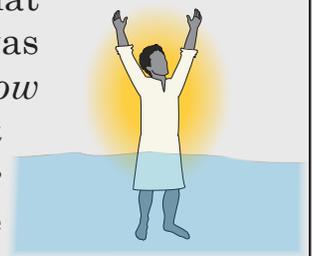


Lesson 10: Anyone Can Be Saved!

Introduction: The Great Question

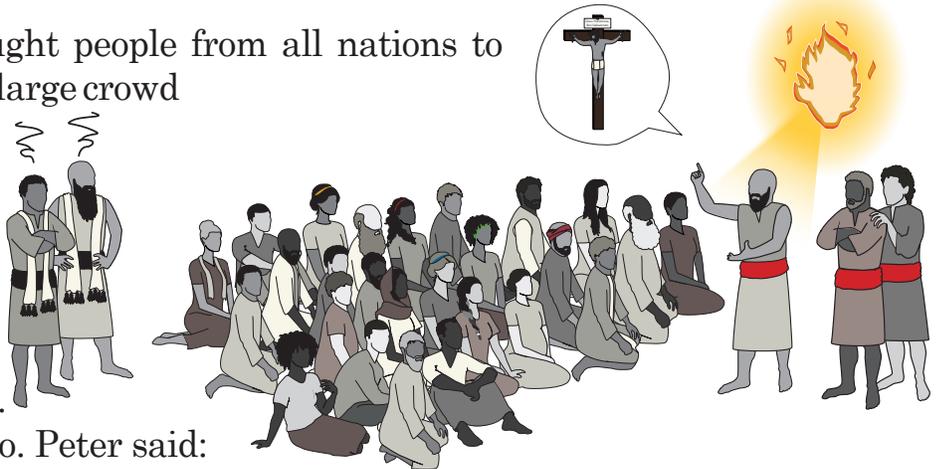
*What must I do to be saved?*¹ This is the great question that people have asked since the good news about Jesus' sacrifice was first preached. Other inquiries about salvation might be: *How does a person become a Christian? How does someone begin a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? How does one join the church?* While the wording may vary, the concepts point to the same inquiry: *the need be saved from sin and spiritual death.*



The First Conversions

After His resurrection, Jesus stayed on the earth forty days. Then, He ascended to Heaven in clouds. Later, God sent the Holy Spirit to inspire Jesus' apostles.² The Spirit appeared like fire and wind. He gave them miraculous power to *speak in tongues*. This means they could to speak in foreign languages with no prior study or experience. God granted them the ability to overcome the curse of Babel from thousands of years ago!³ The apostles immediately began preaching.

A special festival had brought people from all nations to Jerusalem. Peter preached to a large crowd of Jews and explained who Jesus was, why He mattered, and how the people were all guilty for putting Jesus to death. Many people were convicted of their sins when they heard this gospel sermon. They asked what they should do. Peter said:



*“Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*⁴

Three thousand people obeyed Jesus' gospel and were baptized! The Christian Age had begun and the church was established.⁵ The Bible says these new Christians:

*[...] ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*⁶

¹ Acts 16:30

² Acts 2:1-4; See *Christian Basics: Miraculous Gifts in the NT*

³ See Genesis 11 for the curse of Babel

⁴ Acts 2:38

⁵ For more on the church, please consider *PSB: The Church Series*

⁶ Acts 2:46-47

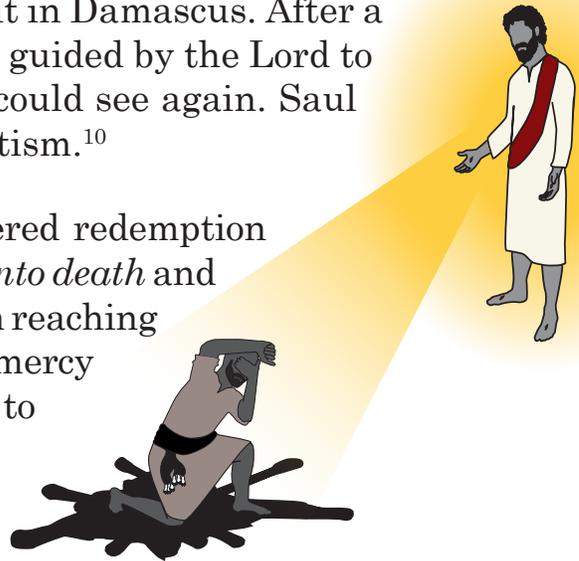
Discussion Questions:

- What is the difference between the phrases: "be saved" and "become a Christian"?
- What did Peter tell the people to do in order to be saved?

