

Lecture 5 - God Our Salvation
Psalms 16, 27, 31, 62, 85, 86, 98
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Greetings – hard to believe we’re already at lesson 5 of this wonderful topical-based tour through the Psalms and Proverbs. For this lesson, Carol has grouped seven of the psalms into a topic titled “God Our Salvation.” Today’s lecture we will seek to pull from these seven Psalms answers to four questions:

- What is the definition of salvation?
- Why do we need salvation?
- What should God’s salvation teach me about Him?
- What should my life look like as one who is saved?

My wife, Vickie, taught me there is often much to learn about a word when looking up a definition. It took her beautiful and wise suggestion to get past the frustrating youthful echoes of my dad’s common response when I would ask what a word would mean. “*What does a dictionary mean?*” he would curtly retort. Thanks for your help, Dad.

Similarly, when studying the Bible, looking up the definition in the original language to which it was written is a good exercise to help drill down on the meaning or message the writer is trying to convey. Sometimes, the true or deeper meaning the writer is looking to convey gets lost in translation. For the vast majority of the Old Testament, the original language was Hebrew. I highlighted each of the times the word “salvation” was used in the Psalms we’re covering in this lesson, and looked them up in my handy-dandy Hebrew dictionary. Notably, there were two Hebrew words used – one of which was taken from another word. These Hebrew words and their definitions are:

- yeshuwah – something saved; deliverance, aid, victory; prosperity; health; helping; saved; saving health; welfare
- yasha – liberty; deliverance; prosperity, safe – this word comes from the word, “*yasha*,” which means to be open wide or free; to be safe; to free or succor; avenging; defend; deliver; help; preserve; rescue; be safe; get victory

When you look at these definitions, I hope you can see there is a theme – saving – being delivered or rescued. A fair and vitally important question for every human to ask when reading these words is, ‘*What do I need saving from?*’ Well, if you’re anything like me, and I hope you’re not, the thing *I* most need saving from is myself. Maybe that’s not the kind of confidence-building statement you want to hear from someone teaching the Bible – but I can assure you it’s an honest statement. If I choose to compare myself to the rest of the physical world, I can start to feel pretty good about myself: I have a beautiful wife, two sons, a daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren all of which I’m very proud of. I have a good job, a fair amount of education, and live in a comfortable home. From the world’s perspective, there’s nothing I need saving from.

The world’s perspective, though, is *not* God’s perspective. From 1 Samuel 16:7, we learn how God looks at us, “*For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*” Ahh, the heart – as William Shakespeare’s Hamlet said - “*There’s the rub.*” Jeremiah 17:9 paints an unflattering description of the human heart, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*” When I look back on my life – at least that part of it my old memory can recall – the majority of my greatest pains were self-inflicted acts coming from a bad heart. I’m not the only one with this malady – we all have this problem. Romans 3:23 says it plainly, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” And that’s just the *diagnosis*. What’s the *prognosis*? Romans 6:23a tells us, “*For the wages of sin is death.*”

This death sentence from sin applies to the physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental realms. Physical death is unavoidable, unless God should be merciful and we be raptured (“Any time, Lord!”). However, debilitating, crippling, stunting, bondage-like effects of sin cannot be overstated. This, brothers and sisters, is what we need saving from if we want to have hope – salvation from sin’s death sentence.

What is sin? Technically, it means falling short of the mark. What mark? That was defined by God with the 10 Commandments – the Law. To achieve that mark – that standard of holy thought and conduct – we must perfectly obey the Law 100% of the time. I always get a kick out of those who say they prefer the New Testament God to the Old Testament God. This is largely said because Jesus was so personal, so merciful, so forgiving, so loving, and so much more. Yet, here’s the thing – the God of the Old Testament is the same God as the one in the New Testament. Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17 confirm God does not change.

The second reason I’m amused at people who claim they like the New Testament God better is I wonder if they really listened to Jesus in Matthew 18? Sin in the Old Testament was looked upon as *physical* acts of disobedience. Jesus raised the level of accountability to the Law to our *minds*. In other words, if we even think about an act of sin, we are guilty of breaking the Law. Some of us less self-aware folks might be able to fool ourselves into thinking we’re obeying the Law all the time because we’re not physically doing the things we’re not supposed to be doing. However, you have to be living on the River Denial to claim you’re obedient to the Law in your mind all the time. Just remember what went on in your mind the last time you felt wronged by someone cutting you off on the road or some relentlessly screaming little brat wouldn’t shut up. I’m guessing you had some unholy thoughts in your mind – I know they would be in mine!

So, as we said earlier that Romans 3:23 reminds us we’ve all sinned. That means we *all* need saving. I believe it’s worth taking a quick pause to think of why God would even *want* to save us. I’m not sure I know why, but I’ve developed in my mind an image that every time I sin, it’s like slapping God in the face. If you adopt that image as what sin is to God and then multiply that act times 7.75 billion – that’s what is believed to be the world’s population now – that’s a lot of face slapping. When I imagine this, it makes me marvel all the more Romans 5:8, “*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” Why would God make salvation available to a people who reject Him and slap Him in the face every day with their sinful thoughts and deeds?

