

God Accepts Us and Gives Us Hope



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Colossians 1:21–27; Ephesians 5:27; Ephesians 3:17; Ephesians 3:3–6.

MEMORY VERSE: “Christ [Jesus] never did [didn’t do] any wrong thing, but God punished him as if he had [did]. He [Jesus] died as punishment for our sins. As a result [because Jesus died for us], we become right [accepted] with God when we belong to Christ. We become right, because he [Jesus] is right” (2 Corinthians 5:21, EASY).

AS WE SAW LAST WEEK, PAUL talked about how God accepts us (Colossians 1:20). God accepts us because of everything Jesus did for us (read Lesson 8, Thursday’s study). This week we will study what else Paul says about this topic in his letter to the Colossians.

Jesus’ death on the cross helped God to accept us again. Sin separates us from God. But now, because of Jesus, God accepts us when we believe in His Son.

Our memory verse for this week is 2 Corinthians 5:21. This verse also teaches us the Bible truth that God accepts us because Jesus died for our sins. The Cross is a powerful symbol for God’s love. The Cross shows us that God’s love changes people’s lives when they hear the Good News and accept Jesus. Jesus gives us hope of everlasting life.

Paul also talks about “a secret that God hid from everyone before now” (Colossians 1:26, EASY). What is this secret? What else does this secret include? How is this “secret” connected with the Good News about Jesus? This week, we will study the answer to these questions.



Jesus’ death on the cross helped God to accept us again.

SAVED FROM SIN (Colossians 1:21, 22)

Read Colossians 1:21, 22. What is Paul saying in these verses? What does he mean when he talks about our separation from God and our being His enemy? How does Jesus' death change all that? (Also read Ephesians 5:27 for the answer.)

Paul lived and wrote 2,000 years ago. He understood that people are evil without God's love in their hearts. 2,000 years later, who can argue with Paul? Someone said that we don't need faith to accept the Christian teaching that humans are sinners. Just watch the evening news, right?

Bad as we are, God made a perfect plan to save us. But the only way to solve the sin problem was for Jesus to die.

In Eden after Adam sinned, the Lord went to look for Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve hid from God after they sinned. The Lord called to Adam, " 'Where are you?' " (Genesis 3:9, ERV). Today, God continues to look for us. We are the same as lost sheep. God looks for each of His lost sheep, one at a time. We see God's saving plan in Genesis 3:15. This verse is the promise of the Good News about Jesus.

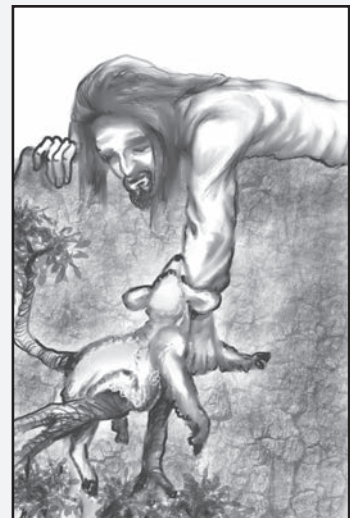
The Good News about Jesus has three simple parts. These three parts are easy for us to understand:

Part 1: We are helpless sinners. As sinners, we can't save ourselves. So, Jesus came to die for our sins. (Read Romans 5:6–8.)

Part 2: We must accept Jesus' death for our sins. Then we must confess our sins and get baptized. When we do these things, Jesus forgives us. He makes us clean from the guilt of sin. (Read Romans 5:9–11 and Romans 6:6, 7.)

Part 3: The life we live now after Jesus saves us is because of His power. We join our lives to Him. He changes us and gives us new hearts. Then He lives His life in us. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 and Galatians 2:20.)

These three parts may happen all at one time. Or they can happen at separate times. Everyone's experience may be different. But one thing is the same: we must be ready to accept Jesus. We can do the three parts again when we give our lives to Jesus each morning. The most important thing to remember is that we are saved because Jesus died for our sins.



God looks for each of His lost sheep, one at a time.

IF YOU CONTINUE TO BELIEVE . . . (Colossians 1:23)

Read Colossians 1:23. What encouraging words does Paul write to the Colossian church in this verse? How do these words give hope to Paul's readers? (Also read Colossians 2:5 and Ephesians 3:17.)



