

MY BIBLE SCHOOL

LESSONS

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #4: What the Bible Says About: "The Plan of Salvation"

SCRIPTURE READING: JOHN 3:1-21 EPHESIANS 2:1-10; 5:10-18

Memory Verse: "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

WHAT IS SIN?

The answer to this question is found in the words of John:

1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law."

This is the most comprehensive definition of sin in the Scriptures. God has a fundamental, unchangeable, everlasting law (*Psalm 111:7-8*), and the violation of that law is sin. The unchanging God will never set aside that holy law in any plan for saving man. This would destroy the very foundation of His government. And, remember, God's fundamental law is the Ten Commandments.

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (*Romans 14:23*). If a man violates his conscience, to him it is sin. To be sure, his conscience must be open to enlightenment and education, but he should sacredly guard it. If he does not, it will become seared as with a hot iron (*1 Timothy 4:2*). "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (*James 4:17*).

The only man who will not be held accountable for his wrongdoing is the man who does not know that he is sinning (*Romans 2:12*). Said Jesus, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth" (*John 9:41*).

If we close our eyes that we may not see, our ears that we may not hear, then we shall be responsible for what we (may) have known (*Matthew 13:15*). "All unrighteousness is sin." This is the way John sums it all up. The line of demarcation between sin and righteousness should be sharply drawn in our minds.

Is there a more important question man can ask than What must I do to be saved from sin? A skeptical mathematics student found a note on his table, reading: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" He could not figure out any profit, so he gave his heart to God. After a man has found out what to do to be saved, then he ought to act on this vital information and seek salvation for himself and his dear ones.

1 - FROM WHAT THREE THINGS DOES MAN NEED TO BE SAVED?

1. The penalty of sin.

Since "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," all men are sinners. And "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). This death penalty is not the first death. "In Adam all die," saints and sinners alike (1 *Corinthians* 15:22). The wages of sin is the second death. This is the death that is eternal, the penalty we should all seek to escape. God has given the promise: "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (*Isaiah* 55:7).

2. The power of sin.

Romans 8:7: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

If God pardoned a man for the sins of the past and did not save him from the power of sin, and then allowed the man to live forever, He would have an everlasting sinner, wouldn't He? This is just what God will not permit. Sinful man was driven from the tree of life lest he should eat and live forever (*Genesis* 3:22-23). It is not enough merely to have a boat to keep from sinking. We must have strength to row upstream lest we drift until we plunge over sin's great Niagara to eternal destruction. The whole current of our thinking and the swift-moving stream of our restless souls need to be changed to flow God-ward. Do you not, even now, sense a great need of more power in your life? God will supply you with this much-needed power.

3. The presence of sin.

Romans 16:20: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

This text means that sin and its originator, Satan, shall be put down forever. And death shall be "destroyed" (1 *Corinthians* 15:26). There shall be no more sin or suffering. God saves us from the presence of sin and creates a new world of righteousness for us (2 *Peter* 3:13). This is God's final act of salvation.

2 - CAN MAN SAVE HIMSELF FROM SIN?

Man is unable to atone for the sins of the past.

Romans 3:20: "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin:"

Man is like a criminal who has violated the law and is doomed to die, and there is nothing he can do for himself. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified."

His promises to do good cannot save him. And, even if he could live without sin in the future, he still has upon him the guilt of all the sins he has committed in the past. He is like a person who owes a huge grocery bill. He promises to pay cash from now on. But this will not pay the back debt, will it? So far as human prospects go, man is hopelessly in debt and hopelessly lost.

Jeremiah 13:23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

Sinfulness is a part of our very nature, like the Ethiopian's skin or the spots of a leopard.

Romans 7:18-19: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

An eagle swooped down in a field and flew away with something wriggling in its claws. It rose higher and higher. A farmer was watching. After a while the eagle seemed to grow weary. Its great wings moved slower and slower as it came nearer and nearer to the earth. Finally, its wings collapsed and it plummeted to the ground. The farmer went to investigate. There he saw a serpent slithering its way through the grass. It had bitten the great bird and poisoned its blood stream. Even so the serpent of sin brings us down from every attempt to be good: and, as the delinquent little boys said, "We just can't help it." But God has a way to help us, as we shall see.

