

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 11: The God Who Saves

Unit 11 Big Question and Answer:

How Can We Be Saved?

It is God's Free Gift!

PFI NIV Songs 11, Tracks 3,4

Unit 11 Bible Verse: Romans 6:23, NIV 1984

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 3:

We Must Trust Jesus as Our Savior and Obey Him as Our Lord.

It isn't enough to simply think that Jesus is the only way to God. We need to trust in Jesus as our own Savior; and, we need to begin a new life of living for Him.

We need to confess to God that we are a sinner and ask His forgiveness for our sins. We need to believe that Jesus suffered and died on the cross as the perfect payment for our sins; and that three days later, He rose from the dead in victory over death. We need to turn our lives over to Him, asking Him to help us to love and live for Him in everything we do.

Trusting in Jesus to be our Savior is a wonderful work that God does by His Holy Spirit in the hearts of His people. He delights for us to ask Him to send the Holy Spirit to do this work in our heart.

When we trust in Jesus as our Savior, we also accept Him as our Lord. "Lord" is an old word used in the Bible that we don't use much anymore. It means someone who is in charge and who we are to obey. The sign of someone who truly trusts in Jesus as their Savior, is whether they also are trying to live to please God.

God's people want to obey Him in everything they do, but they can't do that on their own—and they don't have to. God gives believers His Holy Spirit to live inside them and help them to grow in love and in obedience to Him. God always gives us what we need to be His people, if we but ask!

BIBLE VERSE

How do I know this is true? The Bible tells me so!

Bible Truth 3 Bible Verse: Romans 10:9-10, NIV 1984

"...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

CASE STORY

Mark 2:13-17; Matthew 9:9; Luke 5:27-32

Our story is called:

The Case of the Transformed Tax-Man.

As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out:

1. Who was the Tax-Man? Why did he need transforming?
2. Who transformed him? How?

This story takes place in New Testament times, when Jesus lived on earth.

Matthew sat in his tax booth along the Great West Road, just outside of Capernaum. This busy road led from the rich city of Damascus in the east, to the ports of Phoenicia on the great Mediterranean Sea to the west. Matthew was the chief customs officer for the Roman leader, Herod Antipas, and his job was to collect Herod's customs tax money from every merchant's caravan that passed.

"You must collect tax from everything the merchants carry in their caravans," the Romans had told Matthew, when he started the job. "Any extra money you can get out of them is for you. That's how you get paid," they explained.

A fellow could get very rich if they were good at this job...and Matthew was! Galilee—the part of Israel where his booth was—had brought in five million dollars of customs tax money in just one year! Yes, Matthew had grown very, very rich.

But Matthew was a rich sinner. He had grown rich only by doing many sinful tricky tricks. What kinds of tricks did tax collectors like Matthew use? Well, it would look something like this:

Matthew would sit at his booth until he heard the tingling bells and clomping hoofs. This meant a merchant and his caravan of camels, loaded down with goods was approaching.

"Good morning, Master Merchant. What do you have in your caravan today?" Matthew would ask.

"Good morning to you, Master Tax Collector," replied the merchant in a less than friendly voice. He knew what Matthew was like. "Wheat from the plains, and fish from the Sea of Galilee."

"We'll see about that. I'll have to inspect each animal's load. Unpack them all," Matthew ordered.

"But Master Tax Collector, look at all these animals! You can plainly see what I have," the merchant replied.

“Do as I say or I will be forced to call in Roman soldiers to persuade you to cooperate,” Matthew warned.

“Yes, Master Tax Collector,” the merchant grumbled. Load after load was pulled from camels’ backs for Matthew to inspect.

“What is this here? This is not fish or wheat. It looks like a great deal of fine cloth. You must pay tax on it, too, my friend,” Matthew would say.

“But sir, that is not cloth for sale, it is for my family. You are only to tax those things I am selling,” the merchant would answer.

“How do I know that you have a family? I have a duty to the King Antipas and I must not fail. I will be forced to tax this cloth!” Matthew ordered. “So, let’s see, that’s 10 loads of wheat and 20 loads of fish, plus one load of fine cloth. To that we add a charge for each servant and for each animal...plus the fee for crossing the King’s bridges...that comes to ... and Matthew would lean over and show the merchant a ridiculously high amount.

“What! That is at least twice the amount I should pay!”

“Will you pay or shall I get the soldiers to force it out of you?” Matthew threatened again.

