

▼ First Class or Coach? - Part 4

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• Read the Passage: Acts 15

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.”

The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. When they finished, James spoke up: “Brothers, listen to me. Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: “‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’ that have been known for ages.

“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers. With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings.

We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul — men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.

The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. After spending some time there, they were sent off by the brothers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent

them. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

▼ **Sermon’s Purpose (what listeners should do)**

- Understand the issues at stake in the the conflict.
- The Language of Harvest
- Understanding Salvation

▼ **Understand the issues at stake in the conflict**

▼ Evangelism — —> Discipleship Sequence:

▼ Evangelism

- 1 Trust
- 2 Curiosity
- 3 Open to Change
- 4 Seeking
- 5 Commitment to Christ

• Discipleship

▼ Background

- Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius’ household. - Acts 10 - 11
 - Jews scattered by persecution began sharing the gospel with gentiles. - Acts 11:19-21
 - Barnabas and Saul shepherd a mixed Jewish & Gentile church in Antioch - Acts 11:22-26
 - Barnabas and Paul (aka Saul) conduct a successful missions trip evangelizing Gentiles and Jews. - Acts 13 - 14
- ▼ There is now a substantial population of Gentile Christians with “headquarters” in Antioch.
- They have a well-established understanding of what it means to be “saved” (Acts 2:40-41).
 - The new teaching from the Judean visitors threatens to undermine the Antioch church and all the other churches that Paul and Barnabas have established.
- This is a major crisis in the short history of the church!

▼ The Language of Harvest

▼ Bearing Fruit

- Parable of the sower - Matthew 13:1-23

▼ Ladder of Abstraction

- concrete language

▼ Physical Fitness:

- You can't achieve it using only words like: fitness, health, flexibility, strength.
- You must use words like: reps, squats, presses, push-ups, speed, incline, etc.

▼ Education

- You can't achieve it using only words like: education, knowledge, learning, understanding.
- You must use words like: add, multiply, conjugate, microscope, experiment, essay, verb, noun, translate.

▼ Farming: seed, sower, scattering, harvesting

- What is a crop and how do I know when I've produced one?

▼ Fishing: nets, fisherman, lake or sea, boat

- What is a fish and how do I know when I've caught one?
- How do I know when I've cooked one?

▼ Understanding Salvation

▼ The Bible uses many terms to describe a single experience from multiple perspectives:

- Believer, Born Again, Christian, Disciple, Follower of Jesus, Saints, Saved
- See Following Jesus: Introduction - Lesson 2
- Consider these terms from "Following Jesus: Introduction" Lesson 2 (<https://lifechurchboston.org/activities/classes-programs/following-jesus/introduction/>)
- **Believer** – someone who believes in or has faith in Jesus and therefore follows him. In the Bible, the term "believer" refers to much more than simply agreeing with an idea. It implies a level of commitment such that, when given a chance, you will act on the belief. For example, you demonstrate your belief that a chair will support your weight by sitting in it; you demonstrate your belief that an airplane will take you safely to your destination by flying in it.
John 4:39-41; Acts 2:44-47; Acts 4:31-32; Galatians 6:9-10; James 2:1
- **Born again** – those who believe in Jesus are born again from God's Spirit. You must be born again to see or enter the Kingdom of God.
John 3:1-21; 1Peter 1:22-23

- **Brother** – those who follow Jesus are part of a new family and become brothers and sisters to one another.
Matthew 12:46-50; Matthew 23:8; Acts 6:3; Acts 9:28-30; Acts 11:1; Acts 11:29; Acts 15
- **Christian** – means “belonging to Christ” “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” – Acts 11:19-26
- **Disciples** – those who are trained by the one they are following.
Matthew 5:1-2; Acts 6:1-7; Acts 9:1-31; Acts 11:19-26; Acts 18:23
- **Follower of Jesus** – Someone who follows and organizes his/her life around the life of Jesus as revealed in the Bible, especially the four gospels (i.e. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and as revealed by the Holy Spirit.
Matthew 4:19; Matthew 8:19-22; Matthew 9:9; Matthew 10:37-39; Matthew 16:24-26; Matthew 19:21-22; Matthew 19:27-30; John 1:43; John 12:26; John 21:19-22
- **Saints** – those who are “sanctified”, or set apart for God’s use.
Romans 1:1-8; Ephesians 1:1-2; Philippians 1:1-2
- **Saved** – those who by following Jesus have been rescued from this world and from God’s wrath.
Luke 8:12; Luke 8:4-15; John 10:1-9; Acts 2:17-21; Acts 4:8-12; Romans 10:1-13

