

30 Days of Salvation

**A Personal Bible Study,
Shared with Others**

(January 20, 2010 - Feb 19, 2010)

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Ever wonder about the salvation people claim that comes from God through his Son Jesus? Well, me too.

So, here's my 30-day study on various passages I've found in the bible that discuss this salvation. Let me warn you, the writing after each verse is just my own observation and thought. I am no special teacher; just someone who wants to understand and claim truth. I would love to hear your comments on any or all of these verses and/or my thoughts. You can leave your comments on my Blog: www.leelangdon.com

30 Days of Salvation: Contents

Intro Reading

- Day 1 — John 3:16-21**
- Day 2 — John 3:1-8**
- Day 3 — John 5:16-30**
- Day 4 — John 8:21-30**
- Day 5 — John 15:18-25**
- Day 6 — Matthew 4:23-25; 5:1-2, 7-20**
- Day 7 — Romans 3:21-26**
- Day 8 — Romans 4:1-12, 18-25**
- Day 9 — Colossians 2:9-13**
- Day 10 — Matthew 28:16-20**
- Day 11 — Romans 5:1-11**
- Day 12 — Romans 6:1-14**
- Day 13 — Romans 10:8-13**
- Day 14 — Matthew 7:21-24**
- Day 15 — Acts 2:32-41**
- Day 16 — Acts 3:11-4:4**
- Day 17 — Acts 4:8-14**
- Day 18 — Acts 8:4-25 (& John 14:12-14)**
- Day 19 — Acts 8:26-40**
- Day 20 — Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-21**
- Day 21 — Acts 10:30-48**
- Day 22 — Acts 16:13-15, 25-34**
- Day 23 — 1 Corinthians 1:4-9**
- Day 24 — 2 Corinthians 1:18-24**
- Day 25 — Titus 3:1-8**
- Day 26 — Ephesians 2:1-10**
- Day 27 — Ephesians 4:17-24**
- Day 28 — 1 Peter 3:18-22**
- Day 29 — Colossians 2:6-15 (a second look)**
- Day 30 — 1 Peter 1:3-5**



30 Days of Salvation (a Study)—Introduction

Ok.

(a big breath...and then a big exhale)

I have decided to do a bible study of salvation over the next 30 days right here on my blog. Each day I will choose a passage referring to some aspect of salvation and briefly discuss the passage openly. I truly believe this will be an interesting study for long time disciples as we contemplate Scripture in traditional and possibly new ways, and for those who are wondering if they need to believe and be saved at all.

My hope is that I will honestly look at Scripture with no filters or outside influences. That will be difficult because of what I have already filled my head with through my first 36 years of life, but I will put forth my best effort to wipe the slate clean. I will read nothing but the bible for the next 30 days, nor will I consult with anyone regarding what to believe about a passage. Everything I write will be fully my own thoughts and conclusions.

One more thing, I need you to remember that I am only a Christian. I claim Jesus Christ only, and I know he claims me. If we disagree about something regarding salvation, I ask you to please don't dis-fellowship me. Just like you, my desire is to read Scripture and fully understand it. I will simply do my best.

I invite you...no, I implore you to join me on my quest. Comment on my blogs. Tell me what you think as we go. Let's see where God leads us in the study of his Word.

30 Days of Salvation.

Here we go!

30 Days of Salvation: Day 1 – John 3:16-21

Day 1—John 3:16-21

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ All those who do evil hate the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But those who live by the truth come into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

I couldn't think of a better place to start a study of salvation than from this text. There is nothing more heroic, more dedicated, more passionate than God's love for us. His love is the very foundation of his salvation, the roots of the mightiest tree...the tastiest and most satisfying bottom layer of the most scrumptious wedding cake! And it's all because of God's great love for us that we can have salvation.

It is important to point out that *God saves us*. His salvation is fully his effort from the start, not ours at all. It begins with his love and is fulfilled by his gift of his Son. His salvation isn't something we earn, nor do we deserve it. His salvation is clearly a gift of love, given for those he loves.

Truly, he could have sent another epic flood, or created some devastating nuclear disaster to wipe out mankind and destroy the earth to once and for all take care of the problem of sin. But he didn't. He loved us too much. He loved us, the humans who have been notorious from the beginning for our evil ways and our selfish idolatry, turning our backs on our creator and Father. *He decided to rescue us instead of condemn us*. Wow, what incredible mercy.

His loving salvation is simple, it's not complex. He just wants us to believe in his Son Jesus who is the light of the world. If we will just listen to Jesus, understand who he is and believe that he is God's true Son; we will then be rescued from our deserved punishment and able to live a new saved life for God.

I think this text is clear; *we do have to believe in Jesus*. We can't *not* believe in his Son Jesus and still have salvation. We must believe in his Son.

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 2—John 3:1-8](#)

Day 2—John 3:1-8

¹ Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, **we know that you are a teacher who has come from God**. For no one could **perform the signs** you are doing if God were not with him."

³ Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, **no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again**."

⁴ "How can anyone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, **no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit**. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, **'You must be born**

again.⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

Today I want to go back a few verses from yesterday’s text to the beginning of John chapter three where a discussion takes place between Nicodemus—who was a Pharisee—and Jesus.

It’s interesting to note that before Nicodemus comes to Jesus he already believes that Jesus is a “teacher who has come from God.” Like many others in Jerusalem, Nicodemus just witnessed Jesus performing signs in front of many people, and then convinced by what he saw he believed Jesus to be the real deal. Imagine witnessing those signs with your own eyes!

Jesus seems to just come out with a stipulation, a condition: *No one can see the kingdom of God without being born **again***. To discharge Nicodemus’ obvious confusion, Jesus makes the statement again with some clarification: *No one can **enter** the kingdom of God without being born **of water and the Spirit***. If I am reading this correctly, entrance into the kingdom of God requires being born again of water and the Spirit.

What if in his statement Jesus is referring to a second birth that takes place in water, specifically in water baptism? Jesus was very aware of the act of baptism, a common religious practice even in his day that signified renewal and rebirth. Furthermore, to support this possibility comes a few verses later when you see Jesus and his disciples going out into the Judean countryside baptizing more disciples (John 3:22; 4:12). Water baptism could very well have a solid link to Jesus’ statement in this text.

We can know for sure that the Holy Spirit plays a main role in the second birth that Jesus demands: “...but the Spirit gives birth to spirit”. Being born again is a spiritual act of the Spirit, and only done by the Spirit of God. Again, God is at work through his Spirit for our salvation and entrance into his kingdom. Can we just declare we are born again believers and part of God’s Kingdom? I think only the Spirit of God can declare this and make this happen.

Possibly water baptism is our submissive act of faith which gives way for the Holy Spirit of God to give birth to us.

30 Days of Salvation: Day 3—John 5:16-30

Day 3—John 5:16-30

¹⁶ So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. ¹⁷ In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to

this very day, and I too am working.”¹⁸ For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but **he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.**

¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.²¹ **For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.**²² **Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,**²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

²⁴ “Very truly I tell you, **whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.**²⁵ Very truly I tell you, a **time is coming and has now come** when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

²⁸ “Do not be amazed at this, for **a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice²⁹ and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.**³⁰ By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

Not that every day of our thirty days will be spent in the book of John, I do think it is a good idea to spend a few days here at the beginning looking at some salvation texts where Jesus discusses salvation.

Jesus was doing and saying some things that really challenged the beliefs and traditions of the Jewish leaders (i.e. healing on the Sabbath). Apparently, saying God was his Father was very offensive as well. You know what, they were right! He was saying something that should have been offensive, to claim that he was equal to God. No one does that! No one should...unless...they truly believe they are equal to God.

Two things Jesus says in this text regarding salvation: 1) “the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it”, and 2) the Father (God), “has entrusted all judgment to the Son.” We rely on Jesus to judge us and give us life. He drives this home when he clearly states: “whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.” To believe the message of Jesus and in God’s grace is to live and be free of judgment! Going even further, Jesus says that by believing we can presently—even right now—count ourselves *already* crossed over from death to life. We can live with the assurance that we are saved. The time to do this is *now!* (Let me just go lay in my comfortable and safe hammock now and take a peaceful nap!)

The time will come when everyone who has died on this earth will face Jesus. Those who have done good will rise; and those who have done evil will also rise. *All will rise* and face Jesus to be judged. I think this will be a rough day for people who did evil. Yikes!

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 4—John 8:21-30](#)

Day 4—John 8:21-30

²¹ Once more Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and **you will die in your sin**. Where I go, you cannot come.”

²² This made the Jews ask, “**Will he kill himself?** Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come?’”

²³ But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ **I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.**”

²⁵ “Who are you?” they asked.

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied. ²⁶ “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

²⁷ They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said, “**When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.** ²⁹ **The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.**”

³⁰ Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.

Let’s look today at a text that can give some insight into “why” we may need salvation in the first place. We will look at more texts in future days regarding this topic that will explain even more, but for now let us listen to the words of Jesus firsthand and try to hear what’s he’s saying.

(We should remember that Jesus has been performing signs and miracles before the eyes of many Jews and he has many Jewish followers at this point. In the specific context of today’s text, Jesus is teaching Jewish people: common people and teachers of the law.)

Jesus says some pretty bold and *loony* things in this text that make his listeners question his intentions, even to the point of wondering if he plans to commit suicide. Well, his statements are not “loony” if they are true...right? I mean, if Jesus is truly the Son of God, then saying he’s “not of this world” makes sense because he really isn’t of this world, he’s from wherever God is—above. But if he isn’t truly the Son of God, then yeah, these things he says *are* pretty loony. I guess that is why we need to decide if we

believe whether he was and is the real deal, the true Son of God. We need to decide if we believe his claims.

He told his listeners they would die in their sin after he leaves them, after he leaves this world. This is crucial to our salvation study. Jesus claims that mankind will die in their sin; this is man's destiny. It is this very concept—death for sin—that ignites this study in the first place. Every person in this world has sinned against God and we all need to be saved from our foreseeable death, an eternal death and separation from God and his kingdom.

Jesus fascinatingly says next, “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.” As matter of fact as he says man will die in their sins, he then says we will *for sure* die in our sins if we *don't* believe in him. However, *if we do believe in him we won't die in our sins*. This is one of Jesus' great claims, and he says it over and over and over again in so many different ways, all throughout the book of John. Death won't be the end for those who believe Jesus is the true Son of God. Salvation from death is given to true believers, even us who live on this earth so many years later.

