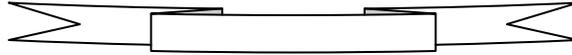


So Great Salvation Study Guide

Teaching Series Part 1 - Awakening

By Paris Reidhead*

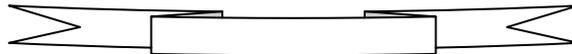
Pastor Reidhead set up this Bible Study Guide to accompany the “So Great Salvation - Study Guide I”. Below are his instructions on how to administer this study guide and questions.



Series I of “So Great Salvation” is composed of six sermons with eight correlating lessons. At the end of each chapter there are study questions. You will find the answers to these questions by carefully listening to the sermon and thoughtfully and prayerfully reading the text.

It is suggested that you first answer the questions of each chapter on a piece of notebook paper; then reread the chapter and listen again to the sermon to satisfy yourself that your answers are correct in relation to the material covered.

Then transfer your answers onto the study question sheet at the end of each chapter. Your carefully written answers will now become a valuable part of the study course of “So Great Salvation.”



AWAKENING

God does three things when He wants to bring someone out of death into life. First, He exposes that person to a sample of His grace. Do you know that you are a sample of the grace of God? If ever that person comes to Christ it will be because of you.

Second, God constrains someone to intercede for the sinner. Intercession is crucial if God is to begin working in a sinner's heart. God gives sinners the right to go to hell. “As I live, saith the Lord. I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn and live. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?” (Eze. 33:11) The essence of sin is anarchy. Under the dominion of Satan people are free to be anarchists and to do whatever they please. God doesn't interfere until the sinner asks for interference, or a request for interference is made by the sinner's representative.

God made us to be priests. “Unto Him who loved us, washed us in His blood and made us to be kings and priests unto God.” (Rev. 1:5) As a priest, God has given you the responsibility to intercede. This is not to be carried out capriciously. An intercessor goes into the presence of God in behalf of the sinner, consents to the justice of the condemnation of the sinner and acknowledges his guilt. He then makes the confession the sinner ought to make, and pleads with God to begin to work in the sinner's heart. You are the court appointed representative of the sinner. God's command is not a whimsy. He does not change.

Third, God prompts someone to witness to the sinner. A witness tells what he has seen and heard and experienced; nothing more. That person who goes beyond what he has seen, heard or experienced becomes a philosopher. Christ did not we should be philosophers unto Him. He said, “Ye shall be witnesses ...” Hearsay is inadmissible and has no spiritual value.

What have you seen that you can share? Have you seen yourself to be a sinner worthy of death as the Scripture states in Romans 1:29-32. What have you heard that you can share? Have you heard God speak through His Word concerning His holiness and righteousness? Have you heard, “Thou shalt not ...”? Have you heard Him say, “Come unto Me and rest.”? Did you come? Did you find cleansing and forgiveness? Did you experience the New Birth? Did you experience the witness of the Spirit of God to your heart enabling you to call the Almighty God “Abba Father”?

You are a witness, telling what you have seen and heard and experienced; that's all. You don't know the answers to all the questions, and you don't need to know. But you are the world's greatest expert on YOU. No one can contradict you. If you've really experienced something, you can speak of it to anyone in the world. This is what I SAW; this is what I HEARD; this is what I EXPERIENCED.

That's witnessing. But when you've done that, you can do no more. Live Christ before sinners, intercede for sinners and witness to them. From that moment on, God must act, and that is to awaken the sinner.

I. HOW THE SINNER IS DESCRIBED

The Scripture tells us much about the sinner. We can also learn much by recalling our own attitude. We were traitors, rebels, anarchists, transgressors and enemies. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them." (II Cor. 4:4)

Have you ever tried to take a nap in the middle of the day? In order to simulate darkness you put a blindfold over your eyes. That's what the god of this world seems to have done to the lost. He has blinded their minds, deliberately and effectively, so we may correctly say that the sinner is asleep.

Not only is the sinner asleep, but he is dead in sin. "You who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1)

The sinner is dead in the sense that there is no interest in the things of God, no sensitivity to the work and Word of God. Sinners must be awakened. "Awake to righteousness." (I Cor. 15:34) "Awake, thou that sleepest." (Eph. 5:14)

II. WHAT GOD HAS TO SAY ABOUT SINNERS

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen. 6:5) Of this verse Matthew Henry writes: "All the sins of sinners are known to God the Judge ... God sees all, and judges right according to it, how great it is, nor can He be deceived in His judgment. He observed the fountain of sin that was in men's hearts."

When we read "the thoughts of the heart" we can take it for the settled judgment and opinion and purpose. Since sin in its essence is the sovereign choice of the person to "live to please himself, to gratify his appetites as he sees fit", every imagination thereafter is evil.

"Because sentence against evil is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Ecc. 8:11)

Again we go to Matthew Henry for comments: "It is true of all sinners ... that because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily they think it will never be executed, and therefore they set the law at defiance and 'their hearts are full in them to do evil; 'they venture to do so much the more mischief, fetch a greater compass in their wicked designs, and are secure and fearless in it, and commit inequity with a high hand ..."

