

Salvation

Turning Back to God

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Chapter 1

OUR NEED FOR SALVATION

God is our life source

Wars, murder, abuse, drugs, poverty, disease...God did not create the world in the exact condition that it is in today. God created the world to be *GOOD*, without the problems that we see around us. He made it good because He loves us! *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very GOOD.”* (Genesis 1:1, 31).

Everything that originated from God finds its life in God. He is the Creator! We belong with Him. He is our source for life (Genesis 2:7). Like we require air to breathe, we need God to live.

The Bible says that God made human beings in His image and in His likeness (Genesis 1:26). God is a spirit, and as His children, we are spirit beings. (John 4:24). This is what sets us apart from the rest of creation. Animals and plants are not spirit beings. We're different, we're made to have relationship with God! God also gave us a soul, which includes our mind, will, and emotions. God also gave us a body to live in on the earth (I Thessalonians 5:23).

God made the world, then He gave dominion of the earth to mankind (Genesis 1:28). He delegated authority to Adam and Eve to fill and earth and to subdue it. It was their responsibility to care for the world they lived in.

Opportunity to choose

Our life is found in relationship with God. God gave us the opportunity to choose whether or not we wanted that relationship. In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve every tree that was beautiful and good for food, but He also placed one tree in the garden called “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:9). God told them that this was the one tree that they were not to eat from. The tree was there to give man and woman the opportunity to choose. God told Adam and Eve that if they chose to eat of this tree they would be turning away from Him and turning away from the life they found in Him (Genesis 2:16, 17). God gave us the choice between life and death, but His desire was that men and women would always choose to have life with Him.

The sin of self-sufficiency

Satan is real, and he is an enemy of God. Satan came into the garden to tempt Adam and Eve and to turn them against God. Remember God delegated the authority and the responsibility of the earth to mankind. If Satan was successful, through man's sin Satan would have access and dominion in the earth.

Satan approached Eve and questioned her about her choices for eating from the trees in the garden. Eve knew what God had said and replied, *“We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”* (Genesis 3:1-3)

Satan immediately opposed what God has said. Satan tells Eve: *“You will NOT surely die.”* Satan then accused God of misleading Adam and Eve. Satan goes on to say: *“For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD, knowing good and evil.”* (Genesis 3:4,5) Satan is telling Eve, “God does not want you to know that you can live apart from Him. If you can know everything that God knows, then you won’t need God, and you can be in control of your own life.” Satan is accusing God of manipulating Adam and Eve, saying God is dominating them for His own selfish reasons. The Bible says that Eve believed the lie about God. *“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”* (Genesis 3:6). Adam and Eve’s decision to eat of the forbidden tree was a choice to take control of their own lives. In their pride, they decided to do things their own way, living self-sufficiently of God. They turned away from God, and thus, twisted away from their source of life. Sin came into the human spirit and changed the nature of man. With a sinful nature, sin would rule in the hearts of men and women. Death entered the human race both physically and spiritually (Romans 5:12).

The sin consciousness

There was a change in Adam and Eve’s mentality when they become aware, or conscious, of their sins. For the first time, a man and a woman felt guilt, shame, and fear. When they heard God walking in the garden, they hid themselves from Him. They were afraid of God’s rejection and punishment (Genesis 3:8-10). People today do the same thing. We hide who we really are from God and others because we’re afraid of being rejected or judged.

Adam and Eve were afraid of judgment, so instead of owning up to their sin, they began to blame each other for what had happened (Genesis 3:12, 13). People are the same way today trying to shift blame for the condition of life on something or someone else instead of admitting that they have a need for God.

The consequences of sin

God is love and God is fair. Adam and Eve had made their choice to live independently of God, and now they had to live with the consequences of their decision to sin. Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden. The human race had invited sin and Satan into the world that God had made (Romans 5:17). Satan became the god, or ruler, of this world (II Corinthians 4:4). The world had changed from God’s original design. All of creation has been affected by the result of sin entering the world. Apart from God, men and women would live by their own strength and efforts. Now there would be labor and work in sustaining life (Genesis 3:16-19).

Efforts to control

Trying to live self-sufficiently of God, we have tried to control our lives and our problems. Nations try to control countries through treaties, weapons, and war, but there is still fighting. Governments try to control problems with policies for poverty, pollution, and natural disasters, but the problems are still there. Through a legal system we try to control crime, racism, and violence, but assaults continue to happen. We try to solve

and prevent the spread of disease and deformity, and still so many are suffering and dying each day.

Others try to control a sinful appetite, but can't escape their fleshly desires. Many turn to substances such as alcohol, tobacco, or drugs to help them cope with their life. What we try to control usually ends up controlling us, and then it is called addiction.

The need to be loved

We find our value and significance in our relationship with God. Apart from God people try to find their worth in other ways. Some measure their value by what they do and how well they do it. They put their work before anything or anyone else, driven to prove their worth, not satisfied with anything less than being number one. As hard as they try, nothing is ever good enough.

