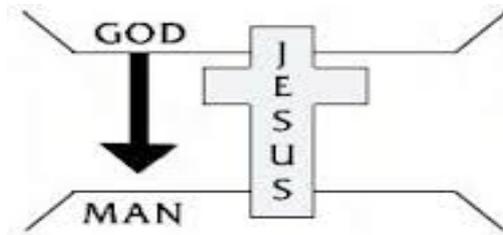


LESSON SIX - SALVATION

Many people believe man's greatest need is to have good health, long life, wealth, and success in this world. However, thousands of years ago one man asked the most important question that revealed man's greatest need, "*How should a man be just with God?*" (Job 9:2) There is no more basic or important question in life. All throughout history men have asked the same question. A rich young ruler once asked Jesus Christ, "*Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*" (Matt.19:16). The most glorious moment in the life of any person is the moment their sins are forgiven and God grants them eternal life. The doctrine of salvation is critical to your eternal destiny. We need to be saved from "*the wrath to come.*" (1 Thess. 1:10b) If you get this one wrong, you are eternally lost.

THE PERSON OF SALVATION

It is popular to say today that there are many ways to heaven. You go the way that pleases you. BUT THAT IS FOOLISH. We don't apply that logic to the rest of life. If I want to go to London from Singapore, I just cannot go any direction I feel. I must go the right direction!



The Bible makes it repeatedly clear that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. We as humans cannot save ourselves. It is from God Himself. Salvation is both of the Lord and from the Lord. It is tied up in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. The angel declared at the birth of Jesus Christ, "*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.*" (Matt. 1:21) The Lord Jesus declared the same truth in John 14:6, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" You don't need a PhD to understand what Christ is saying here. He is the only way. There is no Plan B. The Apostles repeated the same message,

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 3:11)

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 2:5)

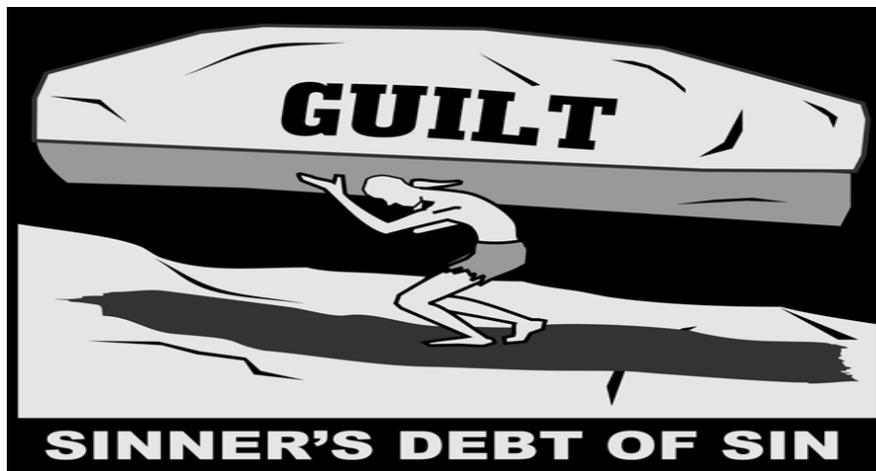
Our sins have separated us from God. We need a "*mediator*" to bring us back to God. This mediator who reconciles us to God is Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). No other mediator is necessary - No other mediator is possible. All are saved by faith alone in Christ alone so the Gospel transcends all cultural, national, and racial lines. It is not one way of salvation for one group and another for a different group.

HOW GOOD ARE WE?

All of us have fallen short of God's perfect standards, "*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*" (Rom. 3:10-11; cf. Jer. 17:9; Eph. 3:1) You may do better than another man but you both fail the perfect standard required. God's pass mark is 100%. Compared to the perfection of Jesus Christ you are an absolute failure. RC Sproul gives a helpful comment,

"It is commonplace to hear the statement, "people are basically good." Though it is admitted that no one is perfect, human wickedness is minimized. Yet if people are basically good, why is sin so universal? It is often suggested that everybody sins because society has such a negative influence upon us. The problem is seen with our environment, not with our nature. This explanation for the universality of sin begs the question, how did society become corrupt in the first place? If people are born good or innocent, we would expect at least a percentage of them to remain good and sinless. We should be able to find societies that are not corrupt, where the environment has been conditioned by sinlessness rather than sinfulness. Yet the most dedicated-to-righteousness communes we can find still have provisions for dealing with the guilt of sin."

The standard of righteousness that is required for us to be declared a just man or woman is perfect conformity to God's holy standards. We all fail the test when the mirror of God's word is held up before us. All of us are declared unrighteous. Every apple in the barrel of humanity is rotten! All of humanity is under the curse, condemnation, and power of sin.



