



INTRODUCING

THE GOSPEL

The way to be saved





Lesson 9: The way to be saved

Introduction

Throughout this course, we have seen how sin leads to death, but that sin can be forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

But to make use of his sacrifice and gain eternal life - to be saved, or to gain salvation - we need to associate ourselves with it.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”

Romans 3:23-25

This explains the point of Jesus’ sacrifice. We have all, from time to time, turned away from doing what is right, which makes us sinners. This puts us on the road to death, but Jesus has made a sacrifice of himself to allow our sins to be forgiven.

Associating ourselves with this sacrifice is a process which contains several different steps.

In this chapter you will learn:

- Why faith is important for salvation
- What actions we can take to show we believe
- The importance of baptism as a symbol



Faith

The idea of faith is central to the response we need to make to Jesus' sacrifice. However, it's a more complicated concept in practice than many suppose.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.””

Romans 1:16-17

Faith certainly includes the idea of believing the truth revealed by God. But having only an academic knowledge of the Bible, while useful as a guide to life, is not enough to be saved. The Apostle Paul develops this idea in his letter to the Romans:

“He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.”

Romans 2:6-8

This passage describes judgement according to works. Works are the things that we do, the way that we live our lives, and the interactions we have with other people. Here, Paul points out that these are what we are judged on.

Initially, this might appear to be a discrepancy in the Bible's teaching. But the idea of faith fits into both passages. The clue to what is going on is the phrase “obey the truth”. We cannot obey the truth unless we know what it is, but just knowing is not enough. To obey the truth, we must also act on it.

The connection between faith and action is also explored in the letter to the Hebrews. This passage begins with a statement about faith:

“but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

Hebrews 10:38



This verse sets out the idea that one lives by faith. The letter goes on to make another statement:

“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

Hebrews 11:6

This describes two points about faith. It requires belief - at least in the existence of God - and it requires action, in that we must then seek God. Thought and action are both parts of faith.

This chapter goes on to provide a list of examples of faith. These are taken from the Old Testament, and include accounts of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses and more. Here is part of the account of Abraham:

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.”

Hebrews 11:8-9

This tells us one of the things that Abraham did by faith. He left his family and his city and went to live in a tent, not initially knowing where he was heading. He did this because he believed the promises that God made to him. He took an action because of his faith.

Hebrews 11 describes other incidents to reinforce this point:

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.””

Hebrews 11:17-18

This talks about the time Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham believed God and trusted that he would somehow protect his son, in order to fulfil the promise made to him. God did deliver Isaac from death, and Abraham had shown his faith.



The important thing here is that Abraham demonstrated his faith by the things that he did. His faith was not merely a theory, it was something that informed his life and drove him on to action. Abraham's faith included action, and it was because of this action that he was acceptable to God.

The letter to James reinforces this example of Abraham, and digs deeper into the relationship between faith and works.

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works”

James 2:21-22

Abraham's faith was of value because it affected the way that he lived his life. Had he only believed what God had said, and not done anything, then he would not really have had faith.

This explanation is repeated many times in James:

“So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

James 2:17

“But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

James 2:18

“For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”

James 2:26

The point is that for faith to be real, it must affect our actions. To be faithful, we not only need to believe God, but need to live a life where we act on this belief.



Baptism

To have our sins forgiven, we need to associate ourselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus. God has provided a mechanism for this: baptism.

Baptism is the 'burial' of a believer in water as a symbol of the death of Jesus:

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Romans 6:3-4

The picture of baptism here emphasises the idea that it involves submerging the person being baptised in water so that they are completely immersed in it. They then come back up from the water, symbolising the resurrection of Jesus. This is the time at which we become associated with Jesus.

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

Romans 6:5

By being associated with the death of Jesus in baptism, we will then be raised in a resurrection like his. This, however, will be at the day of judgement.

A further picture of the symbolism of baptism appears in the next verses:

“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.”

Romans 6:6-7

This depicts baptism as the point at which we are set free from the grasp of sin. The picture of sin is of a master who holds sinners as slaves. By being baptised, we are no longer the slaves of sin, and consequently, of death.



When we are set free from sin, we are also set free from this law; sin will no longer lead to our complete death. Instead, death becomes a temporary sleep which ends in an awakening at the day of judgement.

“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.”

Romans 6:8-9

By being associated with the death of Jesus, we follow him to eternal life. To die with Christ in baptism is to live with him in the resurrection.

We can summarise the Biblical picture of baptism like this:

- Baptism is the ‘burial’ of a believer in water
- It associates the believer with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ
- It is the first action of a life of faith

Being baptised requires a conscious choice. The decision to follow Jesus and live a life of faith is called ‘repentance’. This is the decision that precedes baptism, and one the Apostles talk about:

“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.””

Acts 2:37-39

The people who heard the Apostle Peter asked him what they should do to follow the risen Jesus. His answer was that they should repent - choose to follow God’s way - and be baptised. This is what we also need to do.

Of course, baptism is only of use if it is an action which stems from faith!



Lesson summary:

Salvation from sin, and therefore from death, requires four steps:

1. **Belief:** It is necessary to understand the basics of the Gospel and to believe that these are true
2. **Repentance:** It is necessary to change the direction of one's life and make a commitment to following the teaching of God through Jesus Christ
3. **Baptism:** It is necessary to be immersed in water in order to become associated with the death and resurrection of Jesus
4. **Live faithfully:** It is necessary to continue to live the Gospel. This involves teaching it to others and living a life which attempts to follow the principles of Jesus Christ.



Lesson 9 summary questions:

1:

- a) Read **Hebrews 11:24-28**. What did Moses do to show his faith?
- b) Read **Hebrews 11:7**.
 - i) What did Noah do as a consequence of his faith?
 - ii) What would have happened had he not done it?
- c) Read **Mark 2:3-12**.
 - i) Why did the four men decide to bring the paralyzed man to Jesus?
 - ii) What would have happened if they had not believed that Jesus could cure their friend?
 - iii) What was the result of the faith of the men involved?
- d) Can you think of a good definition of the word 'faith'?

2: Read **Acts 2:38**, **2 Corinthians 7:10** and **Luke 15:1-7**. What do these passages tell us about repentance?

3: Read **Acts 8:35-39**, **John 3:23** and **Matthew 3:16**, which describes some baptisms taking place.

- a) Why was much water needed?
- b) Why are the people involved described as 'coming out of the water'?
- c) What does the metaphor of burial tell us about baptism? (Romans 6:4)

4: Consider the account of the man healed of blindness by Jesus in **John 9:1-7**.

- a) What did the man have to do in order to be cured of his blindness?
- b) If the man had not believed Jesus, what would have happened?
- c) If the man had believed Jesus but not gone to Siloam, what would have happened?
- d) Is it important to follow the way described by God - and Jesus - in accepting the Gospel? Why?



Deeper dive questions

- 5: What should a follower of Jesus do after they are baptised?
- 6: How important is it for someone who wishes to be a follower of Jesus to be baptised?
- 7: When we sin after we are baptised, what should we do about it?