

Salvation

Lesson 1

John 3:16-17

Opener

Ask: Have you ever seen the movies or TV shows that depict someone sinking in quicksand? They squirm around, trying to save themselves, only to fall deeper into the fatal pit of sand and water. Only someone from outside can rescue them. Otherwise, they will eventually die. We may feel like our lives are sinking in quicksand.

Ask: What is the quicksand of your life? Maybe it's discouragement, depression, or emptiness. Maybe it's a problem in a relationship or an addiction. Maybe it's something else. Are you about to drown? How will you get yourself out of the pit?

Good News: The good news is that WE don't have to get OURSELVES out of the deadly pit of sin and shame. Only God can. But how?

Scripture

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

- John 3:16-17

Discussion

Discussion

WHOSOEVER is a crucial word in John 3:16. It means that ANYONE can be saved from spiritual death if only they will believe in Jesus.

Question: What is spiritual death?

To be spiritually dead is to be separated from God. God is holy, perfect and without sin. Yet people are sinful. Romans 6:23 says that "the wages of sin is death" - spiritual death. Sin puts up a wall between us and God, which is to be dead—spiritually. So there is a gap between us and God. The only thing that can bridge that gap is the cross of Jesus Christ.

So what is the solution? The only way to join in a relationship with God is through Christ His Son. You do this by believing in Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

This one word—WHOSOEVER—changes everything. Some people may think they are beyond the reach of God's love—that they have done too many bad things to be forgiven and accepted by God. This verse should set them straight—NO ONE is outside the reach of the love of God.

No matter what your past, if you make a decision to believe in Jesus as your savior in the present, your future is certain: eternal life.

Question: What is eternal life? In John 17:3, Jesus defines eternal life as knowing God and his son, Jesus Christ. Eternal life, or everlasting life, is the relationship with God that begins when you leave your old life behind and accept Jesus as your Savior.

Jesus told a parable about a son who left his family and used all of his inheritance money his father gave him on wild living. He ended up penniless, feeding pigs for a living. Finally he decided to return to his father and beg him to just let him be a slave there. But on his way home, his father saw him coming down the road and ran to meet him with open arms. There was a huge celebration because he came home.

Jesus told this parable to illustrate the way God sees us. We may do a lot of bad things, but when we decide to turn to God, He is waiting with open arms to receive us—not as a slave, but as His child!

When we make a decision to follow Christ, the wall of separation comes down and we can enter into a relationship with him.

Application

Questions:

Do you feel like the lost son? Do you feel like you don't deserve God's love because of the bad things you have done?

Does God wait for us to clean ourselves up and get our lives together before He will save us?

No! Romans 5:8 says that Christ died for us "while we were still sinners." That is good news for us, since none of us can get it right, or save ourselves. We must rely on Jesus to save us.

So what is your decision today? We all make a decision every day: either to follow Christ or follow the world. If we don't believe in Jesus as the verse says, we are rejecting Him.

All you have to do to receive salvation is believe in Jesus and turn away from your sins. Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart (Revelation 3:20). What is keeping you from letting Him in? He'll receive you with open arms.