Every man or woman is born totally depraved. That means that every part of man's nature, including body and soul, are corrupted by sin. We are corrupted in our mind, in our will, and in our affections. Sin permeates the core of our life. So, we are sinners not because we sin. Rather, we sin because we are born sinners, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" (Psa. 51:5; cf. Rom. 7:14; Eph. 2:1-3)

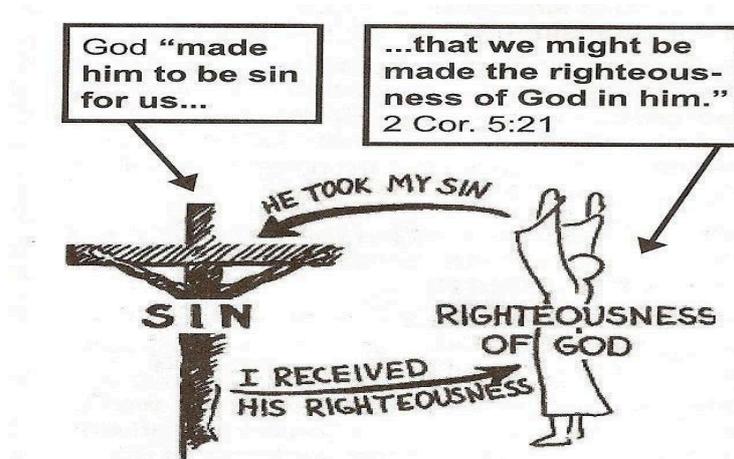
We choose according to our sinful desires, as the thoughts and desires of our heart is evil continuously. Total depravity also denotes that fallen man has no ability to change the bias of his will toward sin or merit God's favour. We are totally unable to work for salvation from the Lord. Even fallen man's outwardly good actions are tainted by the motive of sin such as pride, self-glory etc. If any human deed is not done

absolutely for the glory of God then God sees it as not good and worthless, “*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” (Isa. 64:6).

HOW ARE WE MADE RIGHTEOUS?

It is clear that we cannot provide our own righteousness because “*all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” (Isa. 64:6). We are debtors who cannot pay our debts. Jesus warned us that “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:3) This word “*except*” means that we must be reborn or radically changed as a prerequisite to enter God’s kingdom. ***BUT HOW CAN WE BE BORN AGAIN?*** Christ gave the answer to Nicodemus, “*That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*” (John 3:15) The solution to our unrighteousness is through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, “*For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.*” (John 3:17)

The only hope for man is for God to provide righteousness for us through Jesus Christ. This righteousness is the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ by His perfect obedience in life and atoning death on the Cross. By His perfect obedience, Christ satisfied the demands of God’s law and merited eternal life for us. Jesus did not die on the Cross for Himself but for us, “*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.*” (Isaiah 53:5)



A classic summary of this exchange is described by the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian saints,

For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21)

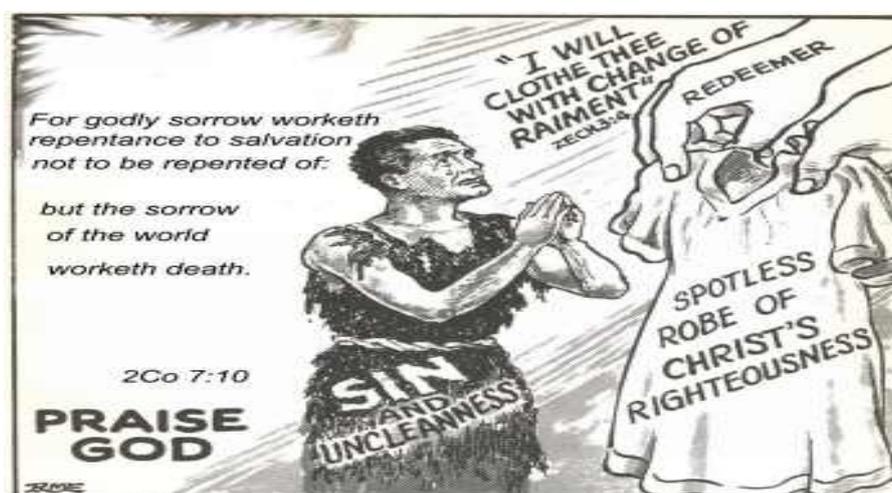
When we believe by faith in the perfect Person and Work of Christ we exchange our unrighteousness for Christ’s perfect righteousness. God then declares us justified. This moment is called our justification. It is a gift of grace from God. We could not pay the price but only Christ could. That is why some have defined grace as: **God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.**

This is what is so amazing about the Cross. It is the place where God can deal with your sin and mine yet maintain His just character and righteous judgment towards sin. It resolves the dilemma of punishing sin yet showing mercy to sinners. The Cross is so much more than simply a demonstration of the love of God towards sinners (although it includes this). It is the most just and the most gracious place in history. The Cross reveals God's justice, the holiness and righteousness of God, the hatred and wrath of God towards sin, and the glory of God in doing what man could never have provided. Grace, mercy, love, holiness, justice, wrath, glory all meet at the foot of the Cross.

JUSTIFICATION – This term is an image from a courtroom, when a Judge declares a defendant “Not Guilty.” Justification is an act not a process (Rom. 5:1). This act is God declaring us righteous eternally because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God does this be imputing or crediting to us the righteousness of Christ. This righteousness of Christ was obtained through His perfect obedience in life and death, which He then offered to God on our behalf for this purpose. This is equally complete in all the justified and is eternally effective. When Martin Luther was tempted by the devil that his sins were not forgiven, Luther cried, “bring them all and millions more for the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

BY FAITH OR BY WORKS?

