

1. **Introduction:** Last lesson, we were discussing Salvation: “To save” a person means to rescue them from personally threatening danger.
  - What “personally threatening danger” or dangers does every person face, but only God can eliminate the threat? “Mortal death” is one such threat. Everyone dies. No one knows when their death will occur nor are able to avoid it.
  - But there is another even scarier threat. It is God’s holy and inevitable wrath at sin which impacts not only mortal life but also the life to come.
2. **Moral Creatures Created;** God created two categories of moral creatures (angels and humans). Only God’s moral creatures are capable of sin.
  - WSC Q.14. “What is sin?” “*Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.*” God’s moral Law reflects His character. Thus, sin is anything that is not consistent with the character of God. Sin is disobedience to God.
  - Angels were created directly by God, created one-by-one as individuals. Angels are incapable of procreation.
  - God created humans as male and female such that, jointly they are capable of procreation. Except for Adam and Eve, all humans come into existence through human procreation (God’s indirect way of creating humans).
  - God is sovereign over all He created, both the living and non-living.
  - God’s moral creatures (humans and angels) were created holy as God is holy, created to live in conformity with His moral nature.
  - They were given the ability to freely choose in accordance with their strongest internal inclination at the instant of choice, either conforming to God’s moral nature or not.
  - Like their Creator God, the first humans, as created, were holy and righteous. They were in perfect conformity with God’s moral nature. “As created,” Adam and Eve were immortal.
  - God made them a lovely, perfect Garden to live in, one that supplied all their needs.
  - In that Garden, they lived in the presence of God, and He was with them regularly, walking and talking with them in the cool of the evening.
3. **Obedience to God Required:** To remain in their state of holy perfection, their was one requirement - obedience to God. Since their “ability to choose” allowed them to disobey God, they had the freedom (but not the necessity) to be disobedient.
  - To test Adam and Eve’s faithfulness, they were given a specific “do not” command.
  - God put one fruit-bearing tree in the Garden whose fruit they were forbidden to eat.
  - All other fruit-bearing trees were available for their food.
  - God told them if they ate the forbidden fruit, they would surely die on that day.

- A serpent, a persuasive creature, tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit by telling them that it would enable them to be more like God. He also assured them God didn't mean it when He said they would surely die if they ate the fruit.
  - Adam and Eve should have asked the serpent how he defined "die?" God and the serpent were using different definitions.
  - The serpent meant Adam and Eve would not die mortal death (separation of body and soul) in the day they ate the forbidden fruit.
  - God meant eating the forbidden fruit would cause death to become an integral part of who they were. They would immediately die spiritually (their spirit separated from God), would lose their immortality, their bodies would begin to deteriorate and experience changes leading to mortal death which would later occur.
  - Being more like God sounded like a good thing, and all they needed to do was eat a piece of fruit. Surely God would not punish them for becoming more like Him.
4. **Fall from Perfection**: They decided to eat the fruit to become more like God. Their disobedience caused them to immediately die spiritually, became unholy, lose their immortality, and began the physical decay toward inevitable mortal death.
- Since they were now unholy, they could no longer live in God's presence, so they were expelled from the Garden. God cursed the earth so gaining their living from the earth became hard work with many possible natural disasters.
  - Adam and Eve's disobedience and its consequences are referred to as "the fall."
  - When they ceased to be holy as God is holy, they experienced spiritual, physical, psychological, and other changes which were heritable.
  - Their procreated descendants would reap the defects imposed by the fall. They would be born spiritually dead and subject to mental and physical problems.
  - Their disobedience generated an internal inclination to disobey God, referred to as the "sin nature," which passes to all their descendants.
  - The sin nature that produces inclinations to disobey God is an ontological change, a change from a holy nature to an unholy nature.
  - Since Adam and Eve's sin, everyone sins and falls short of the glory of God. That means, every person faces the threat of God's wrath in this life and the life to come.
5. **Salvation**: Our Trinitarian God, in an act of grace and mercy to save sinners from His rightful wrath at their sin, provided a solution to the lack of holiness that is consistent with the requirements of the Law.
- Salvation pardons the penalty due sin and transforms the sinner's innermost being to make them "able to not sin." Salvation is directly from God.
6. **What Salvation Must Fix**: Salvation must remedy all spiritual defects. The goal of salvation is making people holy like God and thus able to live in God's presence.

