

A5 - Salvation

Study 1 - An Ethiopian is Saved

BIBLE READING:
Acts 8: 26-39

KEY VERSE:

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.”

Acts 8: 35

In this final unit on the topic of ‘salvation’, we shall consider the stories of four people, or groups of people, who received salvation, in New Testament times.

The first is about a man from Ethiopia.

1. THE MAN

There is evidence in **verse 27** that he was a high-ranking government official, who was trusted by his Queen. The fact that he travelled to Jerusalem (about 1,000 miles) to WORSHIP indicates that he was searching for the satisfaction which is found in knowing God. His position and wealth had failed to give him true peace. He needed to find salvation through the Lord Jesus, just as each one of us needs salvation.

2. THE MEETING

We believe that God has control over all the circumstances of our lives, and He arranges events for our blessing. In the case of the Ethiopian, God directed His servant, Philip, to the very road where the African was travelling. It was also remarkable that the Ethiopian was, at that very moment, reading a part of the Old Testament! Indeed, he was reading that part of the prophecy of Isaiah which most clearly explains the way of salvation - **Isaiah 53**.

The Bible states that **“God... desires all people to be saved”**. (1 Timothy 2: 4) To bring this about, God often brings people into contact with those who can explain to them the way of salvation. Perhaps, today, you will meet someone with whom you can share the Bible’s truth about salvation!

3. THE MESSAGE

It would be hard to imagine a more ideal situation for explaining the way of salvation than that of Philip seated beside the Ethiopian in his chariot. The man was genuinely seeking for God. Added to that, the words he had just been reading were about the sufferings and death of the Saviour. So Philip **“opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus”**. The news of salvation, which Philip explained to the African, was both Bible-based and Christ-centred.

It is very important for us to understand that the Gospel message remains unchanged. Only on the basis of the sufferings, the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, as taught in the Bible, can we be saved. Read **Acts 4: 12**.

4. THE MIRACLE

When a person is concerned about their sin, the Lord Jesus knows this and reaches out to reveal Himself to them. In our study the Ethiopian was seeking or searching for the truth and this was closely followed by the moment when he encountered the Lord Jesus for himself. It came about when Philip explained the way of salvation which prompted the Ethiopian to ask if he could be baptised. The reason why the Ethiopian asked about baptism was that as he listened to Philip he had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that baptism was the way of declaring the miracle which had already taken place in his life. It was an outward means of identifying with the Lord Jesus. (see **verse 38**)

To be saved by God’s grace is indeed a miracle in the sense that salvation does not come to us by our own efforts. It can only come about as a result of what God has done on our behalf, in the Lord Jesus. The story finishes on a happy note telling us that he **“went on his way rejoicing”**. (verse 39) He had found the Saviour, and in receiving Him, the deepest longings of his heart were satisfied. Each one of us too needs to ask the question: ‘Am I trusting only in this Saviour, for my personal and eternal salvation?’.



This rock hewn church is an example of the rich history of Christianity in Ethiopia. (Source: Wikipedia) Please note that the modern day country of Ethiopia differs slightly geographically to the region of Ethiopia mentioned in this study.

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Study 2 - The Jailer at Philippi

BIBLE READING:

Acts 16: 19-40

KEY VERSES:

“Then he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”

Acts 16: 30-31

God uses many different means to bring people to faith in His Son. Study 1 has shown us how God directed His servant, Philip, to a lonely stretch of road to meet an Ethiopian who was seeking salvation. In addition, we saw how the Scriptures can play a major part in a person’s salvation. This study points to the fact that unexpected and destructive events, like an earthquake, can be God’s ‘voice’ to us, resulting in our salvation. Perhaps you can identify people or circumstances, which were used by God to bring you to the Saviour!

We can be sure that Paul and Silas found the experience of being arrested, beaten and imprisoned very distressing, yet they did not allow themselves to be despondent. Their trust in God remained unshaken, as is indicated by their praying and singing. **(verse 25)** This, in turn, prepared them for what was about to happen - first, the earthquake and then the enquiry of the badly-shaken prison officer: **“What must I do to be saved?”**



The location of Philippi (Map Source: Wikipedia)

This question about salvation has frequently been asked! Many people have put the emphasis upon the word “DO”, thinking mistakenly that being saved is the result of their own efforts. Read again **Ephesians 2: 8, 9** and **Titus 3: 5**. If what we do can save us, we might very well ask why the Lord Jesus had to suffer and die upon the cross at Calvary.

The reply given by Paul and Silas, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved”** gives us the true way of salvation.



A mosaic floor found at an archaeological site in Philippi showing the name Paul (Paulo, ΠΑΥΛΟ) (Source: Wikipedia)

Here is a **CONCISE ANSWER**. The jailer needed a short clear answer. God intends the gospel to be within the grasp of all so when the gospel is explained it is important that the message is stated simply and to the point.