Jesus claimed a special connection between himself and his Father, who he claims to be God. He claims to have been taught by the Father directly and that Father God is with him always. Apparently, this connection will be made clear when Jesus is “lifted up” or exalted for who he is and what he has done. Hopefully there will be a day when all of this makes perfect sense, when we will see with our own eyes Jesus and the Father together as one.

(Stay with our study! Let's keep listening to Jesus for a few more days.)

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 5—John 15:18-25](#)

Day 5—John 15:18-25

¹⁸“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. ²²**If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. ²³He who hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.** ²⁵But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’

Today's text is fairly short, and I only want to draw our attention to one main point.

The context of this text finds Jesus talking to his twelve (actually eleven at this point because Judas Iscariot has left, only to come back later to betray Jesus), comforting them, warning them, and even still teaching them. Our text today is much of a warning to them about how people will treat them as they go in his name making more disciples. Their quest is grand and intimidating, and will only be capable with the help of the wonderful counselor, the Holy Spirit (previously taught to them in John 14:23-26).

Jesus warns his disciples that the world will hate them because of his name. In other words, because they will represent him as they go proclaiming his teaching, people will hate and reject them for their dedication to Jesus. We understand this hatred by association.

But then Jesus says something important even for us regarding salvation: "He who hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin." This is another statement made by Jesus that reinforces his claim to be *one with God*, and also reinforces his teaching that all of the miracles he was performing were to prove that very connection. Jesus claims that now, after all of the miracles have been performed that could only be done by one sent from God, now that they have been seen by humans, those humans have no more excuse for rejecting him. The cat is out of the bag!

When the people didn't believe in the miracles and rejected Jesus and his teaching, they were showing hatred to him *and* to God, and therefore sinning.

I think this principle carries out even with humans today. If we reject Jesus, we reject the one who sent him—who is God. When we read about and accept Jesus for who he claims to be, the One sent from God, then salvation is ours as promised. (We will leave the book of John here and venture into another book tomorrow! See you there.)

30 Days of Salvation: Day 6—Matthew 4:23-25; 5:1-2, 7-20

Day 6—Matthew 4:23-25; 5:1-2, 7-20

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ **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. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

¹ Now when Jesus saw **the crowds**, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

¹⁷ “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. ¹⁸ Truly I tell you, 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. ¹⁹ Anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly 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. ²⁰ **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.**

I am not sure how long Jesus had been teaching up to this point. However, I do think it is safe to say we find him in this text still fairly early in his ministry, but late enough to develop a serious following. This is the setting of the famous “Sermon on the Mount”, well famous in the world of Christianity. It is in this sermon where he illustrates the call of true discipleship that is found first in the heart, and then in action.

Today, I want to simply point out the fact that *Jesus expects those who truly believe in him to live a righteous life*. He even calls his followers to be more righteous than the Pharisees of the day, the very teachers of the Old Testament Scriptures who paid the most attention to every single letter written there. Apparently, based on what he says at the end of our text, if we don’t live more righteously than the Pharisees we can be certain *not* to enter the kingdom of heaven (the people of God where he sits on high).

So, I am then led to ask myself: *was he calling his followers to pay such close attention to and follow every letter and stroke of the pen found in the Old Testament so they can be saved?* I don’t think so.

Jesus was calling his followers (and us) to a righteousness that is true and produced from the heart. The Pharisees knew the Scriptures extremely well, but did a terrible job executing them because their hearts were hard. They missed the bigger picture of God’s desires—of loving the people around them, of real devotion to him, of full dependence on God—all because they were so worried about dotting every “i” and crossing every “t”. Today we might say they “missed the forest for the trees.” We need to be sure we live righteously in our hearts and in our action.

Please let me emphasize something: *We don’t need to walk around worried that we might not be saved in the end if we didn’t live righteously enough*. God knows us; he knows our very thoughts. He saves us in spite of our faults and wrongdoing. We will never be righteous enough to deserve salvation; God’s gift of salvation is free. However, to truly believe in Jesus and his claims is to do what he says. If you don’t care about doing what

he says, then you probably don't truly believe in him. Think about it, if he is truly *God's* Son, then why wouldn't we want to just fall on our faces and worship him?

Furthermore, salvation in our text today can be present and future. When we do what Jesus says and follow the teaching in the Bible, not only will we be saved in the future on the day of Judgment (which we will talk about in future dates), but we will also be saved from a present life of destruction and meaninglessness.

Ok. That was a lot to think about, so I'll leave you to it. Please comment and let me know what you think about our study so far—or even just about today's study.

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 7—Romans 3:21-26](#)

Day 7—Romans 3:21-26

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² **This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.** There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and **all are justified freely by his grace** through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Last night we read that our righteousness needs to surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. That is a very tall order, one that seems impossible to fulfill. You know, I think Jesus understood this impossibility when he said it. He knew we couldn't be perfectly righteous by never sinning again. If anyone would have known that it would have been him! We are human...we sin. It is sad, but it is true. So, in his wisdom, God made a way.

A "righteousness of God" has been made known to man, one that could only be a gift from him. When we believe in Jesus and trust only in his ability to take away our sin, then we are called righteous. Faith is putting all of our eggs in his basket and completely trusting him. Despite our wrongdoings—our sins (and we have all sinned) or our "moments of weakness"—God calls us "righteous" anyway because we believe in his Son, who was the final and best sacrifice that could actually take away our sin.

Before Jesus we were all helplessly guilty; nothing could wash us clean of our darkness and sin. Spiritual destruction and death were our inevitable sentence. But now, when we believe in Jesus we are freely justified and set free from sin. We can walk away from our

due sentence and be free to live a new life in the light—who is Jesus Christ. Our prison chains of sin have been taken off; we’ve been set free! Wow! And this was all done because God is gracious and loving, a creator who passionately loves his creation enough to send such a ransom. A new life of freedom from sin and walking with Jesus—what could be better?

Realizing all of what God has done for us makes me want to just praise him! I feel safe and secure knowing Jesus is my key to salvation, and God wants me to keep that key around my neck so I will never lose it. Why shouldn’t I wake up each morning with certainty that I am God’s and destined to live with him now and forever!

We must consider completely trusting him by putting all of our faith in Jesus. When it comes to salvation, surely God’s own plan is best!

(By the way, isn’t God’s plan so God-like? Doesn’t he always seem to make a way when there seems to be no way? He is always faithful even when we are not. He is always there even when we can’t see him. He is always working in ways we don’t understand.)

30 Days of Salvation: Day 8—Romans 4:1-12, 18-25

Day 8—Romans 4:1-12, 18-25

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, the forefather of us Jews, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. 3 What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

4 Now to anyone who works, their wages are not credited to them as a gift, but as an obligation. 5 However, to anyone who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. 6 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed are those whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”

9 Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. 10 Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! 11 And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. 12 And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” 23 The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Today I want to discuss something that I have come to believe is extremely important. The text today helps us see when God considers us righteous.

Abraham was a man we read about all the way back in the first book of the bible: Genesis. He was the man who God chose among others to fulfill his great promise of salvation, which ultimately was found in Jesus. God made a great promise to the aged and childless Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15:4-5). He and his wife were old enough (Abraham was seventy-five years old [Genesis 12:4]) when God made the promise that carrying a child to full term seemed like impossibility. Nevertheless, God made the promise and Abraham believed God would follow through.

We read in our text tonight, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Paul makes it very clear that Abraham didn’t earn his righteousness through anything he did; if he would have earned his righteousness by something he did he would have deserved it as a payment from God. But no! Abraham’s righteousness was no payment; it was a gift of God.

It seems that Paul wants his readers (us) to secure this message about Abraham in their (our) minds and hearts. Why? Look what he wrote in verse five: “However, to anyone who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.” We must understand that God doesn’t consider us righteous (and more righteous than the Pharisees) because of what we do. God considers us righteous when we trust that he—God—justifies the ungodly when they believe in his Son Jesus who “was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”

It is interesting to read about what circumcision meant to Abraham. When God was about to give Abraham a son and therefore begin the fulfillment of his promise, he made a covenant with Abraham. God told Abraham that he was to keep this covenant: “Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you” (Genesis 17:10-11).

Here's the thing, Paul impresses on his readers that Abraham was circumcised "as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised." Did anything amazing happen during his circumcision? No, I don't think so. What Abraham did when he was circumcised was fulfill the covenant of God. He did what God called him to do in order to keep his covenant and to enable God's promise to be fulfilled. And I'm glad he did, because Jesus is Abraham's offspring, and through Jesus we are descendants as well.

I am left with this question: Now that I believe in Jesus and trust that God considers me righteous, do I need to do anything to keep a covenant? Let's talk about that tomorrow!

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 9—Colossians 2:9-13](#)

Day 9—Colossians 2:9-13

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your sinful nature was put off when you were **circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God,** who raised him from the dead.

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, **God made you alive with Christ.** He forgave us all our sins,

After day eight's study about the covenant God made with Abraham, this text came to mind and I thought we could briefly look at it today.

In today's text Paul talks about a circumcision that is "not performed by human hands" as the Jews have been doing since the time of Abraham. Now there is another circumcision that is *done by Christ*. This circumcision done by Christ is when our sinful nature is put off, and it seems to have a connection with baptism.

He says in baptism we are *buried* with Christ and *raised* with Christ "through our faith in the working of God". Just like in the passage we studied yesterday (Romans 4:21) where Paul mentions how Abraham was "strengthened in his faith" and was "fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he promised", we too are *buried* and *raised* with Christ through baptism *because we have faith that God can and will do what he promised he would do*—give us new life in Christ. Our faith in God's grace and his power to raise us anew is extremely important and foundational for our salvation.

Is there a covenant connection here? Is baptism is the new "sign" of a new covenant with God, like circumcision was the old "sign" of the old covenant with God and

Abraham. I'm not quite sold on this idea based solely on today's text because the baptism/circumcision analogy here could just be used by Paul as an illustration to get a point across.

So, I am still left with my question from last night still unanswered: *Now that I believe in Jesus and trust that God considers me righteous (and believe he has the power to do so), do I need to do anything to keep a covenant?*

I am also left asking these two additional questions:

1. *Could baptism for disciples of Jesus mean what circumcision meant to the Jews?*
2. *Does baptism have a role in God's salvation?*

Hopefully we will find answers to these questions in future studies.

[FYI: I did return to this passage on Day 29 unintentionally, but I'm glad I did. When I return after visiting other passages, I have more insight.]

