

GOD IN ACTION



ONE ARMY: We see a God-raised, Spirit-filled Army for the 21st century - convinced of our calling, moving forward together

We will...

- deepen our spiritual life
- unite in prayer
- identify and develop leaders
- increase self-support and self-denial

ONE MISSION: Into the world of the hurting, broken, lonely, dispossessed and lost, reaching them in love by all means

We will...

- emphasise our integrated ministry
- reach and involve youth and children
- stand for and serve the marginalised
- encourage innovation in mission

ONE MESSAGE: With the transforming message of Jesus, bringing freedom, hope and life

We will...

- communicate Christ unashamedly
- reaffirm our belief in transformation
- evangelise and disciple effectively
- provide quality teaching resources

**God in Action Bible Study Manuel produced by Captain Michael Ramsay at the Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army, September 2012.*

Doctrines of The Salvation Army

1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God; and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.
2. We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.
3. We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost - undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.
4. We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.
5. We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness; and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.
6. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has, by His suffering and death, made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.
7. We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to salvation.
8. We believe that we are justified by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.
9. We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.
10. We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
11. We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 1: 2 Timothy 3:1-4:5 (John 5:31-40)

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God; and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.

Background and context: Assuming Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy, Paul probably wrote this letter while he was in prison in Rome under Emperor Nero in the mid-60s CE. Now, this imprisonment was different than other imprisonments that Paul had suffered. Previously Paul was under house arrest – an electronic monitoring type of situation, albeit before electronics of course - where Paul had a fair bit of leniency in his imprisonment. Now, however, he is in a dungeon. Tradition has it that this is Paul’s final imprisonment as well. He will only leave the dungeon for the grave. Paul will die via capital punishment here in Rome and he is now in prison awaiting that conclusion. The conditions in the dungeon were probably not as bad as those for the people today trapped in Guantanamo Bay but Paul’s experience may not be entirely dissimilar and probably even worse than prisons in this country. It certainly is not the house arrest that Paul had experienced earlier. This is a new style of imprisonment for Paul and this is what life is like for Paul as he is writing this letter to his friends and church family.

2 Timothy 3:1-9 speaks about those who oppose the truth. How can we tell what is the truth?

What qualities abound in those who oppose the truth?

2 Timothy 3:10-16 speaks about persecution that arises from proclaiming the Scriptures. What happened to Paul when he preached the scriptures?

What can happen when we preach the scriptures? Does this apply to 21st Century Canada?

What good is scripture?

Is the potential persecution worth it? If so how would we prove that it is worth it? What risks have we taken for the sake of God and the scriptures?

2 Timothy 4:1-5 speaks of a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Is that time now?

What is it like when people do not put up with sound doctrine? Are people doing this now?

What should we do when sound doctrine isn't even accepted in our community or our churches in this community?

John 5:31-40

Background and context: John, a first century fisherman was probably the author of this letter. John and his brother James (The sons of Zebedee) actually dropped their work mid-day and left their dad to run the family business without them to follow Jesus. John was known in the Gospel of John as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ and had a prominent role in serving Jesus as a disciple and later as an apostle.

John 5:31-39 speaks about studying the scriptures. Why does Jesus say that we should study the scriptures?

How important is it to study the scriptures?

What would happen if we didn’t study the scriptures? What would we miss? Would it be anything really important?

Are we willing to commit to pray and read the scriptures a little bit everyday?

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Lesson 2: Genesis 1-4

We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.

Background and Context:Genesis is the first book of the Pentateuch. Stories of the Patriarchs included within are very important for not only Christianity but also Judaism (established ca. 70 CE) and Islam (established ca. 610 CE)¹. Genesis records Creation, the Edenic Covenant, Noahic Covenant, Abrahamic Covenant, the patriarchs, and the journey into Egypt.

Genesis 1-2

God as Creator: Genesis 1:1-2:3

View *Room for Creation*(see Further Reading section) as we read the scriptures:

- ❑ What do we notice about the relationship between God and creation?
- ❑ What does it show us about the relationship between animals, people, etc. and their environments?
- ❑ What do we notice about God’s creation of and relationship to humankind?
- ❑ What was God’s general assessment of the environment he created and the inhabitants he created for the environment?

