

LESSON #7 HOPE GROWS AS GOD CHANGES MY HEART

- Salvation is finished for all. “Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.” (Rom. 5:18)
- God gives me the benefits of Jesus’ work through faith. “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)

I. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLS ME TO FAITH

Read Acts 26:9-18

1. When Paul (also called “Saul”) was an unbeliever, what was his attitude toward Christianity in general and Jesus in particular? (v9) _____

2. In fact, Paul describes his opposition to Christianity as an obsession. (cf. v11b) Because of it, what actions did he take? (v10-12) _____

3. While traveling to Damascus, God appeared to him. How? _____

4. The question God asks Saul in v14 is harsh law. Why does God approach Saul that way? _____

5. After revealing Himself as Jesus (remember, Jesus means “Savior”), He then tells Paul why He had appeared to Paul. Why had He? (vv16-18) _____

6. Which of these statements is more accurate: a) Paul willingly chose to become a Christian.
b) Although Paul was unwilling, God brought him to faith.

Some helpful passages concerning humans by nature:

Eph. 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

1. By nature I’m _____ .

Rom. 8:7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

2. By nature I'm _____

Gen. 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

3. By nature I'm _____ .

4. Some religions teach that it's up to you to choose to become a Christian. Why is that teaching wrong? _____

Some helpful passages concerning how faith happens:

Eph. 2:4-5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions -- it is by grace you have been saved.

1. By working faith in my heart, God takes me from spiritual _____ to spiritual _____ . Because this is God's work, I confess: _____

Eph. 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast.

2. Faith, as with all of my salvation, is described as _____ . Faith is not _____

Rom. 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

3. Faith comes in only one way: _____

Rom. 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

4. God describes that message (the Gospel, that is) as _____

1 Cor. 12:3 ... no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

5. The person of the Godhead who works faith in me is _____

(The truth that God has worked faith in my heart is called "conversion," which means "being turned around.")

II. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK

Some Helpful Passages:

2 Thess. 2:13-14 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The Holy Spirit _____ me, that is, leads me to trust in Jesus as my Savior, through _____

Acts 26:17-18 I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

2. The Holy Spirit _____ me, that is, takes me from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight, through _____.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

3. The Holy Spirit _____ me, that is, He sets me apart for a life of Godly living, through _____

Isa. 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

4. The Holy Spirit _____ me and _____ me, through _____

5. Because the Holy Spirit works through the Word, through the good news of the Gospel, what ought to be an important part of each of our worship services? _____

Two Reminders for God's Children

Hebr. 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

Hebr. 10:26-29 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. ²⁸Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

1. God warns me _____ .

1 Pet. 2:2-3 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

2. God urges me _____ .

Some Questions for Discussion:

1. Can faith be lost? (1 Cor 10:12) _____

2. Is church attendance important? (Heb 10:24-25) _____

3. What is predestination? (Ephesians 1:3-14; Romans 8:29-30; 1Timothy 2:4) _____

4. Why some and not others? (2Peter 3:9; Matthew 23:37) _____

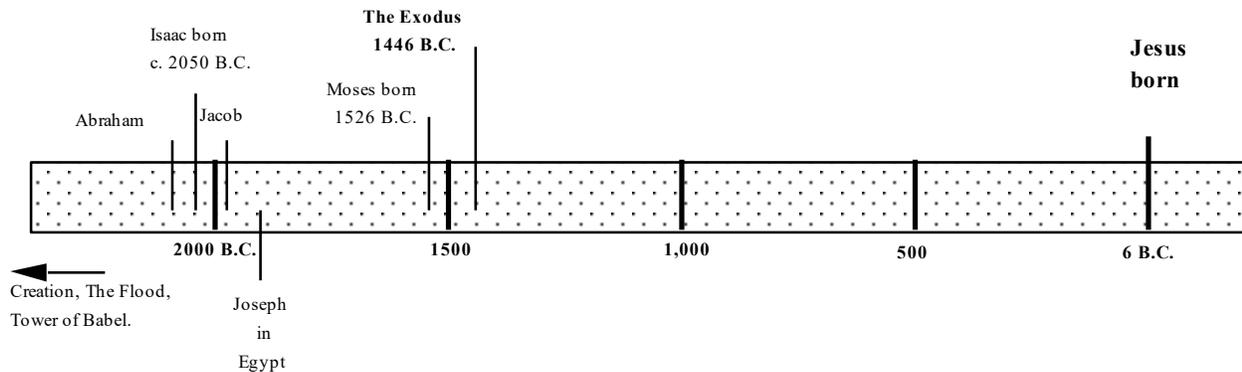
5. Do I have to "feel saved" to be saved? (1John 3:20; Romans 7:15ff; Gal. 5:22-23; Rom. 15:13) _____

