

# How Can I Be Saved?

## Lesson 2: Hope in Jesus

### Vocabulary:

to gather	tangible	sting	burial
secure	to take away	to abandon	to reward
desperately	to rescue	inheritance	witness
court	to mow	drought	tempted
guilty	bench	flood	dormancy
fine	wrath	to seal	tomb
appropriate	subject	earnestly	genuine
to murder	to stretch out	to hang (past – hung)	to put away
punishment	to strengthen	decay	to get rid of
to stand before	to encourage	realm	kernel
to require	conscience	to wrap	
shedding	deliberate	to please	
sacrifice	to thrive	entrance	

### Discussion

God's plan of forgiveness and salvation is found in no other name than Jesus Christ. God loves his children so much that he placed his living Word into Jesus, sending him to die on a cross as a sacrifice for our sins. When we place our full faith in Jesus, we receive God's forgiveness and the hope of living forever with the one who loves us: our Father in heaven. God's plan and desire is **to gather** his faithful children together as one family, **secure** in his holy Presence for eternity. His plan for you and your hope in Jesus can begin in your life today.

What do you believe about the afterlife? Do you have hope? Explain.

### Hope in Jesus's Death

Our chance to be saved can begin the moment we see that we are sinners who **desperately** need saving. We realize that no good deeds of ours will ever remove our sins: we *need* our Father's mercy and forgiveness. The Old Testament Law stated, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Leviticus 24:20). In other words, every sin during the time of the Old Testament (1500 B.C.E.–6 B.C.E.) had to be fully punished. Imagine you went to **court** for a traffic ticket. If you were found **guilty**, then you would have to pay a fine. That's called *justice* – every wrongdoing is punished, and every wrongdoer pays the price.

In our modern system of justice, we understand that we must pay an **appropriate** and just price for things we do wrong. Why is this type of justice fair and important in our society?

If justice is paying an appropriate and just price for things we do wrong, then why did a man have to *die* for my sins if I never **murdered** anyone? The **punishment** seems too high and does not seem to fit my crime. Discuss this issue.

The Bible teaches that a single sin brings spiritual death to our relationship with our heavenly Father because sin makes us unholy before a perfect, righteous, and holy God. To think that we could stand in front of a holy God with our sin is a prideful thought. The Bible teaches that we cannot and will not be able **to stand before** God with our sin. For this reason, sin means death to God's dream of his children ever being a part of his family. We could never live with him in heaven because heaven itself is a holy place. Somehow, God had to create a way to *make* us holy, in spite of our sin. In the Old Testament, God **required** his people to sacrifice animals and be cleansed by their blood as a way to purify themselves from sin. Everything was cleansed through blood, for the Bible teaches that "without the **shedding** of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

Think about God's view of sin. Why would the sacrifice of a living being be appropriate punishment for sin according to his view?

Why do you think God sacrificed his perfect Son Jesus, instead of continuing the **sacrifices** of animals for our sin?

Since sin brought an eternal end to his relationship with his children, God gave them a visual and **tangible** way to see this spiritual death. The sacrificing of animals gave his earliest people that visible sign. The death of an animal was also a visible representation of the just punishment men deserved for committing sins against their holy and perfect Father. But who was truly responsible for this sin? Who should have been punished? The answer is his own children, including us. Therefore, if God were to punish everyone justly, then he would have had to destroy every person on earth. His dream of living with his children eternally would have come to an end within a generation. Instead, God chose animals to demonstrate his heart about sin and provide for his children a payment for what they deserved.

While these sacrifices originally served as a protection against our eternal punishment for sin, these sacrifices couldn't take away sin. These sacrifices had no power to keep people from sinning again; they were simply reminders of sin and guilt. Now, imagine you went to court for a bigger crime than a traffic ticket. This time, you had killed a person, the son of a family. Now the family wants justice.

In this case, what would justice look like? How would you feel about this justice?

Remember Leviticus 24:20? The Bible teaches that justice is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Justice is a level of punishment that is equal to the level of a crime. In this case, the family wants only one thing: your death. You offer to **pay** their law and provide them with food for the rest of their lives. You offer your car, your home, your services – anything for your life. But the family refuses. Why? Any payment that you offer will never bring back their son. The family wants justice: life for life. Then your mother comes into the courtroom: "Don't take my child!" she cries. "I will die instead." The judge agrees because an equal payment was made for your sin. Justice has been served.