3 - WHAT IS GOD'S PART IN SAVING MAN FROM SIN?

1. God provides the pardon for sins that are past.

John 3:16: "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."

Christ came to earth to pay the price of our transgressions. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (*Romans 5:6*). "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (*Romans 5:8*). Isaiah declares: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him" (*Isaiah 53:5*).

No man who accepts Christ as his Saviour and follows Him need suffer the wages of sin—the second, eternal death—for Christ, God's sacrificial Lamb, died in his place. "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 25). But eternal separation from God is to be the sad end of all who reject the gospel of salvation (*Matthew 25:41*).

This can be illustrated by comparing the sinner to a condemned man standing before a firing squad. Only the slightest touch of a trigger is needed to send him into eternity. But a messenger suddenly appears and command is given to lower the guns. Some higher authority has intervened. The condemned man is led away and set free. God has provided for us a way of escape from certain and everlasting death. That way is through Christ (*John 3:16*).

2. God gives man the victory over sin in his life.

Through the new-birth experience God gives the power of a new life. Says John, we "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (*John 1:13; John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23*). To be born again means that God fulfills His law in us. As Paul tells us, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the

likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (*Romans 8:3-4; Hebrews 8-10*).

The process of sin was reversed when God created a "new creature" in Christ Jesus (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). Not only does He recreate the sinner, but He has made other wonderful provisions for all who believe.

a. He gives repentance for our sins (*Acts 5:31*).

b. He sends His Spirit to dwell in our hearts (*1 John 3:24*).

c. He provides the Bible to comfort, strengthen, and keep us (*Romans 15:4; Psalm 119:105; Ephesians 6:17*).

d. He opens heaven to our prayers (*Hebrews 4:16*).

Romans 8:32: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

And if there is anything else that God can do to save us He will do it!

4 - WHAT IS MAN'S PART IN SALVATION?

TO OBTAIN PARDON FOR SIN, THE FOLLOWING SIMPLE STEPS MUST BE TAKEN:

1. Look to God.

Isaiah 45:22-"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (*John 5:40; Matthew 11:28-30*).

2. Believe on Jesus Christ.

Acts 16:31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

3. Repent of every sin.

Luke 13:3: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Acts 3:19: "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

4. Confess every sin known to you.

1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

5. Make things right with your brother.

Ezekiel 33:15-16: "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

One never tires of the story of Reuben Johnson, of Andersonville prison. He had served many years of his long sentence. At assembly one morning, announcement of a pardon was to be made. There was an uneasy expectancy. With the pardon in his hand, the prison official rose and read the name of Reuben Johnson, and asked him to come forward. There was no response. Reuben

supposed it must be some other Reuben Johnson. The officer read again, "Reuben Johnson!" Reuben looked all around, turned and looked behind him, expecting to see Reuben Johnson get up somewhere. This movement caught the official's eye; and, pointing to Reuben, he shouted, "Reuben Johnson, I mean you!" It finally dawned on poor old Reuben that he was to be set free. He had been a prisoner so long that it was difficult for him to believe it. Down the aisle he made his way, reached out a big, rough, trembling hand, and took the paper that meant freedom from the gray prison walls. The tears of mingled gratitude and repentance made their way down the lines that time had chiseled in his great face. Reuben was free.

Thank God, He has a pardon for every man who will reach out and accept it. He will "bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (Isaiah 42:7). But we must come to God, believe on Jesus Christ, confess our sins, and take the pardon. We must "Lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6: 12: Isaiah 1:18-20).

TO OBTAIN VICTORY OVER THE POWER OF SIN, MAN HAS AN IMPORTANT PART HE MUST PLAY.