▼ Confess and Believe

- ▼ For salvation, many view Romans 10:9-10 as their “go to” passage:
That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. – Romans 10:9-10 (NIV)
 - This 4th and final passage in the “Romans Roadmap to Salvation” (Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10) is the one that “seals the deal” for many.
 - Some have treated this as a “magical formula” as if merely saying the words guarantees your eternal destiny. This however is based on a misunderstanding of the verses and their context.
- ▼ Romans 10:1-13 - Here is Romans 10:9-10 in its larger context.
Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.
Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: “The man who does these things will live by them.” **But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,”** that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from

the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

- Notice that vs. 9-10 (underlined) are preceded by vs. 5-8 (bold).

▼ Romans 10:5-8 includes a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 30:11-14:

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: “The man who does these things will live by them.” But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” - Romans 10:5-8

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. -

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

- Notice that Romans 10:5-8 parallels Deuteronomy 30:11-14
- Here, in Romans, Paul substitutes “Christ” for the commands that Moses references in Deuteronomy.

▼ Deuteronomy 30:11-14 is actually the conclusion of the following sequence:

- Deuteronomy 28:1-14 – Blessings for Obedience
 - Deuteronomy 28:15-68 – Curses for Disobedience
 - Deuteronomy 29 – Renewal of the Covenant
 - Deuteronomy 30:1-10 – Prosperity After Turning to the Lord
 - Deuteronomy 30:11-20 – Offer of Life or Death
- Deuteronomy 28:1-14 – Blessings for Obedience
If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:

You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.

The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock — the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed.

You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. Deuteronomy 28:1-7 (NIV)

- Deuteronomy 28:15-68 – Curses for Disobedience

However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country.

Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed.

The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. - Deuteronomy 28:15-19 (NIV)

- Deuteronomy 29 – Renewal of the Covenant

- Deuteronomy 30:1-10 – Prosperity After Turning to the Lord

When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today. Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land.

The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

- Deuteronomy 30:11-20 – Offer of Life or Death

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

▼ Let's look at our Romans passage once again: Romans 10:1-13

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." - Romans 10:1-13

- Here, "Christ" and the confession of Jesus as Lord replace the commands to which Moses refers in Deuteronomy 30:11-14.
- Paul is acknowledging that for followers of Jesus, Christ (our King) replaces the Law in our covenant relationship. We obey him!

▼ Romans 10:9-13

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

- We must therefore understand confessing that "Jesus is Lord" and believing in your heart that God raised him from the dead as an expression of commitment to obey Christ!

▼ Romans 10:14-21

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone

out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.” But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”

- The preaching of the message produces faith in some hearers.
 - This faith is actual commitment to Jesus as “Lord” meaning the one to be obeyed rather than just a title to be applied.
 - If I believe that simply addressing him by the title is sufficient, then the title itself becomes just a courtesy. He’s not really “Lord” because I apparently don’t really have to obey him. In other words, I don’t really believe that he is Lord.
- ▼ The Gospels give us a picture of what salvation looks like.
- ▼ **Matthew 4:12-17 – Jesus Begins to Preach**
- When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali — to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles — the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”
- From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”
- Note the content of his message: “The Kingdom of Heaven is near!”
- ▼ **Matthew 4:18-22 - Jesus Calls His First Disciples**
- As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him.
- Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.
- Peter, Andrew, James, and John
 - Note Jesus’ command: “Follow me”. Following Jesus is the foundation of being a Christian.
- ▼ **Matthew 4:23-25 - Jesus heals the sick:**
- This draws large crowds who follow him.
- ▶ **Matthew 4:23-25 - Jesus heals the sick:**
- Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

▼ Matthew 5:1-2 - Introduction to Sermon on the Mount:

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying: . . .

- Notice the distinction between the crowds and the disciples.
- Jesus sees the crowds and goes up on a mountainside.
- His disciples come to him and he begins to teach them.
- The crowd is following Jesus for potentially a variety of reasons.
- Jesus' disciples are following him in order to learn from him. Disciples are learners who learn by following a teacher. In this case they learn by following Jesus.
- They are considered disciples from the beginning.
- We know that not all of them will make it to the end, but Jesus treats them as people who both belong, and who can make it.