If this happened to you, how would you feel? What thoughts would be in your mind?

One answer might be that you would still feel guilty for your sin. You will live, but your guilt remains because you yourself were never punished. Your own mother died instead! This was the problem with the Old Testament sacrifices. Payment was made, but the people's guilt for their sin was never removed. Hebrews 10:3 says that their guilt remained year after year "because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" <sup>(4)</sup>. In fact, in the Old Testament, God required the people to make yearly sacrifices for sins. People continued to sin, and sacrifices continued to be required for those sins. In this way, the people were continually reminded of their sins toward others and toward God. They were cleansed on the outside by ritual, but the guilt in their hearts remained <sup>(9:9-10, 13)</sup>.

Now imagine that your mother does not come into the courtroom. You are waiting for the judge to announce your punishment: death. But the courtroom door opens, and God himself enters. He approaches the judge's **bench** and announces that he will die for your sin.

How do you think the judge will respond? Explain.

How is this situation different than you or your mother dying for your sin?

There are many answers to this second question. If God, the Creator and Judge of the universe offers payment for your sin, who could challenge him? Is not a judge on earth **subject** to the Almighty Judge of heaven? Who could say that the punishment wasn't enough or wasn't just? God's sacrifice for your sin would be the highest payment anyone could ever offer! The writer of Hebrews adds that God's death would actually be the *only* way for us to be sure that the true price of justice had been paid, and his sacrifice would be the only sure way that we would receive the promise of eternal life with God, our Father, in heaven <sup>(Hebrews 3:10, 14)</sup>.

Why would God's death for your sin give you security that you will receive eternal life?

The Hebrew writer says that God's sacrifice was pure and holy, unlike the sacrifice of an imperfect animal <sup>(9:14)</sup>. Through his own Living Word made into a man, his sinless Son, God **stretched out** his own arm for our salvation, the only perfect and lasting sacrifice for our sins. That's why the blood of animals, or any yearly sacrifice, was no longer needed. There is no greater sacrifice!

Not only did Jesus's blood provide justice for our sins, but his blood has the power to cleanse our minds and our **consciences**. Why does this happen? The first reason is that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. His perfect sacrifice has the ability to completely remove sin <sup>(14)</sup>! Yet, Jesus not only has the power to remove our sin before God, but God also gave Jesus the power to remove sin from our lives <sup>(28)</sup>. Men are now given the power to overcome their own **deliberate** sin. Remember Jude 1?

<sup>24</sup> To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— <sup>25</sup> to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!

This is the power of Jesus's death and why John the Baptist called Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world <sup>(John 1:29)</sup>. What an amazing miracle Jesus does in our lives!

For this reason, the Hebrew writer also says that if we continue to sin deliberately after we have received this truth, then there is no other sacrifice available for our sins. No one can offer another sacrifice greater than God's. When we accept his sacrifice, he gives us the power to turn from deliberate sin and obey his teachings. If we refuse and continue in sin without turning back to him, our only option is to face God's judgment and punishment (10:26-27). He promises to help us, and he will help us, if we continue following him.

What does God's sacrifice for your sins mean to you? How do you want his sacrifice to impact your life?

The greatest hope we have in Jesus is that our eternal life is secure. We know this because of what the Bible teaches about God's nature. The book of Numbers says, "God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being that he should change his mind" (23:19). He is faithful to his promises and his love is true and sure. He will not save you one day and **abandon** you the next. The writer of Hebrews compares God's promise to a will. A will is a document that a person writes before he dies to ensure that his desires, or "will," will be fulfilled. Many people leave their money and belongings, also called an "**inheritance**," to their children or loved ones: All of these wishes must be written in the legal document called a will. The writer of Hebrews explains that a will only goes into effect *after* a person dies, not before. In this way, God **sealed** his will for our salvation through his own death (9:16-22). All our good deeds and sacrifices in our imperfect and sinful lives could ever compare to the security of salvation that God provided through his own death and will. This is the love and salvation he offers us today.

Even though you are a sinner, how does Jesus's death give you hope?

### Hope in Jesus's Burial

After Jesus **hung** on the cross for six hours, two Jewish leaders, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea **wrapped** his body in linen and placed him in a tomb with a large stone over the **entrance** (John 19:38-42, Matthew 27:57-60).