¹ Christians accept that Jesus is the Messiah prophesied in Genesis (and the other Scriptures) and that the Messianic Era commenced at His resurrection from the dead (Ca. 33 CE). The Rabbis responded to the destruction of the temple in relation to Jesus Christ’s resurrection by denying His Messiahship and creating the modern religion of Judaism through the drafting of a document banning the ancient sacrificial system and, among other things, removing the cornerstone of Temple worship from their ceremonies (Ca. 70 CE). Mohammed in turn responded to his rejection by the Jewish community, establishing Islam, after experiencing a vision (ca. 610 CE).

Genesis 2:4-25

- ❑ What is God's relationship to this environment that He created?
- ❑ What is man's relationship to God and the environment God created?
- ❑ What is our responsibility today for the environment? Does this still apply? If it does do we look after God's creation? How can we who are here today obey the command to look after God's creation?

Scriptures for further exploration re: creation: Psalm 33:6, Psalm 93; Isaiah 45:12; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 11:3

God as Governor: Genesis 3

When God made this wonderful garden out of nothing at all for Adam and Eve to tend, He – as the governor of all things – just asked something very simple in return. God made the world for His people and He told them to take care of it and obey Him in two or three simple ways.

1. Genesis 1:28a: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...'"
2. Genesis 1:28b: "Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."
3. Genesis 2:16-17: "And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'"

God says 1) populate the earth, 2) take care of everything in it and 3) in doing this I'll let you eat anything you want in the garden – but just not the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it's not safe. I'm saving that for something.

3. Genesis 2:16-17: “And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’”

- ❑ Read **Genesis 3**: How do people respond to God’s command to save the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
- ❑ What was the result of their response?
- ❑ What are some of the things that God asks us to do and how do we respond?

1. Genesis 1:28a: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...’”

- ❑ Read **Genesis 11:1-9** what is humankind’s response to the command to fill the earth?
- ❑ What is God’s response to their actions?
- ❑ This is very similar to the command in **Acts 2 (especially 1-5, 42-47)** Recorded in Genesis 11 is God’s confusing of people’s language so that they would go to the ends of the earth. In Acts 2, God provides an understanding of various languages so that we can bring His Good News of salvation to the ends of the earth. How does this relate to Genesis 1 and Genesis 11?
- ❑ What is our responsibility to go and share the good news of salvation?

2. Genesis 1:28b: “Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

- ❑ **Leviticus 25-26** records that we are directed that the land itself shall enjoy its Sabbath rest (**Leviticus 25:2, 26:33-35**) just as man was commanded to (Exodus 20: 8-11, Deuteronomy 5:15), and just as God did (Exodus 20:11, Genesis 2:3). If we, as ‘tenants’ of God’s land (**Leviticus 25:23**) fail in our responsibility to carry out this duty to take care of the land, then what did happen to Israel?

- ❑ What will happen to us (**2 Chronicles 36:20-21**)?

Scriptures for further exploration: Job 34:14-15; Psalm 65:9-13, 104:24-30; Isaiah 65:17-25; John 19:11; Romans 8:18-25; Colossians 1:17; Revelation 21:1-4.

God as Preserver

Genesis 4:

- ❑ **Genesis 4:1-12** records what Cain did to his brother; what were the consequences of Cain's actions?
- ❑ Cain pleaded for mercy, what did God do?
- ❑ God is the preserver of all things **Job 12:10** records that, "In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind." **Job 27:3** refers to the life within us as "the breath of God in my nostrils." **Job 33:4**: "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life." And Psalm **104:29** warns us "When You [God] hide Your face, they are terrified; when You take away their breath, they die and return to the dust." God is the preserver of all life. If He were to withdraw His spirit from us, we would perish (cf. also Job 32:8, 34:14; Psalm 33:6; Ecclesiastes 3:19).
- ❑ What happens if God ceases to be the preserver of all life?
- ❑ As God is the preserver of all life, what does this mean to us?
- ❑ As God is the creator and governor of all life and we are his managers of sorts, how can we be good stewards of the earth and all that the Lord has entrusted us to manage on His behalf?

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In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 3: John 1:1-18

We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and coequal in power and glory.

Background and context: John, a first century fisherman, was probably the author of this letter. John and his brother James (The sons of Zebedee) actually dropped their work mid-day and left their dad to run the family business without them to follow Jesus. John was known in the Gospel of John as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ and had a prominent role in serving Jesus as a disciple and later as an apostle.

What is the Word?

Have you ever tried to solve a word puzzle? Solve for the puzzle this word: In each section below answer the question, “What is the Word?”

