

Lesson 7

How Does One Become a Christian? Part I

Salvation tends to get lost in a lot of religious jargon and doctrine. This two-part lesson is designed to cut through all the baggage and see the simple requirements of God to be saved – faith, repentance, and baptism. Each will be described and explained through the scriptures. This can be a very disturbing lesson for some, especially those who have adhered to less than Biblical views or have been assured since their youth that certain actions saved them. However, with a positive, inclusive presentation, it can simply be a matter of course correction for them in their spiritual journey. The goal here is to make a disciple of Christ not to “church” people to any creed, view, or doctrine. This is a positive, God-focused response to the greatest message ever given – the good news of Christ.

Acts 16:30-32 *To get started as a disciple, we must be saved.*

1. The jailer was a Roman and probably had no previous experience with the true God, nor had he likely ever heard of Jesus. What do you suppose he had in mind when he asked the question, “What must I do to be saved?” *Men have always had an awareness of the supernatural. Perhaps the jailer was asking a question concerning an immediate need to escape the wrath of Paul’s God, who had opened up the prison. Perhaps he was asking a loftier question about truth and eternal salvation after listening to Paul’s and Silas’ songs and prayers. Either way, he got the answer to both questions. Paul told him about Jesus and his word – whom to believe in to be saved and what to do.*
2. Belief in Jesus is the foundation of our response to Christ. Why do you suppose it is so? *We either trust in ourselves, others, false gods, or the God of heaven. Only faith in the true God can bring true salvation.*
3. What does it mean “to be saved?” *To be forgiven by God of my sin against Him. When my sins are forgiven, the separation between God and me is removed. I am included as a part of God’s family, the church, and God comes to dwell in me through His Holy Spirit.*
4. **Acts 2:38**
5. **1 Timothy 1:15**

Faith

Hebrews 11:1, 6 *Faith is not blind – it is sure and certain. It is also essential.*

1. What does it mean to be “sure” and “certain?” *Many see faith as blind belief. This, in fact, is the opposite of Biblical faith. Biblical faith is based on evidence, testimony, and historical record.*
2. What are the two essential components of faith mentioned here? *Belief in God’s existence (Psalms 14:1, the fool says there is no God) and belief that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*

Ephesians 2:8-10 *Faith is the right response to God's grace.*

1. What does "grace" mean? *Grace means "undeserved favor or mercy."* God's grace is expressed in His forgiving those who do not and cannot deserve forgiveness. He showed His grace by sending His own son to pay our penalty, freeing us from eternal condemnation. Paul says in **Romans 3:25-26**, that through the cross God was both just (in that the penalty was required to be paid) and the justifier (in that He paid the penalty through His own son).
2. What does "faith" mean? *The actual Greek word used simply means to "believe" or "trust."* The New Testament describes three necessary components to a faith which brings salvation. James 2:19 says even demons believe in God, and, of course, they are not saved. John observed leaders who "believed" but wouldn't confess it (**John 12:42-43**). The New Testament writers describe the three essential components of a saving faith as belief in the truth of the gospel, a complete surrender to Christ, and a life inspired by that surrender. Paul describes the components in **I Corinthians 15:1-3**. The Corinthians "received" the gospel (believed), "took their stand on it" (surrendered their lives to Christ), and were told they would be saved if they held firmly (a surrendered life). Otherwise, their belief was "in vain." This is contrary to the popular notion that simply doing the first two, culminating in a prayer for forgiveness, seals one's fate in heaven forever. In **Hebrews 10:36-39**, the writer says that to be saved, one must live their life by faith, and if one goes back, he will be destroyed. Being saved by faith is like a marriage relationship in that faithfulness must be lifelong. Paul says we are saved by faith that is from "first to last" (**Romans 1:16, 17**). We must be faithful from the beginning of our salvation to our physical death or we have not "lived by faith." Paul said of his own salvation, that upon his death, he had "kept the faith" (**2 Timothy 4:7-8**).
3. What is the connection between God's grace and our faith? *There is no one else worthy of our faith. Who else can you trust for your eternal security? If you cannot respond to the cross with faith, then there is no hope for salvation. It is when we respond to His gospel with faith that we receive His grace.*
4. What are "works" and why does Paul say we're not saved by them? There are two ways to have a relationship with God – either by our own performance or by His mercy and grace. The Law of Moses was given to demonstrate that no human, other than Jesus, could keep the Law with all of its requirements. However, many mistook the Law's purpose (to lead us to Christ) and pursued salvation by their own performance. They of course failed. Paul said in **Galatians 3:11**, "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law..." Hence, Paul says our only hope is to trust in God's grace and not think we "earn" salvation at all. We are all eternal death row inmates without Christ's redemption. So, we must never ever boast in ourselves.
5. Are "works" bad? *Not at all.* We must do them, but we must keep them in proper perspective and sequence. We were, after all, "created in Christ to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (**Ephesians 2:10**). Works come from faith (**James 2:14-26**). You CAN have works without having faith in God. However, you CANNOT have faith without works which serve God.

Repentance

Acts 2:36-38

Repentance is the first step of faith.

1. What were the believing Jews' responses to the gospel message (verse 37)? *They were "cut to the heart." What does this mean? It means to be emotionally, mentally, and spiritually convicted about the implication of Jesus dying on the cross. It means to finally "get it."*
2. What were they asking? *They realized their sin problem and wanted to know what to do to be saved.*
3. What was the first part of Peter's reply? *To repent.*
4. What is repentance? *The word means, "a change of mind." Biblical repentance is about seeing the truth, realizing its implications, and changing my mind to give myself to God.*

2 Corinthians 7:10-11

Repentance is much more than being sorry. Much more.

1. What are the two kinds of sorrow mentioned? *Godly and worldly.*
2. How are they different? *Worldly sorrow is sorrow that does not bring change. I feel bad but keep living the worldly life. This leads to death. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation.*
3. Describe the fruits or results of repentance.
 - a. **Earnestness** - seriousness; real intent.
 - b. **Eagerness to clear yourself** - contriteness, brokenness, penitence.
 - c. **Indignation** - embarrassed at sinful state.
 - d. **Alarm** - realization of the seriousness of your situation.
 - e. **Longing** - intense desire to rectify (correct or make right) the situation.
 - f. **Concern** - the opposite of unconcerned and uncaring.
 - g. **Readiness to see justice done** - desire to get things right with God (and others for that matter).
4. How does this description of repentance differ from general beliefs? *It is much deeper. It means an inner change which results in a changed life. It means a life "U-turn" is made!*

Lesson 7

Homework

Challenging Yourself

Interview two people (leaders) in the ministry about their salvation stories.

Looking Ahead

Acts 2:36-47

1. Write down what the believers did in repentance and how their lives changed.
2. What did their new lives look like?
3. Write, in your own words, what it means to be saved?
4. Have you ever done anything to be saved?