This is a vital point to get right in understanding salvation. Are we saved by faith alone in Christ alone or do we contribute to our salvation by doing “good works?” Salvation from beginning to end is based on the righteousness of Christ. We exchange our filthy robes of self-righteousness for Christ's perfect robes of righteousness.



The Lord Jesus stated that in His famous summary, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) The Apostle Paul gives the same answer, “the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Romans 3:26b) God declares justified only those who by simple faith trust in the finished work of Christ alone. Notice it is not him that trusts in Jesus Christ plus the Church or personal works of righteousness!

The last words of Jesus on the Cross were words of triumph that He had paid the debt for our sins, “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He

“The thief had nails through both hands, so that he could not work; and a nail through each foot, so that he could not run errands for the Lord; he could not lift a hand or a foot toward his salvation, and yet Christ offered him the gift of God; and he took it. Christ threw him a passport, and took him into Paradise.”

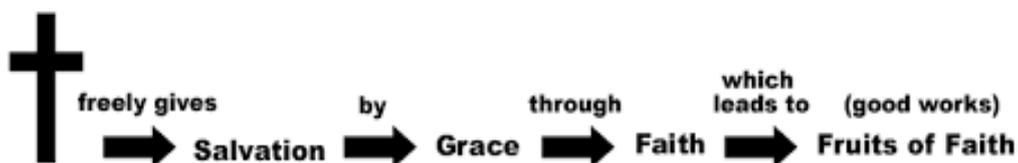
So, either you are saved by the merits of Christ’s righteousness or you can attempt to justify yourself by your own good works. Any attempt to do the latter, in whole or in part, blasphemes the God of grace. It robs God of His rightful glory; it diminishes the death of Christ to the point of being redundant, and puts the sinner in the place of God. There is no other alternative. There is no middle ground. All religions in this world can be divided into two very simple categories:

- (1) DO – trying to use human efforts to obtain merit and forgiveness of sins
- (2) DONE – ceasing from human efforts to find forgiveness and resting by faith alone on the perfect Work of Jesus Christ’s death on the Cross.

The best 30 minutes of our lives couldn’t be trusted to get us to heaven never mind the worst. You can pray for years, go to church every day, partake of the sacraments, give to the poor but they won’t bring you one step closer to eternal life in heaven. You cannot believe in salvation by works and be truly justified. It is that serious. We all must choose one or the other!

Since salvation is entirely by the grace of God through the redemption of Christ’s shed blood then our salvation is certain. If it was ever contingent on human efforts, then I could ruin it. But salvation is entirely by the grace of God from beginning to end. No justified person can perish as justification leads invariably to glorification in heaven, *“Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.”* (Rom. 8:30)

If salvation did begin with man, then he has something to boast about. But salvation is all of God so there will be no boasting in heaven and there should be no boasting here on earth. We are not saved because we have more faith than someone else. It is not a joint effort between Christ and us. All we can take pride in is Christ and Christ alone!



WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD WORKS?

We cannot do good works that please God until we are justified, *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”* (Isa. 64:6). This justification is by faith alone without human works,

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. (Eph. 2:8-9)

That doesn't mean that once we are justified and born again that works are redundant. There is a place for good works for a Christian.

The moment we are justified we are given a new heart to desire and live out good works. Salvation produces good works but good works never produce salvation. The proper relationship of faith and good works is one that may be distinguished but it can never be separated. The formula is "Faith alone saves but the faith that saves is not alone!" We are saved for good works not by good works.

Good works always flows from the life of a man that has become a new creature in Christ Jesus, "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" (Eph. 2:10) The word translated, "*workmanship*" here means "a work of art" or "a masterpiece" for God to display the light of Christ to the world. The possessive pronoun "*His*" reflects the truth that I am His workmanship. A new King rules in our lives.

There are people who make empty professions of faith in Jesus Christ with their lips only that are not sincere. Their fruits or works reveal that they have no saving reality. James explains this in his epistle,

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? (James 2:17-20)

Paul writes to Titus of such people with false professions, "*They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*" (Titus 1:16). Good works are like a thermometer in a pot of boiling water. They reveal to us that there is real heat there. But the thermometer doesn't create the heat. That comes from another source. Good works cannot get us into heaven just as a thermometer cannot make the water hotter.

In heaven, our works will be the basis upon which we are rewarded by God. The works don't get us into heaven as that is on the basis of faith in Christ's perfect work. But our good works will generate God's eternal rewards.



APPENDIX ONE



THE ROMAN ROAD

- **STEP ONE:**
Romans 3:10 (KJV)
"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:"

- **STEP TWO:**
Romans 3:23 (KJV)
"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

- **STEP THREE:**
Romans 5:12 (KJV)
"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

- **STEP FOUR:**
Romans 6:23 (KJV)
"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

- **STEP FIVE:**
Romans 5:8-9 (KJV)
"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

- **STEP SIX:**
Romans 10:9-10 (KJV)
"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

- **STEP SEVEN:**
Romans 10:13 (KJV)
"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."