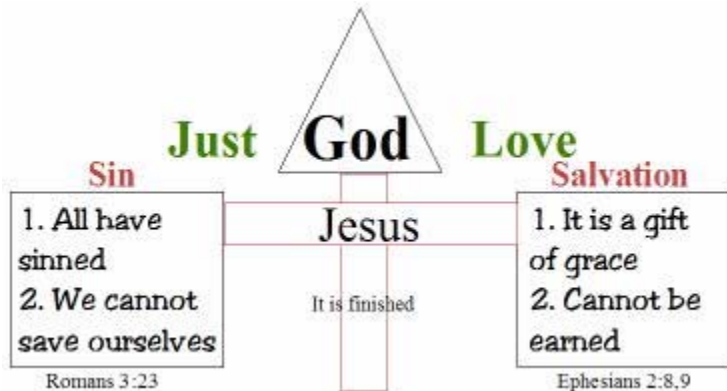


Plan of Salvation

Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:8,9, 1 John 1:9, John 14:6, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Ephesians 1:7, Romans 10:9-10, Luke 15:7



➤ Introduction – Why are we here?

Illustration: Imagine with me for a moment. Pretend you are a **brave explorer searching for riches** around the world.

Suppose you **find a place where there was some very valuable gold**. There is more than you can take or use yourself. However, there is not an unlimited supply. **What would you do?** You would likely contact your closest friends and family and let them know about the gold so they can gather some for themselves.

Suppose you find a place where there was a **fountain spewing forth with a special golden water**. This water when drunk will heal all forms of sickness and disease. Just one drink is all it takes and you are healed. The fountain is gushing forth with an unlimited supply of this **healing golden water**. There is plenty for anyone that goes there. Again, **what would you do?** You would likely tell everyone in with whom you came into contact. You would want to share **this exciting discovering with anyone** who had need of its special healing power.

This is why we are here today. This is why we take our vacations and travel thousands of miles to be with you. It is because we have discovered something even greater than a fountain of healing golden water. We have discovered and experienced the **love of God through Jesus Christ**. We are here to share that love with you and your community. We are here to share the **“good news” of the gospel of Jesus Christ** to anyone who will receive it.

Is this salvation healing water? Yes, it provides life eternal. The bible calls our experience **“salvation”** or being **“born again”**. This gospel, this Christ has so changed our lives that we are **compelled to share it with others**. That is why we are here.

➤ 1. What is salvation?

Illustration: **Imagine a super fast flowing river where water is gushing by at dangerous speeds.** In addition, the water of the river is rising quickly. On one side is a **man and on the other side are his children**. The man wants very badly to save his children. As he ponders what he can do, he thinks **“if only I could build a bridge.”**

This is exactly the circumstance for **God and His relationship with mankind**. Like the gushing river, **sin creates a gap between God and His creation**. This dangerous gap prevents God’s love and fellowship from being experienced by mankind. **God provides a bridge in Jesus Christ to overcome the sin and allow you and I to be saved.**

Becoming a Christian is both an **easy and difficult thing to do**.

As a result of the death and resurrection of Christ, God has made wonderful provisions for mine and your salvation. The Bible teaches that **all men sin and fall short** of the expectations of God. *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23).*

Nothing in the way of works or service can cause us to overcome sin and earn salvation. However, in Jesus Christ, **we have a Savior.** We have one who has paid the ultimate price for our sin. Salvation through Christ is **a gift of grace from God** to you and me *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:8,9).*

Accept or reject, how will you respond to life's most important decision?

➤ 2. The Difficult Part of Salvation

It can often be difficult for people to receive the salvation of God. Some of the reasons people hesitate or reject God's salvation include:

- **heavy load of guilt and shame**
- **intellectual reluctance to believe**
- **fear of required lifestyle changes**

a. heavy load of guilt and shame

There is perhaps no greater paradox than the circumstance where people **feel they cannot come to Christ because of their sin and shame.** The fact is that **we all sin.** The gospel of Jesus Christ is the Good News because **it frees us from the bindings of sin.** Jesus came to earth and died for our sins. **God does not expect you to clean up your life** before seeking His salvation. He expects you to **gather up in your heart, all of the sin and everything else wrong with your life and bring them to the altar.** Salvation is where we **confess our sin to God in repentance** and lay it all out before Him. He **washes white as snow** and forgives as far as the east is to the west. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)*