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 10—Matthew 28:16-20](#)

Day 9—Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

(I want to take a second to make something clear. This “30 Days of Salvation” study is not just me trying to prove to you and the rest of the world things I have believed for years. On the contrary, this study is my own personal study to wade through scriptures that discuss salvation and try to make sense of them for myself, and possibly my study will benefit others. I invite you to wade through these scriptures with me and try to understand more about God's salvation. I write all that because this study may change beliefs in you and me. That's ok! Truth is what we seek, nothing else. The way I see it, if *truth* changes me [or you]...so be it.)

Now to today's text...

Since Jesus' disciples were already worshipping him before he made the statement, I guess he already had their attention. But when Jesus starts off by saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”, he definitely gets my attention! I wonder

if he says this to show his authority to give the following instructions. With intention I'm sure, he says "therefore" here (well, at least something like this English word translated from Greek, from Aramaic), as if what he is about to say must be done—with no exception. Here's the short list of orders:

- "go and make disciples",
- "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"
and
- "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you".

I don't think his disciples were going to argue with his instructions. He was clear and to the point. Their job from now on was to spread the word about *Jesus* around the world, make disciples out of those who believe in *him*, baptize them in *his* name, and then teach them to obey *his* commands. And honestly, the rest of the New Testament is attestation that Jesus' disciples did just what he instructed them to do.

So then, after two thousand years or so of Jesus' instructions being continuously carried out, now the disciples' ripples have finally come to us. His message of salvation for mankind is still alive today. I guess believers then need to ask themselves these three questions:

- *Am I a disciple of Jesus?*
- *Have I been baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?*
- *Am I obeying everything Jesus commanded me to do?*

Here's another thought on this text. Possibly Jesus says the "All authority..." statement for another reason, or for a reason in addition to the first one I mentioned above. Perhaps he says the statement to put some closure on his ministry, death, burial, and resurrection. His job on earth was finished; the work God gave him to do was entirely complete. He taught what he needed to teach, he died on the cross, he was buried, and then God raised him from the dead just as Jesus said God would do. Now, God gave him all authority in heaven and on earth just as Jesus said God would do.

It truly is an assuring promise Jesus made to his disciples that he would be with them. To know that Jesus is with you, the one to which God has given *all authority*...yeah, that pretty assuring! How could they not have confidence going out into the world.

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 11—Romans 5:1-11](#)

Day 11—Romans 5:1-11

¹ Therefore, since we have been **justified through faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom **we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand**. And **we boast in the hope of the glory of God**. ³ Not

only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, **Christ died for the ungodly.** ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But **God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, **how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!** ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but **we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ**, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Today, let us go back to the book of Romans. As we work through this text, keep in mind what we discussed in Romans chapter four on day eight, specifically how Paul seemingly wants his readers to understand how God credits our faith "in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" as righteousness.

Our faith in God's power and faithfulness to do what he promised is huge! Paul wrote in today's text we are "justified through faith", so much so that we should realize a true peace with God. No more worry or fear, only peace.

He says "we have gained access by faith into this grace (God's free justification)"; so contrarily, if we didn't put our faith in him and his Son Jesus we wouldn't have access into this grace of God. The *only* leg we have to stand on is God's grace. Without his grace we are helpless; but with his grace we can stand strong and assured.

Okay, it's clear now: *Jesus died for me.* It says, "Christ died for the ungodly" and "while we were still sinners"—that's me. Guilty as charged! Let me take a break from writing and make a list of my sins for which he died. (Fifteen hours later and a Santa-long sin list) And...I'm back.

Thank you God for justifying me freely through the gift of your Son Jesus; may I never forget the amazing grace you have shown me. I stand only because you make me stand. I simply put my faith in you to do what you say you will do through Jesus—to save me from my own sin and destruction.

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 12—Romans 6:1-14](#)

Day 12—Romans 6:1-14

¹ **What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?** ² By no means! **We are those who have died to sin**; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death**? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵ If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that **our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with**, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been **set free from sin**.

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ **The death he died, he died to sin once for all**; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹ In the same way, **count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus**. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather **offer yourselves to God** as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Today I want to discuss a text that I actually memorized in college for a bible professor somewhere around fifteen years ago. I only write that so you will understand my challenge. Reading this text like it's the first time through—with a clean slate—is a tough task for me. I want to keep this passage in context with the surrounding chapters and in context of the entire book of Romans. Furthermore, I certainly don't want to read this text through my pre-established doctrine filter. So, with that said, here goes my best effort to discuss this text in the context of Romans, but as if I have never read it before...

To start, I know these facts already from Romans:

- Death has come to all men through sin (Romans 3:23-24; 5:6,8,12)
- God sent Jesus to die on the cross to save (me and the rest of) mankind from (my) their sins. Jesus did in fact complete this awful task; and then God raised him from the dead, thereby fulfilling his own promise and displaying his incredible power. (Romans 3:25; 4:24)
- God credits our faith as righteousness, for those who believe in him (Romans 4:20-24)
- We are justified through faith, and by this faith we gain access to his grace (Romans 5:1-2).

Today's text is the first part of an answer Paul gives to a question regarding grace: *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?* He just finished discussing how when sin increased, grace increased "all the more" (Romans 5:20-21). So, Paul asks the above question as a logical follow-up question to grace. It's a good

question. I mean, if grace went from the size of a swimming pool to the size of an ocean...then...hey, more room to freely swim around! But Paul answers his own question with a resounding, “By no means!” Just because there is more grace to cover more sin doesn’t mean we can just go around sinning more.

Why is Paul so convicted about this issue of not sinning anymore? He simply writes, “We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” This statement brings me back to the covenant question I asked previously: *Now that I believe in Jesus and trust that God considers me righteous, do I need to do anything to keep a covenant?*

Notice Paul didn’t say, “We are those who have died *in our sin*” (although that would be true as well), he says “died *to sin*”. This sounds like covenant talk to me. Dying “to sin” is a decision, a pledge, or a commitment made by someone who says, “I don’t want to live in sin anymore!” For example, if someone who loves pizza wants to lose weight, they might say, “I die to pizza!” and then they stop eating pizza. Maybe that illustration is too logical or simple, but I do believe it is similar to the idea Paul is getting at regarding how disciples of Jesus should view sin. We need to have a frame of mind that we don’t want to sin anymore because it means not living the new life God wants us to live.

The reason I even go into all this pizza-weight loss-pledge stuff is because it seems like when I read about baptism in this text Paul is talking about baptism like it is a covenant act. Look at these baptism verses broken down:

- Baptized into Christ Jesus (v3)
- Baptized into his death (v3)
- Buried with him through baptism into death (v4)
- United with him in a death like his (v5)
- United with him in a resurrection like his (v5)
- Old self was crucified with him (v6)
- Set free from sin (v7)
- Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (v11)

Remember, Paul just finished a whole explanation about how we are “justified through faith”, so he’s surely not going back on all that and now presenting baptism as a work or something done to deserve God’s grace. However, Paul does make some strong connections with baptism here!

He actually brings up baptism in today’s text as if he should assume his readers are already familiar with the practice and these connections. I would even go as far to say Paul assumes many—if not all—of his original Roman readers would have already been baptized. This really is not too far fetched when you think about it, since Jesus told his disciples to “go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19-21).

It seems to me, in effort to answer his own question (Romans 6:1) Paul tries to take his original readers back to the commitment they made to God when they were baptized. He

reminds them of everything their baptism meant when they were baptized. When they were baptized they went through the covenant ceremony of baptism that represented uniting with Jesus in his death, being buried with him, being crucified with him, uniting with Jesus in his resurrection—these are the things baptism meant to them in their hearts when they made that great pledge to God. They had faith in God and his son Jesus, and through baptism they symbolically died and were raised again with him.

So, now Paul is reminding them about all these things and helping them logically see that there should be no more intentional sinning. Why? Because you made a pledge to God that you would not do that anymore, now stay with your pledge! He even challenges his readers to “*offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.*” Not only stay away from wickedness, but be proactive by offering yourself to God as his instrument of righteousness.

What does baptism have to do with our salvation? From this text I think it is good to conclude *baptism is where we make our covenant with God*, where we make our heart’s pledge to follow Jesus and live a new life in the light, symbolically and certainly out of the faith in Jesus existing in our heart.

Are we saved through the event of baptism? In John chapter three (as we discussed on day two) we read what Jesus said:” Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” Maybe a better question is *when does the Spirit give birth to spirit?* I don’t believe we have looked at a text that helps us find the answer to that question yet.

(Yeah, that was a long one. I’ll try to be more brief tomorrow!)

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 13–Romans 10:8-13](#)

Day 13—Romans 10:8-13

⁸But 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: ⁹That **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.** ¹⁰For **it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.** ¹¹As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” ¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”**

I thought one more day in Romans would be a good thing. I have honestly never read today’s text in view of the faith perspective Paul has given in Romans. So, with the “justified by faith” perspective in mind, I want to discuss this text.

Paul wants the Israelites to be saved by faith, apart from the law. He wants them to trust in God for righteousness instead of trying to be righteous by their own works. In this text Paul tries to convince his readers that salvation for both the Israelites and the Gentiles (that's us) comes only by confessing "Jesus is Lord" and by believing "in your heart that God raised him from the dead."

True belief is found in the heart. Since God knows and reads the hearts of men (1 Samuel 16:7) there is no fooling him into salvation and righteousness. He knows if we believe in him and justifies us based on our faith in him. Paul reinforces his conviction:

- It is with your heart that you believe and are justified
- It is with your mouth that you confess and are saved

Observe the connection with confessing Jesus as Lord and salvation. That is an expected response from Jesus' disciples, to confess he is Lord. They need to be willing to not only proclaim him as Lord for salvation, but continue to in the new life they live for him.

Paul tears down any walls that may still be standing and uses the all-encompassing word "everyone" by quoting from Old Testament Scripture yet again in this text: "*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" This reminds me again of Jesus telling his disciples to "go and make disciples, baptizing them *in the name* of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." There is something very special about claiming the name of Jesus, being found in him; and salvation is certainly special.

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 14—Matthew 7:21-24](#)

Day 14—Matthew 7:21-24

²¹ **"Not everyone** who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven.** ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Today's text is one that came to mind during day thirteen's study. I think it was the word "everyone" that prompted my consideration. Compare these two usages of "everyone" and you will see why today's text came to mind:

1. "*Everyone* who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Joel 2:32, quoted by Paul—Romans 10:13)

2. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” (Jesus—Matthew 7:21)

How can Jesus say one thing about salvation using the word “everyone”, and Paul say another thing using the same word, and they both stand correct? How do I balance these statements?