1. John 1:1-3:

The Word:

- was in the beginning
- was with God
- was God

a. What (Who) is the Word?

2. John 1:3-5:

The Word:

- All things were made with this word
- Life was in this word
 - Light was in this life
 - This life was the light of man
 - This light shines in the darkness but is not understood

a. What (Who) is the Word?

b. What (Who) is the Light?

3. John 1:6-8:

The man:

- ❑ Was from God
- ❑ Was named John
- ❑ Witness to testify about the light
 - People could believe through the light
- ❑ Was not the light

b. What (Who) is the Man?

c. What (Who) is the Light?

4. John 1:9-13:

The Light

- ❑ Gives light to everyone
- ❑ Is coming into the world
- ❑ Made the world
- ❑ Was in the world
 - The world did not recognize him
- ❑ He came to that which was his
 - His own did not recognize him
- ❑ Gives the right to become children of God to Those who recognize and receive him
 - These children are born of God not people

c. What (Who) is the Light?

5. John 1:14:

The Word

- ❑ Was in the world
- ❑ Became flesh
- ❑ Dwelled (lived) among us
- ❑ We have seen the Word's glory
 - The Word's glory is the glory of the only begotten Son (therefore the Word is the Son)
 - Came from the Father
 - Full of grace and truth

a. What (Who) is the Word?

d. Who is the Son?

6. John 1:14:

The Son

- ❑ John testified about Him
- ❑ Out of His fullness we receive grace
- ❑ Grace and truth came through Him (the Law came through Moses)
- ❑ He is Jesus Christ
- ❑ No one has ever seen God except Him
- ❑ He is the only begotten Son
- ❑ He is God himself
- ❑ He is in closest relationship with God
- ❑ He has made God known

d. Who is the Son?

7. Summary:

- a. What (Who) is the Word?**

- b. What (Who) is the Man?**

- c. What (Who) is the Light?**

- d. Who is the Son?**

What is the relationship between Jesus Christ and God?

Read Genesis 1:1-2, Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 1:26-37: What do we know about the relationship between God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit?

Scriptures for further exploration: Job 33:4; Luke 1: 30-33, 46-55; 4. John 14:16-26; 15:26, 16:12-15; 20:22-23; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6.

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Lesson 4: Luke 1:26-38

We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

Background and context: Luke, the author of the both Luke and Acts, was a 1st century physician. These two short books (letters) that he wrote read like a two-volume set. In the opening chapters of Volume 1, Luke contrasts Jesus Christ and Augustus Caesar, the leader of Rome, which was the paramount Superpower when Jesus was born. Caesar was worshipped as a god. He ruled the most powerful country in the world and was seen as a son of god in that his deceased adopted father Julius Caesar was also revered as a god. This ‘god-king’, ‘son of god’ won a brutal civil war and was arguably the most powerful of all the Roman rulers in history. He achieved a restless peace in the Mediterranean, know as the ‘Pax Romana’ through a series of wars but this wasn’t a real peace as, of course, many subjugated peoples were awaiting their opportunities to seek independence. Luke points out that Jesus, in contrast, truly is God, the Son of God, and the real Prince of Peace. Notice how different Jesus, the real King of Kings, is from Caesar Augustus or any other king or any leader of any superpower either past or present. Luke, in invoking Caesar Augustus’ name in Chapter 2 and this taxation is drawing this parallel and making this contrast for all of us to see for it is **only** the person of Jesus Christ that the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

Luke 1:26-38

1. Why would Mary be troubled by the words, “Greetings you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you”? (Luke 1:28)

2. Why do we think God sends an angel/messenger to Mary? (Luke 1:26)

3. Why do we think Luke repeatedly mentions that Mary is a virgin? (Luke 1:27, 34)

4. What news does Gabriel give Mary? What do we know about her child? (Luke 1:31-33,35)
 - a. What does it mean to be called ‘Son of the Most High’? (Luke 1:32)

 - b. What is the ‘throne of his father David’ to which this pericope refers? (Luke 1:32)

 - c. How can he reign over the house of Jacob *forever*? (Luke 1:33)

5. Read Verse 35 (NIV):*The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God..."*

a. How will Mary become pregnant?

b. What does this mean about the parentage of her son Jesus?

