

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

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Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

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At this point I need to express a very special thanks to all of the people who have contributed to my series of books, both directly and indirectly: First and foremost, His most wondrous of gifts--my wife Janet and the incredible blessings from the Lord as I continue to write this series of books. Next, all of the help and spiritual growth I received from attending and ministering in the Lord's non-instrumental churches: McPherson Church of Christ, Council Bluffs; Redline Church of Christ, Harlan, Iowa and Harlan Church of Christ. Also the instrumental churches: First Christian Church, Council Bluffs, Iowa; my home congregation--East Side Christian Church, Council Bluffs. And finally: my family, Kathleen Kachulas, and many other wonderful friends and brethren, and my nephew David West who offered his professional web design services. I truly appreciate all of their help and encouragement.

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought no cease to yield fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Statement of Purpose

In mid-nineteen nineties I set out to research what took place when I first decided to obey the Gospel. The interest reaches back to 1978. This is when I first heard the gospel message from a preacher who served in a Council Bluffs, Iowa, Church of Christ – noninstrumental. My wife Janet had quietly and very effectively led me to attend this church and respond to the Lord’s call. Throughout our dating and engagement she consistently modeled a Christian woman, greatly influencing my interest in the Lord. She never stopped.

The minister taught me the basics of salvation and I chose to answer the Lord’s call. From this moment I became increasingly interested in learning what took place and began a systematic study of salvation. As I accumulated more knowledge and research information the thought occurred to me to share what I have learned. Thus my book began to take shape from a rough outline to a manuscript.

Through many years of writing I included other books and ending up with a series of books in various stages of completion. They speak about salvation, sin, the Lord’s work of salvation, the covenant, and an overview book.

The books include the integration of many different types of theology: theology – information about God, Christology – the work of Jesus, pneumatology – what the Holy Spirit is doing, ecclesiatology – about the Lord’s church, anthropology – mankind’s response and accountability to God, soteriology – the process of salvation, and eschatology – concerning the end of time and eternal life in the body of Christ.

This book is the overview. I have organized the chapters to briefly look at many differing aspects of salvation. It has nine chapters which include basic steps of information leading to a greater insight about God, what takes place when responding to His free offer of salvation in Christ, and spiritual confidence.

The parts of each chapter are like stepping stones, one of many crossing a stream of spiritual water. As the reader progresses from one step to another he will begin to grow in a better understanding concerning his present fellowship with Jesus and knowledge of what lies ahead. Once he reaches the other side he is able to look back across the stream and see the wonders of God’s grace. He is better equipped to recognize his participation and partnership in the Lord’s eternal plan.

I sincerely hope this information becomes as useful to the reader as it is for me the writer. May God richly bless your efforts to understand the blessings of salvation which the Lord so lovingly gave to all humanity. I pray God will give you the confidence and faith to witness the wondrous grace of God to the lost and fellow servant’s in the Lord.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Contents

Introduction

Section One: God

Section Two: God Speaks to His People

Section Three: Expectations

Section Four: Appealing to God for Redemption

Section Five: God's Work

Section Six: In God's Presence

Section Seven: Partnership with God

Section Eight: With God

Section Nine: Assurance

Closing Remarks

Section Nine: Assurance

Worshipping God	5
Hope	11
Inner Peace	14
Heritage in Christ	17
End of Life Inheritance	22
Eternal Life with God	26
Resurrection after Physical Death	29
Judgment for the Faithful in Christ	34

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Worshipping God

Under the Law of Moses, the faithful expressed their worship through belief and faith motivated sacrifices, moral obedience, and love towards one another. They physically revealed the will of God. Worship involved strict obedience to tribal spiritual leaders, priests, high priests, oral traditions, festivals, laws, required sacrifices of animals, birds, grains, and liquids. Throughout this time God used untold numbers of imperfect priests under the leadership of one imperfect high priest who presided over the rituals and intercession for an imperfect people.

The writer of *Hebrews* noted this about Jesus and the former duties of the priestly service to God: "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (7:26-27). Personal access to God only occurred once a year, by one randomly selected priest, and only behind a heavy curtain in the inner sanctuary of the temple.