The answer to my own question lies in their respective contexts.

The first “everyone” statement (where Paul uses the word) is discussing how the good news of salvation is available for everyone—both Jew and Gentile—who believes in God who raised Jesus from the dead, a concept difficult for many Jews to accept. Therefore, “everyone” who calls on the name of the Lord with real faith in God and his Son Jesus will be saved. This concept was discussed in day thirteen’s study.

The second “everyone” statement (today’s text) is located in a very different context. In the broader context, Jesus just finished teaching the “sermon” known to many as “The Sermon on the Mount” about how real heart-based faith in God plays out practically in real life. Jesus was teaching his disciples the pure meaning of certain Old Testament Scriptures while helping them understand what will be expected of them as they live in the light—in his name. Also, just before today’s immediate text, Jesus just finished a brief discussion about avoiding “false prophets” who come in sheep’s clothing but are really wolves. In the end, they will be like bad trees that are cut down and used as firewood.

Certainly these “false prophets” are in mind when Jesus says “not everyone” in today’s text. If these false prophets are actually wolves, then they are not true disciples of Jesus and not putting their faith in Jesus. They may look like sheep by saying and doing things that resemble the teachings of Jesus, but they actually don’t belong to him at all.

Going further, I think Jesus makes it clear to all of his disciples that if you want to enter the kingdom of God, then you are expected to do what pleases God (“...but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”); and Jesus’ ministry was all about turning the hearts of men toward God through his truthful teaching, which was much about how to live to please God.

Are we expected to be perfect? No. But should we just carelessly live without trying to please God? No!

Are we expected to do things and live the way Jesus instructed throughout his ministry? Yes.

Are we expected to put our faith in God, who raised Jesus from the dead? Yes.

We need to be a part of the “everyone” found in both texts, the part that says, “I believe you God and trust you will save me, and now I want to live a life that pleases you.”

30 Days of Salvation: Day 15—Acts 2:32-41

Day 15—Acts 2:32-41

³² **God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.** ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

” The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

³⁵ until I make your enemies

a footstool for your feet.” ‘

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: **God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.**”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, **what shall we do?**”

³⁸ 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.**

³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

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

It is time to enter into the book of Acts with this study. There are quite a few statements referring to salvation in the book of Acts, not to mention the numerous examples and stories of people who dedicated their life to Jesus. I’m not sure how long I’ll look in Acts, but I assure you I’ll only look at Scriptures I believe have something to do with our salvation.

Today’s text is found in one of the most exciting places in the New Testament chronology. The disciples of Jesus, who numbered around one hundred and twenty people at this point (Acts 1:15), were all together in a room when the day of Pentecost came (a Jewish traditional festival). Previously, Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit to come on them in power (Acts 1:4-5) and that he needed them to stay in Jerusalem to be his witnesses, to share his message. It was amazing when the Holy Spirit finally came because the disciples found themselves speaking in foreign languages with no effort at all; it was definitely the power of the Holy Spirit that enabled these Galileans to do this. There were many Jews in Jerusalem for the Pentecost festival from surrounding nations who spoke in these foreign languages, so it was truly mind-blowing for them to hear these disciples of Jesus speak in their native tongues. It was a true miracle at Pentecost!

I don't think the disciples of Jesus could have realized what God was going to do that very day. However, we know because we have the rest of the story. God's Holy Spirit opened a door of opportunity to take this group of one hundred and twenty disciples of Jesus to an astounding three thousand—all in one day! That is some incredible church growth! I guess when God is behind something we should expect to be amazed.

Our text today is at the end of a great testimonial speech Peter made to all of these Jews who gathered in Jerusalem for the Pentecost festival. The speech is filled with Old Testament Scripture that the listening Jews would fully understand, and the entire speech is made to prove that Jesus is the true Son of God, the very Messiah these Jews had been waiting for, and the actual savior of the World.

What amazes me in this speech is when Peter, at the very end of his speech, blames these Jews for crucifying Jesus—which would have been only fifty days prior to this festival—the one who Peter just proved to be the Son of God and Messiah! This was actually something that normally would have caused these Jews to pick up stones and kill Peter and the others on the spot. However, the Holy Spirit of God got their attention through the language miracle they were experiencing, and instead of picking up stones they were “cut to the heart.”

We know this feeling, when something grips our heart all of a sudden, like a reality that you can't undo, a death of a loved one or the instant effects of an extremely poor decision. When something cuts your heart an overwhelming sense of desperation fills your core and you feel completely helpless. I think this is what these Jews felt in our text today when they realized they were guilty of crucifying God's true Son, the savior of the world, their perfect Messiah and king.

In their desperation of helplessness, knowing they have done the worst possible and displeasing thing they could have done in God's eyes, they ask the big question:
“Brothers, what shall we do?”

I am assuming it was without hesitation that Peter tells them to do two things: repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (or Jesus the Messiah; or Jesus the King). I think repent in this text means to look at what you've done and be totally sorry for doing it, specifically in their case repent from the sin of crucifying Jesus. When they crucified Jesus they showed ultimate rejection of him and his teaching. Peter here tells them to repent of your rejection of him (which is the deepest sin) and now give your life to Jesus. In other words, leave your life of not believing in Jesus and enter the new wonderful life only found in him.

Baptism here was the act where these Jews would pledge their hearts and lives to Jesus Christ, and fully dedicate their lives to living in his name as his disciples. They symbolically took their clothes of rejection off and now put on the clothes of believing in Jesus. Once they completed their dedication ceremony, the forgiveness of God was theirs—and bonus, the Holy Spirit they experienced through the convicting miracle they just witnessed was theirs as well! Only through God's sacrificial gift of Jesus is there

forgiveness, and those who give their lives to him—and in our text today, through their baptism—will have access to that forgiveness. But even in today’s text it’s not the ritual of baptism, it’s what happens in the heart, the dedication that lies there. Nevertheless, who can argue that baptism is certainly instructed here, and as we studied before, instructed by Jesus himself (Matthew 28:16-20).

It is interesting to note that these Jews were only “added to their number” after they accepted Peter’s message and were baptized. Baptism was a sign, the initiation into the fellowship of disciples. They weren’t considered a part of the group until they were officially baptized. But it is important to remember, this group was the entire body of Christ at the time. This wasn’t a baptism to be a part of a congregation; this was an initiation baptism into the fold of God, the body of Jesus Christ, into the church that has grown to include those like me today who have given their life to Jesus in their hearts and in action.

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 16—Acts 3:11-4:4](#)

Day 16—Acts 3:11-4:4

¹¹ While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade. ¹² When Peter saw this, he said to them: “People of Israel, why does this surprise you? **Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?** ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ **By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.**

¹⁷ “Now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ **Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,** ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; **you must listen to everything he tells you.** ²³ **Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’**

²⁴ “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. ²⁵ And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your

fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

^{4:1} The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ² They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³ They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴ But **many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.**

The disciples of Jesus (numbering over three thousand) have been meeting together and worshipping daily in the temple courts, and the apostles were performing wonders and miraculous signs in the presence of everyone. It was an exciting and convicting time for the disciples of Jesus as they experienced the amazing works of God’s Holy Spirit.

Surely the Jews became more and more curious everyday about what was going on among the disciples of Jesus. We do know many Jews were repenting and giving their lives to Jesus on a daily basis (Acts 2:47), so curiosity led to learning about Jesus, which then led to salvation for many.

In our text today many more Jews who lived during the ministry of Jesus and then rejected and crucified him are now bluntly challenged again by Peter. Peter has just healed a man who had been crippled from birth, which was particularly impressive to the Jews because they all recognized him as the man who used to sit begging at the temple gate. The Jews were amazed and “filled with wonder” because of this miracle and in our text Peter takes advantage of the opportunity to share more about Jesus.

He hits the Jews hard with some pretty serious accusations:

- “You handed him over to be killed”
- “You disowned him before Pilate”
- “You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.”
- “You killed the author of life”

Ouch! Such sharp accusations thrown straight at the Jews!

It says a lot to me when I read how Peter and John don’t take any credit for the miracle, but give all the credit to Jesus. They are fully servants of Jesus, merely tools for him to do his work through the Holy Spirit. They declare their humble attitudes when they say that the miracle was only possible in *Jesus’ name* and by *faith that comes through him*. To the disciples, all wonders and miraculous signs point to Jesus.

There it is again—*Jesus’ name*. What is so amazing about the name of Jesus? Why is having “faith in his name” so important?

I am coming to realize that claiming the name of Jesus—especially when all of this amazing miraculous stuff was going on—carried a lot of weight, responsibility, and expectations. When a Jewish person was baptized “in the name of Jesus” that was a HUGE step to make. Claiming the name of Jesus meant claiming all of his teachings, a spot among his growing group of disciples, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. What they would have been saying through their baptism, to everyone witnessing their baptism, was basically, “I believe Jesus was/is the anticipated Messiah of God and will represent him everywhere I go from now on. I will live for him!” It wasn’t that they would have rejected God through baptism, but they would have accepted the truth about Jesus as God’s son. The name of Jesus was theoretically branded on their foreheads and everywhere they went among the Jews they were moving targets of ridicule and rejection from other Jews who didn’t accept the truth about Jesus. Standing in their new faith in Jesus would have made these new converts look like fools in the eyes of the Jews. That is major dedication to Jesus!

Peter calls for the Jews present to “repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.” After all of the pointed accusations Peter made to the Jews, he calls them to turn to the truth of God in Jesus and listen to what he says by using a quote from Moses. Using this quote he says possibly one of the most abrasive and offensive things a Jew could hear: “Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.”

Peter drew a new line and challenged them to cross it. If they didn’t listen to the truth of Jesus—God’s Messiah—and give their lives to him they would be cut from God’s people. Since Jews found their entire identity in their faith, being cut off from God’s people would mean in the end loosing or at least changing their identity. Peter understands this because he’s already done what he’s asking them to do and has settled nicely into his new identity in Jesus Christ.

Amazingly, even though Peter and John were seized and placed in jail because of their abrasive and hard-to-swallow message, many more Jews believed in Jesus and gave their lives to him. I wonder if the water was cold in the river that day when 1,500 plus people were baptized in the name of Jesus!