6. What does all of this mean for us here today?

John 3:16 (NKJV):*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Scriptures for further exploration: Matthew 1:18-25; 4:1-11; Mark 1:41; 11:12; 14:32-42; Luke 2:52; 4:1-21; John 1:1-5, 14-18; 3:16-21; 4:6; 11:35; 14:1-11; 17:1-5; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:10-18; 5:1-10

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Lesson 5

We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocency, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness; and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God(Romans 5:12-21; see also Genesis 1:27-31, 3:1-7; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

Romans 5:12-21

Background and context:Paul’s letter to the Romans was written in the mid-to-late 50s and is arguably addressed to a Gentile dominated church. In the mid-to-late 50s, Rome was by far the Mediterranean world’s dominant power and Nero was the Roman Emperor (54-68 AD, Proconsul since 51AD). Immediately prior to this time, in 49 AD, Nero’s predecessor, Claudius had banished the Jews from Rome. The bulk of the remaining Christians then would be non-Jews. When Nero officially ascended the throne in 54, many of the Jewish Christians returned. Things had changed and this was the historical context of Paul’s letter. Paul’s letter to the Romans is clearly an important work. N.T. Wright claims that “Romans is neither a systematic theology nor a summary of Paul’s lifework, but it is by common consent his masterpiece.”²

Romans 5:12-14:

1. What does it mean and how did it happen that sin entered into the world through one man? (See Genesis 3:1-17)

2. How and why did death come to all people?

² N.T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans*(NIB 10: Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1995), 395.

3. What does it mean that “all sinned”?

4. Given that Sin was around before the Law was around, what does it mean: “death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam”?

Death is the result of Adam’s sin for all of us: an analogy

Death was the natural consequence of Adam’s disobedience to God. We all experience that consequence even though we were not born; how does that work? An analogy would be as follows: My fore parents moved from England and Scotland in the 1600s and 1700s respectively. As a consequence to this I - through no fault or credit on my part - was born in North America. If we think about it, there are many parallels to descendants being born into a different world than their fore parents due to the actions of those who went before them. This is the same with us, people who are living generations after Adam and Eve. They were relocated outside of the garden and were denied the fruit of the tree of life so their descendants inherited death.

Romans 5:15-17

1. What is the difference between the gift and the trespass (sin)?

2. Where and from whom did the Sin’s and its consequences originate?

3. From whom did the gift originate?

Romans 5:18-19

1. What are the similarities and differences between Jesus and Adam here listed?
2. What does it mean that “through one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man many will be made righteous”?

Romans 5:20-21

1. What was the purpose of the Law?
2. What was the result of the Law?
3. Fill in the blanks and explain your answer:

_____ = death and _____ = eternal life.

4. Does all of the above apply to us today? If so, how does it apply? If not, why not?

Romans 3:23: “for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”

For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The Greek word for ‘sinned’ in this passage (*hamartanō*) carries with it the classic definition of sin that we have probably heard before: that of ‘missing the mark’. It brings to mind the idea of an archer shooting for a target and falling short – missing the target. On the surface this seems innocuous enough but if we then find out that that archer is William Tell – who is famous because he shoots apples off of people’s heads – and if we then find out that indeed the apple is about to be placed on our heads, it becomes important. You don’t want him to miss the mark. William Tell, of course, used to shoot the apples off the head of his own sons and so if he missed, the consequences could be most devastating for both father and son (as is our own sin). When we continually sin – the consequences are often fatal. Romans Chapter 3 tells us that indeed, we have all sinned, we have all fallen short of this glory of God (Romans 3:23) and Romans 1 and 2 tell us that because of that we deserve to die (Romans 1:32, 2:12).

John Phillips, tells us:

‘Paul describes sin as a coming short of the divine standard: Two men went to the recruiting office in London to join the guards regiment. The standard height for a guardsman was a minimum of six feet. One man was taller than the other, but when they were measured officially both were disqualified. The shorter of the two measured only five feet seven inches and was far too short; his companion measured five feet eleven and a half inches and, stretch to his utmost, as he did, he could not make it any more. Nor did his pleas avail. It mattered nothing that his father was a guardsman, that he promised to be a good soldier, that he had already memorized the drills and knew the army regulations by heart. He was short of the standard.⁴

Scriptures for further exploration: Genesis 1-4, 8:20-9:7, Deuteronomy 4:26-31, Psalm 5:4-8, 8:4-8, 51:1-5, Isaiah 43:27-28, 48:9-11, 59:2, 64:6, Jeremiah 2:20-21, Matthew 5:48, Luke 16:9-31, John 3:19-36, Romans 1-8, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, Ephesians 4:24, James 3:9, 1 John 1:18, Jude 20-21, Revelation 2-6.

