

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons
309 - The Biblical Doctrine Of Salvation

1. Introduction

Speaking of salvation, we know we're saved by Grace. We also know we're saved by faith. We understand that the Holy Spirit plays a part in our salvation. But how do we access the grace God has provided. How does our faith save us. What part does the Holy Spirit actually play in redemption. In this lesson we'll discuss **The Biblical Doctrine Of Salvation** as we answer these questions.

2. Time honored traditions

In the Bible believing world ideas about how one receives forgiveness of their sins varies. The process and mechanism by which one is saved has been the subject of debate over the centuries to the point that members of some groups were killed for their beliefs by members of other groups. This sounds tragically familiar. Pagans in the Roman empire perceived Christianity as a threat and sought to eliminate anyone who deviated from state sanctioned religion or emperor worship. As the church grew, fell away and controlled the Western world, heretics, those who didn't agree with the teachings of the church, were hunted, arrested and executed. During the Protestant Reformation, differing doctrines battled for supremacy, and sometimes did so by eliminating leaders in other groups. Christian religious history isn't peaceful and has a long line of conflict between groups.

Today, the doctrines that survived these battles have emerged as time honored traditions. In recent decades many groups have agreed to disagree and try to hide or deny their differences in the name of unity. In spite of this apparent compromise there remain ideas, debates and arguments about how a person is saved. While the turmoil continues in the background, and individuals lacking a familial heritage of spiritual teachings struggle to find God, or make sense of the Bible, the scriptures stand ready to reveal the truth about sin, salvation and eternal reward.

We need to understand the relationship between faith, grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. I've already covered each of these in previous lessons and you can review those before we proceed if you need to. In this lesson we'll review and discuss:

- a. Grace and salvation
- b. Faith and salvation
- c. Works and salvation
- d. Water and salvation
- e. The scarcity of salvation

Let's take a look at each of these.

3. Grace and salvation

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In the last lesson I discussed the idea that we're living in the era of grace and as a result aren't bound by law. I hear that expressed sometimes by individuals who desire to be saved but don't want limitations on their lives and activities. There are many who believe their love for God and Christ gives them freedom to pursue what they feel is important or needed and engage in activities they deem personally fulfilling. I've even heard some say that they're saved and claim to be Christians but aren't part of a local group of believers and don't think that's required. The reason often given to support this is that we're living under grace and therefore free from such considerations. Scriptures speaking of liberty and freedom in Christ are often misused to support these ideas. In the Bible believing realm there are groups that cater to personal wants and ideas and slide the doctrine of the New Testament to the background. To reinforce these ideas a great deal of emphasis is placed on benevolent and charitable activities that are seen as spreading God's grace to everyone through blessings. When we try to direct the focus to the actual doctrine of the New Testament, the idea is often dismissed with the rebuttal that we're covered by God's grace implying that the words of the scriptures aren't as vital as we might think they are.

I'm over simplifying this but you might be familiar with similar attitudes or maybe this is what you think. There are millions of believers who take comfort in this idea and don't worry about the specifics. But, as I brought out in the last lesson, is that accurate?

Are we saved by grace? Absolutely. Are we saved by grace alone? Yes and no. Like everything else we've discussed in this series we have to understand the concept of salvation by grace in it's fullest context. We can take a closer look at salvation and God's grace to understand the fine points.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God foretold of a time when the serpent, Satan, would bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, and Christ, the seed of the woman, would bruise the head of the serpent, Satan. The blow to Christ would be a serious injury, but Christ would destroy the power of Satan, bruising his head, as the writer of Hebrews notes (**Heb 2.14**).

God was under no obligation to save humans, but he would. Later when mankind corrupted themselves, grace was at work in God's warning to Noah when he gave the patriarch instructions to build the ark that saved his family from the flood (**Gen 6-9**). God was under no obligation to save creation. He could have destroyed everything and started over, but he didn't - there was a greater plan at work.