There can only be one answer to this question, and I want you to listen to it very carefully. He wants to save you because He loves you. All that sin garbage that covers you – all the guilt, all the shame, all the regrets, all the hard heartedness – Jesus looks through all of it and looks at the *you* He originally created and says, “*I love you. I love you so much that I’m going to the cross to make it possible for you to be completely forgiven by My Father and Me. My blood is going to wash away all that sin garbage, and you will be completely pure and clean in the eyes of My Father and Me.*” Don’t believe me? Listen to what the writer of Hebrews said from chapter 12, verse, 2, “*who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.*” What was that joy that was set before Jesus? The notion that His creation that He loves could be reconciled to God through Him. Each of you is His joy. That, my brothers and sisters, is the heart of the God of the Bible.

This is a good segue into the third component of our list of things to cover in today’s lecture. We’ve defined salvation, and we’ve explained why we need it. Now, we want to review the Scriptures that reveal to us God’s character, mind, and heart in salvation – as our Savior. I want you to look at some key words that jumped out at me in this lesson’s verses that I believe unveil God’s provision in His act of saving. We’ve attempted to categorize these Scriptures with the following themes that when combined encompass a complete picture of God as our salvation:

- Deliverance
- Forgiveness
- Security
- Rest
- Character

As we noted earlier in one of the Hebrew definitions of salvation, we were given words such as “deliverance; to free or succor; deliver; help; preserve; rescue; get victory.” An act of salvation or saving must begin with a deliverance from the circumstances to which you need saving. As you listen to these verses, think of yourself as a lost sinner calling out for help.

Psalm 31:2: “Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.”

Psalm 31:16: “Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.”

Psalm 86:13: “For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.”

We spoke earlier of why we need salvation – from sin’s death sentence. The Divine balm of sin is the blood of Christ shed at His cross. Hebrews 9:22b confirms this, “*without the shedding of blood there is no remission or forgiveness.*” Christ crucified made Him the only way and the only One with the power to deliver us from our death sentence. The act of deliverance to the granting of forgiveness is a simultaneous step at the point of salvation. In other words, at the moment we accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord, He delivers us from sin’s death sentence via His forgiveness. Check out these verses that testify to God’s *ability* and *desire* to forgive those who confess His name.

Psalm 85:2: “You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.”

Psalm 85:3: “You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.”

Psalm 86:5: “You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.”

Do you believe you are completely and totally forgiven by God? Or, are you enslaved by a legalistic attitude that in order to maintain your salvation, you have to be perfect? If God alone provides the means of our salvation, what makes us think it is up to us to maintain it? I come from the school of once saved, always saved. Just as a caterpillar is permanently transformed to a butterfly, so I believe a saved child of God cannot lose his/her transformation. More importantly, listen to what Jesus says in John 10:28, “*And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*”

Hopefully, Jesus’ words are comforting, which is another good segue into the next progressive fruit of salvation – security. Once we are saved by God through Jesus, we are eternally safe. As our Lord and Good Shepherd, Jesus has a responsibility to protect His own. He tells us He lays down His life for His sheep in John 10:15. Take a look at some of the verses in today’s lesson that speak to the safety and security we enjoy because of our salvation.

Psalm 27:5: “For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.”

Psalm 16:5: “LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure.”

Psalm 62:7: “My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.”

A natural progression of a God-given sense of safety and security should provide us *rest*. How many of you feel at rest in this world these days? It's not easy, is it? However, if you are willing to further your trust and faith in God's all-powerful protection, then these Scriptures offer wonderful assurances.

Psalm 62:1: “Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.” (Our memory verse)

Psalm 62:5: “Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.”

Psalm 86:17: “Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.”

So, we've seen the progressive steps of God's salvation – deliverance, forgiveness, security, and rest. These are awesome, but we also learn a lot about God's character in His salvation. Why is that important? Let's put a pin in that question, and I'll answer it in my conclusion. See if you can pull some of God's character traits in these verses for this lesson:

Psalm 85:7: “Show us your unfailing love, LORD, and grant us your salvation.”

Psalm 98:2: “The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.”

Psalm 86:13: “For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.”

Psalm 86:15: “But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”

What do we learn about God's character in these verses? His unfailing love, His righteousness, His compassion, His grace, His patience, and His faithfulness. Aren't these glorious character traits what we would *expect* and *want* from someone to save us from our sins? The question is do we really believe these are true? Or, are we letting the pain from our circumstances call into question the truth of God's character? I'm not pointing fingers with this question – believe me, I've done this myself. But this is God's Word telling us these are true, and God cannot lie. Therefore, if we're not trusting God's promised character traits in our pain, then we need to ask Him for more faith and a greater appreciation of the depth of our position as saved children of God. If He heard our cry for salvation, shouldn't He hear our cry for help? The problem with this logic is for some of us, when we do cry out to him, the pain keeps coming. In our weakness, we start to listen to what Satan is telling us – that God doesn't care or He's mad at us – that's why we're still in pain. Remember what Jesus said about Satan, “*He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*” (John 8:44) We must consistently choose whether or not we choose to believe the one who has no truth in him, or the One who cannot lie and is the Truth.

