



“God’s Gracious Salvation”

Romans 1:1-17

Lesson 9

In A Nutshell

The Bible doctrine of salvation is both the incomprehensible work of the infinite God and the truth desperately needed by every sinful man. The Philippian jailer expresses well both the incomprehension and the desperation of every sinner with his simple question, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

The word *soteriology*, the theological term meaning *the doctrine of salvation*, never appears in the Scripture. We do not read anywhere in the Old or New Testaments of the “study of salvation” per se. The book that best approximates a formal study of the doctrine of salvation is Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. Yet here the technical term that adequately summarizes Paul’s subject matter is not *the study of salvation*, but *gospel*. He uses the word four times in the 17 verses of the prologue to this Epistle (1:1, 1:9, 1:15, 1:16). The difference between *soteriology* and *gospel* is that the former focuses on studying salvation truth, whereas the latter emphasizes the proclamation of salvation truth. Rather than merely studying salvation, New Testament believers are everywhere proclaiming it. Their concern is that unbelievers learn the Bible doctrine of salvation so that they can be saved (Acts 17:11).

Clearly, Paul was the Holy Spirit’s choice to write Romans in part because he had made a careful study of the doctrine of salvation. But as he wrote, Paul never lost sight of the fact that this truth is gospel truth. The greatest soteriological theologian the Church has ever known also happens to be the greatest missionary/evangelist the Church has ever known. In the person of Paul, we have an example of what an accurate understanding of the Bible doctrine of salvation produces, and we find here a man with a deep passion for lost souls. We read of his great sorrow and unceasing grief (Rom. 9:2), of his heart’s desire and prayer to God (10:1); and lest we conclude that these were mere hyperbolic effusions or academic contemplations, we also read of his lifelong aspiration and faithful execution, preaching the gospel where Christ had not been named (15:20).

Three topics will occupy our study of God’s work of salvation: (1) its accomplishment in the atoning work of Jesus Christ; (2) its acceptance through faith, not works; and (3) its application—all the benefits in Christ bestowed on those whom God has saved.

To The Testimony!

Salvation is accomplished by the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

Phil. 2:5-8
Gal. 4:4

1. *Atonement* refers to the work of dealing with a breach between two parties. We might say that the work of “at-one-ment” makes the two to be “at one” again. Jesus Christ became a bond-slave to do this work. What one word does Paul use in Philippians 2 to summarize the work that Jesus did as a slave to atone for our sins?

Phil. 2:9-11
Isa. 53: 10-12

2. There is a sense in which the obedience of Christ’s sinless life and perfect sacrifice is only half of the saving gospel message. What is the other half according to the following passages: 1 Cor. 15:1-8, Rom. 4:23-25, and Acts 4:10-12?

Interesting Insight!

The most notorious atheist of the 20th century, Antony Flew, changed his mind and wrote a book in 2007 called *There Is A God*. He invited the theologian N. T. Wright to author an appendix in the book about the historical evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here is some of what Wright wrote as an historian about the resurrection of Christ (pp. 209-213):

“We have to ask: How do we explain this extraordinary phenomenon, the fact of early Christianity arising in the first place, taking its very specific shape, and telling the very specific stories that it did? I discover, as I look for historical explanations, that two particular things must have happened: (1) there must have been an empty tomb that was known to be the correct tomb; it couldn’t have been a mistake; (2) there must have been appearances of the risen Jesus. Both of these must have occurred.

“Why? Because if there had been an empty tomb and no appearances, everybody in the ancient world would have drawn the obvious conclusion (obvious to them even if not to us): body snatchers. Tombs were regularly robbed. . . So they would have said what Mary said: ‘They’ve taken away the body. I don’t know what’s happened to it.’ . . .

“Equally, you cannot explain the historical data we have looked at simply by saying that the disciples must have had some sort of experience they took to be a meeting with Jesus. . . . In other words, if they’d had an experience, however vivid it seemed, of being with Jesus, but if the tomb had not been empty, they would have said, ‘My goodness, this was very powerful, and quite consoling in a way; but he hadn’t been raised from the dead, of course, because dead people don’t get raised . . . And anyway, there is his body in the tomb.’ . . .

“The point is this. If the body of Jesus had still been in the tomb, the disciples could easily have found out. Then they would have said, ‘However strong these hallucinations are that we’ve been having, he hasn’t been raised from the dead.’ So we as historians have to say that there really must have been an empty tomb and there really must have been sightings or, if you like, meetings with somebody discovered to be Jesus. . . .

“The resurrection of Jesus does in fact provide a *sufficient* explanation for the empty tomb and the meetings with Jesus. Having examined all the other possible hypotheses I’ve read about anywhere in the literature, I think it’s also a *necessary* explanation.”

3. The Scripture abounds with important characteristics of the atoning death of Jesus Christ as it describes how that sacrifice meets the needs of sinners. In the chart below, draw a line that connects the characteristic with its definition, and then draw a line that connects the definition with its Scripture.

Characteristic of Christ’s atonement	The need met	The Scripture
A ransom	It appeased God’s wrath	Rom. 3:23-28
A propitiation	It allowed a just God to justify	Rev. 5:9
Vicarious	It is sufficient for all	Isa. 53:4-6
Penal	It provided shed blood as the price of redemption	Gal. 3:13
Absolutely necessary	It was an act of free grace and God’s love	1 Tim. 2:3-6
Gracious	It provided a substitute for the sinner	1 John 2:2
Universal	It incurred the penalty of God’s law	John 3:16

Salvation must be accepted—what must we do to be saved?

1 Cor. 2:9-16
Eph. 2:1-10

4. We learned in Lesson 8 that one of the effects of the fall of Adam is that man needs saving. He is totally depraved in his sin, unable to save himself. What are some of the debilitating effects of total depravity that preclude a man from saving himself?

Acts 16: 5. Paul’s answer to the critical question of the Philippian jailer in 30-31, Acts 16:30 was “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” The belief Paul speaks of in this answer, however, is unlike a belief some have that does not save (John 8:31, 33; James 1:15 Mark 2:19). What goes missing in faith that fails to save?

6. List some other things that are true about true saving faith from the passages listed below.

Passage:	Hint:	Answer:
Mark 1:15	Object—faith in what?	
Luke 17:6	Its magnitude?	
Eph. 2:8-9	Its opposite?	
Rom. 3:27	What it excludes.	

Salvation is applied—blessings in heavenly things in Christ.

Eph. 1:1-14, Rom. 8:28-39 7. Believers possess something wonderful that Paul calls being “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Read the passages cited, and list as many of these spiritual blessings as you can. Include others that come to mind from other passages.

8. Match these other important aspects of the application of salvation to the sinner to their definition.

Regeneration—Eph. 2:5	God justly declares a sinner just
Imputation—Rom. 4:6-9	God gives freedom from darkness
Justification—Rom. 3:23-28	God imparts spiritual life
Redemption—Col. 1:13-14	God treats sinners as righteous