Why do you think Jesus needed to be buried? Why didn't God just take him to heaven?

Jesus's **burial** shows that he was fully human, and like any other man, he died. **Witnesses** touched his dead body, wrapped his dead body in a cloth, and laid his lifeless body inside a **tomb**. Yet through his death and burial, Jesus also showed the world that he not only died for our sins, but he also buried our sins. In this way, he helped us to see that if we put our faith in him, our sins will be buried and forgotten by God. Now, as followers of Christ, we must follow his example: we too must die to our sins. When we make this decision, Jesus frees us from the power that sin has over us and gives us his power to overcome the sins in our lives: "6For 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 – 7because anyone who has died has been set free from sin" (Romans 6).

What does it mean to be a slave to sin?

Would you describe yourself as a slave to sin or a master over sin? Explain.

What would putting sin to death look like in your life?

Becoming a master over our sin begins with seeing that we are sinners, and we must have a genuine desire to put away our sin and follow Jesus. This decision doesn't mean that we become perfect, but our attitude toward sin has clearly changed. Because of Christ's sacrificial and faithful love for us, we no longer desire sin, but we desire to be faithful to him. We're no longer seeking sin but seeking righteousness and closeness to the Lord. Knowing we will never be perfect, we put our full faith and hope in Jesus as our loving Savior. We believe that he has the power to forgive our sins and that he will save us if we give our lives to him. The writer of Hebrew says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (11:6). If you have never made the decision to put your faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior and earnestly seek him throughout your life, or if you need to renew that decision, you can do that today!

On a scale of 1-10, where do you see your faith and commitment to following Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Explain. If you're not at a 10, what do you want to do to grow?

Following Jesus means walking daily in a relationship with our heavenly Father, a relationship based on love. Jesus spent time with his Father and obeyed him even in death. When we bury our old lives, we realize that there is nothing that we want more than to get rid of anything that would hurt our relationship with God. Even in this burial, Jesus gives us hope. For the death of our old life gives life to our new life in him! Jesus explains how in John 12: "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (24).

What do you think Jesus means by this statement?

When a seed falls from a plant or the wind blows it to another field, the seed becomes extremely dry and goes into a phase called dormancy, or sleep, where the seed stops growing and developing. This period of dormancy is very important to the seed and is required for the seed to grow into a plant. The seed that survives dormancy is able to endure difficult conditions and waits for the right conditions when it begins to grow. Sometimes this period lasts for months or even years and is required for the seed to mature. Interestingly, water and light are two of the main elements required for the seed to grow into a plant, also called germination. In a sense, the seed dies, yet through difficult conditions, the seed matures and is finally made alive again through light and water.<sup>1</sup>

Now that you know something about seed dormancy, maturation, and germination, what do you think Jesus meant by the statement above in John 12:24?

<sup>1</sup> Campbell, Neil A. and Jane B. Reece, Biology, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed., (San Francisco: Pearson, 2005), 779-780, 798. See also Bentsink, Leonie and Maarten Koornneef, "Seed Dormancy and Germination," The Arabidopsis Book, Dec. 30, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3243337/>.

Jesus uses this beautiful analogy to explain God's plan of salvation. We are seeds, and like Jesus we too must die to our old life of sin. But this isn't easy. We face challenges that reveal areas where we haven't died. Maybe someone makes us angry, and we react. We feel **tempted** by the world, and we go back to our sin. Yet, when the seed overcomes these challenges, the seed becomes stronger and more ready to grow when the period of dormancy is over. That's why abundant new growth of seedlings often occurs quickly after a fire, a period of cold weather, a **drought**, or a **flood**.<sup>2</sup> In the same way, the more we die, the more we see God's power and glory in our lives!

Yet, dying to ourselves isn't easy. Think about the sacrifices you might need to make to die to yourself and stay strong in following Jesus. To start, our priorities change. Like Jesus, our walk with the Father is our number one priority. This means spending significant time with him daily in prayer and in the Word, going to church regularly for worship and Bible study, and building relationships with other believers. Jesus asks us to serve him by loving others and sharing our faith with them. We might face challenges giving up certain sins or living in righteous relationships. Perhaps we will have trouble forgiving people who have hurt us. We might be wondering what our friends, family, or spouses might think of our decision. All of these things can be difficult as we try to follow Jesus.