"Sinners herein deceive themselves, for, though the sentence be not executed speedily, it will be executed the more severely at the last." Of this verse Charles Finney said: "This does not imply that men do evil for the sake of the evil itself ... We are not to suppose that men set their heart upon these sins out of love of pure wickedness; but they do wickedly for the sake of the good they hope to gain thereby ... His (the sinner's) heart, too, is so fully set within him to do evil that he cannot get his own consent to turn from his sins to God."

"The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live." (Ecc. 9:3)

In his sermon entitled "Moral Insanity" Charles G. Finney affirmed:

"According to the Bible, the heart in all unrenewed men is the same in its general character —'the heart of the sons of men is full of evil' - as if the sons of men had but one heart—all in common—and this one heart were full of evil."

“The Bible, by affirming that ‘madness is in their heart while they live’ suggests that this madness is not that of anger but insanity—not of the head, but of the heart—in which the will and voluntary powers are disordered. Moral insanity is will madness.”

“So men, in their sins, treat the realities of the spiritual world as if they were not real, but follow the most empty phantoms of this world, as if they were stern realities.”

“—They act as if self were of supreme importance and everything else of relatively no importance;”

“—They act as if their own self-interest to be more important than everything else in the universe and that God's interests and rights are as nothing in comparison;”

“—They act as if it is far more important to secure the good of time than the good of eternity;”

“—They act as if damnation were salvation and salvation as if it were damnation.”

“Although some sinners may be externally fair, and may seem to be amiable in temper and character, yet every real sinner is actually insane. In view of all the solemnities of eternity, he insists on being controlled only by the things of time.—The mournful fact is, he loves sin, and after that he will go!”

“Intellectual insanity is only pitiable, not disgraceful; but moral insanity is unspeakably disgraceful.”

“Conversion to God is becoming morally sane. It consists in restoring the will and the affections to the just control of the intelligence, the reason and the conscience.” (from *Gospel Themes*, Charles G. Finney, pps 147-159)

Moral insanity is not a congenital condition one can blame on parents or ancestors; intellectual insanity may be, but not moral insanity. Rather moral insanity is the logical result of the choice made by all sinners (“for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”) when at the age of accountability the person made the choice, the commitment to please himself as the end of his being.

“God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.” (Psalm 7: 11)

The great British preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in his *Exposition of the Psalms*, on this verse had these words:

“‘God is angry with the wicked every day.’ He not only detests sin, but is angry with those who continue to indulge in it. We have no insensible and stolid God to deal with; He can be angry, nay, He is angry today and every day. You, you ungodly and impenitent sinners, the best day that ever dawns on a sinner brings a curse with it. Sinners may have many feast days but no safe days. From the beginning of the year to its ending, there is not an hour in which God's oven is not hot and burning in readiness for the wicked, who shall be as stubble.

“‘If he turn not, He will whet His sword.’ What blows are those which will be dealt by the long uplifted arm! God's sword has been sharpening on the revolving stone of daily wickedness, it will not repent, it will speedily cut the wicked in pieces. Turn or burn is the sinner's only alternative. ‘He hath bent His bow and made it ready.’”

Much earlier than Spurgeon, Matthew Henry in his commentary wrote the following on this verse:

“‘God is angry with the wicked every day.’ They are ever doing that which is provoking to Him, and He resents it, and treasures it up against the day of wrath. As His mercies are new every morning towards His people, so His anger is new every morning against the wicked, upon the fresh occasions given for it by their renewed transgressions. God is angry with the wicked

even in the merriest and most prosperous of their days; even in the days of their devotions; for if they be suffered to prosper, it is in wrath; if they pray, their very prayers are an abomination. “The wrath of God abides upon them.’ (John 3:36) and continual additions are made to it.”

III. HOW BELIEVERS ARE TO WITNESS TO THE LOST

Some time ago I talked with a surgeon who stated that the most important person in the operating room, other than the surgeon, is the surgical nurse. The function of the surgical nurse is to know what is to be done next, and to be prepared with the instrument needed. The surgical nurse puts the instrument firmly into the hands of the surgeon. In a sense, you are a surgical nurse to God the Holy Spirit. If you find a sinner who is unawakened, do you know which of the scalpels of truth is needed in order to be effective in awakening that sinner? The witness has to be effective.

The Holy Spirit uses a certain class of Scriptures. It is your responsibility to memorize them to make them available for use.

Don't use John 3:16. Why? Because you tell a sinner how to be saved before he has realized that he needs to be saved. What you have done is to gospel-harden him. What we have done in America is to gospel-harden a generation of sinners by telling them how before they have any understanding as to why they need to be saved.

There is no record of what Paul and Silas said in that jail in Philippi during those long night hours, but I do know what they DIDN'T say. They did not tell the people in that prison how to be saved. Paul and Silas waited until the Philippian jailor, realizing his desperate plight, gave the invitation, when he said,

"What must I do to be saved?" Then Paul told him how, but not until then.

What are the Scriptures you can quote when you meet someone who is unawakened?

"Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction." (Psa. 73:18)

"Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord." (Jer. 23:12)

"Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant," (Isa. 30:12-13)

Do you think that sinners actually believe they are standing in slippery places, that their position is precarious? I know; you say that you are going to do something about God when you get old, but you may not get old.