³ By Captain Michael Ramsay *Romans 3:22b, 23: There is no difference, for all have sinned...* Presented to Swift Current Corps, 12 July 2009. Available on-line <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2009/07/romans-322b-23there-is-no-difference.html>

⁴ John Phillips, ‘Exploring Romans’ (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1969), 67.

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In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 6: John 2:23-3:35

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has, by His suffering and death, made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved

Background and context: John, a first century fisherman was probably the author of this letter. John and his brother James (The sons of Zebedee) actually dropped their work mid-day and left their dad to run the family business without them to follow Jesus. John was known in the Gospel of John as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ and had a prominent role in serving Jesus as a disciple and later as an apostle.

John 2:23-3:8

1. What kind of a greeting is this? Why would Nicodemus come by night? (John 3:1)
2. What does it mean to ‘see the Kingdom of God’? (John 3:3)
3. What does it mean to be born of the Spirit? What does it mean to be born of water? (John 3:4)
4. Explain John 3:8: *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*

John 3:9-15

1. Put Jesus' comments in Verses 10-11 into your own words; what is Jesus saying to Nicodemus?
2. Read Daniel 7:3,13-14: who is the 'Son of Man'? (See also Matthew 25:31ff.)
3. Read Numbers 21:1-8 (cf. 2 Kings 18:4). What comparison is Jesus drawing in Verses 14 and 15?
4. To whom is both the salvation from the snakes and the Salvation provided through Jesus offered?

Important Note: *this salvation is available for everyone but not everyone necessarily takes advantage of it.*

John 3:16-21

1. 'One and only Son', as it reads in some translations, is better translated as 'only begotten Son'; what is the difference?
 - a. Why might 'one and only son' be a misleading phrase?
2. Who takes advantage of the offer of eternal (everlasting) life?

3. Why did God send His Son into the world?

4. Does God's Son condemn people?
 - a. How is it that some people are condemned?

5. Verses 19-21. What is this saying? How does this relate to Chapter 1:1-18?

John 2:22-36

1. Verses 22-26, who is the recorded dispute between and what is it all about?

2. Verses 27-30, what is the Christ (Messiah)?
 - a. Who is the Christ?

 - b. Who is not the Christ?

3. Verses 31-33, what does it mean to come from either heaven or earth? What is said about each?

4. Verses 34-36, what is the relationship between God and His Son, Jesus?
 - a. What is the relationship between God and people who put their faith in Jesus?

 - b. What is the relationship between God and people who do not put their faith in Jesus?

Scriptures for further exploration: Genesis 12-17, Numbers 21:1-8, Isaiah 53, Leviticus 16-17, Mark 8-14, Romans 2-5, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 5, Hebrews 9, 2 Timothy 2, 1 Peter 1.

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In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 7: 2 Peter 1; 1 Thessalonians 5; Romans 8:1-17

We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to salvation.

Background and context: Paul’s letter to the Romans was written in the mid-to-late 50s and is arguably addressed to a Gentile dominated church. In the mid-to-late 50s, Rome was by far the Mediterranean world’s dominant power and Nero was the Roman Emperor. Immediately prior to this time, Claudius had banished the Jews from Rome. When Nero officially ascended the throne in 54 CE, many of the Jewish Christians returned. Things had changed and this was the historical context of Paul’s letter.

As far as 2 Peter is concerned, it is most likely that this letter was written in Rome also sometime in the first Century. If we accept that Peter was the author of the letter then it would have also have been written before the conclusion of Nero’s reign (ca. 64 CE) as tradition has it that Peter was martyred under Emperor Nero by being crucified upside down on a cross.

Pertaining to Thessalonians, tradition states that this letter was written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica even earlier. It was probably one of the earliest of his letters that we still have being composed ca. 50 CE. We are now living in the 2nd Century and all three of these letters were composed during the 1st Century. Let us look at these passages and see what we can learn about that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit that are necessary to salvation.

2 Peter 1:1-21

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4

1. From where did we receive everything that we need for life and godliness?

2. In what way is it known that we received these?

3. What is the result of receiving this?

Read 2 Peter 1:5-9

1. What is the response that we must have to the gift of life?
2. Why must we support our faith with all of the above listed attributes of a believer?

