



CHAPTER 3

Salvation

KEY IDEA

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

KEY VERSE

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. — *Ephesians 2:8-9*

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION:

Satan, the great deceiver, clothed himself as a serpent, one of God's good creatures, and set out to trick Adam and Eve into disobeying their good and gracious God.

Satan, the tempter, appears in Genesis 3:1.

> The fact that Genesis says that the temptation came through a serpent, and that Rev. 12:7 and 20:2 refer to the devil as a serpent, would suggest that Satan used the form of an actual reptile.

< This enhanced the shrewdness of the temptation—it came in disguise.

> It's not until the book of Revelation that we get a confirmation that this was Satan.

In the first two chapters of Genesis, God had been the dominant speaker. His spoken word brought life and order. When the serpent spoke, his word brought deception and death.

> The fall of man was about Adam and Eve, but it is also about all of us.

< The Fall came as a result of temptation.

Have you ever thought about the power that temptation has over your own life?

Realizing where the source of temptation comes from, does it make you understand better the difficulty in overcoming temptations?

Since God spoke first we can say that truth is older than falsehood.

> Biblical commentator, Allen Ross has stated, “God’s words came before the serpent’s words, but the serpent’s words were more effective because the humans did not know God’s words well enough.” [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Genesis]

Do you agree or disagree with Allen Ross’ statement and why?

THE PROBLEM

After creating Adam and Eve, God had told them not to eat of the fruit of a certain tree in the Garden of Eden. But Satan suggested that God wasn’t being honest when he warned of the results of eating the forbidden fruit. The great deceiver’s ploy succeeded, and Adam and Eve willfully rejected God and his promise of life together in the garden.

The consequences of Adam and Eve’s rebellion were passed on to their offspring and to every generation since. Every human born receives this “virus” at conception and then acts out of this nature throughout their life. The Bible calls it sin. It creates death — both the physical death of our bodies and the spiritual death of separation from God.

GENESIS 3:22-24

And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Adam and Eve had now become aware of good and evil in a dangerous way—by disobedience.

> If they ate from the tree of life, they would live forever in that condition.

> In desiring the knowledge of good and evil, they had chosen evil; and so from this point on, it would be impossible for humans to improve on God’s creation and ways without introducing pain and destruction at the same time.

FROM CORNERSTONE BIBLICAL COMMENTARY:

Apparently, if (Adam and Eve) had remained in the protective presence of God in the garden with all its supernatural provisions of life, they would have lived forever in that evil condition. And so God prevented that by expelling them from the garden so that death would take its decreed course and end the life of toil and trouble. So with severe mercy, the Lord drove them out of the garden ...

Have you ever thought to see Adam’s and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden as “severe mercy.” What do you think this means?

... (God) placed at its entrance the terrifying cherubim with a flaming sword...to guard the way to the tree of life. In the Tabernacle, shapes of cherubim were embroidered on the curtain that separated the people from the presence of God - that separation would remain in place until Jesus opened the way to God through his blood.

Take a moment to realize just what Jesus the Christ did for us because he was willing to do the word and will of God. Any comments?

THE SOLUTION: ABRAHAM

Even before Adam and Eve sinned, God had a plan to get people back into a relationship with him. When he replaced their clothes of fig leaves with the skins of animals, he signaled something important — it would take the blood of another to cover the sins of humankind.

For more than 1600 years every Biblical story of the chosen people of Israel would point to the coming of the solution.

[If you don't know the story of Abraham and how God called him to be the one who would be the patriarch of a chosen nation, read Genesis chapters 12-25.]

At a point in Abraham's life God put him to test. After waiting until he was 100 years old to have the son God promised him, God asked Abraham to make the ultimate blood sacrifice—his beloved son, Isaac.

> Abraham was obedient, knowing God would provide a solution to his dilemma, even to believe that God could resurrect Isaac from death.

< God did provide a solution, a substitute sacrifice—a ram that appeared in the bushes was sacrificed instead of Isaac.