▼ Matthew 5:3-12 Beatitudes

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- Jesus identifies the different backgrounds among those who have come to learn from him.
- All are welcomed with a promise they will receive the Kingdom, with Jesus highlighting that aspect of the Kingdom most relevant to the background that he identified.

▼ Matthew 5:17-20

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- Jesus explains that he will fulfill the law rather than abolish it.

▼ Matthew 5:21-22

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

- Jesus adopts a verbal formula indicating that his disciples are to transfer their attention from their past teachers to him exclusively.
- Consider what we know about the disciples:
- Do they know everything that Jesus is going to teach them at this point?
- Are they perfectly obedient?
- Will all of them last to the very end?
- Why does Matthew already refer to them as disciples?
- In light of all this, how does Jesus treat them? Are they nervous or insecure about where they stand with him?

▼ This is what salvation looks like.

▼ People who

- have been captivated by Jesus.
- follow him in order to learn from him.
- abandon their past teachers in favor of learning directly from Jesus.

▼ Jesus

- Welcomes them regardless of their past social status or degree of spiritual achievement.
- Considers them to be disciples from the beginning.
- Treats them with an expectation of success.
- The disciples’ attention is focused on Jesus and they are not at all anxious about whether they are “in” or “out”.

▼ With salvation we receive a “superpower” - the ability to distinguish between Jesus and other sources and to pay attention to Jesus.

“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” - John 10:1-5 (NIV)

- This is the flip side of the “faith” that is the evidence of salvation.
- What we do with this “superpower” will determine the course of our spiritual life.

▼ Modeling Conversion

- ▼ Compare 2 paradigms:
 - Salvation as a free gift.
 - Salvation as a commitment to following and obeying Jesus.
- ▼ Salvation as a free gift:
 - Illustration: Free tickets to a show I can't afford.
- ▼ Salvation as a commitment to following and obeying Jesus.
 - Illustration
- ▼ What is the normal path to conversion (i.e. becoming a follower)?
 - Gospel proclamation (e.g. The Kingdom of God is here)
 - Saving faith (includes the “superpower” ability to pay attention to Jesus)
 - Acts of commitment (e.g. baptism, “Jesus is Lord”, joining family of believers)
 - Discipleship
- ▼ Let's use Peter's Pentecost sermon as a model:

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. - Acts 2:36-42 (NIV)

 - Peter: God has made this Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ.
- ▼ People: What shall we do?
 - This indicates that Peter's message has generated saving faith in some of his audience!
 - We need to leave space for an indication that saving faith has been generated!
- ▼ Peter: Repent and be baptized . . .
 - Peter responds to their faith by “opening the door” to the Kingdom.
- ▼ Outcome:
 - They responded and 3,000 men were added to their number.
 - They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching . . .

▶ **Setup for Next Week:**

▶ **Make Disciples!**

▶ **Conclusion**

▼ **Followup**

▶ **Old Questions**

• **Q&A**

▼ **Discussion Questions - Part 1**

- Can you clearly articulate the gospel?
- Find a passage where the gospel is clearly presented and practice presenting it.
- Are there any parts that you don't understand?

▼ **Discussion Questions - Part 2**

These are questions you can use to help those who are struggling in their understanding of and/or relationship with Christ. Practice these on one another.

- What do you want God to do for you? What role does Jesus play in this?
- Are you confident that you are saved? If not, was there ever a time when you were confident?
- ▼ What were you told about salvation and how it happens?
 - Probe for understanding of who Jesus is and what role he plays.
 - Probe for understanding of the Kingdom of God.
- What did you do that caused you to be confident that you were saved?

▼ **Discussion Questions - Part 3**

- ▼ In the following questions stay as low on the ladder of abstraction as possible:
 - What does it look like to follow Jesus?
 - What does it look like to pay attention to Jesus?
 - What does it look like to eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood (John 6:52-71)?
 - How will you pay attention to Jesus tomorrow? This coming week?



First Class or Coach?

Part 4 – Sunday March 28, 2021



Review

Bearing Fruit

Parable of the Sower explained - Matthew 13:18-23

- “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” (NIV)



Review

Bearing Fruit

Parable of the sower - Matthew 13:1-23

Ladder of Abstraction

Concrete Language





Review

Concrete Language

Physical Fitness:

- You can't achieve it using only words like: fitness, health, flexibility, strength.
- You must use words like: reps, squats, presses, push-ups, speed, incline, etc.