Abraham, whose family was idolatrous (**Josh 24.2**), was called by God to go to a land he would later give to his offspring (**Gen 12.1-2**). That became a reality later when the Hebrews returned from Egypt under the leadership of Moses and Joshua. The nation rose, flourished, fell away, were punished and then restored as a remnant returned and eventually brought the Messiah into the world. All as fulfillment of God's promise he made in Eden when pronouncing consequences on the serpent, Eve and Adam for their transgression.

I noted in the last lesson that **John 3.16** is a definition of the grace of God and that Christ

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is the ultimate expression of God's grace. God's grace began with the Lord's determination to save humanity as noted by Paul (**Titus 1.1-2**), was concealed through the years and then revealed in Christ. We can see this as we look at the scriptures.

- a. God promised to save mankind (**Titus 1.1-2, Gen 3.15**)
- b. Actions were taken by God to bring this about (**Gen 6-9, Gen 12.1-2**)
- c. Christ came into the world to provide the final sacrifice for sin (**Heb 10.1-4, Heb 9.15-16**)
- d. Christ defined grace in his conversation with Nicodemus (**Gen 3.16**)
- e. Christ is the only avenue to reach God and be saved (**John 14.6**)
- f. The grace of God, found in Christ, has appeared in the world and is available to all (**Titus 2.11**)
- g. The grace of God, which had been hidden, or kept as a mystery, is revealed and explained in the appearance of the Messiah (**1 Tim 3.16**)

Are we saved by grace? Yes. God determined to save his creation and provided the means for that in Christ. He sent Christ into the world, allowed him to be killed as a sacrifice then raised him from the dead so that all who believe in him would be saved. Grace is therefore the provision, made available by God, to be saved. Salvation is therefore through Christ by following the instructions Christ issued and that we see followed on the day of Pentecost in **Acts 2** and following.

4. Faith and salvation

Are we saved by faith? Absolutely. Faith is an essential element that has to be present or we won't be acceptable to God. But how are faith and salvation related. For some the idea of faith means having complete confidence and trust in God, believing on Christ and placing their lives in the Lord's hands. I agree with that completely. But too many times when we talk about salvation and conversion there are elements that are rejected in the idea that all one needs is faith and having that will result in God shedding his spirit on us and saving us. That's partially correct.

In an earlier lesson I discussed faith in two ways. One as a characteristic of a believer and secondly as an object made up of God's word. The writer of Hebrews defines faith as "***the substance of things hoped for***" and "***the evidence of things not seen***" (**Heb 11.1**). Both of these elements are contained in the word of God.

God's word, the scriptures, reveals the Lord and his nature. It contains his word, and his word contains promises as well as instructions. The writer of Hebrews also tells us that without faith it's impossible to please God (**Heb 11.6**) so we know it's a critical element. But is it enough to believe and have a level of confidence in God that we have no doubts or worries and that he'll save us? To answer that we have to add a companion element to faith - works.

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5. Works and salvation

We have a definition of faith. We have a reliance on God, trust in Jesus and we know that he'll save us. We trust that we have a home prepared after this life is over as Christ promised (**John 14.3**). We know we need to have faith in God and be unwavering in our conviction. But what kind of faith is it that will save us?

I'm going back to Hebrews 11 and we're going to take a look at the faith hall of fame as it's known as. As we go through the examples we need to keep in mind an important point. The faith that saves, or makes us acceptable in God's sight, is one that is demonstrated by what we do. This is where the conversation usually gets tense.

Some excuse themselves from commands in the scriptures believing we're saved by faith, or by grace, and reject certain aspects of what the New Testament teaches. The argument usually presented is that there's nothing we need to do to be saved other than have faith and receive the grace of God because actions on our part are works, and we're not saved by works. And, once again, that's partially correct.

There's nothing we can do as humans that will obligate God to save us. We can't earn salvation and we acknowledge that it's a free gift from God. We must understand that while salvation is provided freely by God through his grace, and faith is necessary, that doesn't mean there's nothing we have to do access that grace and therefore salvation. A review of the lives of the faithful in **Hebrews 11** illustrates this point.