Read 2 Peter 1:10-11

1. What must we do?
2. Why must we do it?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

1. What else must a believer do?
2. How is it that a believer is to do it?

Read Romans 8:1-7

1. Why is there no condemnation in Jesus Christ?
2. How are those who are not regenerated by the Spirit different from those who are?

Read Romans 8:9-17

1. Who belongs to Christ and who does not (v. 9)?
2. Who will live and who will die (v.13)?
3. What does it mean to be children of God?

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In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 8: Galatians 3:1-4:7

We believe that we are justified by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.

Background and context:The Apostle Paul’s letter to the Galatians was written circa 49-57CE to a church or a number of churches in a region of modern day Turkey. Paul is quite concerned because it appears that there are some “false believers” who actually want the church in Galatia to rely on rules, regulations, feasts, celebrations and the Law rather than relying on Jesus for their salvation (cf. Galatians 3:10, 4:9,10 cf. also Deuteronomy 27:26)

Read Galatians 3:1-10

1. How does Paul begin this passage? What sort of language and tone does he use in the first 5 verses?
2. What can we infer from Paul’s words about his feelings about the situation at hand?
3. Why is Paul upset?
4. Who is a descendant of Abraham?

5. Are Jews or Gentiles saved in any different way from each other? Are some more privileged than others? Are Gentiles now any less God's chosen people than the Jews?

6. Who is blessed along with Abraham?

7. What befalls those who try to really on their own actions or race/association/family (works of the law) for their salvation? Are you saved because your mother goes to church? Are you saved because you do good things?

8. How do the righteous live? What does it mean to live this way?

9. What, according to our passage here, did Christ redeem us from? How? Why?

Read Galatians 3:15-18

1. Write a version of the example Paul uses here in your own words:

2. What is his point in saying this?

3. To whom did the Law (received by Moses 430 years after Abraham) apply?

4. Read Genesis 12:1-3, to whom does God's covenant of Salvation extend?

Read Galatians 3:19-4:7

1. Why did God give Moses the Law?
2. Was the Law opposed to God?
3. In Verses 3:23-25 and 4:1-7, to what professionals does Paul compare the Law?
4. What then was the purpose of the law (cf. especially 3:24, 4:2)?
5. Is there any different way that some people are saved from other people (cf. especially 3:36-29)? Are some different than others in Christ Jesus? Is the Jew saved because he was born a Jew or the woman simply for being born a woman?
6. What is the status of all those that receive the promise of the Spirit (cf. especially 3:14, 25-29, 4:6-7)?

What does all of this mean for us here today, thousands of years later?

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In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 9: James 1-2; 2 Peter 3, Jude

We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

Background and context:The book of Jude has been called the most neglected book in the New Testament. The author of this letter is probably either the disciple named Judas (not Judas Iscariot because, among other reasons, he was dead when this letter was written: Matthew 27:3-8, Acts 1:18-19) or, more likely, this Jude is Jesus’ biological brother, Judas (cf. Jude 1:1; cf. also Matthew 13:55, John 7:3-10, Acts 1:14, 1 Corinthians 9:5, Galatians 1:19). In Verse 1 the author identifies himself as James’ brother. James was another one of Jesus’ brothers and a prominent figure in the early Christian Church in Jerusalem. This letter was written early on in the history of the Church: probably not more than forty years after Jesus’ death and resurrection. The Church was still quite small at this point. Judas, Jude is writing this letter to faithful and earnest Christians who are in the early Church (cf. 1:3,4; Matthew 7:15-20, 24:11; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:1, 4:3-4; 2 Peter 3:3).

Who wrote ‘James’? James was a common name in the first century. There are four men called James in the NT. Two of these have been suggested as possible authors. Some think the writer is the apostle James, the son of Zebedee. Most scholars, however, believe that he was martyred too early (44 CE) to have written this letter (Acts 12:1-2) and see James the brother of Jude and Jesus to be the most likely author. In more recent times other views have been advanced, such as that the name ‘James’ is a pseudonym, or that the letter was originally anonymous, or that it was written by an unknown James, or that it was the product of a disciple of Jesus’ brother and thus represented the teaching of James, who was the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. However, the evidence of the letter itself still favours the identification of the Lord's brother as the author (cf. Acts 15:13-29, 21:17-25, Galatians 2:12, cf. also ‘James the Just’ in Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23). As far as the date of this letter is concerned, if James was the author the letter would need to have been written prior to 62 or 69 CE (the two commonly held dates for his death by stoning).