- Salvation proceeds in steps. (1.) Regeneration - instilling new spiritual life. (2.) Justification – declared legally righteous before God based on Jesus’ atoning life and death. (3.) Sanctification – the Holy Spirit is sent to indwell the justified sinner for the purpose of working the ontological change necessary to reduce the sin nature. (4.) Glorification – sanctification gradually reduces the sin nature but does not eliminate it. It is glorification at mortal death, or when Jesus returns, that eliminates the sin nature making it impossible to sin.
  - Glorification completes the transformation of a believing sinner into a moral image of Christ, holy and righteous, able to live in Gods’ presence.
7. **The Gospel Offer:** Through the gospel, God’s salvation is offered to all people.
8. **Matthew 2:18-20:** *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*
- This “great commission” directs the disciples to go to all nations to spread the good word about what Jesus’ accomplished on behalf of sinners to all the nations.
  - Surprisingly, the disciples, who heard Jesus’ admonition, stayed in Jerusalem for most of the next four years. Then persecution forced many to leave that city.
  - In 34 AD, about 4 years after Christ’s ascension, Saul was converted.
  - In 37 AD, about 7 years after the Ascension, Peter had a vision that sent him to Cornelius, a God-fearing Roman centurion. Peter administered baptism and received the Gentile family into Christian fellowship.
  - In 48 AD, about 18 years after the Ascension, Paul began his first missionary journey. That was the beginning of sustained, focused evangelism of Gentiles.
  - Jesus came into the world “at just the right time” when God’s preparations were complete. One phase of that preparation was preparing conditions so that it was relatively easy to spread the gospel to the world from its beginning in Israel.
  - In the beginning, effort was focused on the people of the Roman Empire.
9. **Providential Preparation for the Spread of the Gospel:** The Roman world’s situation was well-suited for the spread of the gospel. At least 6 conditions contributed to the gospel’s rapid spread.
- (1.) The widespread dispersion of the Jews. (2.) The earliest Christian missionaries were converted Jews. (3.) There were many Synagogues throughout the Empire. (4.) Greek was the default common language understood by most people in the Empire. (5.) Travel was relatively easy and safe. (6.) The Roman Peace.
  - Persecution of Christians by both Jews and Romans contributed to the spread of the gospel as persecuted believers sought safe places to live.

10. **Dispersion of the Jews:** Assyrian and Babylonian Empires conquered Israel and Judea, forcibly took large numbers of Jews from both kingdoms and carried them as prisoners to their own countries. The result was that Jews were widely dispersed in Gentile areas that later became part of the Roman Empire.
- At the time of the crucifixion (30 AD), there were Jews all over the Roman Empire.
  - Large cities had thousands. Egypt had more than a million. These dispersed Jews were a major factor in spreading the gospel. Here is how.
  - The dispersed Jews remained true to their ancestral faith. Wherever they went, they built Synagogues. They made pilgrimages to Jerusalem for religious festivals, but they built homes and businesses in their new countries. They were industrious, bright, successful, and influential citizens wherever they settled.
11. **Missionaries:** Most early Christian missionaries were converted Jews. As they traveled to spread the gospel, wherever they went in the Empire, they encountered fellow Jews at Synagogues. Not all Synagogue worshippers were Jews.
- Synagogue worshippers included Jews, Proselytes, and God-fearers. Proselytes were Gentiles converted to Judaism, obedient to the Law. Men were circumcised.
  - God-fearers were people attracted to Judaism but who chose to not convert. They accepted the one true God but did not keep Ceremonial Law. Males were not circumcised. God-fearers were not permitted to speak to the congregation.
  - All Synagogue worshippers were familiar with Hebrew Scripture including that about the promised Messiah. That basic knowledge was useful to missionaries.
  - A stumbling block to Synagogue worshippers was not Scripture's promise of Messiah's coming but doubt that Jesus was the promised Messiah.
  - To the Jews, a gospel that failed to differentiate between Gentiles and Jews didn't make sense. God chose the Jews as His people. If Gentiles wanted to be favored by God, they needed to first convert to Judaism, and become Law-abiding Jews.
12. **Synagogues:** Christian missionaries, coming to a new area, established contacts through the Synagogues that were scattered all over the Empire.
- Jews received special dispensation from Rome excusing them from emperor worship. Because Christians worshipped in the Synagogues, Rome considered them to be a sect of Judaism and hence shielded from emperor worship.
  - Later, Jews opposed Christians and refused to let them worship in Synagogues.
  - Rome then declared Christians to be independent and subject to emperor worship.
  - Since Christians could not and would not participate in emperor worship, they were considered guilty of breaking Roman law and were punished.
13. **A Common Language:** Alexander the Great (July 356-June 323 BC) conquered enormous territory that included all the area surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

- Alexander’s ambition, and that of his successors, was to bring people into one common world by imposing the Greek language in the conquered territories.
  - They succeeded so well that, except for a few remote areas, Greek became the common speech around the Mediterranean and remained so after Rome took over.
  - Everywhere in the Empire, Christian missionaries could speak Greek and be understood. Paul most likely spoke Aramaic, Hebrew, and Latin as well as Greek, but when he preached to Gentiles, he preached in Greek.
  - Paul and most of the dispersed Jews used a Greek translation of Hebrew Scripture called the Septuagint (a Greek translation from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC).
  - Having Scripture in Greek and Greek as a common language helped missionaries.
  - Rome’s official language was Latin. It might seem Paul’s letter would be written in Latin. However, most of Rome’s population understood Greek, so Paul wrote his great explanation of “Justification by Faith” in Greek.
14. **Ease and Safety of Travel:** Travel was relatively easy and safe in the Empire.
- Roman roads, developed to move military forces and supplies, provided easy access everywhere. Roman soldiers policed the roads.
  - The Mediterranean Sea was cleared of pirates making sea travel common and relatively safe. The biggest sea travel problem was winter storms. Sea travel generally ceased during the winter.
  - Good roads and frequent ship traffic during non-winter months made long journeys possible. Paul used the good roads and sea travel to advantage.
15. **The Roman Peace:** Threats from invaders were minimized by Rome’s military triumphs. Roman law was powerful and relatively fair, especially for citizens. The strong, impartial hand of Roman law saved Paul from several violent encounters.