to keep it burning always.

In chapter 28 we read of the separation of Aaron and his sons to the service of the Lord. The intricacies of the priests' garments are given along with the consequence of death for failing to wear them when they come into the tabernacle or near the altar to serve in the holy place.

Chapter 29 tells of the consecration of the priests, Aaron and his sons. They were separated by God for this great spiritual work and must be consecrated (set apart, made clean or holy) in order to stand in this place with God. The tabernacle, the altar, and the priests were to be consecrated to God in order for them to approach Him in service.

Chapter 30 gives the details of the altar of incense. Just as other furniture was crafted, it was to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. It would reside in the holy place just before the veil that separated the ark of the covenant, and sweet incense would be burned on it morning and evening. The service of the tabernacle needed funding, thus, the LORD commanded a census tax: one-half shekel for every numbered Israelite. The bronze laver was to be placed between the tabernacle and the altar; the priests were to wash their hands and feet before entering the tabernacle or burning an offering on the altar. The tabernacle with all of its furniture and tools, as well as the priests, were to be anointed with an oil made according to the pattern. Incense used in the service of the tabernacle was to be used only for the tabernacle; no one could duplicate it for their own use.

Chapter 31 introduces Bezalel and Oholiab, the ones chosen by God to build the tabernacle, its furniture and tools, and the clothing of the priests. The LORD "*put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you*" (Exodus 31:6). These God-appointed workers would follow His pattern and accomplish this great task. Even as they saw the importance of this work and kept this monumental goal before them, God reminds them of the observance of the Sabbath and the consequences of violating it.

Chapters 35-40 detail the carrying out of these divine instructions. The Israelites were faithful in their actions. Thus, "*the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle*" (Exodus 40:34). Because they heeded the pattern God gave them, His intended blessings were brought to Israel. Let us remember this as we strive to do the same under the new covenant as the church!

-- Dave Leonard

## Overcoming a Gossiping Tongue

In comparison to the rest of our body, our tongue is a small object. But, that little thing often gets us into big trouble (James 3:10-12). One way that occurs is when we use our tongue to spread gossip.

Gossip is a strange phenomenon. Why? People tend to detest it, yet many still choose to engage in it. Gossiping tongues are a destructive force and can ruin the peace and harmony in a local church. In the Bible, some are described as “*gossips and busybodies*” (1 Timothy 5:13). Such an appraisal is certainly not an endorsement of their speech; rather, just the opposite.

A “talebearer” is “a person who spreads scandal or tells secrets; gossip” [www.yourdictionary.com]. Each scriptural depiction of a talebearer/gossiper has a negative thrust (Proverbs 11:13; 16:28; 26:20,22).

In modern times, a gossiper might say or write, “I am not sure of the source, but I heard . . .” Or, “I do not know if it is true or not, but I heard that . . .” Some share unverified messages about public officials, post on social media unsubstantiated statements about businesses, and seem to have lips or fingers that are ready and willing to share any statement that comes to them. We expect that from the devil’s disciples, but it is sad and disgusting to observe God’s people doing it. It gives me no joy to acknowledge that some gospel preachers are highly-skilled, frequent gossipers.

How do we put gossip to death? Begin with genuine love for others. Love “*does not behave rudely*” and “*thinks no evil.*” Instead, true love “*rejoices in the truth*” (1 Corinthians 13:5,6). And, “*Love does no harm to a neighbor*” (Romans 13:10).

Let us make this commitment: we will not accept or repeat unfounded/unproven statements about others. Even if something is true, it is really expedient and helpful to share such information with others?

Let us practice Jesus’ charge to treat others like we would want them to deal with us (Luke 6:31) — such a mindset will eradicate gossip.

When we are mature enough to care about what is best for others (Philippians 2:4), that will eliminate gossip flowing from our lips.

God’s saints are instructed to speak “*what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers*” (Ephesians 4:29). Let us resolve to apply that message to our speech! No. More. Gossiping.

For gossip to spread, it takes not only a wagging tongue, but also ears that are willing to listen. It is time, friend. It is time for you and me to stop paying attention to gossip. Gossip ceases when people refuse to listen to it. Let us do our part and refuse to hear it.

-- Roger D. Campbell

## Are there any sins which the Lord will not forgive?

“God cannot help me; I’ve just done too much.” “There is no possible way I can be forgiven for all the horrible mistakes I’ve made.” Statements like these are sometimes made by those who think there is no possible way God could forgive them or that they have committed some sin(s) that God simply cannot pardon. Even Christians, having stumbled or fallen away, wonder whether they can be forgiven. So, are there, indeed, any sins the Lord will not forgive today?

First, note that Jesus’ very mission in coming to this earth was to save sinners—“*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). On another occasion, Jesus said, “*They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*” (Luke 5:31,32). Truly, “*God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved*” (John 3:17).