Pertaining to 2 Peter, it is most likely that this letter was written in Rome sometime in the first Century. If we accept that Peter was the author of the letter then it would have been written before the conclusion of Nero’s reign (ca. 64 CE) as tradition has it that Peter was martyred under Emperor Nero by being crucified upside down on a cross.

Read James 1:19-26

James 1:19-21

1. What does it mean to be quick to listen and slow to speak and become angry?
2. Why must we do this?
3. How do we do this?

James 1:22-27

1. Why should we not just listen to the word?
2. What does it mean to just listen to the word? What does that look like today?
3. How do we do what it says instead of just listening to the word?
4. What is the 'religion' that God accepts as pure and faultless?

Read James 2:12-26

James 2:12-19

1. How should we speak and act?
2. What does it mean that faith without deeds is dead?
3. Is simply believing that there is a God going to guarantee one eternal life with Christ?

James 2:20-26

1. What is the evidence provided that ‘faith without deeds is useless’?
2. How is it that a person is considered righteous?

What does all this mean for us today?

Read 2 Peter 3

2 Peter 3:1-10

1. Why is Peter writing?
2. What is going to happen in the ‘last days’? Is that happening now?
3. What did people intentionally forget?
4. What should we not forget and why?

2 Peter 3:11-16

1. Since everything will be destroyed like this, how should we act?
2. What is going to happen to the heaven(s) and earth after it is laid bare by fire?
3. How are we to act while waiting for everything to be made anew?
4. What should we bear in mind while we are awaiting the re-creation of heaven and earth?

2 Peter 3:17-18

1. Why is Peter's warning here so important?
2. What will happen if believers are 'carried away by the error of the lawless'?
3. Instead of this happening what should we do?

What does all this mean for us today?

Read Jude 1

Jude 1:3-16

1. To whom did Jude write this letter?
2. Why did Jude write this letter?
3. Where here is it mentioned that there are the ungodly people and what do they do?
4. What happened to some who were saved from Egypt?
5. What happened to some angels who were already living in their 'proper dwellings'?
6. What does Verse 16 say is about these people?

Jude 1:17-25

1. What must we remember?
2. What must we do
3. Why does Verse 21 record that must we do this?
4. Who is able to keep us from stumbling and present as faultless?

What does all this mean for us today?

Excerpt from *Grace and Works: a Look at Doctrines 5-10 of The Salvation Army* by Captain Michael Ramsay

Doctrine 9 may be read almost as a counter-balance to the justification by faith expressed in the eighth doctrine. It is one that will need to be explored a little more in depth. It is certainly one of our more controversial doctrines: *continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ* ‘Depends’ is the main point of contention in this doctrine. It is the lynchpin of many an argument made rationally and theologically that our position is purely a doctrine of works.

Does our Salvation depend upon our works? If it does, would it follow that we could earn our Salvation? This sounds like the debates of the first century Church pertaining to circumcision (cf. Acts 15, Romans 2-4, Galatians 5:1-5), meat sacrificed to idols (cf. 1 Corinthians 8), and dietary laws (cf. Acts 10, 15; Galatians 2:11-21). Are we, by this doctrine, as some have suggested, “...putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear” (Acts 15:10). If so, it would seem to contradict The Salvation Army’s eighth doctrine. How can one be justified by grace and not have one’s salvation secured? Will God change His mind? Will He suddenly decide to ‘harden your heart’ (cf. Exodus 4:21, 7:3, 9:12) or send an evil spirit to torment you? (cf. 1 Samuel 16:14) Will he say that he never knew you? (cf. Matthew 7:23)

Salvation Story offers an interesting response to this line of questioning: on initial examination it apparently, for our part, reinterprets the word ‘depends’ as ‘is evidenced by’ and leaves the conditional work entirely to Christ. “We remember that an ongoing union with Christ *depends on his work* and not our feelings...Such assurance must be affirmed daily by obedience and never made an excuse for carelessness or complacent presumption. It is the changed life that *evidence* for the work of grace within.” ‘Obedience’ is mentioned in the preceding comment; ‘dependency’ - as our part - is not. The argument seems thus far to state that our continued Salvation depends not on our continued obedient faith but rather on Christ’s work. “We believe that God, who has accepted and saved us and given us eternal life, has given us also the assurance of our standing in him.” These statements on ‘assurance’ appear to read more like an acceptance of a doctrine of ‘perseverance of saints’ than one of ‘conditional perseverance.’

