

THE BAD NEWS OF SEPARATION

① YOU ARE A SINNER

1. *What do each of the following verses tell us about sin?*

Psalm 51:4

Romans 5:12

Matt 5:27-28

Ephesians 2:1-3

Romans 3:23

2. *From these passages, how would you define the word “sin?” What does it include?*

The primary words for “sin” in both the Old and New Testaments were originally used in the practice of marksmanship and meant “to miss the mark or target.” What is the mark that God has set? It is His own perfect example (Matt 5:48). In other words, if we want to earn God’s approval, then we must be as holy as He is holy, as righteous as He is righteous. But it doesn’t matter how religiously we live, how good we are, or how hard we work; none of us can meet that standard (Isaiah 64:6). Here’s an illustration. Suppose you and I were standing on a beach on the Atlantic coast and I say to you, “Let’s see which of us can swim across this ocean to the other side.” So we begin to swim. But while you might get farther than I, or I might get farther than you, neither of us will come anywhere close to making it. Both of us will fall short.

AMAZING GRACE, HOW SWEET THE SOUND, THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE ME.

② THE PENALTY FOR SIN IS DEATH

1. *Romans 6:23a tells us that, “the wages of sin is death.” But what does the Bible mean by “death?” What exactly is the result that our sin earns us? Answer this question by looking up these passages: Rom 1:18; 5:12-14; 2 Thess 1:8-9; Revelation 21:8.*

2. *Why does our sin naturally result in our separation from God (Isa 6:1-5; Hab 1:13a)? This question ties back to what you learned in Lesson One about God’s attributes.*

3. *Let’s return to the previous case study about Mary. As you talk to her this Saturday morning, it becomes obvious to you that Mary has been relying on her morality at work and her service to the poor to earn her admission to heaven. She can genuinely say that she lives a “better” life than 90% of the people she knows, and she has always felt that this must outweigh the faults she still struggles with. What would you say to Mary to help her better understand the biblical view of sin?*

*I*t takes a good hour to communicate these ideas to Mary, but finally she agrees that her morality and her best deeds can't erase the fact that she falls far short of God's perfect standard. Yet this simply leaves her more anxious! If she can't earn her way to God, then what hope does she have? Fortunately, the Bible reveals that what we cannot do, God has already done. The Bible calls this great news the "gospel," a word that simply means "good news." This good news is described in the following two points...

THE GOOD NEWS OF *Reconciliation* RECONCILIATION

③ CHRIST DIED FOR YOU AND THEN ROSE FROM THE DEAD

Read the following passages carefully and write down what each says about the "good news" of what Christ has done for us.

Romans 5:8

I Peter 3:18

I Corinthians 15:3-4

The essence of the "good news" is Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection. God the Son lived a perfect, sinless life and then died on the cross in our place for our sins (1 Peter 2:22-24). It's as if I stood as a convicted criminal before a perfect judge. Being perfect, the judge must condemn me for my crime; he must send me to prison because this is what the law demands. But this judge genuinely loves me and cares for me. So having passed a just sentence of life in prison, he steps down from his bench, places his hands behind his back, and orders the bailiff to escort him to prison in my place. By taking my punishment upon himself he frees me from the condemnation I justly deserve.

This is exactly what God did for us! Jesus took all of our sins upon Himself and died as our substitute. But praise God, death could not hold Him down, for three days later God the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

▶ *Why is it important that Jesus Christ rose from the dead (1 Peter 1:3)? What if He had just died for our sins and stayed in the grave (1 Corinthians 15:13-19)?*

4 YOU CAN BE SAVED THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

Read and observe Ephesians 2:8-10. Underline the key words in the passage. Then use this passage to answer the following questions.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. **Ephesians 2:8-10**

1. According to this passage, what is the basis for our salvation? In other words, what ultimately makes it possible?

2. What is required of us to receive this salvation? What does this word mean? See also Acts 16:29-31 and Romans 4:3-5.

3. According to this passage, how do our good works relate to our salvation? See also Titus 2:14 and 3:4-8.

I ONCE WAS LOST BUT NOW I'M FOUND, WAS BLIND BUT NOW I SEE



What are the results of being “saved” through faith in the gospel? Look up these verses and write down all of the results you see: John 1:12, 3:16, Romans 5:1, and Col 1:13-14. (We will talk about this much more in coming lessons!)

Dig Deeper...

...INTO THE SUBJECT OF SIN:

1. Read Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19 and answer the questions below.

- For what purpose did God originally create humanity?

- How does sin affect this purpose?

- What is the origin of human sin?

- Why are we sinners? Is it simply because we do sinful things or is it a state we are born into?

...INTO THE SUBJECT OF SALVATION:

2. Read Acts 4:12 and 1 John 5:11-12. According to these passages, what is the apparent consequence for those who do not believe in Jesus? Is there any other way to be saved? Do you agree? Why or why not?

3. What things do people often add to the gospel message, mistakenly thinking that they are essential for salvation?

4. Is it necessary to pray a certain prayer or walk down the aisle of a church to be saved? Why or why not?

THE MOST EFFECTIVE EVANGELISTIC TOOL YOU HAVE AVAILABLE FOR SPEAKING THE WORDS OF THE GOSPEL TO SOMEONE LIKE MARY IS YOUR OWN LIFE. People can argue apologetic issues with you all day long, but no one can argue with what God has done in your life. And besides that, our lives are a story... and everyone loves a story. Now keep in mind that not everyone is ready to sit through the epic version of your life. So be prepared with a short version (3-4 minutes) of your story that communicates the gospel clearly. Whoever hears it should know exactly how he or she can make a decision to become a Christian – that is the point of a personal testimony. Here are a few tips on how to communicate your story effectively:

Think back on the period of time leading up to your belief in Jesus Christ for eternal life. What were the primary influences that caused you to believe in Jesus? Were they intellectual, circumstantial, relational?

Move quickly to the main point, the gospel, and make it clear. Share a couple key Bible verses to clarify the main points of the gospel (such as John 3:16, Romans 3:23, 6:23, or Ephesians 2:8-9).

Avoid Christian jargon (e.g. “justified,” “atonement”) and negative statements about other Christian denominations or groups.

Tailor your testimony to the needs of each listener. Is he an atheist, a Hindu, a person who calls himself a “Christian” just because he goes to church on Sundays? Adjust what you say based on what they need to hear to grasp the gospel message clearly.

Now take a few minutes to write out a short version of your testimony (3-4 minutes). Then read back over it twice to familiarize yourself with it.

In general, you can use a three point chronological outline:

1. Life before knowing Christ; e.g. Acts 22:1-5
2. How you came to know Christ (be specific); e.g. Acts 22:6-11
3. Life after you received Christ (changes He has made, what He means to you now; obviously you will emphasize this point if you became a Christian at a young age); e.g. Acts 22:12-21