We all crave to be loved for who we are or what we can do. We look for acceptance and approval to satisfy our need for love. In an effort to get people to like us, some concentrate on outward appearance or their sexuality. Others try to draw friends by the amount of money they make and the material things they possess. Some use their talents and abilities to gain fame, but still feel something is missing.

Without God we are not complete. There is a void that we try to fill with the things or the people that are around us, but they cannot be to us what we can only find in God.

And some, in their own attempts to reach God have entered into a religion to try to quiet their conscience. They know they have a spiritual need, but they try to come to God their way instead of His way. We miss the life and the love that can only come from God. Within ourselves we are longing to know that we have value and worth. People are searching as one groping in the darkness, trying to find out who they are, where they came from, and where they are going.

Chapter 2

GOD SENT A SAVIOR

God wanted us back

The love that God has for us is so great that nothing on earth can compare with it. It was never in God's plan for us to know the pain of sin and death. God never intended for any person to go to Hell. The Bible says that Hell was made for Satan, and not for us (Matthew 25:41). When we sinned, we were joining up with Satan, just as Adam and Eve did. In our decision to turn away from God, we brought judgment upon ourselves. God doesn't send anyone to Hell; they send themselves.

The Bible says that everyone has sinned and has known the effects of sin ... *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)*. Whatever your nationality, race, age, or gender, we all have this in common...we all are in need of a savior. We all have known sin and its results.

Nothing of sin can stand in the presence of God. Our sin made a separation between God and us (Isaiah 59:2). Separation from God, our life, is spiritual death.

Some people have had a misconception of God. They think God enjoys seeing people feel punishment. That is not true! The Bible says in Ezekiel 33:11 *"I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live..."* God is for us, not against us! Jesus told us that there is joy in heaven when one person turns back to God (Luke 15:7)!

God knows what our need is for life and wholeness – to be restored back into relationship with Him! But there was a penalty for sin that not one of us could pay. All of us had a debt of death that we owed. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23)."*

God sent Jesus

God knew that we would need a substitute to die in our place, so He sent His Son Jesus. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16). That is the reason Jesus came into this earth as a man – to become the sacrifice for our sin. John 3: 17 says, *"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."* As our substitute, Jesus identified with us. He has felt what we feel, He has experienced what we experience, He has been tempted like we are tempted – yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). When Jesus was crucified, He took our sin and the curse of sin upon Himself and died in our place. Jesus, blameless and without sin, paid the price of death with His own blood (Colossians 2:14, 15). He removed the sin barrier between God and mankind, making a way for our reconciliation with God.

Jesus did not stay in the grave. With the way made open, God raised Jesus from the dead! He defeated Satan and the dominion of sin! Now He is seated in Heaven with the Father. God wants to do the same thing for us that He did for Jesus. God wants to take us from death back to knowing His life!

Jesus is the only way

God made the way for us to turn back to Him. It is His way and the only way! There is no other religion that can do what Jesus has done. No one else is sinless who can die in our place. No one else but the Son of God can remove the debt of sin. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6).”*

Chapter 3

TURNING BACK TO GOD

You have a choice

It is now possible for each one of us to make our own choice. We can choose to remain in control of our own lives, apart from God and bound by sin and death; or we can turn back to God, dependent upon Him for our eternal life. That is what the word repent means – “to turn back.” If you choose life, not only will you know God here in this life, but you will also be with Him forever in Heaven. If you choose death, not only will you know the effects of sin on the earth, but you will also be forever separated from God in Hell. The choice is yours to make as long as you are on the earth. Once a person physically dies, his right to choose is over. You are making your choice *RIGHT NOW* – either you have chosen Christ Jesus or you have not.

Jesus had a choice

Jesus was given the same decision that we have been given. He had to choose whether He would obey or disobey God. Would Jesus obey God by going to the cross or would He choose to turn away from what God wanted Him to do? In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus made His choice. He prayed, “*Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done* (Luke 22:42).” Jesus chose to trust His Father even to the point of death.

Trusting God’s love

To give God the reins of your life, you have to be able to trust His love for you. When we realize the unconditional love that God has for us, we can take down our guard and let God in. “*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear... (1 John 4:18).*”

There is no reason to be afraid of being rejected by God. He sees everything you’ve ever done, and He still loves you. The Bible tells us that “*while we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8).” Trust His love, and let Him see you as you are. He understands the condition you’re in, so you don’t have to pretend to be something that you’re not.

Some people have thought that their sin was too big for God’s love to forgive, but Jesus said this, “*the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out* (John 6:37).” There is no sin that is too big for the price Jesus paid.

Believe that He loves you and accepts you just as you are right now. He is real and His love is genuine. Faith goes beyond what we can grasp with our intellect, emotions, or physical senses. Knowing God is a matter of the spirit. It is there that He will reveal Himself to you – in your heart.

