



YOUR WAY TO PERSONAL PEACE

Course 1, *Basic Christianity*, Lesson 5

The Problem: In our previous lesson we studied the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We saw that God gave His Son to die for our sins so that we can be forgiven; so that we can live transformed lives now; and so that we can have eternal life in His Kingdom. Without Christ's death and resurrection, human beings, who have inherited fallen natures because of the sin of our first parents, and who have themselves sinned, could never have eternal life. Satan thought that when he led Adam and Eve to disobey God, he had seized the world for himself irrevocably. But God already had a plan of saving man from Satan's domination. See Ephesians 1:4. He had already decided to send His own Son to die in man's place. Then by accepting His death for their sins, humans could be delivered from the dominion of sin and death.

Now the question arises, how can I come to know Christ for myself as a personal Friend and Savior? How can I receive the spiritual life and power that He has promised to give me? Many people who believe that Jesus came as God in human form 2,000 years ago do not know how to establish a personal relationship with Him. This lesson will explain how.

How can we find God and experience the peace of mind for which we are craving? In the simplest and clearest possible terms, how do we experience the salvation that Jesus Christ is offering us?

Objectives:

- First, does God really love us individually?
- Second, why does every human being need Christ?
- Third, how do I turn away from sin?
- Fourth, how do I confess my sins and know that I am forgiven?
- Fifth, how do I give all of myself to Christ?
- Sixth, what is faith?
- Seventh, how does Christ live out their faith?

I. DOES GOD REALLY LOVE US INDIVIDUALLY?

Although there is much in nature that reminds us of the curse of sin and death, there is also much that speaks to us of God, pointing to His bountiful concern for His children. The order and harmony in nature by which man's physical and temporal needs are supplied is an ever-present evidence of God's infinite love.

God's Word is full of expressions of His love and examples of His willingness to forgive sin and protect His faithful people from their spiritual enemies. The supreme example of God's love, as we saw in the previous lesson, is the life, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ. In Him, God gave all that a loving God could give to save us from sin and lead us to eternal life in His Kingdom.

The Word:

1. How did God reveal His loving character to Moses?
So he cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone. Now

the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation. So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. Exodus 34:4-8

2. What does the Bible say about God's provision of mankind's temporal needs?

The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Psalm 145:15-16; compare Matthew 5:45.

3. What kinds of activities were characteristic of the ministry of Jesus?

So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are¹oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:16-21

4. Whose character was represented by the loving ministry of Jesus

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? John 14:9

Explanation: These Bible passages emphasize that God's infinite love for each of us individually is revealed by His provision for our physical well-being, as well as by the gift of His Son. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" John 3:16. The most remarkable evidence of His love is that the Lord provides these blessings for unbelievers as well as believers. *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Romans 5:8

Relevance: God loves you individually. "I have called you by your name; You are Mine." Isaiah 43:1. "See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands" Isaiah 49:16. All the indications in Scripture are that Christ would have died for you even if you had been the only sinner.

Can you respond positively to God's great love for you?

II. WHY DOES EVERY HUMAN BEING NEED CHRIST?

When our first parents chose to rebel against God, they lost the perfect spiritual natures which God had given them. Now they were fallen, and Satan was in control. Their minds became perverted by sin and their bodies began to deteriorate. Their children were born fallen. The Psalmist says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" Psalm 51:5. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies" Psalm 58:3. This is why all mankind needs a Savior. All are fallen by nature, and all have chosen to sin.

The Word:

5. What does the Bible say about the universal problem of sin?

There is none righteous, no, not one. for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:10, 23

6. What can a person do to save himself from his fallen sinful condition?
Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one! Job 14:4. See also Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14.
7. What is our only hope of being delivered from our state of alienation from God?
Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" John 3: 7; See also Romans 7:24-25

Explanation: If a man is convicted of murder and given an unconditional life sentence, there is nothing he can do to change that. No amount of good behavior in prison will earn his release. Just so, because of our sin, we have been justly condemned to eternal death. See Romans 6:23. We were born alienated from God, but worse than that, we have chosen to sin. There is nothing we can do to reverse the sentence. We need help beyond ourselves. Jesus bore the sentence for us, and He comes to live within us through the presence of the Holy Spirit, to engage in a lifelong war against sin within the human heart. See Galatians 5:16-26.

Relevance: Works of religion are powerless to save us. Every non-Christian religion is based on the principle that you can do something to save yourself. Christ teaches that you and I must depend wholly upon Him.

Have you recognized your need for Christ?