- a. Noah was warned by God that destruction was coming and followed God's instructions to build an ark that resulted in his family's survival (**Heb 11.7**)
- b. Abraham's faith was shown in the fact that when instructed to leave his homeland and go to the place God would show him, he packed up and left (**Heb 11.8**)
- c. Sara placed her confidence in God that she would have a child which she did (**Heb 11.11**)
- d. Abraham offered his son Isaac on the altar as instructed by God confident that the Lord could raise his only son from the dead (**Heb 11.17-19**)
- e. Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph confident that the Lord would return them to the land promised to Abraham (**Heb 11.21**)
- f. Moses' mother hid the baby from the Egyptians confident that God could save the child and protect him from Pharaoh's soldiers. (**Heb 11.23**)
- g. Moses rejected a place in the Egyptian court and later answered the call to lead God's

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people out of bondage and deliver the law from God (**Heb 11.27-29**)

h. The Israelites marched around the city of Jericho for seven days as instructed by God resulting in the destruction of the city (**Heb 11.30**)

I. Rahab hid the spies that came to Jericho knowing that their God was powerful and could save her and her family (**Heb 11.31**)

The list continues in **Heb 11.32-39** demonstrating how faith manifested in the lives of those characterized as faithful. Having said that we can now analyze these examples and apply them to our discussion of faith, works and salvation.

In each case we have the hope of redemption, salvation, preservation or blessings. Each of these are contained in God's statements (his word) or the confidence that the faithful had in the Lord to care for them. In each case, their faith took the form of an action on their part. Noah built the ark. Abraham moved his family to the place God showed him. Sara believed God and waited, a passive action but an action nonetheless. Moses mother had confidence that God would save her child but had she not gone to the trouble of placing him in an ark and putting the baby in the river it wouldn't have happened. Moses followed God's instructions delivering the Lord's word to Pharaoh then leading the children of Israel to Sinai, giving them the law he received from God and standing as a mediator between them and God. Joshua followed God's directions in regard to Jericho with the result that the city fell and began the conquest of the land promised to Abraham. Rahab, endangered her own life concealing the spies, having confidence in the power of the Hebrew God to save her for which she and her family were saved.

So what does all this mean?

All of these individuals had faith in God. Their faith led them to act in a way that led to their preservation or blessing. Because God owed it to them because of what they had done? No.

The actions taken by the faithful are consistent with conditions or commands given by God. Their faith led them to behave in a manner that demonstrated their confidence in God and his ability to save them. They didn't earn anything. They simply met the conditions stipulated by God and when they did so were blessed for their actions. Performing an action outlined or commanded by God is not a work that will earn salvation or obligate God to save us. It's critical that we meet the conditions or requirements given by God to demonstrate that we have the kind of faith the Lord will respect. In that sense, works and faith not only go together, they're inseparable.

6. Water and salvation

Now we come to one of the most controversial aspects of a discussion of the doctrine of the New Testament. The need to be baptized in water in order to access the saving grace of God

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through Christ as a statement of faith in God. Many argue that one only needs to accept Christ in their hearts and acknowledge Jesus as their Lord. That's part of it. In a previous lesson I discussed this thoroughly and I'll provide a link to that lesson. Let's look at the common points we all agree on.

First we all agree that we need to understand or hear the message of the Gospel. We can't believe in what we don't know about. The information gained leads to a conviction in which we're convinced of the truthfulness of the scriptural message. In short, we believe the Gospel.

Once we reach a point of belief we realize there's a difference between how we've been living and what God wants us to be doing and we need to change. We call that repentance.

At this stage we understand the need to acknowledge this by confessing our belief in Christ.

Those are points we can all agree on. A popular belief is that this is the point at which one is saved and filled with the Spirit enjoying a relationship with God. This is where we have to go back to the scriptures and look at the missing element - water baptism.