Satan would have you focus on your sin and shame. But God **already knows about it and is simply waiting on you** to confess and accept his gift.

b. intellectual reluctance to believe

There is no question about it - **salvation involves faith.** If you **wait to fully intellectually understand the concept of salvation by grace, it will never happen.** On the other hand, consider your **own failed efforts** to achieve holy living. Like the rest of us, you struggle with one temptation after another. **Salvation is all about exercising faith!** It is believing God **and trusting and accepting that He love's you enough** to send His son to pay the price for our sins. It involves **giving over to what your soul has known all along,** that there is a wonderful Creator of everything who has a plan for everything including your life. Many sin burdened people have come to know Christ as personal savior on just a **splinter of faith.** When we express our faith in Christ, God **takes our small faith and multiplies into a miracle filling us with His Holy Spirit.**

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me.” (John 14:6)

“For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18)

c. fear of required lifestyle changes

Illustration: Three archeologist were exploring and **discovered this extremely large hole** in the middle of an area. Curious about just how deep the hole might be, they found a large boulder and rolled it off into the hole to hear how long it took to get to the bottom. Almost immediately after that the strangest thing happened. **A goat came up to the edge of the hole and jumped into it.** A few minutes later, a goat herder came up to them and asked if they had seen his goat. They told him about the strange goat that jumped in the hole earlier. The goat herder replied, **“that couldn't have been my goat, I had him tied to a big rock.”**

Very often, it is our sins and possessions that we are so tied to that prevent us from experiencing salvation. **We are willing to allow them to take us down.** God wants to **free us from the binding of sin and the world.**

If fear of a lifestyle change prevents you from accepting God's salvation then you are wrong on two counts. First, you

are perhaps **not really ready to lay your sin at the alter and repent**. If you are not really willing to turn something over to God for reformation then **you obviously don't aren't willing to let go fully**. Secondly, you don't understand **that God works out the lifestyle change as you grow in His grace**, love and word. God does not expect you to change your lifestyle **before coming to the alter**. However, He does expect you to bring your whole being to the alter. **Declaring Him Lord means turning over your life to His power and leadership**. It means surrendering your will and selfish desires and becoming a new creature "born again". **It won't happen over night but it will happen**. When you become a child of the Creator, **you become a new creature in the likeness of Christ**.

➤ 2. The Easy Part of Salvation

Though **often over simplified**, the act of coming to salvation **involves exercising faith in Christ as the Son of God**. You might say that **salvation is a free gift from God but it is not cheap**. **A tremendous price has been paid** for mine and your salvation. However, you do not have to be a Bible scholar to understand the steps involved. All you need to do is **believe with all your heart and trust in Christ as Savior**. Bring your sins and all aspects of your life to the alter. **Turn them over to God and ask Him to forgive you**. **Declare your faith in Christ as the Savior** inviting Him and the Holy Spirit into your heart. God will hear and answer your prayer. *"In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."* (Ephesians 1:7)

The Bible teaches that God will **wash you as white as snow**. He will forgive your sins **as if he never knew of them**. Remember a huge price has already been paid for those sins. Just as the diagram above reflects, **Jesus is the bridge between man and God**. That bridge supersedes everything that stands between us and God. If you have not already done so, you should **pray now to God declaring your faith in Him**. Ask Christ to come into your heart and forgive you of your sins. Don't stop there. **Talk with God. Tell Him everything that is wrong with your life** and turn all of your troubles over

to Him. Commit to living your life for Him and leave the sorrows and struggles behind.

"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believe, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." (Romans 10:9-10)

Rise up from your knees a child of the King filled with God's Holy Spirit. Rejoice because you are **a new creature fully forgiven**. Your immediate response should be to share your experience with other believers. Christian friends will be eager to rejoice and share in your new walk. You should also be obedient by following Him in baptism. Proceed to grow in your relationship with God through affiliation with a local church which is His body of believers. Study God's word and apply it to your life with prayer and thanksgiving. You will be amazed at what God has in store for you.

"in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents," (Luke 15:7)

➤ Conclusion

In John 11:25 & 26, Jesus says, **"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"**.

This is the question today, "Do you believe this?"

Will you accept God's gift of love?

Will you cross the bridge that God has provided for your salvation?