Giving up control

The way back into relationship with God is by deciding to trust Jesus as Lord of your life. Romans 10:9, 10 says, *“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* Deciding to receive salvation has to be your decision, not a parent’s decision, not a pastor’s or priest’s decision, not a friend’s decision. God is looking at *YOUR* heart for *YOUR* decision.

Coming in faith

We can’t earn salvation, nor can we buy it. As hard as we might try, there is nothing that we could do to be good enough to deserve the gift of salvation. Eternal life is a gift that is received by faith in God’s love for you. The way back to God is through faith. Faith is simply acting on what you believe. Ephesians 2:8,9 says, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* If you believe in what Christ has done for you, then by faith act on that. Make the choice to turn back to God by giving your heart to Jesus.

The New Birth

People have thought that they have to change their behavior before coming to God, but that is impossible to do. We act like what we are. An apple comes from an apple tree, right? Would an apple ever come off an orange tree? No, of course not. In the same way, people have a tendency to sin when they have a *SINFUL NATURE*.

When you choose to make Jesus the Lord of your life, there is a change that will take place on the inside of you. God will *RECREATE* your spirit in the likeness of *HIS NATURE*. God’s life will enter into your heart, which is your spirit, and you will become new. II Corinthians 5:17 says, *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”* This is why it is called being “born again.” Jesus said, *“unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).”*

Some people have thought they were Christians because they were “good people,” but being a good person won’t make them born again. Some have thought reading the Bible and saying certain types of prayers would do it, but they won’t. Some have thought that going to church or giving offerings would make them a Christian, but it won’t. Others have said that water baptism, confirmation, and other rituals have guaranteed their way into Heaven, but they’re mistaken. Read the Bible for yourself! Don’t gamble your salvation on what some man or some woman said. You can know for sure that you are saved and headed for Heaven! There is only *ONE WAY* to be saved and that is through a relationship with God by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior!

Because of our new nature, our lives begin to change to become more like God. As we grow in God, our desires change, our attitudes change, our actions change! Sin no longer has dominion over the Christian!

Living victoriously

If Jesus is your Lord, then He gives you power over sin and death. Satan can no longer control the Christian. I John 4:4 says, *“Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.”* He also has sent the Spirit of God to live in you to give you the power to live the Christian life.

John 10:10 says, *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* Satan wants to destroy you, but Jesus came to turn your situation around! Not only will we enjoy the blessings of God in Heaven, but we can also have victory over the world in this life!

Sin has twisted and distorted God’s beautiful creation, but through Christ God wants to restore us back to the condition He intended for us. Sickness is a result of sin. Poverty is a result of sin. Mental anguish, depression, and addictions are some of the bondages that Christ has come to set us free from! Receiving salvation is just the first step in returning back to God. Once you make the choice to turn back, God wants to restore ALL of His benefits to you!

A new consciousness

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus... (Romans 8:1).” With sin erased, feelings of guilt, shame, and fear also have been removed from the Christian. You are unconditionally loved and accepted by your Heavenly Father. Don’t allow Satan or anyone else to try to hold you to your past. Jesus has washed you white as snow!

In Christ, we find our significance! We know who we are, where we came from, and where we are going! God makes us complete and satisfies us with Himself. For those who have been searching, when they are found in God they say, *“This is it, this is what I was created for!”*

Assurance

How will you know if you have received this new birth? You may or may not feel any differently, and that’s okay. You receive salvation by faith, not feelings. You know you are saved because you believe God loves you and gave you that promise. He also will send His Holy Spirit into your heart and He will give you the assurance that you belong to Him (Romans 8:16). You don’t have to wonder if you are going to Heaven, you can know for sure!

There is forgiveness with God

Just because a person makes a decision for Christ does not mean that they will never make another mistake. I John 1:9 was written to Christians, and it says, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* Christians should know that if they have sinned, to always run *TO* God and not *FROM* God. There is no reason to hide our shortcomings and failures from the Lord. God will not reject you when you come to Him. If the problem is addictive, the power of God can set people free from the grips of sin!

How to become a Christian

1. Becoming a Christian involves more than saying a prayer. First, you must see your need for a Savior and turn from your sin.
2. Second, believe that Jesus died as a substitute for your sins and that He rose again.
3. Third, accept Jesus as your Savior and confess Him as Lord of your life.

Pray this prayer from your heart:

Dear God, I come to You in the name of Jesus. I know that I am a sinner in need of a Savior. I trust Your love for me. I now turn back to You. I believe that Jesus died and was raised from the dead. I believe that Jesus is alive, and I now confess Jesus as my Lord. Thank You that I am now born again! I am saved and am a part of Your family. Thank You Father.

Your name: _____

Date: _____

What to do from here

If you have just received salvation, there are three important steps that you need to take in your spiritual growth. They are:

1. Read the Bible consistently.
2. Pray daily.
3. Go to a local church that teaches the Bible.

We pray that you continue to grow in your relationship with God and share your faith with others.