Here is the **CORRECT ANSWER**. This answer agrees fully with the entire message of the Bible on the matter of our personal salvation. It is faith in the Lord Jesus which brings perishing sinners to a position of complete security. See **John 3: 16, 36** and **John 5: 24**.

Here is a **CHRIST- CENTRED ANSWER**. It had the effect of turning the mind of the prison officer away from anything that he could do to earn salvation. Instead, it directed him to the One who had died, been buried and raised again.

Here is a **CONCLUSIVE ANSWER**. **“You will be saved.”** God wants us to be sure about our salvation with no room for uncertainty! By putting simple, personal trust in the Saviour who died for your sins, you **WILL BE SAVED!**

For the jailer, and indeed for his entire household, it was a night of salvation! They all heard **“the word of the Lord” (verse 32)**, had **“believed” (verse 34)** and were **“baptised” (verse 33)**. A new joy filled their hearts, and with it came a caring attitude towards Paul and Silas who were suffering painfully as a result of the beating they had received.

To be saved is a personal and inward matter, the result of putting one’s trust in the Lord Jesus. But we should understand that the genuineness of our faith is shown by changed behaviour and attitudes. Do your words, your actions and attitudes ‘tell others’ that you have been saved?

This is the third of three units on Salvation.

Answer Sheet

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Study 1 - An Ethiopian is Saved

Name: _____ Return address on back of answer sheet

Address: _____

1. Fill in the profile of the man who was saved.

Country of residence _____

Occupation _____

Employer _____

Reason for travel _____

□ /4

2. What evidence of God's concern for us as individuals can we apply from this story?

□ /2

3. Cross out the wrong phrase so that each sentence below is correct:

a) The Ethiopian was **on his way to Jerusalem / returning home**, when Philip met him.

b) The Ethiopian **invited Philip / did not ask Philip** to sit beside him.

c) Philip explained the words of the prophet by **referring to Old Testament history / relating them to Jesus and His death**.

d) The man was saved by **being baptised / believing in the Lord Jesus**.

□ /4

4. Answer the following questions:

a) What are the 'Scriptures'? _____

b) Which part of the Scriptures was the man reading? _____

c) Why is Isaiah referred to as **"the prophet"**? (verses 28, 30, 34) _____

d) Whom did Isaiah prophesy about? _____

□ /4

5. Answer the following questions:

a) What action did the Ethiopian take to show he was now a believer in Jesus? _____

b) Which word does the Bible use to describe how he went on his way? _____

c) What do you think was the reason for this? _____

□ /3

6. Look again at Acts 4: 12 and explain why salvation can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

□ /1

7. Find Isaiah 53 and answer these questions:

a) Give the number of the verse from **Isaiah 53** which the Ethiopian was reading about Jesus being like a lamb. _____

b) Why is He compared to a lamb? _____

c) Which aspect of Jesus' suffering is highlighted by the comparison to a sheep? _____

d) Look at **verses 4 and 5**. Find three other ways in which the Lord Jesus suffered for our sin. _____

e) What do we obtain as a result of the Lord Jesus' suffering? _____

□ /7

THINK: Was there someone who explained the good news about Jesus to you? You could give thanks to God for this person. Have you had the opportunity to explain the good news to someone else?

TOTAL = □ /25

Answer Sheet

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Study 2 - The Jailer at Philippi

1. Explain three ways in which God draws people to Himself for salvation. Use the first paragraph for help with your answer.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

/3

2. Answer the following questions:

a) The arrest of Paul and Silas is recorded in **verse 19**. Write a sentence to tell what happened to them between their arrest and their being put in prison. _____

/3

b) What does the fact that Paul and Silas **“were praying and singing hymns to God”** show about them? _____

/2

3. Answer TRUE or FALSE:

- a) The prison doors burst open. _____
- b) The prison officer allowed all the prisoners to escape. _____
- c) Silas shouted, **“Do not harm yourself, for we are all here”**. _____
- d) Paul and Silas fell down before the jailer. _____
- e) The jailer and his family were baptised, as Christians, that night. _____

/5

4. Explain, as clearly as you can, what it means to **“believe in the Lord Jesus Christ”**.

/3

5. Match each verse reference by drawing a line to what it teaches about salvation.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Titus 3: 5 | Believing in the Lord Jesus leads to eternal life. |
| Ephesians 2: 8 | Salvation is not a result of our works. |
| John 3: 36 | Salvation is a gift from God. |

/3

6. ‘It is faith alone which saves, but faith that saves is never alone.’ Explain how the jailer’s faith showed itself in his actions.