III. HOW DO I TURN AWAY FROM SIN?

Sorrow for sin and turning away from it is what the Bible calls repentance. True repentance is not sorrow for the results of our transgression. Judas was sorry for the consequences of his sin, but he did not repent (Matthew 27:3-5). Pharaoh was sorry when Egypt was afflicted by plagues, but he did not repent and let Israel go (Exodus 8:28-32). True repentance is genuine sorrow for the sin itself and a turning away from it. This is what the Bible calls "godly sorrow" (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

The Bible teaches that there are three steps in repentance. Two of these steps are God's and one is yours.

The Word:

8. What is the first step in repentance?
No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:44
9. What is our part in repentance?
Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20
10. What does God do for us then?
Him (Jesus) God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. Acts 5:31; See also Romans 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25.

Explanation: Many people think they must repent before they can come to God. This is not so! We cannot make ourselves sorry for our sins, and of ourselves we cannot turn away from the habits and practices of the past. Sorrow for the past and power to overcome (repentance) are God's gift to us. So, we respond to His call, and God gives repentance as a gift.

Relevance: The delightful implication is that if you do not resist God's call, you will be drawn to Jesus and saved from sin. Are you responding daily to Christ's convicting, drawing power by coming to Him in faith just as you are?

IV. HOW DO I CONFESS AND KNOW THAT I AM FORGIVEN?

The Bible does not teach that we must confess our sins to some other human being as an intermediary, or punish ourselves with extreme fasting, or make long pilgrimages before we can be forgiven. The simple truth is that we are asked to confess directly to God, and He promises to forgive and cleanse us.

The Word:

11. Under what circumstances does God promise to forgive and cleanse us?

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9. See also Ezra 10:11; Proverbs 28:13.

12. If you come to God and remember that you have wronged someone, what should you do?

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24

13. What are some examples in the Bible of people confessing a particular sin?

And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves." 1 Samuel 12:19; See also Acts 26:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:16.

Explanation: If we have wronged someone, the Lord asks us to make that right as far as is possible, and then to seek that person's forgiveness. Whether we confess to God, or put things right with those we have wronged, we must acknowledge our sins. It is not that God's forgiveness depends upon our memory. But, in so far as we are conscious of sins committed, the Lord asks us to mention them specifically to Him without making any excuses for ourselves.

Relevance: God's forgiveness involves cleansing. Once you have confessed your sin in the name of Christ, you must believe that you are forgiven and cleansed, because it is so! What Christ purifies is pure! Paul refers to people's past sins and adds, "*But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God*" 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Do you believe that you are forgiven and cleansed?

V. HOW DO I GIVE ALL OF MYSELF TO CHRIST?

Consecration is giving all your life to Christ. Whatever your station in life, the Lord wants your first and best service. Half-hearted devotion to God will make you a very unhappy person, because you will be torn between two ways of life and have no peace of mind. The only way to have rest of soul is to surrender your life fully to Jesus. Then, whatever your circumstances, you know that God is with you and will not allow anything to happen for which He has not made provision.

The Word:

14. What did Jesus say about the degree of consecration that He expects in His disciples?

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:26-27, 33; See also Matthew 10:37-39

15. What must be put away from our lives completely if we are to be Christ's true followers?

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:24

16. What wonderful assurances does the fully surrendered Christian have?

For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. 2 Timothy 1:12. See also Matthew 28:20; Romans 8:28

Explanation: Jesus said, *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"* Luke 14:26. He was using a typical Semitic hyperbole. What He meant, as Matthew 10:37 explains, was that we must love Him first and best. No human affection or earthly attachment of any kind is to come between us and Christ. Human commitments and relationships are acceptable to the Lord only if they contribute to our love for Him; never if they destroy our relationship with Him.

Relevance: To turn your back on any plan Christ has for your life is tantamount to rejecting Him. Being His follower involves being what He wants you to be, going where He sends you, and living as He asks you to live.

Do you love Jesus sufficiently to make that kind of commitment?

VI. WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith is not just believing the historical facts of Christianity. *"The devils also believe, and tremble"* (James 2:19), but they do not have faith in Christ. Faith involves a conscious exercise of the will, by which you choose to serve Christ. When Jesus commanded the paralyzed man to arise and walk, it was necessary for him to choose what Christ had commanded. He chose and rose to his feet. Thus, he was healed (Matthew 9:6-7). If you wait until you feel right, you may never be saved from sin. Faith is not feeling! It is choosing to receive Jesus into your life because you are responding to His love.