A big part of the problem of seeing sinners awakened is the unconcern of the saints. If we can't get the saints concerned about the lostness of the lost, it is difficult to get the lost concerned about their own state.

"God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." (Psa. 7:11, 12)

There is no conflict with the fact that God loved the world and gave His Son and still is angry with the wicked every day. You see, sin is not a congenital disease. Sin is a high treasonous crime against the Godhead. The only one big enough and wise enough and just enough and righteousness enough to rule and govern that which was made in the image of God is the God in whose image that one is made. To turn to one's own way and to say I'm going to live as a moral anarchist in a moral universe is treason ... not just an act of treason, but a lifetime of rebellion; not just a lifetime of rebellion, but the policy of anarchy.

IV. UNCONCERN OF PROFESSING BELIEVERS TO THE PLIGHT OF THE LOST

I have found singularly little burden for the lost in the average church in which I have been privileged to minister. I have been for an entire week in some of our fine churches in Bible Conferences and evangelistic meetings, and not one church member has brought one lost person, or taken me out to meet such a person. There is no prayer burden, no concern for the lost. Somehow God has to penetrate our understanding with the truth that what has happened to us must happen to others.

"He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Pro. 29:1)

Are sinners around you often reproved? Every obituary page in the newspaper is a reproof. Life is short; death is certain. Every time a sinner passes a church crowned by a steeple and a cross is a reproof. Every time he dates a check he is marking the birth of Jesus Christ, from which we mark all legal documents. A gospel song heard on the radio through an open window ... a gospel video program ... those are reproofs. An angel does not need to stand and voice a warning for sinners to flee from the wrath to come ... a tract left in the subway, a Bible in the hotel room. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck ..."

We have given to the unsaved the idea that they have unlimited time before them in which they can decide whether or not they want to come to Christ. They don't have it.

V. WHAT SHOULD TRUE BELIEVERS DO ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LOST?

Do you care about the lost? Someone cared about you; someone lived Christ before you; someone interceded for you; someone witnessed to you. Are you equipped with those verses of Scripture that you could use for the unawakened to cause them to realize the danger in which they stand? Or don't you believe they stand in danger? We have so twisted the love of God so as to make the God of the Bible one who was stern and angry with His children but indulgent with His grandchildren. The God of the Bible doesn't change!

"I entreat you to first "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." (II Cor. 13:5)

You see, salvation is not a scheme, it's not a plan, it's not a decision. Salvation is a Person. "He that hath the Son hath life." (I John 5:12)

The second entreaty is that you ask God to forgive you if you have been unconcerned about the lost, and if you are unequipped with those verses of Scripture that you could use, honed in prayer and oiled in love, to be the Sword of the Spirit to the unawakened sinner.

It is imperative that the sinner be "awakened" before the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ" can shine into his heart and mind. Awakening is that new sensitivity that the Holy Spirit of God works in people to cause them to realize their need. It is usually not expressed in theological terms, but in things of church, the Bible, the believers known and previously considered unimportant. The awakened sinner finds that he is vaguely dissatisfied with his life, his friends, his "things", his position. None of these things give him the inner satisfaction and peace he now finds he wants and sorely lacks.

Usually when a sinner is awakened he goes to someone he thinks can help him. All too often this individual thinks that because the sinner is open and concerned he is ready for the plan of salvation. Too frequently the awakened sinner is led to make a premature profession of faith, only to discover a few days later that there is nothing real to it. At that point, he goes back to the world he wished to leave saying, "I tried this Jesus business, but it doesn't work!"

We need to understand that awakening is but the first stage of the divine operation, albeit one of great importance. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." (Rom. 8: 15)

In contrast to the work of the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of Adoption" is this earlier work of awakening in which the Holy Spirit uses the law to reveal to sinners that they are slaves of sin and have grounds to fear God.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Psa. 111:10)

Since the law is the "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ" it was given that "every mouth might be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." (Gal. 3:24) Therefore, it is to be expected that the Holy Spirit will use the law to awaken the sinner and cause him to realize how just God's judgment is and what good reasons he has to tremble and be afraid in the presence of a Holy God.

Our next study will how the Holy Spirit works through the Word to bring the awakened sinner to conviction of sin.

7. What Scripture verses make it clear that the unconverted stand in slippery places?

a.

b.

c.

8. We know that the Word of God declares that “God loved the world”, but does it also say that God is angry with the wicked?

a. Where?

b. Cite reference.

9. What is the effect of frequent reproof of sinners?

a) Cite reference.

10. Why, in your judgment, are we commanded by the Apostle Paul to examine ourselves, as in II Corinthians 13:5?

11. Give a brief definition of “awakening”.

12. Why, in your opinion, did John Newton, the song writer, say, “Twas grace that taught our hearts to fear”?

13. What is the function of the law in awakening sinners? (Gal. 3:24)

14. What does the Scripture mean when it declares “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”? (Psa. 111:10)

* Reference such as: Original Message Delivered at Bethany Fellowship, Minneapolis, MN on Wednesday Morning, June 10, 1987 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

©PRBTMI 1987