

Lesson 8

Salvation by Faith

Man's Efforts

In lesson five we learned that all men have sinned against a holy God. Lesson six taught us that sin results in a terrible penalty--eternal suffering in hell. There was good news in lesson seven; Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins. Though Christ died for the sins of all men, the Bible teaches that many men will not have their sins forgiven. Multitudes will suffer in hell for all of eternity. Who will be saved from hell? How can you be saved from hell?

All men are, in some way, aware of their sin problem and need of salvation. They may feel guilty, depressed, lonely, full of hatred, hopeless, empty inside, etc. Thus, men are looking for salvation from their problems and negative emotions. Some people have enough understanding to know that the problem is that sin separates them from God. They know that they need to be forgiven. The following are some ways that men try to solve their problems or obtain salvation:

1) **Religion** Many people believe that practicing a certain religion will result in their sins being forgiven. They may participate in many religious practices such as going to church (or a temple), giving money to their church, praying, being water baptized, receiving Holy Communion, confessing their sins, fasting, etc.

2) **Good Works** A common belief is that God will give us salvation from our sins if we practice a sufficient amount of good works. This may include trying to keep the Ten Commandments, trying to live a good life, feeling sorry for your sins, trying to eliminate certain sins from your life, giving money to your church or to poor people, helping people who are sick, trying to be kind to all people, etc.

3) **Philosophy and Psychology** Philosophy is an attempt to gain wisdom and knowledge through study and much time in thought. Philosophers spend much time thinking about questions such as: "Why am I here?"; "Who am I?"; et. al. Psychology is the study of the mind and human feelings. Many people believe that their problems can be solved through study, deep thinking, and trying to understand themselves and their feelings. They depend on the knowledge they can gain through their own efforts, but fail to believe what God has revealed in the Bible.

4) **Pleasure** Yet others try to overcome their feelings of guilt, depression, and loneliness by filling their lives with something that gives them pleasure or makes them feel good. This may include accumulating money, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, seeking sexual relationships, devoting oneself completely to your career, enjoying music, sports, art, and many other forms of entertainment. These things may help people to feel better for a short time, but they do not save anyone from hell nor bring lasting joy.

Not by Works

What does the Bible say about these four ways that men attempt to solve their problems or gain salvation? "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that **not of yourselves**: it is the gift of

God: **Not of works** lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). We are saved by grace, *not* by religious works such as going to church, praying, or being water baptized.

"But to him that **worketh not**, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). The Bible does *not* teach that God forgives the sins of those who try to keep the ten commandments, feel sorry for their sins, or try to be kind to other people. These are all human works (human effort) and the Bible says that salvation is "to him that **worketh not**."

It is not enough to try to be good. In order to earn salvation you would have to keep all of God's laws perfectly throughout your entire life. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that **continueth not in all things** which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in **one point**, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). No man can continually obey all of the laws of God without failure. Thus, it is not possible to obtain salvation in this way.

God's law does not save us, but rather proves that we are sinners (since we all disobey His commands). "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the **knowledge of sin**" (Romans 3:20). It is Christ's death, not keeping the law, which saves us.

Salvation by Faith

According to God's Word, salvation cannot be obtained through any works of man. Salvation is through faith *alone* (*not* faith plus trying to be good). "Therefore being **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). To be justified is to be declared righteous. This comes about only when we place our faith in Christ's death on the cross for our sins. "Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified by faith** without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28). The deeds of the law (our religious practices and attempts to live a good life) can never bring forgiveness of sin. Only those who believe that Christ died for their sins will be forgiven.

It is important to understand that faith is *not* an emotion. God does not require us to feel sad, or feel sorry, or have any other kind of emotion. Instead we must trust that Christ's death paid the full penalty for our sins. There is nothing that we must (or can) do to gain salvation. Christ did it all on the cross. Faith is believing what God says. The gospel (good news) from God is that Christ died for our sins. When we stop trusting in our religion or efforts to be good and trust in Christ, God will save us. "In **whom** ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in **whom** also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13).

What are you trusting for your salvation? Are you trusting in your church to save you? your water baptism? your attempts to be good? your confession of sin? There is only one way to be saved. Have you placed your faith in the payment that Christ made on the cross when He died to pay the penalty for your sins? If you have not done this, we urge you to pause for a moment right now and make this choice to believe God's good news about Jesus Christ and His death.

This will be the most important decision that you make in your entire life. None of us know how long we will live on this earth. Today could be the last day of your life. Don't delay! Now is the day of salvation!

Review Questions

True or False

1. The penalty of sin is suffering in hell for a long time before going to heaven.
2. Many people believe that they will be saved if they faithfully practice their religion.
3. People who are very intelligent, such as philosophers, have a better chance of finding salvation.
4. We are saved by God's grace, not by our works.

Multiple Choice

5. Salvation comes through:
 - a. trying to be good
 - b. faith
 - c. faith and trying to live a good life
 - d. faith and going to church
6. God declares us to be righteous when we:
 - a. are water baptized
 - b. feel sorry for our sins
 - c. pray
 - d. believe the gospel
7. If we feel guilty, depressed, or lonely we should:
 - a. be more sincere in our religion
 - b. try to be happier and enjoy life
 - c. trust in Christ and His death
 - d. fast and pray

Fill in the Blanks

8. "For by ____ are ye saved through ____."
9. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by ____ without the deeds of the law."

10. For my salvation, I am trusting in _____.

For Further Study

1. How are we justified according to Romans 3:24 and Titus 3:7?
2. How are we justified according to Romans 5:9?
3. Does God require us to have blind faith? (Acts 1:3, II Timothy 3:16)
4. What does Hebrews 11:6 say about faith?
5. How does faith come? (Romans 10:17)
6. How do we become children of God? (Galatians 3:26)
7. Will anyone in heaven be able to boast about what he did in order to get to heaven? (Romans 3:27)
8. Romans 3:25 speaks of faith in what?
9. Is God satisfied if we just do our best? (Matthew 5:48, I Peter 1:16)
10. Who is it that is saved by the gospel? (Romans 1:16)

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