How could following Jesus be a challenge for you? Talk about each of the areas listed.

In the analogy of the seed, what can we learn about the purpose of challenges and suffering in our lives?

When we go through periods of spiritual and even physical testing and challenge and *overcome* the desire to sin, Jesus promises us that we will grow. We will get stronger, and the light of Christ in us becomes brighter and brighter. Just as a plant produces more seeds after dormancy, we too will produce more followers of Jesus as we share Christ's light with the world. But all seeds must have the right conditions to grow from a young seedling into a healthy plant. We need the right environment and food to help us.

What conditions and spiritual food can help a person to grow spiritually? What conditions can cause a person to die spiritually?

The spiritual food of faith in Jesus's power and trust in his love keep us strong and healthy. To grow and be fed daily, we must draw close to Jesus and his Holy Spirit through his Word, prayer, worship, and meaningful times with Christian friends who can **strengthen** and **encourage** us. When we confess our sins to our Christian friends, we experience God's continual grace and forgiveness. If we do these things more and more, we will not only survive, but **thrive**! This is the spiritual food that God provides to keep us strong, healthy, and growing. And this is the new life he promises us, a life made possible by his resurrection.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

### Hope in Jesus's Resurrection

God buried Jesus not only to forget our sins and to remove our guilt, but also to demonstrate his resurrection power. Without a burial, there would be no resurrection! Today, Jesus's resurrection power helps us to overcome sin, transforms our lives, gives us new purpose, and secures our place in eternal life. The resurrection was a way for God to prove to us that our old life is gone, and we have a new life in Christ. In this new life, we have a new purpose and plan for our lives: to live for Jesus and for his glory.

What dreams to you have for your new life in Christ? How do you want to live for God?

Jesus gives us the promise of a new life here that continues into eternal life when we die. For this reason, Paul asks the question, "Where, O death is your **sting**?" (I Corinthians 15:55), for death no longer has power over the life of Christ's followers. If Jesus were only a prophet, his body like any other prophet would still be in the grave. But God raised him from the dead as a sign to all believers that we too would someday be raised with him. One thousand years earlier, the prophet and king David spoke about this hope in the resurrection of the Messiah when he said this:

<sup>8</sup>"I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. <sup>9</sup>Therefore, my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, <sup>10</sup>because you will not abandon me to the **realm** of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see **decay**" (Psalm 16:8-10).

During his life, David saw suffering and death, the power of sin destroying our world, but he knew that his Messiah's resurrection would be a sign of something better after this life, and he placed his hope in God's perfect plan.

What does the hope of eternal life mean to you? What do you think that life will look like?

### Hope in Jesus's Return

The Bible teaches that there will be a day when Jesus returns to bring salvation to his followers, raising them from the grave. Paul describes in detail this hope in I Corinthians 15:

<sup>52</sup>The trumpet will blow and those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we will all be changed... <sup>54</sup>So this body that ruins will clothe itself with that which never ruins. And this body that dies will clothe itself with that which never dies. When this happens, the Scriptures will be made true... <sup>55</sup>"O death, where is your victory? Where is your power to hurt?"...<sup>57</sup> But we thank God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Through his death, burial, and resurrection and return, Jesus destroys our fear of death. In Christ, we have true hope and joy even when we die!

What does this kind of joy mean to you?

As we look around, the sins and decay of our world remind us that God's punishment will happen and an end to what is dying will come to all things. Paul reminds us of our hope when he says, "<sup>10</sup>...wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who **rescues** us from the coming **wrath**"

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(I Thessalonians 1). Yet, Paul doesn't tell us just to live our lives waiting for that day. He reminds us that we have a new purpose that gives meaning to every day that we live: "to serve the living and true God" (9).

What does it mean to serve Jesus with purpose?

How does this study inspire you to live with a purpose? What dreams do you have about serving God?

### This Week:

Write in your journal:

1. Write about what hope in Jesus means to you.
2. Write about ways you can start serving Jesus in your new life and any dreams you have about serving him.
3. Keep reading a chapter in the Gospels every day and spend time praying in Jesus's name. Pray over your decisions and dreams.
4. Complete the next study: *Love in Jesus*.