Review

Concrete Language

Education

- You can't achieve it using only words like: education, knowledge, learning, understanding.
- You must use words like: spell, add, multiply, conjugate, microscope, experiment, essay, verb, noun, translate, 1492, 1620, 1776, George Washington, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King.



Review

Farming: seed, sower, scattering, harvesting

- What is a crop and how do I know when I've produced one?

Fishing: nets, fisherman, lake or sea, boat

- What is a fish and how do I know when I've caught one?
- How do I know when I've cooked one?

Shopping:

- What is a loaf of bread and how do I know when I've purchased one?
- What is a steak and how do I know when I've purchased one?
- How do I know when I've cooked one?



Our Passage – Acts 15

A Disrupting Event – Acts 15:1-5 (NIV)

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.”



Understanding the Issues

Some Definitions:

Evangelism --→ Discipleship Sequence

1. Trust
2. Curiosity
3. Open to Change
4. Seeking
5. Commitment to Christ

Discipleship



Understanding the Issues

Background

- Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius' household. - Acts 10 – 11

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa. - Acts 10:1-8 (NIV)



Understanding the Issues

Background

- Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius' household. - Acts 10 – 11
- Jews scattered by persecution began sharing the gospel with gentiles.

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. - Acts 11:19-21 (NIV)



Understanding the Issues

Background

- Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius' household. - Acts 10 – 11
- Jews scattered by persecution began sharing the gospel with gentiles. - Acts 11:19-21
- Barnabas and Saul shepherd a mixed Jewish & Gentile church in Antioch.

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. - Acts 11:22-26 (NIV)



Understanding the Issues

Background

- Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius' household. - Acts 10 – 11
- Jews scattered by persecution began sharing the gospel with gentiles. - Acts 11:19-21
- Barnabas and Saul shepherd a mixed Jewish & Gentile church in Antioch. - Acts 11:22-26
- Barnabas and Paul (aka Saul) conduct a successful missions trip evangelizing Gentiles and Jews.

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. – Acts 13:1-3



Understanding the Issues

Background - Recap

- Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius' household. - Acts 10 - 11
- Jews scattered by persecution began sharing the gospel with gentiles. - Acts 11:19-21
- Barnabas and Saul shepherd a mixed Jewish & Gentile church in Antioch - Acts 11:22-26
- Barnabas and Paul (aka Saul) conduct a successful missions trip evangelizing Gentiles and Jews. - Acts 13 - 14



Understanding the Issues

There is now a substantial population of Gentile Christians with “headquarters” in Antioch.

- They have a well-established understanding of what it means to be “saved”

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. - Acts 2:40-41 (NIV)

- The new teaching from the Judean visitors threatens to undermine the Antioch church and all the other churches that Paul and Barnabas have established.

This is a major crisis in the short history of the church!



Terminology

Consider these terms from “[Following Jesus: Introduction](https://lfechurchboston.org/activities/classes-programs/following-jesus/introduction/)” Lesson 2
(<https://lfechurchboston.org/activities/classes-programs/following-jesus/introduction/>)

Believer – someone who believes in or has faith in Jesus and therefore follows him. In the Bible, the term “believer” refers to much more than simply agreeing with an idea. It implies a level of commitment such that, when given a chance, you will act on the belief. For example, you demonstrate your belief that a chair will support your weight by sitting in it; you demonstrate your belief that an airplane will take you safely to your destination by flying in it.

[John 4:39-41](#); [Acts 2:44-47](#); [Acts 4:31-32](#); [Galatians 6:9-10](#); [James 2:1](#)

Born again – those who believe in Jesus are born again from God’s Spirit. You must be born again to see or enter the Kingdom of God.

[John 3:1-21](#); [1Peter 1:22-23](#)

Brother – those who follow Jesus are part of a new family and become brothers and sisters to one another.

[Matthew 12:46-50](#); [Matthew 23:8](#); [Acts 6:3](#); [Acts 9:28-30](#); [Acts 11:1](#); [Acts 11:29](#); [Acts 15](#)

Christian – means “belonging to Christ” “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” – [Acts 11:19-26](#)