/2

7. What is meant by the saying that receiving God’s salvation is a very personal matter?

/2

8. What explanation can you give for the joy experienced by the jailer in this study (verse 34) and by the Ethiopian in the previous study? (Acts 8: 39)

/2

THINK: Have you experienced joy as a result of becoming a Christian and in your day to day experience since coming to Christ for salvation? How would you explain this joy to someone else?

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

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Study 3 - A Runaway Slave Saved

1. Write short answers to these questions:

- a) Who was Onesimus' master? _____
- b) In what city did he live? _____
- c) Where did Onesimus go when he left his master? _____
- d) Whom did he meet there? _____

 /4

2. Answer the following questions:

- a) What does the name 'Onesimus' mean? _____
- b) In what way did he not live up to his name? _____
- c) How did this change after he was saved? _____

 /3

3. In what ways does Onesimus portray our spiritual condition before we are saved?

 /2

4. Imagine Paul speaking to Onesimus about the Gospel, in the prison at Rome. What do you think Paul would tell him?

 /2

5. Answer the following questions:

- a) When we are saved, the Bible says that we become "**a new creation**". See **2 Corinthians 5: 17**. In what way was this true of Onesimus? _____
- _____

- b) When we are saved, we become members of 'the family of God' and we enter into new relationships with other Christians. Write the words which Paul uses to describe his relationship with Onesimus in these verses:

Philemon verse 10 _____

Philemon verse 16 _____

Colossians 4: 9 _____

 /5

6. Read **Philemon verses 4-7** again:

- a) What reasons does Paul have for thanking God for Philemon? _____
- _____

- b) Who does Philemon demonstrate love towards? _____
- _____

- c) In what way does Philemon bring joy to Paul? _____
- _____

 /6

7. Read the **Key Verse** again. Explain in your own words what this would mean for Philemon in his future relationship with Onesimus.

 /3

THINK: Is there someone in my life that I need to forgive?

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

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Study 4 - The Christians at Ephesus

1. Using **Acts 19: 17-20**, write a sentence to show how the Gospel made progress in the city of Ephesus.

 /2

2. Read **Ephesians 2: 1-3** and list three characteristics of those who are “*dead in trespasses and sins*”.

 /3

3. Read **Ephesians 2: 4-7**:

a) Explain in your own words what God has done to rescue us from our sin.

b) List some words that describe God's character.

 /4

4. Answer the following questions:

a) Read **Ephesians 2: 8** and explain why it is only “*by grace*” that we can be saved. (Remember that ‘grace’ is ‘undeserved favour’)

b) What did Paul mean when he wrote, “*not a result of works, so that no one may boast*”? (**Ephesians 2: 9**)

 /4

5. One person might say, ‘salvation cost God a great deal’; another might say, ‘salvation is a free gift’. Explain how both statements are true.

 /2

6. Complete the grid below with a short phrase from **Ephesians 2** which compares and contrasts our spiritual condition before and after salvation.

BEFORE SALVATION

verse 1 Dead _____

verse 3 Children _____

verse 12 Separated _____

verse 12 No hope _____

verse 13 Far off _____

verse 19 Strangers _____

AFTER SALVATION

verse 5 Alive _____

verse 6 Seated _____

verse 18 Access _____

verse 10 Created _____

verse 13 Brought near _____

verse 19 Fellow citizens _____

 /10

THINK: Spend time meditating on the contrasts listed in question 6. Give thanks for all of these blessings that salvation brings to us.

Return your completed answer sheet to:

TOTAL = /25 UNIT TOTAL = /100

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Study 3 - A Runaway Slave Saved

BIBLE READING: Philemon: 1-25

KEY VERSE:

“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Ephesians 4: 32

Onesimus is one of the lesser-known people of the New Testament. Almost everything we know about him is found in Paul’s short letter to Philemon:

A. Onesimus was a slave (**verse 16**) owned by Philemon, who appears to have been a well-to-do Christian in Colossae. (See map)

B. Onesimus, it would seem, wronged his master, probably by stealing from him. (**See verses 18, 19**) ‘Onesimus’ means ‘useful’ or ‘profitable’, but at this stage of his life he was failing to live up to his name. Paul notes this in **verse 11!**

C. Like many who do wrong, Onesimus fled, perhaps hoping to avoid punishment. The evidence available to us indicates that he went as far as Rome. We have no information about how he travelled, how long his journey took, or what experiences he had on the way. We can, however, picture him in this great city of the world, a lonely, wayward young man who needs, above everything else, God’s saving grace. In many ways, he is a ‘picture’ of each of us, in that we have all sinned against God and our sins have separated us from Him; therefore, we need salvation.