GENESIS 22:15-18

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Another step toward the solution was taken. God had found a man who was willing to trust him.

When you read and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me. what do you think that means for us?

THE SOLUTION: MOSES

God pledged to Abraham and his descendants a special place in the world, a land for his special people, but when a famine occurred, Abraham and Sarah's grandson Jacob — along with all his children and their families — moved away from the land to Egypt. But God promised that the nation of Israel would return to the promised land.

While in Egypt the people of Israel were made slaves under Pharaoh. When it was time for Israel to occupy the land of Canaan, God raised up Moses to deliver his people out of slavery and move them into the promised land. But Pharaoh was hardhearted and would not let the people leave. To make Pharaoh understand and believe in God's power, God issued ten brutal plagues on Egypt and its people. The tenth and final one foretells of the ultimate solution of humankind's deliverance from the slavery of sin.

[See the last chapters of Genesis through Exodus to read of the entire story.]

Moses finally got the release of the Hebrews from slavery because the Egyptian Pharaoh (after 10 plagues) finally let them go.

> This last plague would mean the death of the first born in all of Egypt, unless the doorposts of their homes had the mark of blood.

EXODUS 12:13; 21-23

The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

What did the blood of the sacrificed lamb mean to the people of Israel?

How did this "foretell of the ultimate solution of humankind's deliverance from the slavery of sin."

FROM CORNERSTONE BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

This explains the symbolic power of the blood. The Bible agrees with other ancient cultures that "the life of every creature is in its blood." Placing the blood on the doorpost made it unmistakable that the lamb or kid did not die by accident, nor was it killed merely to be eaten. The animal had been slain and the death angel could not enter there because of that fact. The blood itself accomplished nothing but it was a "sign". A sign of what? Its presence was a sign that those within the house, unlike their first parents, Adam and Eve, trusted, believed, and obeyed God.

THE SOLUTION: ISAIAH’S SUFFERING SERVANT

About 1300 years after the time of Abraham and 700 years before the birth of Jesus, God inspired the prophet Isaiah to speak on his behalf. In Isaiah 52 & 53 we see a picture of the Lord’s “suffering servant”, which takes the concept of blood sacrifice, or substitutionary atonement, to a new level. Like the Passover lamb, this servant will suffer for the sake of others. This Scripture also foretells the mission of the One who will provide the way for our sins to be forgiven.

ISAIAH 53:5; 12b

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

What do you see in the passages in Isaiah from BELIEVE that “paints” the picture of God’s solution?

THE SOLUTION: JESUS THE MESSIAH

About 2000 years after God “provided the lamb for the burnt offering” in place of Abraham’s son Isaac, 1500 years after God spared the Israelites through the sacrifice of their Passover lambs, and 700 years after Isaiah foresaw the suffering servant who would be “pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities,” the Messiah Jesus was crucified on a cross for the sins of humankind. God’s solution to the problem of sin was made complete through the sacrifice of his Son.

FROM THE TRANSFORMATION STUDY BIBLE

We must never underestimate the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The world believes that Jesus died, but the world does not believe that he arose from the dead. ... Christians have experienced Christ’s resurrection power in their own lives.

Why do you think God took 2000 years to bring the solution to the sin problem?

THE OUTCOME

Even with all the incredible stories connecting the dots from the promised Messiah to the person Jesus, most members of Israel—the Jews—didn’t recognize or accept Jesus as the Savior of the world. They didn’t recognize the one who would provide the way for our sin to be eliminated so we could overcome death and enter into a personal relationship with God and have eternal life.

In John 3:1-21 we read about the story of Nicodemus, who came to Jesus with questions about salvation.

FROM WORD ALIVE BIBLE

Jesus' nighttime meeting with Nicodemus and his midday encounter with the Samaritan woman (4:5-42) show two of the many different ways in which he dealt with people. Whether it had to do with a respected urban leader like Nicodemus, or a toughened, independent loner like the woman of Samaria, Jesus approached people on the own terms. He demonstrated for us what it means to live, work, and communicate the gospel in a pluralistic society.