Now that we know what salvation is, why it's necessary, and what we experience in God's salvation, doesn't it make sense that our lives should change as a result of this transformative step? Shouldn't we see and bear the fruit of this salvation? When Jesus died on the cross to make a way for our salvation, by faith, He released us from the penalty and bondage to our sin. When He was resurrected, though, He became not only the author of our faith, but also the finisher of our faith. From Acts 1, verse 1, we're instructed about “*all that Jesus began both to do and teach.*” Why am I pointing out this verse?

Because there is no end to the statement. Jesus began both to do and to teach, but He's not finished. Salvation is a glorious thing, but it is also just the first step into a new life as a child of God. This lesson's reading offers numerous affirmations of what a saved child of God's life should enjoy. Please take some time to meditate on these promises from God.

“I will not be shaken.” – Psalm 16:8
“Whom shall I fear?” – Psalm 27:1
“I will be confident.” – Psalm 27:3
“I will put my trust in You.” – Psalm 86:4
“Undivided heart.” – Psalm 86:11
“I will praise You.” – Psalm 86:12
“Sing to the Lord.” – Psalm 98:1

The first five of these outcomes of a saved child of God produce a stability and certainty in a world that wants and offers none of this. Satan prays on our fears, but as a saved child of God, he can't do a thing to us without God's permission. If we're willing to believe in all the promises of God's salvation and its powerful provisions, then our lives will change for the better. We'll develop that peace that passes all understanding. Don't we need that in these end times?

The last two outcomes should be the natural responses and outflowing from our redeemed souls – praises of gratitude and worship for God's salvation and all it promises. Our saved lives should be full of grateful praise and worship – even if our circumstances don't feel like we're saved. In fact, praising and worshipping God in the midst of our deepest trials are the greatest testimonies we can offer not only to God about our faith in Him, but also to a world that without God is growing more divided, deceived, and fearful. When we're in pain, our flesh is desperately looking for some way to remove it. If God is in control, and He is, then Whom should we turn to when the pain comes? I can see how accepting that God allows or initiates pain is a tough thing to accept. However, I can think of something tougher to accept – turning to a God who we don't trust that can do anything about the pain or at least will be there with us as we go through it.

I asked earlier why it is important that we learn about God's character in His salvation? Please allow me to share a scene that many of us have likely seen if we have had children – or perhaps we even experienced as children. A little girl who is 3-4 years old and her father are at a community swimming pool. He is in the water up to his waist, and she is standing on the edge. He is encouraging her to jump into his arms as he is promising he will catch her. She's jumping up and down shaking her head refusing to jump because she is afraid. He keeps encouraging, and she keeps saying no. Finally, she takes the leap into his arms, he catches her, and they both rejoice over this life-changing moment.

I hope you can see the spiritual parallel of this scene to each human's life. The Holy Spirit speaks to each human testifying to the truth of who Jesus is, and His desire to save His creations from their sins. While each one of us has his/her own reasons to believe or not to believe, the certainty of the truth of God's salvation never wavers. In this scene I just described, I believe there were two acts of salvation. First, by catching his daughter, the father saved her from drowning. No doubt, that was a fear the daughter was having. However, I believe there was a second and greater act of salvation in this scene. By catching his daughter, she learned she could trust her father to save her. Play this scene again, and do you think she is going to resist jumping into her father's arms as much the next time? Probably, not. If she keeps doing this and realizes he's going to save her every time, she is learning to trust her father. Their relationship has been taken to a new level – but only because she chose to trust her father to save her every time she jumps into his arms.

I'll conclude with this question. If you trusted Jesus enough to save you from sin's death sentence, does it make any sense to not trust Him in all the other natural outcomes of His salvation? Remember the list of these outcomes?

“I will not be shaken.” – Psalm 16:8
“Whom shall I fear?” – Psalm 27:1
“I will be confident.” – Psalm 27:3
“I will put my trust in You.” – Psalm 86:4
“Undivided heart.” – Psalm 86:11
“I will praise You.” – Psalm 86:12
“Sing to the Lord.” – Psalm 98:1

If you’re living in fear, you are listening to Satan. Do you remember what the Apostle John said in his first epistle, *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”* (1 John 4:18) God is perfect, and God is love, so coming to trust in His perfect love will drive out the fear in your life. If you have placed your trust and faith in Jesus, then you are standing on solid ground – you are part of the flock of the Good Shepherd. He delivers, He forgives, He provides safety, and that brings rest.

As a saved child of God, we are new creations with a new set of promises from our Savior that should yield dramatic changes in our lives. If you’re not experiencing those, then the same grace that God provided in your salvation, is available to you to reveal God’s promises that come with being His child. That’s what today’s reading provides. If you took that leap of faith and jumped into the nail-pierced hands of Jesus for your salvation, then you can continue to jump into his hands again and again – because He is our Savior. That’s what Jesus does – He saves. What better reason do we need than to stand and sing the Doxology to praise Him.

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.
Praise Him all creatures here below.
Praise Him above the heavenly hosts.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.