

Salvation Comes in Stages

Romans 6-8

I. A Living Lesson from One of Jesus' Miracles

A. All Jesus' Miracles Revealed Jesus' Glory

1. Demonstrations of Jesus' compassion

Mark 1:40-42 *A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.*

2. Demonstrations of Jesus' power

Matthew 8:24-27 *Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" ²⁶ He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. ²⁷ The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"*

3. Demonstrations of Jesus' authority

Matthew 9:1-8 *Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. ² Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." ³ At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" ⁴ Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? ⁵ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ⁶ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." ⁷ And the man got up and went home. ⁸ When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.*

4. Thus Jesus revealed his glory... and the miracles were a basis of faith in him as the Son of God

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 2:11 This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

John 14:11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

John 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

B. But the Miracles are also SPIRITUAL LESSONS about Human Spiritual Condition

Matthew 11:5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

Human spiritual INABILITY

- Can't see... Jesus touches us so we CAN see (spiritually)
- Can't hear... Jesus touches us so we CAN hear (spiritually)
- Can't walk... Jesus touches us so we CAN walk (spiritually)
- Can't live (dead)... Jesus touches us so we CAN live (come alive spiritually)

Key evidence of this approach: spiritual lessons from the man born blind

John 9:39-41 Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." ⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" ⁴¹ Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

C. One Miracle a Picture of Overall Plan of Salvation

1. Man healed (physically) in stages

Mark 8:22-25 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴ He looked up and said, "I see

people; they look like trees walking around." ²⁵ Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

2. Christians saved (spiritually) in stages

Salvation ... FROM WHAT???

Matthew 1:21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. "

We don't get our salvation from sin all at once... it comes in stages

PAST SALVATION

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

PRESENT SALVATION

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

FUTURE SALVATION

Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

II. The Three Main Stages of Salvation

A. Justification

1. Definition: the judicial declaration by God that a sinner is righteous in his sight.

2. Scripture:

Romans 3:9-12 What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

Romans 3:20-28 no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. ²¹ But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus

Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. 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. ²⁷ Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Romans 4:3-5 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

The result of justification: full forgiveness of sins, total reconciliation with God

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

Romans 5:11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

God sees us as POSITIONALLY righteous in his sight... as righteous (Law-abiding) as Jesus!!!

Jesus, speaking of his perfect obedience to his Father: *John 8:29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.*

1 Corinthians 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

3. Comments: The basic mechanism of justification is *double imputation*... our sins credited to Christ and he dies the death we deserved; his righteousness imputed to us, and we live the life of honor he deserved.

At this glorious moment of justification, "every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph. 1:3) is lavished on the new believer by God's grace. The gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit comes forever (Eph. 1:13), and the Spirit begins his essential ministries of conviction of sin (John 16:8), daily guidance (John

16:13), illumination of the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:10, 13), testimony with our spirits that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16), and assistance in prayer (Rom. 8:26). So also the new believer is adopted as a child of God (John 1:12-13) and takes a permanent place in the family of God (John 8:35). Many other blessings flow at this moment as well: reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:10-11), spiritual union with Christ (Rom. 6:4-5), cleansing of a guilty conscience (Heb. 9:14), rescue from the dominion of darkness and transfer into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). All of these gifts (and others besides) are bestowed at this one moment, and they will never be revoked.

Not one of them comes, however, by human effort or striving. They come by grace through faith apart from works. (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5) Thus the true believer is eternally secure in the grip of God's sovereign grace. No enemy is powerful enough to snatch Christ's sheep from God's omnipotent hand (John 10:28-30), and Christ will lose none of all that the Father entrusted to him, but will raise all of them up at the last day (John 6:39-40, 44).

With that solid ground under our feet, we can now embrace the progressive part of our salvation: sanctification. But as we labor, struggle, fail, weep, succeed, exult, fall, and rise again in the pursuit of daily holiness, we must keep ever before us these immutable truths: "I am a regenerate, justified believer in Jesus Christ, seen in him as perfectly righteous, adopted into God's family, completely at peace with God, and in that state I will continue until I am finally vindicated on Judgment Day."

B. Sanctification

1. Definition: the progressive growth of a justified sinner into increasing holiness in the pattern of Christ by faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and by striving on the part of the Christian. Sanctification is a partnership between God and the believer whereby the believer puts sin to death by the Spirit and brings forth fruit in keeping with repentance by the Spirit.

2. Scripture:

Romans 6:19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Philippians 2:12-13 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 12:1 let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

3. Comments: Sanctification is essential to final salvation, but it will be imperfect in this life. Everyone who is justified will immediately begin to walk in holiness by the power of the Spirit. But because of indwelling sin, this battle will be difficult. Because we have a role to play with our works/efforts, some make better progress than others; some days are better than others. Our eternal rewards are based on our sanctification.

C. Glorification

1. Definition: the final instantaneous transformation of a Christian into total glorious perfection in the pattern of Christ... first, perfection of soul (at death), and second, perfection of the body (at the Second Coming of Christ)

2. Scripture:

Hebrews 12:22-23 you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect

Romans 8:29-30 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

3. Comments: Glorification is the gracious act of our sovereign God whereby he instantaneously, perfectly, and eternally conforms justified sinners to Christ in every respect. Unlike sanctification, glorification is not a process in which our efforts and faith are required. It is an instantaneous work of God.