D. At the time of Onesimus’ arrival in Rome, Paul was being held as a prisoner there. It was not a case of Paul having committed crimes; his imprisonment was on account of his faithfulness to the Lord Jesus and to the task which God had given him to do. In the providence of God, Paul and Onesimus met, most likely in the prison. We can be sure that Paul would not miss any opportunities of speaking to the runaway slave about the Gospel, and about his need to repent of his sins, and put his trust in the Saviour. That is just what happened!



Onesimus was a slave who fled from his master.

E. As a result of Paul speaking to Onesimus, he was saved. Paul refers to his salvation as being like the birth of a child. (**verse 10**) In spiritual terms, Paul had become **‘father’** to Onesimus whom he looks upon as **“my child”!**

F. Onesimus developed quickly in his new life as a Christian. It was soon very evident that he had finished with his former sinful way of living. He was ‘a new man’, whose conduct now agreed with the meaning of his name. (**“useful” - see verse 11**) Paul believed that the right course of action for Onesimus was to return to his owner whom he had wronged. Paul therefore wrote this short letter, as an explanation; in it he urges Philemon to welcome Onesimus back, **“no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you”.** (**verse 16**) Very generously, Paul offers to take responsibility for any debts which Onesimus may have incurred. (**verse 18**)

The story of Onesimus emphasises TWO important points for us:

1. God can save even the worst of sinners. However sinful and evil people may be, if they repent and turn to the Saviour, they will be saved. (**Read 1 Timothy 1: 15**)

2. When we are saved, our lives change. The thief became **“our faithful and beloved brother”.** (**Colossians 4: 9**) If we allow God’s Word to guide us, little by little our conduct comes into line with His will for us. ‘Salvation’ not only saves us from the punishment which our sins deserve, but it also preserves us from the evil which is around us and within us.



Map of the eastern Mediterranean (Source: Google Maps)

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Study 4 - The Christians at Ephesus

BIBLE READING:
Ephesians 2: 1-22

KEY VERSES:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Ephesians 2: 8-9

In this final Study, we direct our attention to a group of people who had been saved, by God’s grace. They were citizens of Ephesus, a large Gentile city, to which Paul and other missionaries had brought the Gospel. (See map Study 3) The result was that many people turned from their evil ways and became believers in the Lord Jesus. (See Acts 19: 17-20)

Some years later, Paul wrote a letter to them. We call it ‘The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians’. In it, Paul explains many things about the salvation which they had found in the Lord Jesus.

In **Ephesians Chapter 2**, Paul begins by reminding them of: **THE CONDITION** in which they were, before the Gospel came to them. There are many words, and phrases, in **chapter 2** which describe their original, unsaved state. For example, they were **“dead in trespasses and sins”** (verse 1); they were **“following the prince of the power of the air”** - Satan (verse 2); they were **“separated from Christ... having no hope, and without God in the world”**. (verse 12) These statements make it very clear that they, just like ourselves, were in need of being saved.

We note also that Paul explains to them: **THE CHANGE** that had taken place in them. He contrasts, from a spiritual viewpoint, what they **USED TO BE**, with what they **NOW ARE**.

Note the following:

- They were once **“dead”**, but are now **“made alive”**. See **verse 5**.
- They were once **“far off”**, but are now **“brought near”**. See **verse 13**.
- They were once **“strangers”**, but are now **“fellow citizens with the saints”**. See **verse 19**.



The Library of Celsus in Ephesus, which dates to around the time of Paul.
(Source: Wikipedia)

These statements highlight some of the great changes which take place when people respond to the Gospel, by putting their faith in the Lord Jesus.

Another point which Paul emphasises in his letter is: **THE COST** of their salvation. To be a Christian may be costly for us, in the sense that we must break with sinful practices and connections. There may also be a cost to us in that we may suffer criticism from friends and family, on account of our commitment to the Lord Jesus. However, it is not the cost **TO US** that Paul refers to in this letter; it is, rather, the cost **TO GOD HIMSELF**. To what lengths did God go to make salvation available for us?

The answer is found in **TWO** phrases:

- **“brought near BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.”** (See 2: 13)
- **“THROUGH THE CROSS.”** (See 2: 16) The cost of salvation is nothing less than the death of the Lord Jesus, as a sacrifice for our sins at Calvary. Because He paid ALL that was needful, salvation is offered to us as a free gift. (Read Romans 6: 23)

Finally, Paul writes to them about: **THE COMPLETION** to which they can look forward. ‘Salvation’ is a **PAST** experience (They were saved from their sins), and a **PRESENT** experience (They are being saved from the daily influence of Satan); it is also a **FUTURE** experience (They shall be saved from God’s judgment). Paul, therefore, projects their minds forward to think about **“the coming ages”** (2: 7), when **“God will show the immeasurable riches of His grace, in His kindness to them, in Christ Jesus.”** (John 3: 36; John 17: 3) How important it is to choose eternal life which God has provided for us.

This is the third of three units on Salvation.