Terminology

- **Disciples** – those who are trained by the one they are following.
[Matthew 5:1-2; Acts 6:1-7; Acts 9:1-31; Acts 11:19-26; Acts 18:23](#)
- **Follower of Jesus** – Someone who follows and organizes his/her life around the life of Jesus as revealed in the Bible, especially the four gospels (i.e. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and as revealed by the Holy Spirit.
[Matthew 4:19; Matthew 8:19-22; Matthew 9:9; Matthew 10:37-39; Matthew 16:24-26; Matthew 19:21-22; Matthew 19:27-30; John 1:43; John 12:26; John 21:19-22](#)
- **Saints** – those who are “sanctified”, or set apart for God’s use.
[Romans 1:1-8; Ephesians 1:1-2; Philippians 1:1-2](#)
- **Saved** – those who by following Jesus have been rescued from this world and from God’s wrath.
[Luke 8:12; Luke 8:4-15; John 10:1-9; Acts 2:17-21; Acts 4:8-12; Romans 10:1-13](#)



Confess and Believe

That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. – Romans 10:9-10 (NIV)

In context, these verses fall within Romans 10:1-13 in which Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:11-14.



Confess and Believe

- Romans 10:1-13

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."



Confess and Believe

- Romans 10:5-8

*Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: “The man who does these things will live by them.” But the righteousness that is by faith says: **“Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming:***

- Deuteronomy 30:11-14 – Offer of Life or Death

*Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. **It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.***



Confess and Believe

*Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. **It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.***

– Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (NIV)

This passage, quoted by Paul in Romans, is actually the conclusion of the following sequence:

- Deuteronomy 28:1-14 – Blessings for Obedience
- Deuteronomy 28:15-68 – Curses for Disobedience
- Deuteronomy 29 – Renewal of the Covenant
- Deuteronomy 30:1-10 – Prosperity After Turning to the Lord
- Deuteronomy 30:11-20 – Offer of Life or Death



Confess and Believe

- Deuteronomy 28:1-14 – Blessings for Obedience

If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:

You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.

The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock — the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed.

You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. Deuteronomy 28:1-7 (NIV)



Confess and Believe

- Deuteronomy 28:15-68 – Curses for Disobedience

However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country.

Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed.

The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

*You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. -
Deuteronomy 28:15-19 (NIV)*

- Deuteronomy 29 – Renewal of the Covenant



Confess and Believe

- Deuteronomy 30:1-10 – Prosperity After Turning to the Lord

When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today. Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.



Confess and Believe

- Deuteronomy 30:11-20 – Offer of Life or Death

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.



Confess and Believe

- Romans 10:1-13

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."



Confess and Believe

- Romans 10:5-8

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: “The man who does these things will live by them.” But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,”

- Notice that Romans 10:5-8 parallels Deuteronomy 30:11-14
- Here, in Romans, “Christ” is substituted for the words of God that Moses references in Deuteronomy.
- What follows this passage will then correspond to the rest of the Deuteronomy passage.



Confess and Believe

- Romans 10:9-13

That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

- Here, “Christ” and the confession of Jesus as Lord replace the “word’ to which Moses refers in Deuteronomy 30:11-14.
- Paul is acknowledging that for followers of Jesus, Christ (our King) replaces the Law in our covenant relationship. We obey him!



Confess and Believe

- Romans 10:14-21

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.” But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”

- The preaching of the message produces faith in some hearers.
- This faith is actual commitment to Jesus as “Lord” meaning the one to be obeyed rather than just a title to be applied.
- If I believe that simply addressing him by the title is sufficient, then the title itself becomes just a courtesy. He’s not really “Lord” because I apparently don’t really have to obey him. In other words, I don’t really believe that he is Lord.



Confess and Believe

- Confessing Jesus as Lord and believing that God raised him from the dead means more than just saying the words. It means committing your life.
 - You don't actually need to understand Deuteronomy 30 to realize this however.
 - No one who takes a serious look at the Apostle Paul could possibly conclude that he was encouraging people to just say some "magic words" without a tangible commitment.
 - Remember that the Paul who wrote Romans 10:9-10 also wrote: Romans 8:1-17; Romans 11:11-24; Romans 12:1-2; Romans 13:8-14; Romans 15:14-16.



Picturing Salvation

Matthew draws a picture for us of what salvation looks like.

- **Matthew 4:12-17 – Jesus Begins to Preach**

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali — to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles — the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

- Note the content of his message: “The Kingdom of Heaven is near!”

- **Matthew 4:18-22 - Jesus Calls His First Disciples**

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

- Note Jesus’ command: “Follow me”. Following Jesus is the foundation of being a Christian.



Picturing Salvation

Matthew draws a picture for us of what salvation looks like.

- Matthew 4:23-25 - Jesus heals the sick:

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

- Large crowds are now following Jesus. Are they saved too?