Notice the following steps carefully and pray that God will give you grace to move forward. Here are the steps:

1. Be willing to forsake every sin.

***Proverbs 28:13:* "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."**

2. Let the Holy Spirit lead you.

***Romans 8:14:* "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."**

3. Be willing to obey God's law.

***Proverbs 28:9:* "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." "Let not sin (law breaking, 1 John 3:4) therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12).**

4. Be willing to witness for God.

***Acts 1:8:* "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."**

5. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

***Hebrews 12:1-2:* "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."**

Yes, man needs not only pardon from sin but power over sin. If Reuben Johnson had left the prison and said, "Now I am a free man, free to break the law," how long do you think he would have been free? Not long. No. Reuben must not be a repeater. He was freed that he might obey the laws, not break them.

Reuben must be willing to have a change of heart, and obey. He needs to watch his step and pray. He needs to bear witness to the goodness of his government and show he now loves the laws he once violated. He needs to keep company with those who are law abiding. He needs to study the laws of his government, know its plans, and live for its honor. Reuben was freed in order that he might become a law-abiding citizen.

If Reuben was freed for that purpose, what of the man whom God has pardoned through the grace of the crucified Christ, who died that the man might be free? Yes, a thousand times more should he seek power to obey God's commandments and do right!

5 - WILL CHRIST TURN AWAY FROM ANY SINCERE SEEKER?

No indeed! Christ will not turn away from any true worshiper. He came to seek the lost, to help the weak, to reach the lowest man. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Remember the man with the palsy. His friends let him down through a roof and placed him right in front of Jesus who said, "Son, be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matthew 9:2). And He healed him of the physical and spiritual disease that afflicted him (Matthew 9:6-8).

6 - HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?

There is no escape. Let these solemn words burn their way into every heart: Hebrews 2:1-3-"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

If angels of God who rebelled against His laws are to be punished, and everlasting destruction awaits them (Matthew 25:41), how shall we escape if we ignore the call of mercy and refuse to enter the open door to pardon and obedience through the power and grace of God? Let us pray that every student taking these lessons will make the right decision. The next lesson will be on the greatest event just ahead of us: "Coming Again!"

Brief Review Questions

Sin is the transgression of what?

What three things does man need to be saved from?

Can we save ourselves from sin?

How does God provide us pardon from our past sins?

What is our part in cooperating with Him in the plan of salvation?

Will Christ refuse us if we plead with Him for help?

THE PLAN OF SALVATION SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

" 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself' (2 Corinthians 5:19). God suffered with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption . . .

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None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption; for only He who was in the bosom of the Father could declare Him. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it manifest. Nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man could express the Father's love to lost humanity.

" 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.' He gave Him not only to live among men, to bear their sins, and die their sacrifice. He gave Him to the fallen race. Christ was to identify Himself with the interests and needs of humanity. He who was one with God has linked Himself with the children of men by ties that are never to be broken. Jesus is 'not ashamed to call them brethren' (Hebrews 2:11); He is our Sacrifice, our Advocate, our Brother, bearing our human form before the Father's throne, and through eternal ages one with the race He has redeemed—the Son of man. And all this that man might be uplifted from the ruin and degradation of sin that he might reflect the love of God and share the joy of holiness.

"The price paid for our redemption, the infinite sacrifice of our heavenly Father in giving His Son to die for us, should give us exalted conceptions of what we may become through Christ. As the inspired apostle John beheld the height, the depth, the breadth of the Father's love toward the perishing race, he was filled with adoration and reverence; and, failing to find suitable language in which to express the greatness and tenderness of this love, he called upon the world to behold it. 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God' (I John 3: 1). What a value this places upon man! Through transgression the sons of man become subjects of Satan. Through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ the sons of Adam may become the sons of God. By assuming human nature, Christ elevates humanity. Fallen men are placed where, through connection with Christ, they may indeed become worthy of the name 'sons of God.'

"Such love is without a parallel. Children of the heavenly King! Precious promise! Theme for the most profound meditation! The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him! The thought has a subduing power upon the soul and brings the mind into captivity to the will of God. The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite and a tender pity surpassing a mother's yearning sympathy for her wayward child."
Steps to Christ, 13-15