Salvation is extended to all. Jesus taught the people at a level of their understanding.

> John records many other ways Jesus dealt with people and many ways they responded to him.

< Some became believers after they were fed (6:4-14).

< Some after they were healed (9:1-38).

< Some after they had seen that Christ had been raised from the dead. (20:24-29).

< Some responded to the Lord's miracles.

< Some to his teaching.

If believers today are going to present the gospel in a pluralistic world, like Jesus, we need to use many different approaches.

Salvation is the beginning of a relationship with God through Jesus. Do you have trouble setting aside traditional thoughts in order to bring the gospel message to people on their level?

Do you think the Church has difficulty doing this? Do doctrines and church traditions ever get in the way of the simple gospel message?

> We should search for creative ways to influence our friends and coworkers for Christ.

Paul reinforces what we must do to receive this gift of grace.

Romans 5:12-17

¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

¹³ To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

Sin came into the world through one man—Adam.

> Contrary to secular thought, death is not a “natural” part of human life—it came through sin.

- > In the biblical sense, death is never natural but is “the last enemy to be conquered. (1 Cor. 15:26)
- > These verses speak of both physical and spiritual death.

Verse 13 says that Sin was in the world before the Law of Moses was given, but it was not technically reckoned as sin before the time of the law.

> Paul does not mean that people were guiltless without the law.

< He said in Romans 2:12 that those without the written law are still judged by God.

^ E.g. Those who died in the flood (Genesis 6-9) and those who were judged at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9).

< Since people still died, this shows that they were guilty – as a consequence of Adam’s sin but possibly also as a consequence of having broken the universal moral law of the conscience before the written law was given.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Death ruled the human race by virtue of the sin of Adam, whereas Christians now stand as rulers because of the work of Christ.

Romans 10:1-4; 8-13

10 Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ² For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³ Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. ⁴ Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

To confess Jesus with our mouth is not an act of works, but rather an outward evidence of an inward faith.

¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Paul shows us that we can be sincere in our religious believe, but sincerity does not lead one to salvation.

< To do this is to attempt to be righteous before God on the basis of our own works.

How would your paraphrase in your own words the above verses in Romans 10?

KEY QUESTION: "How do I have a relationship with God?"

The answer seems to come from five particular passages of Scripture. Each one seemed to help answer the question.

The first passage, Mark 10:17-22 : **DO GOOD WORKS**

Here we face that question of Salvation—what must one do to be saved.

- > Jesus extended the invitation to the young man to follow him.
- > He spoke with love and not condemnation.
- > We can conclude from vs. 21 that if we want to have a relationship with God, then we need to do good works.

Is Jesus introducing salvation by works here? If not, what is he trying to say?

[We will get back to this statement so don't be concerned that we are emphasizing salvation by works. These five passages will present a scriptural progression.]

The second passage: John 3:1-7, 9, 16: **BELIEVE**

Jesus was describing the spiritual rebirth God requires.

- > This rebirth was finally attainable through Jesus.
- > God's motivation for sending Jesus? LOVE.

If we want to have a relationship with God and eternal life, then we must BELIEVE in Jesus and why he came.

Why do you think some people find it so hard to believe? Do you have difficulty believing?

The third passage: Acts 2:14, 21, 37-38: **REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED**

Pentecost had come. As Jesus had promised, the Holy Spirit came and filled them.

- > This was the birth of the Church.

The people heard Peter's message, believed. They had repented of their sin and turned from walking away from to walking toward him. This began the transformation.

> They then asked, "Now what do we do?"

< Peter said, we must call on the name of the Lord, repent and then be baptized.

In Christian churches today we find the act of baptism an item of debate. Why do you think this debate arises?

The fourth passage: Romans 10:1-4; 9-10: **BELIEVE AND PROFESS**

As mentioned earlier, we see the Israelites were trying to develop their own righteousness.

> Works cannot get us to our salvation. We are not good enough. Only God is good enough, through Jesus, who fulfilled all the requirements of the law.