Picturing Salvation

Matthew draws a picture for us of what salvation looks like.

- Matthew 5:1-2 - Introduction to Sermon on the Mount:

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying: . . .

- Notice the distinction between the crowds and the disciples.
- The crowd is following Jesus for potentially a variety of reasons.
- Jesus' disciples are following him in order to learn from him. **Disciples are learners who learn by following a teacher.** In this case they learn by **following Jesus.**
- They are considered disciples from the beginning.
- We know that not all of them will make it to the end, but Jesus treats them as people who both belong, and who can make it.



Picturing Salvation

Matthew draws a picture for us of what salvation looks like.

- Matthew 5:3-12 Beatitudes

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- Jesus identifies the different backgrounds among those who have come to learn from him.
- All are welcomed with a promise they will receive the Kingdom, with Jesus highlighting that aspect of the Kingdom most relevant to the background that he identified.



Picturing Salvation

Matthew draws a picture for us of what salvation looks like.

- Matthew 5:17-20

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- Jesus explains that he will fulfill the law rather than abolish it.



Picturing Salvation

Matthew draws a picture for us of what salvation looks like.

- Matthew 5:21-22

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

- Jesus adopts a verbal formula indicating that his disciples are to transfer their attention from their past teachers to him exclusively.



Picturing Salvation

Consider what we know about the disciples:

- Do they know everything that Jesus is going to teach them at this point?
- Are they perfectly obedient?
- Will all of them last to the very end?
- Why does Matthew already refer to them as disciples?
- In light of all this, how does Jesus treat them? Are they nervous or insecure about where they stand with him?



Picturing Salvation

This is what salvation looks like.

- People who
 - have been captivated by Jesus.
 - follow him in order to learn from him.
 - abandon their past teachers in favor of learning directly from Jesus.
- Jesus
 - Welcomes them regardless of their past social status or degree of spiritual achievement.
 - Considers them to be disciples from the beginning.
 - Treats them with an expectation of success.
- Their attention is focused on Jesus and they are not at all anxious about whether they are “in” or “out”.



Picturing Salvation

With salvation we receive a “superpower” - the ability to distinguish between Jesus and other sources and to pay attention to Jesus.

“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” - John 10:1-5 (NIV)

- This is the flip side of the “faith” that is the evidence of salvation.
- What we do with this “superpower” will determine the course of our spiritual life.



Modeling Conversion

Compare 2 paradigms:

- Salvation as a free gift.
- Salvation as a commitment to following and obeying Jesus.

Salvation as a free gift:

- Illustration: Free tickets to a show I can't afford.

Salvation as a commitment to following and obeying Jesus.

- Illustration



Modeling Conversion

What is the normal path to conversion (i.e. becoming a follower)?

- Gospel proclamation (e.g. The Kingdom of God is here)
- Saving faith (includes the “superpower” ability to pay attention to Jesus)
- Acts of commitment (e.g. baptism, “Jesus is Lord”, joining family of believers)
- Discipleship



Modeling Conversion

Let's use Peter's Pentecost sermon as a model:

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call."

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. - Acts 2:36-42 (NIV)

- Peter: "God has made this Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ."
- People: "What shall we do?"
- Peter: "Repent and be baptized . . ."
- Outcome: Those who accepted the message responded (were baptized) and 3,000 were added to their number.
- Outcome: They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching . . .



Discussion Questions – Part 1

- Can you clearly articulate the gospel?
- Find a passage where the gospel is clearly presented and practice presenting it.
- Are there any parts that you don't understand?



Discussion Questions – Part 2

Questions for those who may be struggling:

- What do you want God to do for you? What role does Jesus play in this?
- Are you confident that you are saved? If not, was there ever a time when you were confident?
- What were you told about salvation and how it happens?
 - Probe for understanding of who Jesus is and what role he plays.
 - Probe for understanding of the Kingdom of God.
- What did you do that caused you to be confident that you were saved?



Discussion Questions – Part 3

In the following questions stay as low on the ladder of abstraction as possible:

1. What does it look like to follow Jesus?
2. What does it look like to pay attention to Jesus?
3. What does it look like to eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood (John 6:52-71)?
4. How will you pay attention to Jesus tomorrow? This coming week?



Hints & Q&A

Hint:

Checkout our [Following Jesus: Introduction Page](https://lifechurchboston.org/activities/classes-programs/following-jesus/introduction/):

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Q&A