“You tax collectors are all the same! Forcing every last cent out of us hard-working merchants so you can have your fine houses and luxurious lifestyles. How can you live with yourself? I pity your mother and father for having such a child. You are a disgrace to us, Jews, you sinner!” The merchant turned his head and spit. He flung his money down on Matthew’s table and left.

“Ha, ha,” thought Matthew as he looked at the sum of money. “I’m off to a good start this morning!” Yet, deep inside Matthew knew that what the merchant had said was right. He was a disgrace to his family and his people. He was a sinner. “But, I am a rich sinner,” Matthew said to comfort himself. “I have a nice house and lots of money. And at least I have the other tax collectors and outcasts for friends.”

So now do you see how things were with Matthew? How much hope could there be for a tricky sinner like him? The Bible tells us. Here’s what happened next:

News traveled fast along the Great West Road. Matthew overheard the latest happenings from merchants as they passing through this tax station. Those coming from Capernaum told amazing things about Jesus: He did miracles! He healed the sick and forgave their sins like He

was God. Just the day before He had forgiven the sins of a paralyzed man and healed him! The man just got up, picked up his mat and walked out of the house! No one has ever seen anything like this! Great crowds had begun to follow Jesus. People wanting to be healed. People wanting to be forgiven. People wanting to hear what Jesus had to say about God.

“Now this is stunning news!” thought Matthew. “A man healing people and forgiving sins? A man who offers forgiveness for sins, as if He was God?” Perhaps a little hope rose in Matthew’s heart as he heard about Jesus. Perhaps he began to think about his life and his sin. Perhaps he began to think, “I am very rich, but I am such a sinner. I wonder if a sinner like me could be forgiven? I would like to meet this Jesus and see what he is like.”

Soon, Matthew got to do just that. Later that day, Jesus was teaching a large crowd nearby. He came down to the Great West Road and right up to Matthew’s tax booth. Jesus looked Matthew in the eyes and said, “Follow me.”

What would Matthew do? Leave behind his job, his money? It would be almost impossible to get it back if he quit, especially if he quit right then and there. And what about his house and all his money? If he followed Jesus, he would have to give all of that up. Wouldn’t he miss his good lifestyle? Matthew had a lot of big reasons to say “no” to Jesus’ offer.

But Matthew had even bigger reason to say “yes” to Jesus. “Jesus offers forgiveness of sins and has proven He has the power to do it by healing the sick. It is nice to be rich, but I am such a terrible sinner. I want forgiveness even more than riches,” thought Matthew. That settled it. Matthew turned to Jesus and said, “Yes, I will follow you!” He just got up, left everything and followed Jesus. Matthew turned away from his sinful life, believed in Jesus and followed him. Matthew was a changed man! God had forgiven and he had joy in his heart.

But it wasn’t enough for Matthew to be forgiven of his sins. He wanted the other outcasts, to hear how they, too, could have their sins forgiven, by repenting and believing in Jesus. So Matthew held a great banquet for Jesus at his house and invited a big crowd of tax collectors and other outcasts.

Jesus ate with them and told them about the Kingdom of God. Never had there been a teacher like Jesus! To eat with someone in Jesus’ day meant that you considered

them as your equal... even as family. No good Jew and certainly no teacher of God's Law would dream of eating with people like Matthew and his friends. But Jesus had come to save sinners from their sins. He knew that many of the other tax collectors and outcasts felt the burden of sin on their hearts, like Matthew. They longed to turn to God and be forgiven. Jesus would not hold back the good news of salvation from them.

But not everyone was as pleased with this news--especially the Pharisees. "Matthew the tax collector is throwing a huge feast for all the sinners and Jesus has gone to be with them!" they grumbled to each other.

They went to Matthew's house and found Jesus eating, drinking and teaching the people about the Kingdom of God. "Why do you eat and drink with 'sinners?'" the Pharisees complained to Jesus.

"You act like you have no sins. You think your good works make you right with God and you hate people who know they need God's forgiveness," Jesus replied.

"All people are sinners and need God's forgiveness. But until you know you are "sick" with sin, I cannot help you. These people here, they know they are sinners and need to turn away from their sins. So I have come to bring them forgiveness. It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Jesus told them.

The Pharisees knew the Bible better than anyone else in Jesus' day. They tried hard to keep every single works make you right with God and you hate people who know they need God's forgiveness," Jesus replied.

"All people are sinners and need God's forgiveness. But until you know you are "sick" with sin, I cannot help you. These people here, they know they are sinners and need to turn away from their sins. So I have come to bring them forgiveness. It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Jesus told them.