III. An Overview of Romans 6-8

The central treatise on sanctification is found in Romans 6-8. The basic idea of Romans 6 is that, since we are united with Christ, we have died to sin, and cannot live in it any longer (Rom. 6:2-5). Based on that premise, we are told to consider ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11). And we are to fight to prevent our bodies from being used now as they were in the past, as instruments of sin. Instead, we are to present ourselves to God, and to present the parts of our bodies to him as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:12-13). In the past, such a presentation of our members to sin brought about ever-increasing habits of wickedness (Rom. 6:19). From now on, the same dynamic must be used to produce ever-increasing habits of righteousness (Rom. 6:19, 22). New status (dead to sin, alive to God in Christ) should produce new thinking (I am dead to sin, I am alive to God), resulting in a new presentation of the body and its members in service to ever-increasing righteousness.

However, the bitterness of the struggle to walk in holiness in our mortal bodies is clearly highlighted in Romans 7. Through deeply ingrained habits, we still sin. And that is also the purpose of Romans 7 – to show us that we will be struggling with sin the rest of our lives. Sin living within us has built up such strength of habit in the members of this “body of death” that we are fighting its pull at every single moment of our lives.

Romans 7:14-25 shows the bitterness of the journey of sanctification. Paul describes how he desperately yearns to do good but cannot seem to carry it out, simultaneously lamenting that the very evil that he would like to kill forever he actually continues to do! The indwelling sin and indwelling Holy Spirit are in constant warfare against each other, and though the Spirit cannot be conquered and will be victorious in the end, the “flesh” (the old nature with its habits and practices) wins many battles every day (Gal. 5:17).

This anguish caused Paul to cry out, *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* (Rom. 7:24). His buoyant and triumphant faith motivates his answer to his own question: *“Thanks be to God through our*

Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 7:25). God will rescue us from the body of death through Jesus Christ! But in the meantime, while we live in the mortal body, we struggle bitterly.

In Romans 8, Paul speaks of the nature of the triumphant work of the Spirit in the life of the true Christian. The Spirit's presence in our lives is the grounds for our assurance that we will not be condemned on Judgment Day (Rom. 8:1). The central act of the Holy Spirit in sanctification is to lead the Christian into battle against sin: *"For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God"* (Rom. 8:13-14, ESV); *"if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law"* (Gal. 5:18). Romans 8:13 may be the key verse in the Bible on the Christian's responsibility and victory in the bitter ongoing struggle with sin. The blending of the Spirit's power (*"if by the Spirit"*) and the believer's responsibility (*"you put to death the deeds of the body"*) is clear. And the stakes could not be higher, for the verse contrasts that daily battle with the opening statement, *"if you live according to the flesh you will die,"* then Paul says that only those who are led to put sin to death by the Spirit are truly children of God; the *"for"* connecting verse 13 and verse 14 supports this strong conclusion: if you are not led by the Spirit into battle against sin, you are not a child of God.

IV. An Overview of Romans 6

Romans 6

vs 1-4: Misunderstanding Addressed: Union with Christ Means Death to Sin

Romans 6:1-4 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We 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.

Q: Why do some people believe that the doctrine of justification by faith apart from works of the law means we can sin as much as we want with no worries? How does Romans 6 refute that false understanding?

Q: What is the significance of Paul's assertion, "We died to sin?" What does that mean?

Q: What are the implications of our spiritual union with Christ in the way we live our daily lives?

vs 5-11: Living the Resurrected Life

Romans 6:5-11 *If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed 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.*

Q: Verse 6 is one of the most important and misunderstood verses in the Book of Romans. What does it mean that “the old self” (KJV “old man”) was crucified with him (Christ)? According to Paul, what is the result of that fact? What is the “body of sin”? What does it mean that the “body of sin” might be “done away with” (i.e. rendered gradually impotent)? How does that relate to us no longer being slaves to sin?

Q: How are we to “count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus”? What does “count yourselves” mean? (KJV translation is “reckon”) How do we “reckon” ourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ?

vs 12-14: Do Not Offer Your Body to Sin

Romans 6:12-14 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.*

Q: Verse 13 is a very significant practical teaching on sanctification. What does Paul prohibit? What does Paul command? How is sanctification then both a negative work and a positive one? Why do the two aspects (negative: “Do NOT offer...” and positive “DO offer...”) necessarily go together?

Q: What does it mean that we are not “under law” but “under grace”?

vs 15-19: Our Obedience Proves Who Our Master Is

Romans 6:15-19 *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey-- whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. ¹⁹ I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.*

Q: How does who we obey prove who our true master is?

Q: What does "obedience leads to righteousness" mean (vs. 16), especially if we are already justified (declared righteous) by faith in Christ?

Q: How is verse 19 a key text on progressive sanctification? How is our future growth in holiness similar to our past growth in sinfulness (i.e. when we were non-Christians)?

vs 20-23: Paul's Appeal for Holiness

Romans 6:20-23 *When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Q: What benefits are there to progressive growth in righteousness and holiness?