The Worst Sinner

The Bible shows the Jewish religious leaders greatly persecuted the church. While they stoned a Christian to death, a man named Saul watched in approval.⁷ He began persecuting Christians *unto death*.⁸ While traveling to a different city to arrest some, Jesus appeared and blinded Saul! He asked why Saul was persecuting *Him*. Jesus implied that when a Christian is persecuted, He is too.⁹ Saul was told to wait in Damascus. After a few days, a Christian named Ananias was guided by the Lord to find Saul. He touched his eyes, and Saul could see again. Saul immediately washed his sins away in baptism.¹⁰

How could such a terrible man be offered redemption from his sins? Saul persecuted Christians *unto death* and tried to stop God's message of salvation from reaching the lost! The reason that God offered Saul mercy was to demonstrate that God wants all men to be saved, even the enemies of the church. Saul became known as *Paul*. Through the Holy Spirit, Paul explained God's grace in his own life like this:



*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.*¹¹

The Good News About Salvation

Paul considered himself *the worst of sinners* because he had opposed God and approved in the arrest and murder of Christians. He reflected that if God could forgive *the worst of sinners*, God could forgive anyone!

The gospel of Jesus is good news for a good reason: *we can all be saved!* Salvation is not for people of a certain skin color, language, culture, wealth, or education. God wants *everyone* to be saved! God created every person in His image. Every person is special and unique to God. No matter who one is, what they have done, or how unworthy they may feel, God loves us all and wants everyone to be saved.

⁷ Acts 6-7

⁸ Acts 22:4

⁹ Saul's encounter with Jesus and eventual conversion are found in Acts 9

¹⁰ Paul's baptism is recorded in Acts 9:10-22 and 22:15-16

¹¹ Timothy 1:15-16 (NIV)

Discussion Questions:

- How would you feel if Saul had arrested your family but later came to worship with the church where you meet?
- Is anyone ever "too bad" to become a Christian?

Salvation starts with God

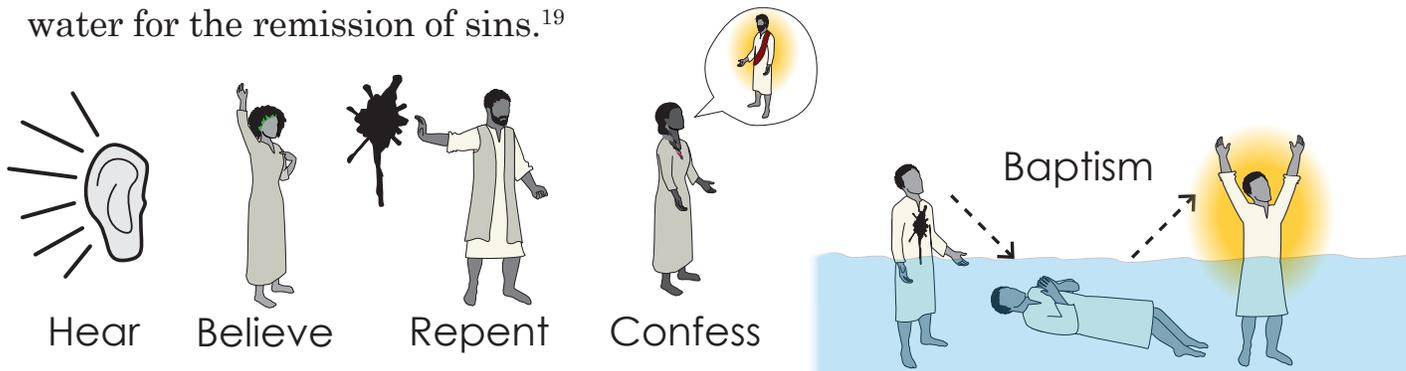
The converted Paul explained that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*. Salvation from sin and spiritual death must always be seen as Divine in origin. Mankind has tried to save themselves in many ways, but sin is too great and mankind is too weak. For this reason, salvation starts with God. Please consider these terms:

When God plans and God works	When God plans and man works	When man plans and man works
Grace	Faith	Merit
<i>an unmerited/undeserved favor</i>	<i>a demonstration of complete trust</i>	<i>a reward or wage that one deserves</i>

The Bible says that sinners are saved by grace through faith.¹² Salvation starts with God's grace because He did not have to send Jesus. In His love, God sent His innocent Son to die in our guilty place. This unmerited and undeserved favor is God's grace. The Bible teaches we cannot be saved by our own works.¹³ If one tries to *earn* salvation through their own works of merit, they imply that salvation is something they *deserve* and not God's precious gift. The Bible also says we access God's grace through faith. We have faith in God by obeying what He has commanded (also called "obeying the gospel").¹⁴ What has God planned for penitent sinners to do in faith?