Although many recognize that statements commanding baptism are in the New Testament, a prevailing idea is that it's optional and therefore not essential. To support this idea some will refer to various passages in the epistles that mention being saved by confession, faith, grace or belief. The problem with that is that the epistles are addressed to Christians who have all rendered obedience to the Gospel. They've been baptized, so the need to continue confessing Christ, acting on their faith and expressing their belief are things they need to keep doing. Christianity isn't a passive religion. Once we've been converted we need to live in a way that shows we're being led by the word of God and therefore the Spirit of God.

A second statement has to do with the idea that baptism is a work and we're not saved by works, so baptism isn't essential. Some who present this argument sometimes go so far as to imply that the baptism spoken of in the epistles is that of the Holy Spirit. I covered that in the previous lesson so we understand that Holy Spirit baptism isn't what's being discussed.

A third persuasion is that all one needs to do is believe and accept Christ. Some reject the idea that we even need to understand the scriptures and rely on internal feelings confirming their blessing by the grace of God. The problem with that, and the other arguments against baptism, is that there are no examples in the New Testament of anyone being saved by praying to God, receiving the Holy Spirit or only having faith. There was another component - baptism.

Christ directed the disciples ***“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”*** (Matt 28.19-20).

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Mark records a similar statement writing, “*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” (Mk 16.15-16). Some reject this since it isn’t in some of the oldest manuscripts but if we remove this passage from the list we still have others that repeat the same thing.

The book of Acts records examples of conversion. This chart shows the elements present in each case of conversion. Some were told to repent, since that was what was needed. Others were told to believe since they already had faith in God. Some, like the apostle Paul were told to be baptized “*calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22.16) implying repentance and acceptance of the authority of Christ. Each example has elements that are similar, some elements are implied but the bottom line is that in every single case of conversion, without fail, the believers were immersed in water or baptized for the remission of sins.

Paul states the purpose of baptism plainly in his letter to the Romans. “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” (Rom 6.3-4). As noted by Paul, being baptized in water is the point at which we come in contact with the blood of Christ. Christ’s blood was shed in his death. Immersion, like Christ’s burial, is a death to a way of life followed by a resurrection.

Paul compares baptism to circumcision in his letter to the Colossians. “*In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*” (Col 2.11-12). As we submit to baptism, God himself performs the operation of cutting away the sins from our souls (Col 2.12-13). Once done we’re raised as a new creature as Paul told the Romans.

Paul also reminded the Galatians of the importance of baptism in his letter to the churches in that region who were being influenced by Judaizing teachers. Paul writes, “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” (Gal 3.27). Logically if one hasn’t been baptized into Christ, they haven’t put on Christ, and are therefore not forgiven of their sins. The message is plain.

But what about faith? Isn’t baptism a work and we’re not saved by works? Peter answers that question and provides us with the means to tie in to the discussion of faith we had earlier. Peter compares baptism to the time of Noah, stating, “*When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ..*” (1 Pet 3.20-21). Let’s take a closer look at this.

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Peter compares baptism to the actions of Noah at the time of the flood. We understand that Noah's faith had led him to build the ark. Building the ark was therefore an act of faith in God's word. Building the ark didn't earn salvation for the patriarch, his faith had been noticed by God and through the grace of God the Lord told him what to do to be saved. Had Noah failed to act on the information God gave him we wouldn't be reading about him. Noah's salvation was the result of his faith in God that caused him to act in a way that complied with God's conditions for preservation. That's the point to the whole story. Faith is confidence in God's word that leads one to act on what we're told in the way God has specified.

Now, Peter brings that together as he states that baptism is to us, what building the ark was for Noah. God has warned of a coming judgment. He's made a way for us to be saved through his grace. We need to act on our faith in God and comply with his instructions trusting that he'll save us in the end. Peter sums that up very well pointing out that being baptized isn't a meritorious work, it's the answer of a good conscience toward God. One that says I'll comply with what God has instructed because it's his will and command. Our faith is shown when we follow the instructions God has given without alteration.