Now, because of these spectacular and challenging events, the number of disciples grew to about five thousand. The message of salvation was spreading and it was exciting!

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 17—Acts 4:8-14](#)

Day 17—Acts 4:8-14

⁸ Then **Peter**, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: **It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.** ¹¹ Jesus is

” ‘the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone.’

¹² **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.**”

¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.

The upshot of healing the begging man and causing a commotion by teaching about Jesus was overnight in jail for Peter and John. However, they were rewarded in the morning by an audience of the Jewish elders, Annas the high priest of the Jews, and other important Jewish rulers. This was yet another great opportunity for Peter and John to proclaim the salvation message of faith in Jesus; but this would take courage and dedication, characteristics Peter and John certainly have already proven to possess.

Once again Peter gives all the credit to Jesus for the miracle, blames the Jews for crucifying Jesus, and claims that God raised Jesus from the dead. Then Peter verbally draws the challenge line again and forces his audience to deal with making some sort of decision about what he is teaching. After referring to an Old Testament text that he believes points directly at Jesus, Peter hits them with a poignant fact: “*Salvation is found in no one else*, for there is *no other name* given under heaven by which we must be saved.” There is real power in his name—salvation power!

Here, Peter makes it as clear as possible that unless you believe in Jesus and put your faith in him, you will not be saved. There is *no one* other than Jesus that holds salvation, no one. That is a tough pill to swallow when you have lived your entire life thinking that if you lived your life according to the Old Testament law you would be saved. These learned men already had all of that figured out and these “ignorant” unschooled followers of Jesus were teaching them! I imagine Peter’s audience had to deal with their pride in this moment.

After Peter makes these statements in connection with the miracle, his Jewish audience was tongue-tied. What could they say in response when the proof of the miracle was directly in front of them? The man was clearly healed, and the only reason given was it was done by the power of the Holy Spirit of God in the name of Jesus. I think these Jews understood this fact *and maybe even believed it*, but their pride wouldn’t let them *accept* this truth. Pride and salvation don’t seem to be a good combination.

30 Days of Salvation: Day 18—Acts 8:4-25

Day 18—Acts 8:4-25

⁴ **Those who had been scattered** preached the word wherever they went. ⁵ **Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there.** ⁶ When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷ With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

⁹ Now for some time a man named **Simon had practiced sorcery** in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. **He boasted that he was someone great,** ¹⁰ and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.” ¹¹ They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. ¹² **But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.** ¹³ **Simon himself believed and was baptized.** And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

¹⁴ When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that **Samaria had accepted the word of God,** they sent Peter and John to Samaria. ¹⁵ **When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit,** ¹⁶ **because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.** ¹⁷ Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸ When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money ¹⁹ and said, “Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰ Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! ²¹ **You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.** ²² Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. ²³ For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.”

²⁴ Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.”

²⁵ After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

The number of Jesus’ disciples had grown into the thousands in Jerusalem and the Jewish leaders were seriously threatened by their influence. So, these Jewish leaders persecuted the apostles and the entire church of Jesus in Jerusalem and all of the disciples were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, except the apostles stayed in Jerusalem.

Following the apostolic example of boldly proclaiming the truth of Jesus, the scattered disciples continued sharing the message everywhere they went. How courageous these scattered disciples of Jesus must have been to take the message of Jesus into new towns and cities with the threat of persecution constantly lingering. Can you imagine taking God's message of salvation to a town who has never heard the message before? What a thrill! That is just what Philip did when he went into a city in Samaria. He proclaimed Jesus the Messiah there, did miraculous signs, and many were healed.

Simon was a sorcerer who wowed the people of Samaria with his magic. He was the David Copperfield of his day I guess! I don't think Simon just shrugged off the name the people gave him: *The Great Power of God*. He wasn't the power of God at all! They were completely wrong to believe in him! It seems like they got that picture pretty quickly when Philip arrived to town. Apparently, Philip's message of the good news of God and "the name of Jesus" (supported by the miracles) was totally convincing and many believed and were baptized. Even Simon believed and was baptized.

Interesting, these people heard the message, then believed, then were baptized. The link between the message of God's salvation and baptism is evident. Baptism was part of the teaching of the good news. But this is not a new teaching found in this story, as we have seen already that being "baptized in the name of Jesus" was the expected response for a new Jesus believer (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:38-41).

Simon believed and was baptized, but come to find out later in our text his heart was corrupt. After he offered money to the apostles to gain the ability to lay hands on people to pass on the Holy Spirit, he was marked as one with wickedness in his heart. The apostles even said, "Perhaps he (God) will forgive you for having such a thought in you heart." *Perhaps?* I thought he was already saved and forgiven, cleansed by the blood of Jesus. It seems to me there are two possibilities for this statement: 1) the apostles reneged on Simon's baptism because they realized his heart wasn't right when he made his commitment to Christ in baptism, or 2) Simon was forgiven of his sin when he was baptized in the name of Jesus but has lost his way already because his heart went bad. I think it was the first possibility. I think Simon's heart wasn't right—or at least hungered for power and therefore insincere—from the very start. Sure he believed in Jesus and was baptized outwardly as a sign of his commitment, but inwardly his heart was not on the same place. His heart was still struggling with what it meant to commit to Jesus in the first place. He was torn in what to believe. Hey, this Jesus teaching was all new to the guy, he was learning as he went. He went from the honored "Great Power of God" to "you are nothing compared to Philip"! I imagine he was pretty used to all that attention and wanted more. I think we can understand his heart struggle. But still, he struggled and the apostles were unsure about whether God would forgive him or not. Yikes! I wouldn't want to be in Simon's shoes.

Apparently many Jews in Samaria were baptized "in the name of Jesus" but had not received the Holy Spirit in power yet. Why not? I think it has to do with the Holy Spirit still limited to Jerusalem where Jesus sent Him. It was only when the apostles prayed for

the Holy Spirit to come down to Samaria that the Spirit did go down, and when Peter and John laid their hands on the disciples they received the Holy Spirit.

This is interesting to me because these new converts went through the baptism ceremony and gave their lives to the name of Jesus but had not received the Holy Spirit. We read in John 3:6 that “the Spirit gives birth to spirit”. So if the Holy Spirit had not come to them yet, could they have been saved or reborn yet? *Could the Spirit have given rebirth to their spirits yet?* This may seem somewhat technical, but since we are discussing salvation, it seems like a good point to bring up. So far the Spirit seems to come after baptism.

- The Spirit descended on Jesus after he was baptized (Luke 3:21-22)
- Peter promised the Spirit would come to all who would repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38-41).

We need some answers to the role of the Holy Spirit in God’s salvation offered to mankind. If the “Spirit gives birth to spirit” then surely he is involved dramatically in the process, and I’m thinking it has to be a pretty important role if it is linked to rebirth.

One other note...

When the apostles prayed for the Holy Spirit to come into Samaria, I was reminded of another Scripture that I don’t think I have brought into this study so far, **John 14:12-14**: *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask **in my name** so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything **in my name**, and I will do it.”*

Those are the words of Jesus given to his special twelve disciples; eleven of those twelve who were present to hear these words were among the apostles in the book of Acts. Peter and John specifically were part of the original twelve and are present in our text today. With these words Jesus made some promises to his twelve disciples and we see those promises coming to fruition in the book of Acts when the apostles do miracles and ask God for things in Jesus’ name.

(I hope I’m not confusing you with my tangents. I’m just trying to work this stuff out.)

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 19—Acts 8:26-40](#)

Day 19—Acts 8:26-40

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake

(which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship,²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.²⁹

The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

³⁰ **Then Philip ran up to the chariot** and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

³¹ “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³² This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth.”

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” ³⁵ **Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.**

³⁶⁻³⁷ As they traveled along the road, **they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?”**³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch **went down into the water and Philip baptized him.**³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.⁴⁰ Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

Today’s text is like a plot straight out of the “old” TV show *Quantum Leap*...well, kind of; at least toward the end anyway.

An Angel tells Philip to go somewhere and Philip just takes off in faith that God had a purpose for him. Philip was ready to go wherever and whenever the Lord was ready for him to move; he was at the Lord’s beckon call, a true servant. So Philip took a walk down a road probably totally unknown to him and waited for the Lord to do his magic. I love Philip’s willing spirit in our text today. His attitude inspires me *today* to say, “Lord, I’m ready to go! Just use me where you want and I’ll be ready.” I need to read this story more often and so I’ll be inspired to say that again tomorrow!

The text found in Isaiah referring to God’s servant, his Messiah, is used by Philip to proclaim the good news of Jesus—God’s salvation message to mankind—to a Jewish Ethiopian eunuch. Well, I assume he’s Jewish since he just finished worshipping in Jerusalem.

It is interesting to note the jump from how Philip “told him the good news about Jesus” to “as they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water.’” I think this supports my observation from yesterday’s text about the clear connection of the good news about Jesus and baptism. Apparently, part of Philip’s

explanation of the good news of Jesus included baptism because the eunuch wanted to get into the water to be baptized straight away. It was like there was no other option but to be baptized, and certainly no reason to wait any longer. But all things considered, he already had faith in God as a Jewish believer, so believing in Jesus as God's Messiah was a natural step for him.

I think we can safely assume, based on what we have read so far in Acts, that Philip's message of the good news about Jesus probably included:

- Jesus was/is the anticipated Messiah and savior of the world (8:5)
- Put your faith in the name of Jesus for salvation (Acts 8:12)
- Be baptized in the name of Jesus (8:12)

However, those are only my assumptions. Who knows what Philip actually said on this wild ride with the Holy Spirit and the eunuch? He could have covered a lot of ground on that chariot teaching about Jesus. This may be one of those questions I ask God when I get to heaven: *Um...Lord...uh...why didn't you give us that extremely convincing conversation between Philip and the Eunuch? It sure would have been useful down there!* Until then, I'll assume he wants us to trust him to fill in the blanks when we are thrown into those situations to share his good news message of salvation.

The "Quantum Leap" part at the end is cool. All of a sudden Philip is gone! The Holy Spirit just took him! Did he fly away? Did he just disappear? I don't know. But, imagine being that Eunuch? Luke really doesn't leave any trace of doubting thoughts like, "Was that all just a dream?" or "What just happened?" The Eunuch just goes on rejoicing, excited about his new life in Jesus, the Messiah. Pretty cool. Hey, in my book, if God can do that he can do anything.