Summary:

- By nature I'm dead in sin. I cannot choose to become a believer.
- God the Holy Spirit brings me to faith; faith, therefore, is yet another gracious gift of God to me.
- The tool by which the Holy Spirit works faith and strengthens faith is the Gospel. Regular worship and Bible study are vitally important for me so that my faith might continue to grow.

FOR STUDY AT HOME DURING THE WEEK

5. Complete the homework sections below.
6. To build up your knowledge of God's Word, memorize these passages:
Eph. 2:8-9 **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.**
1 Cor. 12:3 **No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.**
7. Study Addendum #4, the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed and its explanation
8. Study Addendum #5, a brief explanation of the way Lutherans worship
9. Suggested daily reading: Genesis 44-50



As we saw in the last lesson's homework, God had fulfilled another part of his promise to Abraham -- the nation of Israel had become a great nation. But they were in slavery in Egypt, not in the land of Israel, the land which God had promised to Abraham.

Through a series of 10 plagues, God "convinced" the Pharaoh to let the people go. (Last week we read about the 10th plague, the Passover.) After the Passover, the Pharaoh once again changed his mind and decided to go after the Israelites. (The Pharaoh is a good example of what happens when one over and over hardens himself against the Word of God.) Today we read how God rescued his people from that threat, bringing them out of Egypt and putting them on the road to the promised land of Israel.

Read Exodus 13:17 - 14:31

1. How did God lead His people? _____

2. God led the people in a way which led the Pharaoh to think they were just wandering in confusion. Eventually God led them to the Red Sea, to a place where they were “trapped.” Once again Pharaoh decided to challenge God and he pursued the people. How did the people react? (vv10-12) _____

3. What did the Lord then instruct Moses to do? (v16) _____

4. When he did, the sea divided. What did that allow the Israelites to do? (v21-22) _____

5. The Egyptians foolishly pursued the Israelites. What happened to them? (v24-28) _____

6. How did this event affect the Israelites? (v29-31) _____

7. What can we learn from the Egyptians concerning what happens when you try to fight against the Lord? _____

Read Acts 2:1-42

1. What was the name of the day on which these events happened? (v1) _____

2. What were the miraculous signs which indicated the coming of the Holy Spirit in a special way? (vv2-4) _____

3. Notice the footnote in v4. What was meant by the other “tongues?” (cf. also v8) _____

4. One of the disciples then addressed the crowd. Which disciple? _____
5. Notice, to what does Peter immediately focus the crowd’s attention? (vv16ff) _____

6. In v22, to whom does Peter direct the crowd? _____

7. How did Peter bring the message of law to the people? (v23) _____

8. How does Peter also bring the message of the Gospel? (v24) _____

9. When Peter was done, the law had worked -- the people were “cut to the heart.” To what does Peter direct them? (v38) _____

10. How many people came to faith on that day? (v41) _____
11. After their conversion, to what did these new Christians devote themselves? (v42) _____

12. What lesson can we take from that? _____

For discussion:

1. Why is it so important for you to know that faith is a gift from God, not something you have to do?
2. If you want your faith to grow, what actions should you take?
3. If it's true that “faith comes by hearing the message,” what should be an important, large part of each of our worship services? (cf. Addendum #5 for help.)

Read Luke 8:4-15

1. In the parable (vv5-8) Jesus described four different results when the seed was sown. What were those results?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____

2. In verses 11-15 Jesus explains the meaning of the parable. The seed represents the Word of God, and there were four different results when that seed was sown, as illustrated by the way the seed fell. What are each of those results?