The Pharisees knew the Bible better than anyone else in Jesus' day. They tried hard to keep every single law they thought Jews were supposed to keep. They thought this made them acceptable to God. But Matthew and his friends knew something the Pharisees didn't understand: before God, everyone is a sinner in need of salvation. And they did something that the Pharisees didn't do: they turned and trusted in Jesus as their own Savior.

Our Bible Truth is: We Must Trust Him as Our Savior and Obey Him as Our Lord

Our Bible Verse is: Romans 10: 9-10:

"...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

Matthew and his friends listened to Jesus. They saw the amazing things He did. And many of them turned away from their sins and trusted Jesus to be their Savior. The Pharisees heard Jesus say and do the same things as Matthew and his friends, yet they would not turn away from their sins, trust in Jesus and be saved.

What about you and me? Will we be like the Pharisees and teachers of the law who know the Bible and can answer all the questions... who try hard to keep all the laws... and think that we please God by knowing a lot and doing a lot of good things? Yet, never turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior?

Or, will we be like the tax-collector Matthew and his friends, who knew they could never earn the favor of God, but must confess their sins, turn away from sinning and trust in Jesus as their own Savior?

Let's praise this Jesus, the God who Saves, who offers forgiveness and sins to the worse of sinners who turns to Him. Let's ask Him to help us to confess our sins to Him and turn and trust in His as our Savior.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:
 As long as we think that Jesus is the only way to God, it doesn't matter how we live.
 Answer: False! We must trust Jesus as our Savior, but also begin a new life of living for Him.

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. Who was the Tax-Man? Why did he need transforming?
 Answer: Matthew was the Tax-Man. He loved money so much that he had been willing to do bad things--such bad things, that he was not even allowed to meet for worship in the synagogue or the Temple. He had chosen money over God.

b. Who transformed him? How?
 Answer: Jesus transformed him. He told him the truth about God and about himself. He offered Matthew forgiveness of sins and new life with God, if he would repent of his life and follow Him as his Lord.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse: Romans 10:9-10
 "...if you ___ with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God ___ him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your ___ that you confess and are saved."
 Answers: confess; raised; mouth.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

To God Be the Glory
PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 10

Verse 2
 O perfect redemption,
 the purchase of blood,
 To ev'ry believer
 the promise of God;
 The vilest offender
 who truly believes,
 That moment from Jesus
 a pardon receives.

Refrain:
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
 Let the earth hear His voice!
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
 Let the people rejoice!
 O come to the Father,
 thro' Jesus the Son,
 And give Him the glory,
 great things He hath done.

Words: Fanny J. Crosby Music: William H. Doane

Everyone who trusts in Jesus as their own Savior knows God's forgiveness for their sins. Jesus has perfectly redeemed them. That is, He has paid for all their sins so they know God and enjoy eternal life with Him. How God's people praise God for sending Jesus to make the way for them to come to Him! If we trust in Jesus like this—even if we have been the worst of sinners—we can know that God will save us, just as He has promised. This will cause us to want to give God the glory for the great things He has done for us, too!

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication

A God, we praise You for being the Lover of Sinful People. You welcome them to come and be forgiven!

C God, we confess that many times we act like the Pharisees. We act like we can make ourselves good enough to please You on our own. Sometimes we don't think we really are that sinful, but, oh, how we need a Savior!

T God, we thank You for promising to send a Savior to save all those who turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us all to confess our sins, turn away from them and trust Jesus as our own Savior. Help us to turn away from our old, sinful way of life and live for You instead.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

If You Confess with Your Mouth
PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 11

If you confess, with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord,"
 And believe in your heart,
 That God raised Him from the dead,
 You will be save, you will be saved.
 For it is with your heart, that you believe and are justified.

If you confess, with your mouth,
 "Jesus is Lord,"
 And believe in your heart,
 That God raised Him from the dead,
 You will be save, you will be saved.
 For it is with your mouth, that you confess and are saved.
 Romans Ten: nine and ten.
 Words: Romans 10:9-10, NIV 1984 Music: Constance Dever ©2011

To believe something in your heart is to think that something is true. To confess something is to others is to tell them what you think is true. Christians are those who believe in their hearts that Jesus is the Son of God, who died on the cross to save God's people from their sins. They believe that He rose from the dead on the third day, showing that He had beaten sin and death for them. They love telling this good news to others that they might believe and be saved,