Peter continued to knock at the door after Rhoda left it locked.

Paul encourages the Colossians to continue to believe. Paul already saw proof of their faith. Paul knows that their faith is strong and loyal (Colossians 2:5). At the same time, their hope depends on their continuing to believe. Their faith must stay strong and continue to grow.

The word “continue” in Colossians 1:23 means not to give up. The Bible uses this same word to talk about the Jewish spiritual leaders who brought to Jesus the woman who cheated and broke the seventh commandment. The Jewish leaders continued to ask Jesus for an answer about what they should do with this woman (John 8:7). The Bible also uses the word “continue” to talk about Peter after he escaped jail. Peter continued to knock at the door after Rhoda left it locked. Rhoda ran inside to tell everyone Peter was at the door (Acts 12:16). Paul also uses the word “continue” to encourage Timothy to keep believing in Bible truth (1 Timothy 4:16). In Colossians 1:23, Paul encourages his readers to keep believing and trusting in God.

As we will see next week, Paul doesn't want the Colossians to accept wrong ideas about the Good News. (Read Colossians 2:8, 20–22.) Paul wants the Colossians to grow strong in faith and in their love for God's Word, the Bible. (Read Matthew 7:25; Ephesians 2:20; and Ephesians 3:17.)

Paul wants the Colossians to be the same as a wall or building that can't be moved. Then their hope in the Good News will always stay strong. Paul talks about this same idea in 1 Corinthians 15:58: “So you must continue to be strong in your spirits, my Christian friends that I love. Do not let anything move you away from your faith. Continue to work hard as you serve the Lord. You know that whatever you do for him will not be useless” (EASY).

What is your experience with staying strong in the faith? Why is it important to continue to make the choice to stay strong? What will happen if you don't?

GOD'S EVERLASTING PLAN (Colossians 1:24, 25)

Read Colossians 1:24, 25. What does Paul say in these verses about his suffering for Jesus?

Paul wrote his letter to the Colossian church while he was in a house jail in Rome. For sure, Paul suffered at this time. As a man in jail, Paul no longer could travel from place to place and preach as he did in the past (Acts 20:20). Maybe this reason caused Paul more suffering than being in jail did. Jesus warned His followers that they must suffer for their faith (Matthew 24:9; John 16:33). But the blessings in heaven that God promises us “make the troubles that we have now seem very small” (Romans 8:18, EASY). So, Paul rejoices to the Colossians about his sufferings. Paul accepts His troubles cheerfully because he knows they will be a blessing for the church (Colossians 1:24).

Yes, Paul was in jail. “But nobody can keep God’s message in a prison!” (2 Timothy 2:9, EASY). While Paul was in jail, he wrote letters to the Philippians, to the Ephesians, and to Philemon. When Paul got out of jail, he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. When Paul was put in a Roman jail again for the final time, he wrote 2 Timothy. In short, the time Paul spent in jail was a blessing to the church, then and now. Paul wrote a big part of the New Testament during this time. We think he also wrote the book of Hebrews at this time, too.

God’s everlasting plan to save us included Paul’s experience and more. Paul’s work for God and the work of Jesus’ other followers were all part of God’s plan. So was the work of God’s special messengers in Old Testament times, including the work that Moses did. Their job was to “tell the complete message of God” (Colossians 1:25, ERV).

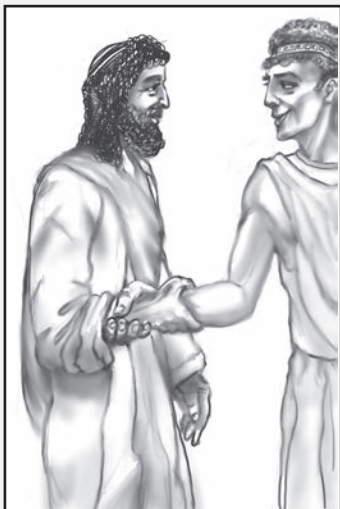
We will look more at God’s plan tomorrow. For now, we should understand that Paul knew his work was a small part of a much bigger plan. God started this plan before He made the skies and the earth (Matthew 13:35; Ephesians 1:4).