This assurance, however, is seemingly unsecured for “assurance does not mean that our salvation is guaranteed to us against our own free will. It is possible to cease to obey Christ and so to forfeit our hope of eternal life. This is consistent with our understanding of the grace of God, who always leaves us open to respond freely to him. Freedom to live by grace includes freedom to turn away.” The Salvation Army then allows for the much accepted Christian doctrine of the eternal loss of the apostate. If one does not renounce God but displays no ‘continued obedient faith’, does one forfeit one’s salvation? How does it relate to backsliders?

“Backsliding, then, is possible for true Christians. It can occur through the deliberate rejection of Christ, or, more insidiously, when we drift from the way of discipleship or neglect the means of grace. This does not mean that every time we sin we slide away from the grace of God. Even our many failures will not deprive us of the Holy Spirit’s presence if we turn to him for forgiveness and restoration. When we live a life of continued obedient faith in Christ we need not fall from grace and be eternally lost.”

This returns the discussion to an earlier question: does the Salvation Army really believe that one’s Salvation is dependent upon one’s continued obedience or - excepting apostasy - does it merely believe it to be evidence of one’s Salvation? “Our Salvation is assured as long as we continue to exercise faith in Jesus Christ. Such faith is expressed in obedience to his leadings, will and commands [1 John 2:3-6]. Obedience as a free-will choice is a consequence of faith, and without it, faith dies. Our conversion inaugurates a journey during which we are being transformed into Christ’s likeness. Thus Salvation is neither a state to be preserved nor an insurance policy, which requires no further investment. It is the beginning of a pilgrimage with Christ.”

The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; Salvation as a pilgrimage is a good analogy. It takes us from our initial contact with the Lord through to sanctification: “it was for [holiness] we were born and to fall short of this will be infinite, eternal loss, and doom us to an everlasting night of shame and contempt.” “Our walk with Him must be constant...or else we will seek for Him some day and not find Him.” We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Salvation Army actually does then observe that a continuance in a state of Salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

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In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 10: 1 Thessalonians 5

We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Background and context: Tradition states that this letter was written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica even earlier. It was probably one of the earliest of his letters that we still have, being composed ca. 50 CE.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

1. When and how is the ‘Day of the Lord’ coming (vv.1-3)?
2. Should we be surprised when this happens? Why or why not (vv 4-5)?
3. What does it mean to be ‘children of the day’?
4. As children of the day what should we do?
5. What does it mean to be sober and to put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation? How do we do this?
6. Why must we be sober to put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation?

7. In light of the aforementioned how should we act one unto another?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

1. As we encourage one another (v.11), how should respond to those working alongside us (or even our 'up-line') for the Kingdom?

2. How should we specifically respond to people when they are idle? Do we?

3. How should we respond to people when they are faint-hearted? Do we?

4. How should we specifically respond to people when they are weak? Do we?

5. What should our response be when evil or bad is done to us? Do we?

6. How do we know what is evil?

7. Can we abstain from every sort of evil and thus be kept blameless? If not, why not? If so, how?

What does all of this mean for our lives here today?

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In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 11: Matthew 7:13-27 and Chapter 25

We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

Background and context: Tradition states that this letter was written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica even earlier. It was probably one of the earliest of his letters that we still have, being composed ca. 50 CE.

Read Matthew 7:13-27

1. Does everyone spend eternity with the Lord?
2. What is the difference between a true and a false prophet?
3. Will everyone who calls Jesus, ‘Lord’ enter into his kingdom? If not, who will?
4. What are some of the things that people who are not a part of His kingdom but still call Jesus ‘Lord’ can do?
5. In light of verses 21-24, what is it that we must do instead of, besides, or even beyond calling Jesus ‘Lord’ and the aforementioned list of verse 22.

Read Matthew 25:31-46

1. Who does the Father bless?
2. What happens to those who are blessed?
3. Who does the Father not bless? What happens to them?
4. Into which category do we fall?

Read Matthew 25:14-30

1. Who does the master reward?
2. Who does the Master not reward and why?
3. What is the unfaithful servants reason? Is it a legitimate and acceptable excuse?
4. What happens to the unfaithful servant?
5. What happens to the faithful?

Read Matthew 25:1-13

1. Who is it that gets to be a part of the glorious eschatological party of salvation?

What does all of this mean for us today?

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