

Lesson 1

The Gospel and Salvation

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 Paul gives us the gospel in a nutshell. There really is nowhere else in Scripture that the gospel summarized in this brief manner.

We need to know the right gospel, because Paul warned that every false gospel is cursed of God in Galatians 1:6-9:

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Not only do we need to have a right understanding of what the gospel is, we must have a right response to it as well.

This response is seen in Acts 20:21: *Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The first part of our response is Repentance.

Repentance is said to be “toward God” because it is God that I have offended. He made man for Himself, and He made man to obey His laws, but we have turned our backs on Him and broken His laws, and He requires that we repent of this. Repentance is admitting that I am not good, that even my own good works are as filthy rags before a holy God (Isaiah 64:6).

Repentance means to turn around, to go a different direction. Acts 26:20 says, *But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.* This is something that happens first in the heart and mind.

Repentance means to surrender to God’s rule over my life.

Isaiah 45:22-23, *22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. 23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.*

Repentance is to receive Christ as the Lord (Romans 10:9-13). To believe is to receive Jesus Christ as my only Saviour and to repent is to receive Him as my only Lord. The Bible says the those that are lost are at enmity against God because of their rebellion to God’s rule. Romans 8:7 says, *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* “Enmity” means “the quality of being an enemy.”

To repent means that I turn from and reject this attitude and surrender to God's rule over my life. We see this surrender throughout the New Testament in the lives of those who were saved. Those who received Jesus in a saving manner called upon Him as Lord (Luke 23:42). Repentance is not a change of life; it is a change of mind about God and sin that results in a change of life. Many who claim to "believe" or that have prayed "the sinner's prayer" have no intention to change or to allow God to take control of their lives. They are not interested in being a disciple of Christ. They want a ticket to heaven that keeps them out of hell, but they want to continue to live as they please. They want to "believe in Jesus," but they have no interest in obeying Him. That is not biblical salvation. The sinner must be ready to turn from his false gods, including self-worship, in order to worship and serve the true God ("ye turned to God from idols," 1 Thessalonians 1:9).

The second part of our response is Faith.

Saving faith is an undivided faith. The Bible says that Jesus is the only Lord and Saviour.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

To be saved I must believe that Christ ALONE is Lord and Saviour, just as the Bible says. Some people try to add Jesus to their other gods. They want to believe in Jesus while believing in other lords as well. No one can be saved this way.

Saving faith is a trusting faith. The word "believe" in the Bible means to trust, to depend upon, to commit oneself to. To be saved a person must fully trust his soul and eternity to the Lord Jesus. He must rely upon Jesus alone to forgive his sin and make him right with God. Trusting Jesus is like trusting parachute. It is not enough to look at the parachute and to admire it. You must actually put it on and jump! and trust it to carry you safely.

Have you trusted Jesus to take away your sin?

Some people say they believe in Jesus, but they continue to go through their old religious rituals. This proves they are not truly trusting in Jesus. When we are truly believing in Jesus, we realize that we do not need any vain religious rituals for salvation.

Saving faith is a convinced faith. To "savingly believe" means that I am fully convinced that Jesus is Lord and Saviour and that He will fulfill His promises to me. True salvation is a know-so salvation. This is the kind of faith that Jesus' early disciples had. This is seen in Peter's testimony in John 6:66-69. This is the testimony of a genuinely saved person. We can be sure because of God's promises.

*1 John 5:11-13 **11** And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **12** He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. **13** These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

Saving faith cannot be mixed with human works (Ephesians 2:8-9). A person must receive Christ's salvation as a free gift, not as a reward for good works. A gift is something that someone

else purchases and then gives to me freely. If I try to pay anything whatsoever, it is no longer a gift. Jesus is the one who purchased our salvation at great cost with His death and shed blood.

This is important because Paul implies in I Corinthians 15, that one may “believe in vain”. By this, Paul means that there are ways to believe that do not result in salvation. For instance:

- a. One can believe in vain by believing the wrong things (Jn. 2:23-25). There were many Jews “believed” on Jesus as a worldly provider who would feed and protect them instead of believing on Jesus as their Lord and Saviour (See Jn. 6:14, 15, 26, 66). Likewise, many today believe on Jesus in wrong ways. They come to Jesus and pray to Him so He will help them with their problems or build up their self-esteem or make them wealthy or heal them or some other thing rather than humbling themselves as sinners and trusting Him solely as their Saviour.
- b. One can believe in vain by “believing” without repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). Repentance means to surrender to God. The Bible tells us, “the devils believe and tremble” but not in a saving sense (Jam. 2:19-20). They know He exists but they do not submit to Him. Many sinners do the same, but this is not saving faith.
- c. One can also believe in vain by believing a false gospel or a false Christ (2 Cor. 11:3-4). There are many who believe in a different gospel or a different Jesus than that which is revealed in Scripture.