- a) Seed on path = _____
- b) Seed on rock = _____
- c) Seed among weeds = _____
- d) Seed on good soil = _____

3. What lessons should each of us draw from this parable? _____

Circle the correct answer:

- 1. A person who is a believer
 - a) can take partial credit for coming to faith.
 - b) can take no credit for coming to faith.

- 2. By nature I am
 - a) spiritually dead in sins.
 - b) spiritually weak, but with some ability to come to faith.

- 3. The instrument that God uses to work faith in my heart is
 - a) the powerful Word of God.
 - b) the power of prayer.

- 4. The person of the Godhead generally credited with working faith in my heart is
 - a) God the Father.
 - b) God the Holy Spirit.

5. If I want my faith to grow, it
 - a) doesn't matter how much I hear the Word of God.
 - b) is vital that I hear the Word of God regularly.

Write the passages, from memory if possible.

Ephesians 2:8-9 _____

1 Corinthians 12:3 _____

Addendum #4

Jesus said that in the last days many false teachers would arise who would deceive many. Because that happened and continues to happen, the church periodically felt it necessary to make a simple, public declaration of the truths of the Bible. The Apostle's Creed is one such declaration of faith. Although the Apostle's Creed isn't found in the Bible, every one of the truths in it is found in the Bible. The Apostle's Creed (so named because it's an accurate reflection of what the Apostles of Jesus had taught) simply brings those truths together in an organized way.

Martin Luther was a pastor in Germany in the early and middle 1500's. Luther recognized the great difficulty which many people have in teaching the truths of the Bible to their children. In order to help them, Luther wrote the Catechism. (The Catechism, like the Apostle's Creed, presented the truths of the Bible in a simple, orderly way, making it easier for parents to teach their children the important truths of Scripture. The difference is that the Creed was meant to be used in worship services and was quite short. The Catechism was much longer, meant to be a teaching aid.) Below is the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed and Luther's explanation.

THE THIRD ARTICLE

(Sanctification)

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead; And he will give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

Addendum #5

The Way We Worship

Below is a brief outline of a typical Lutheran worship service. We'll study this more fully in Lesson #15.

Part I. We come into the presence of God.

1. We begin in God's name.
2. We confess our sinfulness.
3. We hear the message that we are forgiven because of Jesus' work.
4. We respond with praise and with prayer.

Part II. We listen to God.

1. An Old Testament reading.
2. We sing or read a Psalm. (Sometimes a choir may sing in this spot.)
3. A New Testament reading.
4. The verse of the day. (This is one verse, meant to summarize the theme of that day's worship.)
5. A reading from one of the Gospels -- Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. (This is to review the life, words, and work of Jesus.)
6. We confess our faith. (The Apostle's Creed or the Nicene Creed is generally used. When a believer hears the Word of God, the person's natural response is to say, "We believe it.")
7. The sermon. (A section of the Bible is explained and applied.)

III. We respond to God

1. In praise and song.
2. By bringing our offerings to God.
3. By taking our prayers to God, often including the Lord's Prayer.

IV. We receive the Lord's Supper.

(This doesn't always take place in a worship service; different congregations do it in different ways. Jesus never told us how often to use the sacrament. He just said to do it "often.")

1. Preparation. (Words and songs meant to prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper.)
 2. The words of institution.
 3. The distribution.
 4. Praise and thanksgiving, prayers.
 5. The blessing.
- In addition to this outline, there are several hymns, generally four or five, sung by the congregation at different times during the worship service.
 - Worship doesn't have to be done this way. Often a congregation will have variations from this pattern. But Lutherans generally follow the four parts listed above, because they make Biblical sense. First, we need to hear that our sins are forgiven. Then we want to listen to God, so our faith might grow. When our faith has been strengthened by the Word, we want to respond in prayer and praise. And finally, we want to celebrate the Lord's Supper.
 - Lutherans also use this pattern because it has served the church very well for many years. This pattern helps to assure that the important truths of Christianity will be reviewed each week, and that the life and work of Jesus will be reviewed each year.