Second, the Bible teaches that God is both willing and able to forgive all manner of sins in those who come to Him through Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul lists numerous moral sins, saying that those who practice such things cannot go to heaven. He further notes that some of them had been guilty of such, but even with such moral sin, God washed them clean when they obeyed the gospel. In Acts 2, Peter spoke to a crowd that included those who had, in a very literal way, been involved in killing Jesus (Acts 2:22-36), yet Peter told them, “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). Before becoming a Christian and an apostle, Paul killed Christians (Acts 22:1-5; 1 Timothy 1:12,13) but, as he wrote, “*The grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief*” (1 Timothy 1:14-15).

Finally, there are, indeed, sins which the Lord will not forgive. God will not forgive sins a person will not acknowledge and forsake. If an individual denies sin and/or persists in it, he will receive no forgiveness.

The whole of New Testament teaching is clear: if any person, no matter how sinful, is willing to turn away from sin and turn to God through Jesus, God will forgive that person (including His children who stumble into sin or leave home and seek to return, as in Luke 15:11-24). Thanks be to God that, as the old song title says, “Christ Receiveth Sinful Men”!

-- Chad Dollahite

## THE PARABLES OF THE LOST SHEEP AND THE LOST COIN

In Luke 15, three parables of Jesus are recorded: The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Lost Son. Each of them involves something or someone being lost, and the setting in which the Master told them is clearly set forth in the chapter's three opening verses:

(1) Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. (2) And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them.' (3) So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

We will consider the first two parables in this article, then turn our attention to the third one next month.

### The Parable of the Lost Sheep

In the story, a man has one hundred sheep. When one of them becomes lost, the owner leaves all the other sheep to go seek for the one that is lost. When he finds it, he rejoices. Then he carries it home and implores his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him over the rescued sheep (15:4-6). Jesus followed that up with this powerful proclamation: "*I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance*" (15:7).

We remember this: in God's sight, men are more important than sheep or other animals (Matthew 12:11,12). The purpose of the parable is to show God's great love for the lost, at the same time showing *us* what *our* attitude ought to be toward such people.

In the Bible, both God the Father (Psalm 23) and the Son (John 10:11,14) are depicted as a spiritual Shepherd. The lost sheep in the story symbolizes a lost person, whether it be one who has never been saved or an erring disciple of Jesus. Being separated from the Shepherd is a horrible spiritual condition!

Here are four thoughts about the lost sheep:

(1) The lost sheep reminds us that it is possible for a person to be lost. In the Scriptures, we read of humans "*like sheep going astray*" (1 Peter 2:24,25). There may be more than one factor that leads to a sheep going astray, but the bottom line is this: lost is lost, regardless of the specific reason. In the parable, only one sheep out of one hundred was lost, but the main point is not the number of sheep who go astray, but rather that each lost sheep is 100% lost!

(2) Like the shepherd cares for his sheep, so God cares for the lost. Compare the difference in Jesus' attitude toward sinners with the attitude which the Pharisees and scribes manifested toward them. Just as the shepherd's concern for his sheep caused him to go seek it, so God's love caused Him to seek lost sheep through Jesus (Luke 19:10). Under no circumstances

should we ever doubt God's love for humanity!

(3) The shepherd's moving action reminds us that God is concerned about every single lost people. In this chapter, we see that only one sheep was lost, only one coin was lost, and only one son was lost. The value of one soul is far greater than all the world's material goods combined! (Mark 8:36,37).

(4) The rejoicing done by friends and neighbors depicts the rejoicing that takes place in heaven when a lost person/sinner repents (Luke 15:7). If we are thinking properly, we rejoice, too, when one truly repents and sets his/her life in order before the Lord.

### The Parable of the Lost Coin

For this parable, the background and circumstances are the same as for the Parable of the Lost Sheep. It was spoken to the same people and for the same purpose. Because there are great similarities between these two stories, we will simply list a few quick observations about this second story, which involves a woman possessing ten silver coins, one of which is lost, and she seeks diligently to find it. When she does, she rejoices and calls on her neighbors and friends to do the same. Does that sound familiar?

- A lost coin has no knowledge that it is lost. So it is with many lost people today . . . They have no idea that they are lost and need to be rescued. We must go seek them and teach them God's gospel of grace!

- The woman did not want the coin to be lost, but it was. In the same way, the Godhead does not want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9), but wants everyone to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). We do also, correct? Do our actions confirm our claim to desire all to be saved?

- Look at the woman's attitude toward the lost coin. She did not say, "Just forget about it, I still have nine other coins." No, she searched "carefully" (15:8) for it. She kept looking until she found it! We need to emulate such perseverance in trying to reach the lost.

- Just as the woman did, surely all of us would put forth great effort to search for lost *money*. Should we not be doing the same to seek for and find lost *souls*?!

God's church must be willing to come in contact with sinners in order to help rescue them, something the Pharisees apparently were not willing to do. Of course, we must never act in such a way that the lost would think that we are condoning their sinful ways. May we always imitate our Savior's love for the lost!

-- Roger D. Campbell

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