

GRACE BIBLE MISSION

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LESSON: WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW

Study 2: THE MEANING AND METHOD OF GOD'S SALVATION

(Scripture Portion: 1 Peter 1: 1-12)

Have you ever noticed the important words, phrases and expressions that appear in the opening verses of 1 Peter, chapter 1? Notice the words *chosen*, *grace*, *peace* (verse 2); *mercy* (verse 3); *inheritance*, *heaven* (verse 4); *faith* (verse 5); and *gospel* (verse 12); and also the phrases: *sanctifying work of the Spirit*, *the blood of Jesus* (verse 2); and *given us new birth* (verse 3). All of these might well be called identifying words of the gospel, for they are words and phrases unique to the Christian revelation. There is one word, however, that Peter uses repeatedly; it is the word *salvation* – look at verses 5, 9 and 10, and notice the theme of verses 9-12. In this portion of scripture we have an outline of the meaning and method of God's great salvation.

1. GOD'S SALVATION IS HIS REVEALED METHOD OF SAVING MEN AND WOMEN.

The word *revealed* (verse 12) actually means *uncovered*. This reminds us of the difference between religion and revelation. It is important for us to learn the difference. Religion consists of *man's* efforts to reach up to God and be accepted before Him. Religion begins on earth's level and in the heart and mind of man. Revelation, on the other hand, is God's system or plan of saving men and women; it is conceived in His heart, and revealed to man. Every system of salvation in the world, apart from Christianity, is man's *religion*. Christianity is God's *revelation*. This is a great claim to make, for it means that Christianity alone is the only true way of salvation. Jesus Christ is the one and only Saviour – look up John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5. God's way of salvation was revealed in promise – look up Genesis 3:15; in prophecy – over and over again; and here in verse 12 and in the many types and histories of the Old Testament – look up and compare Romans 1:16-18.

2. GOD'S SALVATION IS THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL.

We read this in verse 9. It is so important to remember that our deepest need is in the realm of the soul. Our bodies will waste and die, but not our souls. What profit would it be to have a saved life but a lost soul? --look up Mark 8:36-37. By nature our souls are lost – lost to God, Heaven, righteousness,

purity – eternally lost; lost because of sin – look up Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23. God's salvation saves us from sin, death and Hell, and saves us for eternity. But this raises a question: Does God only offer to save the soul? Does He not offer help for body and mind? Yes, indeed, he offers salvation from fear, worry and doubt, and gives us now the prospect of a new body – look up 2 Corinthians 5:1-4.

3. GOD'S SALVATION IS ALTOGETHER OF GRACE.

Notice the important word grace in verse 10. What do we mean when we say that salvation is altogether of grace? We mean it is altogether of God's providing; we do not deserve it and we can do nothing to merit it. We can only accept it as a gift. Every religion in the world is a system of salvation by works, by merit; but God's method of saving men and women excludes works altogether – look up and compare Romans 3:20; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5, and then read Romans 4:5.

4. GOD'S SALVATION IS MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH CHRIST ALONE.

This is what verse 11 tells us. Christ is the only Saviour. Why? Because He alone 'suffered' – in other words He alone died to atone for our sin. When you talk about salvation the first things to settle are the terms upon which God will accept and save men and women. What are the terms? He will only save us through the merit of the shed blood of Christ; and Peter emphasises this very clearly in 1 Peter 1:18-20; 2:24; 3:18. It is because the Lord Jesus alone has died to atone for our sin that He alone can save us.

5. GOD'S SALVATION IS DIVINELY WROUGHT IN THE HEART OF THE SINNER.

So says verse 12, where Peter tells the Christians that: first, they are saved; second, they are saved because the gospel, God's way of salvation, was preached to them; and third, they are saved because it was preached in the power of the Holy Ghost. In other words, when God's plan of salvation is faithfully proclaimed, the Holy Spirit witnesses to it and saves those who hear and believe. We have an illustration of this in Acts 10:44. We are saved when, hearing the Word of God, the Holy Spirit imparts faith and conveys the saving grace of the Lord to us – look up John 3:8. But what is *man's* part in salvation? What is the condition we must fulfil?

6. GOD'S SALVATION IS RECEIVED BY FAITH.

Peter tells us this in verse 9. This is the only human condition of salvation that is mentioned in the Bible; believing, or, as John 1:12 shows us, receiving – look up and compare John 3:16; 5:24; Romans 1:16; Acts 13:38-39. We are not saved by works, but simply by faith; we are not saved by believing plus something else, but simply by believing. The 'confession' that is made in Romans 10:9-10 is the evidence of believing. The 'baptism' that is mentioned in Mark 16:16 is the open confession of an inward belief. We are not saved by church-going, attending Communion, by religious observances or by reading the Bible. All these come after we are saved, and are the result of our salvation, but they cannot in any way contribute towards our salvation. This is clearly brought out in our last heading:

7. GOD'S SALVATION IS SEEN IN A COMPLETE CHANGE OF LIFE.

Peter is careful to emphasise this fact in verses 13-16, and we have many illustrations of this truth in the New Testament! – look up Ephesians 2:8-9, and then compare verse 10. When the jailer was converted he washed the wounds of Paul and Silas; this was the evidence of his salvation – look up Acts 16:30-34. When Lydia received the Lord as her Saviour and trusted Him for salvation she opened her house to the Lord's servants; this was the evidence of a real work of grace in her heart – look up Acts 16:14, 15 and 40. In 1 Peter 1:12 the writer tells us that 'even angels long to look into' this salvation – they bend down to look into it and they are amazed at the wonders of God's great plan for saving men and women.