Think about your own life. How do the decisions you make (both big and small) fit in God’s bigger plan to save us? Can we really know if a decision we make is really “small”? How can a small decision really be a big one that we will understand only later with time?



The time Paul spent in jail was a blessing to the church, then and now. Paul wrote a big part of the New Testament during this time.

GOD'S SECRET (Colossians 1:26, 27)



God will keep His promises about Jesus to both the Jews and non-Jews. God will join them all together into one body, the church.

Read Colossians 1:26, 27. Paul talks about God's secret in these verses. What is this secret?

Elsewhere, in 1 Corinthians 2:7, Paul also talks about "God's secret" (ERV): "But before God made the world [the skies and the earth], he decided to let us know these secrets" (EASY). God's plan to save us is His secret. Peter also talks about these Bible truths: "Even the angels would like to understand more about these things" (1 Peter 1:12, EASY). The message Paul preaches is the "good news . . . that God has kept secret since long ago" (Romans 16:25, EASY). But Jesus helps us understand this secret or mystery (2 Corinthians 3:14).

Read the following verses about God's mystery. How do they help us to understand God's plan to save us?

1. Ephesians 1:7–10 _____

2. Ephesians 3:3–6 _____

In the end, Jesus will join everything in heaven and on earth. Then everything will be complete in Him. In John 17, Jesus prayed for the church to work together like God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit work together for peace. But no one understood how God would make this peace happen in the church until Jesus died.

Why did God love us so much that He gave us Jesus? When we get to heaven, we will study God's plan to save us. Our study will continue forever. Until then, we know that Jesus "died on behalf of [for] all people. So, while we live, we no longer live to please ourselves. Instead, we live to please Christ. He is the one that died on our behalf [for us]. He is the one that God raised up [woke up from the dead], to live again" (2 Corinthians 5:15, EASY). Everyone who believes in Jesus will share in the things God promises us. God will keep His promises about Jesus to both the Jews and the non-Jews. God will join them all together into one body, the church.

Paul says, "Christ [Jesus] lives in you" (Colossians 1:27, ERV). How? When we have faith, Jesus lives in our hearts.

**WHAT THE WORLDWIDE WAR IS ALL ABOUT
(Colossians 1:28, 29)**

Read Colossians 1:28, 29. What is Paul talking about in these verses?

The topic of Paul's preaching is Jesus and His death on the cross (1 Corinthians 1:23). Ephesians 5:27 tells us why Jesus Christ died to save us: "Christ died so that he could give the church to himself like [the same as] a bride in all her beauty. He died so that the church could be holy and without fault, with no evil or sin or any other thing wrong in it" (ERV). Paul wanted his preaching to help "every person who belongs to Christ to become complete" (Colossians 1:28, EASY). Paul taught and warned the people. He taught people Bible truth and how to live (2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:11; 1 Timothy 5:7; Titus 1:9). Paul warned about the bad things that would happen if Christians rejected Jesus. Paul also warned about the dangers of false teachers (Acts 20:29–31; Romans 16:17).

When we accept the Bible's teachings and warnings, we grow as Christians. Growing in Jesus is an important idea. Parents celebrate their baby's first words and first steps. They celebrate when their child learns to read. But what if someone's child didn't learn to walk or talk after many years? The parents would be worried, right? Growth is a normal part of life.

The Greek word written as "complete" in Colossians 1:28 (EASY) is "teleios." "Teleios" means something that is perfect and not spoiled in any way. As we grow in faith, we understand God's law more and more and what it asks of us (Psalm 119:96). We understand that God's law "judges [shows us] the thoughts and feelings in our hearts" (Hebrews 4:12, ERV).

But we must be careful. That's why Paul uses the word "warn" in Colossians 1:28 (EASY). "Some people think they are doing what's right. But what they are doing will really kill them" (Proverbs 14:12, ICB). When we study the Bible, the Holy Spirit gives us wisdom. False teachings often have some truth. But these teachings add or remove something the Bible says (read Isaiah 8:20). Then we may question if what the Bible says really matters for our time. So, we must be wise when we study the Bible. Then we will know what is Bible truth and what are false teachings.