What must I do to be saved?

The Bible teaches that faith comes by *hearing* the gospel.¹⁵ Faith *believes*¹⁶ that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be. Faith is shown in *repentance*¹⁷ of sins. Repentance is a lifestyle change from serving sin to serving God. Faith is stated by *confessing*¹⁸ that Jesus is the Son of God. These words are confessed when one is ready to be saved, but it doesn't end there. The new lifestyle of godliness becomes a confession of Christ. Faith is demonstrated when a penitent sinner is *baptized* in water for the remission of sins.¹⁹



¹² Ephesians 2:8-10; See *Christian Basics: All About Works*

¹³ Ephesians 2:6,8; See *Christian Basics: How Do You Become a Christian?*

¹⁴ 2 Thessalonians 1:8

¹⁵ Romans 10:17

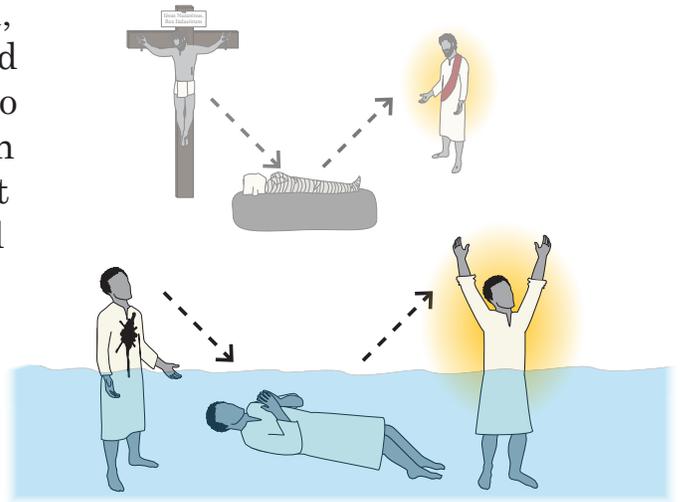
¹⁶ Mark 16:16

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 7:10

¹⁸ Romans 10:9-10, Acts 8:36-38, Matthew 10:32-33

¹⁹ Acts 2:38; 22:16, Galatians 3:27-28; see next page

Baptism is symbolic of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. He submitted to a physical action (death on a cross) to accomplish a spiritual action (redemption of sin for mankind) Likewise, a penitent sinner symbolically dies to sin, is buried with Christ, and is resurrected as a new, saved person!²⁰ The penitent sinner submits to a physical action (going under water) to accomplish a spiritual action (remission of sins.)



When a penitent sinner is baptized, there is nothing magical in the water that literally washes us clean. The water is not holy. The act of faith that obeys as God instructed is what saves us. The Bible says:

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ²¹

Hearing the gospel, believing, repenting of sin, confessing Christ, and baptism must be done in faith. Without faith, hearing the gospel would only be *listening* to words; confessing Christ would only be *saying* some words; being baptized would only be getting wet. By the grace of God, we obey the gospel of Jesus in faith when we obey what God has planned. From that moment, we belong to Christ and do our best to live a Christian lifestyle.

In Review: Anyone Can Be Saved!

After Jesus ascended to Heaven, His followers preached the good news in Jerusalem. 3,000 converted to the Christian faith. These souls were saved by God's grace through faith (just like we can be today). God wants all men to be saved. While some may feel guilty or unworthy, the Bible teaches that God's grace can reach anyone who is willing to faithfully obey the gospel. Please know that Jesus has *you* in mind when He said so long ago:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16

²⁰ Romans 6:3-6

²¹ 1 Peter 3:20-21 (NASB); See *Christian Basics: All About Baptism*

Discussion Questions:

- Please spend some time discussing grace, faith, and merit. Consider asking "what-how-why" questions about each word.
- In your own words, explain how someone becomes a Christian.
- Have you been baptized for the remission of sins? If not, why not?