< When we believe in him, we receive righteousness. This is the only solution.

So how do we make this solution happen for us?

> Romans 10:9-10

< Believe with your heart.

< Profess with out loud with your mouth.

> This kind of confession has to come from the heart. (Luke 6:45)

> If we want to have a relationship with God and have eternal life, then we must believe and profess.

Above we see that the spoken word is a big part of our profession of faith, but is this the only way we can profess our faith?

The fifth passage: Ephesians 2:8-9: **COME TO FAITH BY GRACE**

Faith is not a separate category from believe. They come from the same word in Greek.

> In this Ephesians passage, Paul adds a new insight into salvation.

< The word *grace* means we do not deserve salvation.

^ We are not entitled to it.

^ God is not obligated to offer it.

> God makes us this offer of his righteousness that we cannot achieve on our own.

< To receive this offer we must express faith in who Jesus is and receive what he has done for us.

Now we swing back to the first passage we looked at about the rich young ruler. Notice the phrase "not by works."

> Jesus knew the young man had never, and could never, really keep the law perfectly. Jesus was trying to get him to see he couldn't.

< Jesus' challenge for the young man to give away his wealth to the poor was his way of trying to lead the man to realize he could not keep the law.

< Jesus wanted to see him express his faith and realize that salvation did not come by works— following the laws.

Randy Frazee puts it this way, “Our good works do not contribute in any way to coming into a right relationship with God, but they do express and manifest that we do have a relationship with God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.”

Are some Christians/Churches in danger of putting too much emphasis on works and not enough on grace...or too much emphasis on grace and not enough on works? What are the dangers of not having a Biblical balance of grace and good works?

Salvation is from Christ alone, and our acceptance of his gift must genuinely come from the expression of faith from the heart.

KEY IDEA: I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

FROM ETHANIC ACE, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS by Randy Frazee

Here is the decision a person should make from the heart, placed into a prayer of acceptance to God.

Dear God, I can't, but you can.

I believe in Jesus, who is God. I believe he died and rose from the dead. I place my faith in Christ to make me right with you and give me eternal life. I have no other plan but to have faith and to trust you.

I am doing a 180 today and pointing my life toward you. I will no longer run away from you, but toward you.

Then there comes an outward declaration to the world — a way for us to demonstrate our faith decision: “I profess you with my mouth, out loud for others to know where I stand. And I publicly express my full devotion to you through baptism.”

Salvation is not difficult to understand. God made it clear and simple. (Acts 4:12)

Here is what salvation is not:

> Salvation is not something we can earn or deserve. (Acts 15:11)

> Salvation is not one of many ways. (John 14:6)

> Salvation is not unconditional reconciliation for all humans. (Revelation 20:11-5)

< At the end of time at the final judgment, while it is a nice thought, not everyone makes it into God's eternal kingdom.

Do the above three points cause you to see the urgency of professing the gospel?

Do you know of anyone who sees salvation as one, or all of these? If so, what will you tell them?



FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

KEY APPLICATION: What difference does this make in the way I live?

- **We seek to please God because of what he has done for us, not to earn a relationship with him.**

The apostle Paul writes, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20) No matter what troubles I face in this life, they pale in comparison to my salvation for eternity. Paul reminds us not to lose heart: “Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-17)

- **We walk in grace.**

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes, “Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?”(Galatians 3:1-3)

- **We offer grace to others.**

Let us not forget Jesus’ parable of the unmerciful servant recorded in Matthew 18:21 – 35. It would be wrong and inconsistent for us to refuse to offer grace and forgiveness to someone else in light of the grace and forgiveness God has shown to us.

How about you? Do you believe this offer of Jesus? Have you received it for yourself? None of the other chapters will matter much unless you embrace the truths found in this one.

If you have not received this salvation, pray the prayer on page 11, or pray your own prayer. Then write down the date this happened, and what you felt as you gave your life over to your Savior. Refer to this when doubts may come, to remember this act of faith given by grace.