As we grow in faith, we understand God's law more and more and what it asks of us (Psalm 119:96).



“We have no reason to brag or feel pride in our hearts. Jesus is our only reason for hope.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “We have nothing holy in our hearts. We cannot keep God’s law. But Jesus made a way to save us. . . . You must give yourself to Him. Accept Him as your Savior. Your past may be filled with sin. But God will accept you as holy because of Jesus. God looks at us and sees only Jesus’ holy life. God accepts us as if we never sinned.

“But there’s more. Jesus changes the heart. Jesus lives in our heart when we have faith in Him. Faith helps us keep our connection with Jesus. We also must continue to give our hearts to Him. As long as we choose to serve Him, He will work in us to do the things that please God. . . .

“So we have no reason to brag or feel pride in our hearts. Jesus is our only reason for hope. His holy life is His gift to us. His gift makes our hearts clean. Then His Spirit works in us to make us holy.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pages 62, 63, adapted.

“God showed me in a powerful way that many people would leave our church. They would obey evil spirits and accept their teachings. The Lord wants each person who believes Bible truth to understand what is truth.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, page 363, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read the memory verse again. What does it mean? What does it mean that Jesus became sin for us? How should this idea help us understand Jesus’ death as our Substitute on the cross? Also, what does it mean that God accepts us because of Jesus?
- ② Many Christians believe in the idea of “once saved always saved.” This teaching means that Christians can never be lost after they accept Jesus. Why is this idea false? How does this false teaching put Christians who believe it in danger? We must reject this false teaching. At the same time, how can we have hope that we are saved?
- ③ How strong is your faith (read Colossians 1:23)? How well do you know what you believe and why you believe it? What can you do to better know what you believe? Why is strong faith so important?

MOVING THE TWO-DAY WEEKEND

Rene lost two jobs because of his faith in the Seventh-day Adventist religion. Rene, who lived in the Philippines, asked God for help. Rene prayed, “Lord, it looks as if being a Seventh-day Adventist is only for the rich. I can’t find a job that lets me have my Sabbaths off. How can I support my family?”

Rene studied to be an accountant when he was in college. But now he took whatever work he could find. He took jobs with building companies. But the pay wasn’t enough to feed his growing family. He now was the father of two young children. Rene prayed again, “God, can You help me find a job that will support my family?”

Then Rene saw an ad for an accounting job in the Middle East. He would need to leave his family in the Philippines. Rene got the job. When he arrived, he learned that the weekend in that country was on Thursday and Friday. So, people must work on Sabbath and Sunday.

Rene’s boss made him go into the office on Saturdays. But Rene didn’t need to do any work. So, he read the Bible and Ellen White’s writings. But he felt bad. He was at work on Sabbath. He felt as if he were doing something wrong. He wanted to go to church on Sabbath. Rene prayed. “Lord, if You help me to go to church, I will keep the Sabbath holy until I die.”

For two years, Rene prayed this prayer. Then he talked with his boss.

Rene said, “Please give me Saturdays off for my Sabbath rest.”

Rene’s boss said, “No, I can’t allow that.” But his boss did make Rene a promise. “If my king announces that he will change the weekend to Friday and Saturday, then you are free to rest.”

Rene prayed, “Lord, You heard what my boss said. Will You please help?”

Three months later, Rene’s boss was in Europe when the king signed a law to move the country’s weekend to Friday and Saturday. Rene never stopped praying during this time. But Rene didn’t hear the news. He went to the office as usual at nine o’clock on Saturday morning. He sat down and checked his email. Then he saw the message from his boss. The message said, “Rene, I heard the news from my king. I remember my promise to you. You are free to rest if my king announces Friday and Saturday to be the weekend.” Rene closed the office and went to church. He was so happy he cried.

Rene Tualdo is the accounting manager for the 1000 Missionary Movement, in Silang, Philippines. The headquarters were built with the help of a 13th Sabbath Offering, in 1996. Read more next week.

INSIDE *Story*



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“Rene, I heard the news
from my king. I remember
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Rene Tualdo