The Word:

17. What were the four steps by which the prodigal son was reconciled to his father? Luke 15:14, 17, 18, 20

Step 1. *But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.* Luke 15:14

Step 2. *But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!'* Luke 15:17

Step 3. *I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you."* Luke 15:18

Step 4. *And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.* Luke 15:20

18. How can you be certain that the Lord accepts you when you choose to serve Him?

Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. Mark 11:24; See also 1 John 5:14

19. Once we have been accepted by the Lord, how do we maintain a daily walk with Him?

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. Colossians 2:6; See also Matthew 26:41; 2 Timothy 2:15

Explanation: The prodigal son had to make a decision and then act upon it. Of course, it was the Spirit of the Lord who led him to the point of decision and gave him the power to act (See Jeremiah 31:3). Nevertheless, it was essential for the young man to make a choice. Once we have chosen Christ, we can be sure that He accepts us as His children. Then begins our daily walk with Him. Every day we choose Him again as we pray, study His Word, and surrender to His will. This is the life of faith!

Relevance: We may at times doubt Christ's willingness to deliver us from sin and to guide our lives. However, His power is infinite (Matthew 28:18). When we fall, we turn to Him again with confession, faith, and surrender. Jesus willingly gives forgiveness, cleansing, and acceptance. Are you enjoying a life of faith?

VII. HOW DOES A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH?

Following Jesus means to become His disciple, to follow Him, to be with Him, to become like Him. The Bible records God's will for us. Central to Biblical teaching are the commandments of God as an expression of His will. When a lawyer asked Jesus which is the greatest commandment in the law, Jesus replied: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets"* Matthew 22:37-40. Jesus was quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. He was summarizing the 10 Commandments. See Exodus 20:1-17.

The Ten Commandments reflect God's will for humanity and serve as the moral foundation of the world. They were given by God to the Israelites in the Old Testament (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5) as a guide for living in a way that honors Him and promotes harmony with others. When Jesus explained that law in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-48) He made it clear that He had not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. He also gave a severe warning against disobeying God's commandments (verse 19). In that sermon and throughout His life on earth, Jesus provided a deeper understanding of the law. He emphasized not just outward obedience but also inward righteousness—calling attention to the heart and intent behind actions. He explained that to hate is to break the command which says, "You shall not murder." He also expanded people's understanding of the commandment which says, "You shall not commit adultery," when he said that even evil looks and thoughts break that command.

Obedience to God's law is not the means of salvation, but it is the result of that experience. Let us see what the Bible says.

The Word:

20. What warning does the Bible give about trusting to our works for salvation?

knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. Galatians 2:16

21. Does our faith and trust in Christ eliminate the need to keep God's law?

Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. Romans 3:31; See also Romans 8:3-4; James 2:10-12.

22. To what extent may the believing Christian have victory over sin?

And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. 1 John 3:5-6; See also 1 Peter 1:15-16

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:5-10

23. What is the lifestyle of the disciple of Christ?

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

Explanation: A Christian who lives in sin is a contradiction. The Bible is very direct on this point. *“He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”* 1 John 2:4. Yet, we must not give up in discouragement if we fall. The Bible says *“if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”* 1 John 2:1. Praise the Lord for Jesus our heavenly Advocate. He is willing to forgive and receive us. Even so, He offers us all of the necessary power to live in conformity to God’s will.

We are instructed to keep His commandments (1 John 5:3). But how? *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”* 1 John 5:4. Our faith walk with God is an ongoing journey of grace, repentance, and personal transformation.

Relevance: By daily spending time with Him, listening to His voice, and surrendering our will to His will, we will have the necessary spiritual power to live according to His will. Overcoming sin is a lifelong process of spiritual growth and dependence on God’s grace, not a one-time event. The most important issue in your life is to choose Jesus now, and then to choose Him every day that follows.

Do you love Jesus enough to give yourself totally to Him?

Are you willing, by His grace, to turn surrender yourself to Him every day, and turn away from those things which you know displease Him, and allow Him to live in you through His Spirit?

Will you commit to daily Bible study, meditation and prayer so that Jesus can give you greater and greater power to serve Him?

Review Questions

1. True or False:

- a. If God really loved us, He would never allow us to suffer.
- b. The only people who need Christ are the really weak ones who can’t cope with their problems.
- c. No one can overcome sin without divine power.
- d. It is never necessary to confess a sin to another human being.

2. Discuss: What is the most important feature of being a Christian? Is it what you believe about Christ, or the way you live, or something else more important than both?