30 Days of Salvation: Day 20—Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-21

Day 20—Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-21

[Luke's version of Paul's conversion to Jesus—Acts 9:1-19]

¹ Meanwhile, **Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.** He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"**I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,**" he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and **you will be told what you must do.**"

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ **For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.**

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

¹³ “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, **“Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”**

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ **Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.**

[Paul’s own version of his conversion to Jesus—Acts 22:3-21]

³ “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. ⁴ I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, ⁵ as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. **I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.**

⁶ “About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’

⁸ ” ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.

” ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. ⁹ My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

¹⁰ ” ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked.

” ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ ¹¹ My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

¹² “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. ¹³ He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.

¹⁴ “Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to **know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth.** ¹⁵ **You will be his witness to all people** of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now what are you waiting for? **Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.**’

¹⁷ “When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸ and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’

¹⁹ ” ‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. ²⁰ And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’

²¹ “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; **I will send you far away to the Gentiles.**’ ”

I used both accounts of Paul’s conversion story found in Acts for our text today. It seemed appropriate to me to read Luke’s version of the story, and then read Luke’s recantation of Paul’s version in Paul’s words. I know the two accounts are written in two separate contexts, but they are both still sharing the same situation—Paul’s conversion. The two accounts compliment each other, both sharing most of the same information, but both telling unique details as well.

It is inspiring to read how Paul courageously doesn’t hold back information when he discusses details regarding his personal history of persecuting the church. He is ashamed of it, but shares about it boldly nevertheless. His story of “persecutor turned disciple” amazed many people and disturbed many others. Regardless, his story impacted *him* so much he couldn’t help sharing it. Encountering Jesus on his way to persecute the church in Damascus made him stop in his tracks and turn about face.

Really, the only verses I want to discuss from these harmonizing texts are the verses surrounding the instructions Paul gets from Ananias, the Jewish man who restored Paul’s sight and then instructed Paul about what Jesus wanted him to do.

Here are a couple of my humble observations I made after reading closely through today’s two texts:

- Paul believed it was the Lord Jesus who he met on the road to Damascus, so he then did exactly what Jesus told him to do, thereby showing the conviction of his heart. (Acts 22:10)
- Ananias seems to link Paul’s baptism with washing away sins and calling on the name of the Lord. All three of those things are almost said in one breath, like you can’t have one without the other. To be clear, to me it seems like in the process of Paul’s baptism is when he 1) washed his sins away, and 2) called on the name of the Lord. It wasn’t enough for Paul to just believe Jesus was Lord to have his sins removed or found to be “in the name of Jesus”; he had to follow through with baptism for these things to happen. (Acts 22:16)

These “30 Days of Salvation” studies are beginning to add up and with ten days left to go I thought I would list some of my two-thirds observations for review (all of which remain “in the hot seat” for continual scrutiny and questioning):

1. Salvation is God’s loving plan, initiated and carried out by him and through his son Jesus.
2. You must believe in Jesus in order to be saved.
3. Salvation is only found in the name of Jesus.
4. It is through faith and only by the grace of God that we are made righteous, not by any works that we can do.
5. Jesus commands that his disciples are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
6. The apostles demand that believers are baptized in the name of Jesus.
7. Baptism is when a disciple of Jesus...
 - calls on the name of the Lord
 - pledges his heart to the Lord
 - devotes his life to the Lord
 - establishes a covenant relationship with the Lord (through the ceremony) by dying “to sin”, symbolically (and possibly spiritually) joining Jesus in his burial, death, and resurrection
 - washes his sins away
 - opens the door wide for the Spirit to do His work (This one was only touched on when we discussed Acts 2:32-41, but will be discussed more in the future...I think! We’ll see what pops out in the study!)

I want to make one more personal observations about baptism that I’ve been contemplating, one that includes all of the texts so far, and even just my own general overview of the New Testament teaching. It seems to me that baptism was used by John, and then by Jesus (and therefore by the apostles), in a general sense, as a ceremony to give people *an ending point* of what they are repenting from in order to be right with God, and then also *a beginning point* of a new way to live. Baptism was about change, from one to another. For people who believed and were considered his disciples, it is like they needed that “something” to go back to where one could say, “That was where I ended my old life and where I then put on my new one.” It was the benchmark moment for them. It was the clear and obvious, distinct birthmark of starting over. Even in today’s text, after Paul was baptized and he retells his story, that seems to be the clear mark of his new life with Christ.

Well, just another observation I guess. We’ll see how that one stands too!

(I’m glad to get that stuff out of my head! If these observations remain till the end of the study, I’ll be sure to include verse references when I write my final notes.)

30 Days of Salvation: Day 21—Acts 10:30-48

Day 21—Acts 10:30-48

³⁰ Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me ³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. ³² Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ ³³ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that **God** does not show favoritism ³⁵ but **accepts those from every nation who fear him and do what is right.**

³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

³⁹ “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ **He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.** ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that **he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.** ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that **everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.**”

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ “**Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.**” ⁴⁸ So **he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.** Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Today’s text presents the beginning of God’s good news salvation message being preached and accepted by the Gentiles. So far in the book of Acts the apostles have only preached the Lord’s message to the Jews, but now this limitation has been taken away by God. Cornelius and his household are the first Gentile (10:28) converts to receive the Holy Spirit (exemplified by the gift of speaking in tongues) and to be baptized in the name of Jesus.

Something interesting in this text is the order of events. Back in Acts 2:32-41 we read about Peter’s message to the Jews that they should “repent and be baptized in the name of

Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. And you *will* receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The order in that text was baptism in the name of Jesus, then forgiveness, and then the Holy Spirit was given. In today’s text, the Holy Spirit came on Cornelius and his household *before* they were baptized by water. Isn’t this backwards? I think this is a special situation where the Spirit of God not only led Peter to the Gentile Cornelius, but also God’s Holy Spirit entered these Gentiles in a way that was reminiscent of when Peter and the others received the Spirit in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-2). This was another “first” for the Spirit of God, to move into a people in a powerful and obvious way. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit did come on Cornelius and the others present who heard the message and they praised God for it.

So now I have a question. *If these Gentiles already received the Holy Spirit, then why would they need to be baptized by water?* Here are some possible reasons that come to mind based on the passages I (we) have studied so far:

1. **Obedience.** Jesus stipulated that all of his disciples—those who believe in him—be baptized in his name (Matthew 28:19-20), and in order to obey the Lord properly they needed to be baptized.
2. **Forgiveness.** They still had not received any forgiveness of sins because they were not found in the name of Jesus yet, even though they must have believed at this point because of what the Holy Spirit was doing. Their sins were not “washed away” as Paul’s were when he was baptized and called on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). This supports the idea that to truly be found in Christ, to be part of him, you must be baptized in his name.
3. **Covenant.** They needed to establish the covenant relationship with God through their baptism, by dying “to sin” and starting fresh in a life with Jesus, in the light (Romans 6:3-9). It does appear that God initiated this covenant already with the presence of his Spirit; but whether he did that or not for covenant reasons, they still needed to do their part for the covenant.

I admit, their baptism appeared to be after-the-fact in this text when I first read the passage today. However, after I thought through what baptism meant to the salvation process for other disciples from all the other texts studied thus far, it seems to make sense for them to do it. I can even see why they needed to still be baptized.

Going further, I think to these first disciples found in Acts, baptism wasn’t ever a question of whether it needed to be done or not, like we tend to question baptism in our 2010 world. It was just always done because that was what Jesus wanted and there was no other way as far as they were concerned. It meant too much to them. They seem to have been more concerned about if one truly believed or not, and where the heart was in the process of salvation (Acts 8:21-23).

30 Days of Salvation: Day 22—Acts 16:13-15, 25-34

Day 22—Acts 16:13-15, 25-34

[Baptism of Lydia and her household—Acts 16:13-15]

¹³ On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

¹⁴ One of those listening was **a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia**, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. **The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.** ¹⁵ **When she and the members of her household were baptized**, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

[Baptism of Lydia and her household—Acts 16:13-15]

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was such a violent **earthquake** that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. ²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**”

³¹ They replied, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.**” ³² **Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.** ³³ **At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized.** ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

Not to beat a dead horse, I wanted to look at two more stories revealing baptism in connection with salvation. Both of these stories are found in the same chapter of Acts and for some reason I thought it appropriate to look at them both on the same day. Plus, with only eight more days I couldn’t bear thinking about spending *two* more days beating this dead baptism horse! (Wow, what a morbid expression!) *What’s the reason for looking at these passages?* I wanted to be sure to read these accounts again to see where baptism fit into their salvation stories. So, here we go!

I love how Luke wrote that “the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message”. It reminds me of how the Lord hardened the Pharaoh’s heart way back in the Old Testament when Moses tried to tell the Pharaoh to let his people go. The Lord has that ability, to soften hearts and harden hearts. Was Luke giving credit to God for opening her heart so she would be saved? I think so. I don’t want to go deep into that whole discussion right now of whether or not God must call you or draw you to him for you to

respond to his Son, but I do believe this text supports that belief. I will admit, however, that I do believe God draws people to him and his Son Jesus for salvation based on what Jesus said in John 6:44: “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.*” It seems to me that salvation begins and ends with God and he is active throughout the process.

How did Lydia respond to the message Paul was preaching? Well, I think we can assume she believed Jesus was/is the Messiah of God or else her baptism in his name wouldn't have meant anything. Luke does mention her heart was opened to the message, so her heart was obviously sold on Jesus. For sure, Lydia and her household were baptized. What a great day for an entire household to be saved in one day!

Now, let's switch gears to the Jailor who has quite a story. He was kind of saved twice! He was frightened when the earthquake happened, but probably more frightened when he realized the prisoners he was in charge of had probably escaped. The text says he was even about to commit suicide over the ordeal! Why? Because he knew he would probably be put to death for “letting” prisoners escape. The first “salvation” message of Paul came when he told the jailor they were all still there and there was no need for him to kill himself.

Then Paul shared the second salvation message, but this one was the eternal one. And why wouldn't he share it when the jailor opened the door wide open to hear it with these words:

“The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

In direct response to his question Paul tells the jailor that he must believe in Jesus, and then expounds on the good news. It's hard not to notice how “*immediately* he and all his household were baptized”. Baptism is once again so obviously connected with the message of salvation the early disciples were teaching. We can't avoid it! The expected and immediate response of those who believed in Jesus was to be baptized in his name for salvation.