For those who deny the significance of being baptized. I use an analogy I think mirrors what Satan would want for us all. If I was the devil, and I wanted to make sure you remained outside God's saving grace, I wouldn't interfere with you believing in God or Christ. I'd encourage it. I'd encourage you to believe, study the scriptures, do good deeds and live a devout and zealous life. I'd influence you to do everything God has asked us to do with one exception. I'd let you get to the edge of the waters of baptism but then I'd remind you of your personal convictions. I'd convince you that there's no need to be baptized. I'd encourage you to persevere through the trials of life and remind you of how wonderful Heaven will be. But I'd keep you out of the water. I'd argue that simply getting wet was such a small thing and doesn't matter. I'd remind you of your baptism as an infant if you were, completely disregarding the fact that infants can't consciously understand or exercise their faith. As your life comes to a close I'd be there beside you to remind you of all the good things you've done and the hope God has promised to all that believe. But even in the final hours I'd keep you away from the water of baptism. I'd help you forget that sin and death came into the world because two people ate a piece of fruit. I'd make that look like such a small thing and I'd convince you that baptism in water was really no big deal. And I'd watch you pass into eternity knowing you're not ready to go there. It doesn't have to be that way it we'll listen to what Christ has to say.

7. The scarcity of salvation

God's grace has been poured out on the world. Christ died for everyone. Salvation is available for all who want it. So why am I saying it's scarce. To answer that let's see what Christ had to say about it.

For those who rely on the idea of salvation through things like the sinner's prayer note what Christ has to say. "***Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the***

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kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt 7.21).

For those who believe that the scriptures are guidelines that allow for personal belief and opinion note this. Christ stated, “***Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.***” (Matt 7.14). Why will there be few that find it? The biggest obstacle we’ll face happens to be our own mind and attitude. Most won’t surrender their ideas, what they’ve been taught or their family traditions in favor of what the Bible says. And for that reason will be lost.

Christ also speaks of those who will spend their lives thinking they’re doing what the Lord wants them to do only to find out they were misguided. Christ stated, “***Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.***” (Matt 7.22-23). Good deeds and benevolent actions are wonderful, but if the things we do aren’t in line with the scriptures, God won’t recognize them and Christ won’t own us.

The scriptures are clear regarding the role of baptism. It’s an essential element in coming in contact with the saving grace provided through Christ by God. It’s a demonstration of faith in the promises of God and our acceptance of his authority. It’s not a work, it’s compliance with conditions specified by God for obedience to him. We can form our own opinion, ignore what the scriptures teach and take our chances, or, we can just do what we’ve been instructed to do. It’s our choice in this life, but it’ll be God’s judgment in the next.

Peter provides a final thought on this. “***For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?***” (1 Peter 4.17-18). I think back to Naaman the Syrian who was told by the prophet Elisha to dip seven times in the river Jordan and he’d be healed of his leprosy. Naaman balked thinking there were better rivers in his own country. His servant pointed out that had the prophet told him to do some great thing wouldn’t he have done it? (2 Kng 5.9-14). How about us?

8. What we’ve learned

- a. We’re saved by God’s grace through the provision of Christ
- b. Christ is the sum of the expression of God’s grace toward humanity
- c. We’re saved by faith when we trust God, listen to his word and do what he commands
- d. Meeting God’s conditions are actions that indicate compliance not meritorious works
- e. Faith in God is demonstrated by acting in the way he’s commanded
- f. Baptism was commanded by Christ, practiced by the apostles & taught in the scriptures
- g. All examples of conversion in the New Testament end with the baptism of the believer

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- h. Baptism represents a burial with Christ to rise to a new life
- I. Baptism is a figurative circumcision where God cuts sin away from our souls
- j. Satan is more than willing to help mislead us if we let him

9. Conclusion

Thanks for watching the series. In the past ten lessons we've just gotten started with the doctrine of the Bible but I've presented the core ideas that will help guide you in developing your understanding of the Bible. Keep reading, thinking and remember, God has the final say in everything.