

# BIBLICAL TRUTH ABOUT MAN, SIN, AND SALVATION

## Lesson 21: Gospel Proclamation

This is the eighth of seventeen lessons on the biblical doctrine of salvation (soteriology, from Greek *soteria*, salvation). This lesson focuses on God's general call to sinners everywhere to repent and believe the Gospel. It also deals with God's effectual call to those who eventually obey the Gospel call to repent and believe in Christ. In addition, this lesson examines the sinner's responsibility to repent and believe as well as the believer's responsibility and privilege to proclaim the Gospel to others.

### Lesson 21 – Central Truth Q and A

Question: To whom does God offer salvation?

Answer: God issues His gracious call of salvation to all mankind.

### Lesson 21 – Memory Verses

**Matthew 11:28** *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

**Acts 17:30** *The times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent.*

### 1. The Elements of the Gospel Call

God gives the full gospel message to the whole world. This Gospel message includes man's sinfulness and his need for repentance, Christ's death and resurrection according to the Scriptures, and God's promise of forgiveness for sins and His free gift of salvation and eternal life. Many people will admit they are not perfect, even sinful, but the Bible says that only few people will be saved (Lk. 13:23-24). Consider B. B. Warfield's comments on this text:

The important thing for men is not to know whether few or many are saved but to address themselves strenuously to their own salvation. There is no revelation here accordingly that only a few are saved; there is a solemn declaration that many of those who seek to be saved fail. It is, in other words, not the number of the saved that is announced but the difficulty of salvation. The point of the remark is that salvation is not to be assured by anyone as a matter of course but is to be sought with earnest and persistent effort.<sup>1</sup>

The reason that few by comparison are saved is because only personal conviction by the Holy Spirit leads to repentance, faith, and salvation. Repentance means turning away from sin and turning to Jesus as Lord and Savior (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Faith means trusting in God's gracious provision of salvation through Christ's death alone (Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 16:31). Saving faith begins at conversion and continues throughout the believer's whole life. A person must believe what the Bible teaches, specifically, that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to live a perfectly righteous life on earth and to offer Himself on the cross in payment for the sins of everyone who would believe in Him (Rom. 5:6, 8; 6:23; Heb. 9:26). The Holy Spirit must regenerate (give spiritual life to) a person's heart (Jn. 3:3, 5) to see the need for a

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in *ESV Church History Study Bible*, Stephen Nichols, gen. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), note on Luke 13:23.

Savior, to enable him to repent of sin and trust in Christ alone to be saved (Ezek. 36:26-27; Acts 3:19). Since repentance and faith are necessary for salvation, both must be taught when the Gospel is preached. We will cover individual lessons on regeneration, repentance, and faith in coming weeks of our study.

## **2. The Urgency of the Gospel Call**

Christ commissioned His disciples as witnesses to the Gospel (Lk. 24:44-49), and we must likewise proclaim the Gospel message in our day (Matt. 28:18-20). God's chosen means of spreading the Gospel of salvation is to use believers as His witnesses to take the good news of salvation in Christ to all people everywhere (Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16). God promises that every person who calls on Jesus Christ will be saved (Rom. 10:13), but to call on Him they must believe in Him, and to believe in Him they must hear the truth about Him, and to hear the truth about Him they need someone to preach the gospel message about Him (Rom. 10:14-15). God is sovereign in salvation, in choosing both who will be saved and how they come to hear about Christ; but God has also given believers the responsibility to proclaim the Gospel to the unsaved world. We must preach the Gospel to all people.

## **3. The Distinction between the General Call and the Effectual Call**

While God graciously gives all who hear the Gospel the opportunity to repent and believe, the reality is that not all people will respond to the Gospel in obedience, and the Bible tells us why. Though the Gospel of salvation is proclaimed to all people everywhere, the person's sinful nature and spiritual blindness and deadness prevents him from hearing it, and his hard heart prevents him from accepting it. Further gracious intervention from God is needed for anyone to believe the saving Gospel. Christ said that many are called, but few are chosen (Mt. 22:14). This verse makes it clear that many people hear the general call from God in the proclamation of the Gospel, but few people are chosen, that is, hear the Gospel in such a way that they respond in repentance and faith. The general call is to all people in the world. It is an unlimited call. There is another call, the "effectual call," that effectively works in the sinner's heart to bring him to salvation. Without this intervention, no one can accept the gospel. When the NT epistles refer to the Christian's calling, it always refers to this effectual call from God. To be called in this way is to be saved. This effectual call accomplishes God's purpose to save the sinner. This effectual calling is found in the "golden chain" text in Romans 8:28-30. All of God's saved people are "foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified." In this and many other NT texts the calling refers to the effectual calling of believers which sets them apart from all unbelievers.

## **4. The Responses to the Gospel Call**

There are only two possible responses to the Gospel of salvation in Christ: submission to God in faith or rejection of His gracious Gospel. Those who reject the Gospel and continue to harden their hearts in rebellion and unbelief will not be saved. God is loving and merciful to extend His invitation to all people to repent and be saved. Every person is responsible to repent and believe. Those who refuse to repent and believe have no one to blame but themselves. Those who choose to repent and trust in Christ must thank God for His gracious and powerful work in their hearts to do so. All praise belongs to God! Salvation is based on **SCRIPTURE ALONE** and is accomplished by **GRACE ALONE** through **FAITH ALONE** in **CHRIST ALONE** for the **GLORY OF GOD ALONE**.