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 23—1 Corinthians 1:4-9](#)

Day 23—1 Corinthians 1:4-9

⁴ I always thank my God for you because of **his grace** given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— ⁶ God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸ **He will also keep you firm to the end**, so that you will be blameless on the

day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ **God is faithful**, who has **called you into fellowship with his Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I must say, when I read today's passage again today I was completely encouraged all over again about this 30 Days of Salvation. What popped out to me in today's text was what God was going to do for me regarding my salvation. I know, I know, he was writing to the Corinthian church...keep it in context Lee! But honestly, it's the context that gives me all the more reason to be encouraged and apply it to me. I mean, when I read through the letters to the Corinthian church, I see they were dealing with some pretty rough and hairy stuff. However, even in the midst of their chaos in dealing with all of their issues (divisive issues, sexual issues, etc) Paul gives them a boost of confidence in God and in his grace and salvation that *will* be theirs till the end. He assures them of their faith in God and in what He has, can and will do for them.

Just observe what God did and was going to do for the believers in Corinth:

- His grace was given to them in Jesus
- They were enriched in every way by the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- He would keep them firm to the end so they will be found blameless on the big judgment day of Jesus
- God would be faithful to them and they could have confidence in God because He is faithful
- God "called" them into fellowship with his Son

I don't think I'm reading too much into this text. I really believe those items listed above are what Paul is trying to help them remember, those wonderful blessings and actions of God. He is behind *all* of this salvation jargon.

We must remember that God is the one who not only paved the way for our salvation, but is the one who will carry us through to the end. Remember, he called you into a relationship with him when you heard the message of Jesus. We can't forget his knock at the door of our hearts that drew us to our salvation in the first place.

Be encouraged. God will be faithful to you as well...all the way till the very end!

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 24—2 Corinthians 1:18-24](#)

Day 24—2 Corinthians 1:18-24

¹⁸ But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." ¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by **us—by me and Silas and Timothy**—was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." ²⁰ For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him

the **“Amen” is spoken by us** to the glory of God.²¹ Now it is God who makes **both us and you** stand firm in Christ. **He anointed us,**²² **set his seal of ownership on us,** and **put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.**

²³ I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth.²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, **because it is by faith you stand firm.**

What is the Holy Spirit’s role in our salvation? I want to spend a few days looking at some passages of Scripture that may shed some light on this question, and actually, I hope will give some answers. Today’s text should get this ball rolling. Personally, today’s Scripture text gives me strong confidence in my salvation, but only because I believe this Scripture includes me and you.

The usage of the word “us” gets a little confusing in this text as Paul. I think Paul switches from referring to himself and his companions, to referring to himself, his companions and his letter recipient Corinthians. Look at the four usages of “us” in this text:

1. “Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy”
2. “And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.”
3. “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.”
4. “He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit...”

I see Paul (the writer) transitioning from speaking about himself and his companions to including his readers as well. There is a transition word—“now”—at the beginning of verse 21 that gives me reason to begin to make the switch in my mind. After he uses the word “now”, he writes “both us and you” and makes the switch from talking about himself and his companions to including his Corinthian readers as well. And what he writes about himself and his readers couldn’t have been more encouraging to them—and to us now, as I believe this text is applicable to us today.

“Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us,²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”

Paul mentions three things God has done for them that while make them stand firm in Christ, one of which unarguably includes His Holy Spirit; possibly all three include the Holy Spirit.

1. He anointed us
2. Set his seal of ownership on us
3. Put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

I think there is a “chosen” meaning behind the “anointed” reference in this text. Like when David was “anointed” and chosen by God to be king, so we are anointed by God,

chosen to be his. There is probably much more that could be said about this anointing, but that's all I'm going to write today. Maybe future studies will dig deeper.

Wow, God set's his seal of ownership on us! How cool is that! A seal is intentionally placed on something to make sure that something is secure. When I open my new jar of grape jelly, or almost everything else I eat that has been packaged, I break the *seal*. These kinds of seals are common even today in our daily lives.

In the past when people were commonly buried in tombs (i.e. Jesus was buried in a tomb), the tombs were sealed air tight for preservation and security. Also in the past, when a king or an important official sent a letter with a seal on the letter, the letter was secured. If the letter seal was broken, then the recipient would know the letter had been read already and its security had been broken.

When I read that God puts his "seal of ownership on us", I understand that God has secured us in our salvation in Jesus Christ. He is the one who *owns* us, who made us secure, and the one who will keep us secure till the end. We should believe that God has put his Holy Spirit in our hearts as a "guarantee" of the future and heavenly reality that we will have with him.

Personally, I have not witnessed the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit that were obviously present in the lives of the original Corinthian readers (see 1 Corinthians 12:7-11) as well as in the lives of other early disciples living in other places. I'm pretty sure those extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit died out with the generation after the apostles simply because they couldn't lay their hands on anyone else to pass them down, which seems to be one of the apostles' roles (Acts 8:17). However, God's Holy Spirit was promised to be given to all those who repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus, including us today who are a part of the "all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39).

God's Holy Spirit is a seal, a deposit that shows we are owned by him. When a house is purchased, a deposit is given to show the ownership claim. The Holy Spirit is God's deposit in our hearts showing his claim of ownership of us! But this deposit of the Holy Spirit is more than just the above mentioned house analogy. God's Holy Spirit helps us, gives us life, leads us, and even intercedes and testifies to God on our behalf (see Romans 8).

I say we thank God for his Holy Spirit! We can live with *full* confidence that by his Holy Spirit he will keep us secure till the end as we put our faith in him for our salvation. Let's not be ashamed of the Holy Spirit living in us who have pledged our hearts and lives to God in the name of Jesus, but let's trust the Holy Spirit to do the work God has set out for him to do in our lives.

30 Days of Salvation: Day 25—Titus 3:1-8

Day 25—Titus 3:1-8

¹ Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ² to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

³ At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

⁴ **But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.**

What is the Holy Spirit's role in our salvation? Today is another passage that may shed some more light on the active role of the Holy Spirit in our salvation. In his letter to Titus, Paul gives Titus a lot of instruction about what to teach and how to live.

In today's text Paul, for just a short time dips into recalling God's salvation message. Paul leads into the salvation message and work of God from a discussion about the foolish and sinful life he and his readers used to live. Paul's awareness of his previous sinful ways shows his true heart transformation for God. Paul truly understood the grace of God since he converted from persecutor of Christians to Christian disciple after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus. He considers himself "the worst of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:16) and can only grab hold of the wonderful love, kindness, and grace of God for his hope.

Paul wrote that God saves us, not because of the righteous things that Paul and his readers have done. Salvation is nothing that can be earned; it is given totally and freely by the mercy of God.

How does God actually save us? Paul answers this question. God saves us "through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is active in our salvation! He brings about our rebirth and our renewal. It's "through" the Holy Spirit that we are cleansed. This once again takes me back to when Jesus said to Nicodemus in John chapter 3 that the "Spirit gives birth to spirit." We can't have rebirth and new life in Jesus without the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul pins it down for us in just a few words that the Holy Spirit "washes" us.

Is it the Holy Spirit that "washes away our sins"? And furthermore, is this washing done in baptism? I think it is the work of the Holy Spirit that ends up washing our sins away,

though I'm not exactly sure *when* the Holy Spirit does his washing. I can see the strong link that can be made with baptism and today's text of "washing". For example, when Ananias gave instruction to Paul in Acts chapter 22 to be baptized and told Paul to get up and "wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord [Jesus]." This "baptism link" can be made stronger with the collaboration of other scriptures as well that I have studied in this 30 Days study. Surely the Holy Spirit doesn't wash us clean until after we have committed our lives to Jesus through baptism in his name. It makes sense that we must establish the new covenant with God before he would cleanse us.

Okay. I'm going to be frank here. I'm not sure that it is extremely important to know the definite answer of *when* the Holy Spirit does his work, it's just important for us to understand that he does the work. *Everything* we do for salvation is with the faith that God will do what he promised he would do, and part of his work is washing our sins away. Honestly, he can cleanse me before, during, or after my baptism for all I care; as long as he does it...and I know he did cleanse me years ago.

All that to say, *if I had to* pinpoint the time of the Holy Spirit's cleansing based on the Scriptures I have studied so far, I would say it does happen during and/or after baptism. And then after we receive the Holy Spirit of God to live in us he continues to work in us as we live to please to God.

Obviously I need to look at more Scriptures that speak to the Holy Spirit's role in our salvation. Maybe I'll gain more understanding! (Man, I wish all this salvation stuff was neatly explained in one letter!)

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 26–Ephesians 2:1-10](#)

Day 26—Ephesians 2:1-10

¹ As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, **God**, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ **made us alive with Christ** even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And **God raised us up with Christ** and **seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus**, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—** ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do **good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

Paul packs in a lot of great stuff in these ten verses. However, I have discussed almost everything found in these verses in previous studies during this 30 Days of Salvation study. So, today, just plainly look what Paul tells the Ephesians about what God has done for them (and now us):

- “God...made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions”
- “God raised us up with Christ”
- God “seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”
- “...good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

God has done something amazing for us now—in the present—so in the future he can show his wonderful grace in kindness to us. And now that he has made us alive in Christ we have good works to do for his glory. We are his “handiwork”, like when he made the heavens and the earth. He is our spiritual craftsman! Funny, Jesus was a carpenter too wasn't he?

Praise God for the incredible salvation in Jesus Christ with which he has blessed us, by his grace, and because of his rich mercy!

He has been so good to us.

Now, in faith, let's go be good for him!

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 27—Ephesians 4:17-24](#)

Day 27—Ephesians 4:17-24

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and **insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do**, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² **You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**

With only four days left to go in this study, I want to choose four important salvation Scriptures to finish.

Today's passage is just a couple chapters over from yesterday's Scripture (Ephesians 2:1-10) regarding God's amazing grace when he made us alive in Christ Jesus. Then, later in

chapter four, Paul calls them to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit” and lists a number of items where they should be found in unison, even including “one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:1-6). He then encourages them to think practically about what living the new life in the light of Jesus means.

Paul *insists* that the Christian Ephesians must not live like the Gentiles do; that is, living a life that doesn’t care about pleasing God. The Gentiles were living lives only to please themselves, full of corruption and sin. That Gentile mindset was/is contrary to what the disciples of Jesus should be committed to.

Followers of Christ who have pledged their hearts and lives to him through the covenant act of baptism are to live their lives to emulate Jesus. We are to talk like him, act like him, think like him...everything...like him. If we—disciples of Jesus—could pick one person to imitate, to copy perfectly, it is always Jesus. That is what being a disciple of Jesus means.

When we dedicated our lives to living in the name of Jesus we “put off” our old self and “put on” the new. We put on our new attitude that is all about pleasing God, doing good things, things that are righteous and holy. This is the new life in Jesus. We can’t forget that, ever.

And by the way, Paul goes into a lot of practical application of this concept in chapters four and five. It’s very practical! We can’t ignore the holy expectations of God regarding our new life in Jesus Christ, and we owe it all to him and his salvation.

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 28–1 Peter 3:18-22](#)

Day 28—1 Peter 3:18-22

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. ¹⁹ In that state he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— ²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah **while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,** ²¹ and **this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also**—not the removal of dirt from the body but **the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,** ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—**with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.**

Peter was writing to a plethora of disciples who were suffering for Christ (1 Peter 1:6) in various ways. He encourages them to stay strong in their faith, to do what is good and holy and pleasing to God, and reassures them of their salvation in Jesus, who has all

authority. There's more in the letter than those things I listed, but they are certainly important for understanding the context of today's Scripture.

Peter writes some interesting things in this part of his letter regarding baptism. He compares the water that saved Noah (and his family), to baptism. And he doesn't leave it there, he wrote: "*baptism that now saves you also.*"

How does the water from Noah's ordeal symbolize baptism? (And by the way, understand that it is not the other way...baptism doesn't symbolize the water of Noah in this text.) How about the following for an explanation of this part of the text?

- The water in the days of Noah picked up the ark from a world full of sin and disobedience and carried Noah and his family safely to a new world of purity and new beginnings. The water therefore saved Noah.
- Baptism, in the days of Peter (and in our day as well) saves us by taking us from a life full of sin and disobedience—actually dead in sin, to a new life in Christ that is pure and holy, completely desiring to obey God in Jesus.

However, to be very clear, baptism means nothing if you are only washing dirt off your body! Baptism isn't about the outside of your body; it's about what's going on in the inside—in your heart. Peter couldn't have made that point clearer. When we make our "pledge of a clear conscience toward God" we are certainly making that pledge in our heart, and to God. We can't sneak our way into commitment by faking a covenant with God. He can read our hearts. He knows without us ever saying with words what we are thinking. If we enter into the water of baptism and never *truly* commit in our hearts to God, then we end up just washing dirt off our bodies.

But...when we do enter the water of baptism and truly pledge our life to God through baptism, and in our hearts join Jesus in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-11), then we are raised with him. And remember, in our passage two days ago, Paul explained that "God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus..." (Ephesians 2:1-10). *How do we know we are raised in Christ?* Because now Jesus has all authority over everything and sits at the right hand of our Almighty God, and he promised many times during his ministry that he would raise us if we believe in him and put our faith in him (John 3:16; 5:21,25; 6:40,47,51; 10:27,28; 14:23).

I can not ignore this passage of Scripture—or any passage of Scripture for that matter—because this passage too is from God. How can I not accept the role of baptism after reading what Peter wrote? It is not only something God expects us to do, but salvation is administered through this "baptism that now saves"!

Wow, the meaning of baptism was cranked up a notch in my book tonight!

30 Days of Salvation: Day 29—Colossians 2:6-15

Day 29—Colossians 2:6-15

⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, **continue to live your lives in him,** ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through **hollow and deceptive philosophy,** which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the **head over every power and authority.** ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. **Your sinful nature was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.**

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, **God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.** ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

In today's text, Paul really wants "the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse" (Colossians 1:2) to *remain* holy and faithful *in Jesus*. It seems Paul feels the need to strengthen them in their faith in Jesus, reacting to some philosophical teaching that was tugging them away from the truth they previously learned, specifically God's secure salvation through faith in Jesus. Paul reminds them that the truth of salvation and new life is found in Jesus alone.

Paul begins his encouragement to stay faithful to only Jesus by reflecting on the authority and headship of Jesus. Jesus is the Christ—Messiah—the One from God who now sits on right hand of God with all authority.

Then Paul urges them to remember their "circumcision", but not the circumcision done for the Jewish covenant established by God with Abraham when a man would cut off the foreskin of an eight-day old baby. No, the circumcision Paul wants them to remember is their circumcision of the heart *done by Jesus* and through baptism, when Jesus would "cut off" the sinful nature from the heart.

This gives us another glimpse of how these early disciples viewed the act of baptism. Baptism to them was the new circumcision, the sign of the new covenant between God and man through Jesus. In the act of baptism these early followers of Jesus pledged their hearts to God and believed they joined Jesus in his burial, death and resurrection; obviously not in the physical but in the spiritual, or at least symbolically. Baptism was

where they made their firm commitment to Jesus, the very commitment Paul is encouraging the disciples in Colosse to remember and stay resolute to.

Paul reminds them of the wondrous work God has done with them through Jesus:

- God made you alive with Christ
- He forgave us all our sins
- Canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us
- He has taken it—the charge of our legal indebtedness—away, nailing it to the cross

It's everywhere in the New Testament! God's message of salvation is woven in and through every book! It's truly amazing to me. This 30 Days study has really helped me see the wondrous work of God in his gracious and loving salvation, even in me. Thank you God!

[30 Days of Salvation: Day 30—1 Peter 1:3-5](#)

Day 30—1 Peter 1:3-5

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! **In his great mercy** he has given us **new birth** into a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into **an inheritance** that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is **kept in heaven** for you, ⁵ who through faith are **shielded by God's power** until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be **revealed in the last time**.

I debated this morning on what verse would be the best to end this “30 Days of Salvation” study. There are so many verses that discuss God's salvation and narrowing them down to “the best” verse proved in the end to be an impossible task. With that said, the verse I chose today comes from Peter's first letter, the letter written to “God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered...” Since I count myself and all other disciples of Jesus among the strangers in this world, it seemed fitting to end this study in this place.

As I said before, in this letter, Peter encourages his readers to stay strong in their faith, to do what is good and holy and pleasing to God. He reassures them of their salvation in Jesus who hold all authority, and in who is found true life.

Peter encapsulates the gospel message in today's text, almost like a daily pill that can be swallowed by the scattered disciples of Jesus to keep their strength in the midst of their suffering. Look at it broken down:

- Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
- **In his great mercy**

- he has given us **new birth**
- into a **living hope**
- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and
- into **an inheritance** that can never
 - perish,
 - spoil or
 - fade.
- This inheritance is **kept in heaven** for you,
- who through faith are **shielded by God's power** until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be **revealed in the last time.**

There are past, present, and future aspects to this verse that I love.

Presently, we praise God and recognize his great mercy. We can also presently understand and own our present new birth (life). We can hope today with assurance because of what God has done in the past with Jesus, specifically his rising; and what he has done with us as well, specifically our rising.

For the future, we can hope for an inheritance of God. How exciting is that! It's waiting for us. It's cemented in, sealed and preserved for us, just waiting. It won't perish, spoil, or fade like the things of this world. Peter is talking about eternal things we should put our hope in, not things in this world. We see stuff all around us that will all fade away. Life as we know it here on earth will perish. All things on earth will be only a memory one day. But our inheritance, our eternal heavenly inheritance, will remain intact forever.

Is there anything more secure than the shield of God? There is no battle, no opposition, no earthly anything that can penetrate the powerful shield of God. It's his shield that protects us and keeps us strong in times of turbulence and despair. We hide behind him. He is our front line and a warrior for us.

What would I do without God's defense? Surely I would crumble on the Day of Judgment when all men will face him. But I, as well as every person who has fully given their life to God and abide in the name of Jesus, will stand strong on that Day because *he* will make me (us) strong. I only hope that more people (and my wish is for all people) will come to trust in God and in his Son/Messiah Jesus, so on that great day they too will see God come to their defense and fulfill his plan of salvation in them.

Some Final Personal Notes

As I said above, this is the final day in this “30 Days of Salvation” study. I admit, this study has been a blessing and a burden for me at the same time. It has been a blessing for me when finding understanding and conviction regarding what God has done for me personally. Also, discussing this study with others who are working through this important information has been very encouraging. Those who have commented on this Blog, through Facebook, and in person have enriched my life with their insight. I’ve truly grown during this study in my own knowledge of Scripture, and my heart has grown with desire for others to share what I have—that is the knowledge of salvation and salvation itself. This study has been an enormous blessing to me in many ways.

However, this study has also been a burden for me as I could never fully leave the study alone. It seemed to be on my mind instantly when I woke up each morning, and the last thing I thought about when retiring to bed. I have carried this study around in my mind all day and everywhere I went for the last thirty days. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not claiming to be a special hobbit! I’m just saying it will be nice to sit and watch the Olympics without wondering about the “renewal of the Holy Spirit” or some other salvation topic...well, at least for a little while!

This study has also been a burden for me in my search for truth. I hope my discussions of the chosen texts have been truthful and right. I want to be right just like anyone else, but I know I am not perfect, nor am I special with special insight. I do know that I have been honest and what I wrote each day was from my heart. I don’t know if what I wrote shook anyone’s faith or encouraged anyone’s faith, but that was not my concern (although I hope both happened!). My concern was truth and real understanding of the salvation God presented in the Bible.

With that said, here are some observations I made on day twenty, along with some additional observations, that I believe have stood true to the end.

1. Salvation is God’s loving plan, initiated and carried out by him and through his son Jesus. (John 3:16-21)
2. You must believe in Jesus in order to be saved. (John 8:21-30)
3. Salvation is only found in the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:8-14)
4. It is through faith and only by the grace of God that we are made righteous, not by any works that we can do. (Romans 4:1-12; Ephesians 2:1-10)
5. Jesus commands that his disciples are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:16-20)
6. The apostles demanded that believers are baptized in the name of Jesus.
7. Baptism is when a disciple of Jesus...
 - calls on the name of the Lord (Acts 2:32-41)
 - pledges his heart to the Lord (1 Peter 2:18-22)
 - devotes his life to the Lord (Acts 2:32-41; Romans 6:1-14)
 - establishes a covenant relationship with the Lord (through the ceremony) by dying “to sin”, symbolically (and possibly spiritually) joining Jesus in his burial, death, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-14)

- is the “new circumcision” (Colossians 2:6-15)
 - washes his sins away (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-21)
 - opens the door wide for the renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:1-8; 2 Corinthians 1:18-24))
8. God will make us stand on the Day of Judgment by his own power. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

May God bless our continual study of his bible and his salvation.

And may we never stop sharing this good news of God with others.

God, we can only praise you.