The saint's belief and faith motivated spiritual focus expressed through obedience to God mattered the most, "you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only" (*Luke* 4:8b). The faithful spiritually self-circumcised their hearts as a result of their practice of faith motivated righteousness according to the will of God. When God considered a servant as spiritually righteous and spiritually circumcised He considered him as righteous and a saint. He also included him in the flow of the promise as it moved through history.

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ worship radically changed from physical to spiritual just as He foretold: "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers" (*John* 4:23). The Law of Moses ended the moment Jesus died. And with the beginning of the new covenant the application of belief, faith, and obedience changed from its focus upon physical worship to spiritual worship.

Spiritual circumcision changed as well, in the new covenant the Spirit performs the spiritual circumcision during the servant's unity with the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. However, just as in the ages before the Lord's death the blessing of righteousness remains dependent upon the spiritual state of the heart – it must be circumcised.

Belief and faith in the integrity of His word along with obedience to His will are still considered as righteousness by God. However, the servant's worship focus changed to Jesus Christ and His new covenant in order to approach God the Father in righteousness. In the new covenant obedience changed as well.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Worshipping God

No one is honored by God the Father without first obeying the will of Jesus Christ. In the new covenant the servant's response involves confessing the deity of Jesus and a commitment to repent. Repentance and confession are only honored by God if the servant submits to faith motivated baptism for his rebirth. He believes in the Lord's word concerning what takes place within the water of baptism. Righteousness results when he becomes one with the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. His new spirit, self, conscience, and circumcised heart give him his newborn holiness. Spiritually the servant returns to the innocence and sinlessness he had when first born. This is why he is considered as born again by the power of the Spirit.

Righteousness is still patterned after Abraham's example because its reception is still dependent upon the believer's fulfillment of his belief and faith through obedience to the will of Christ in the unseen work of God. The difference is revealed by how the servant fulfills obedience.

The new covenant believer no longer worships God through physical sacrifices and priests. He directly serves God in worship through Jesus Christ. The servant is the Lord's priest. He is one with God because the Spirit lives within him.

His sacrificial service is his own body, his life, "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (*Romans 12:1*). The worship of a servant of God in the new covenant is now exclusively through Jesus Christ and involves the continual sacrifice of himself as he serves Jesus in unity with His body of believer's. All servants serve God the Father through their high priest, Jesus Christ.

Even though he is God's son, he is still a servant of the Lord Jesus and servants live to sacrificially serve. He no longer needs to reach out to God through physical sacrifices, traditions, special days and festivals, required tithes, and priests, because God is living within him. His worship involves an infinite number of different aspects of serving God based upon faith motivated service rather than obligation to a written law, implied law, or tradition. Every moment of every day offers an opportunity to sacrifice and worship, for his life is his sacrifice and worship.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Worshipping God

All Christians serve God the Father through Jesus – a “holy, innocent, undefiled” and separated high priest.

Hebrews 7:26

- 1) Who do you serve?
- 2) How do you serve Jesus?
- 3) Is Jesus your High Priest?
- 4) How do you serve your High Priest?
- 5) Are the Lord’s servant’s priests?
- 6) What do they sacrifice?

Pre-Christian types of sacrifices are no longer needed because Jesus offered the “once for all” perfect sacrifice.

Hebrews 7:27

- 1) What types of sacrifice ended when Jesus died?
- 2) What specific sacrifice did Jesus end with His death sacrifice?
- 3) Why do you think Jesus will never repeat what He did on the cross?

The single most important focus of heart towards God before the death of Jesus will always remain the same, “you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only”.

Luke 4:8b

- 1) Who or what did you worship before you choose to change your worship to Jesus? Keep in mind who you served?
- 2) Who do you focus your worship on as you try to serve Jesus?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Worshipping God

- 3) Do you ever feel as if you are serving with a divided heart?
- 4) How do the values and expectations of the world affect your service to the Lord?
- 5) Is a constant state of repentance important to you?
- 6) How does sacrifice and faith connect?

Another vitally important part of daily worship focused upon the practice of righteousness which in pre-Christian ages resulted in the self-circumcision of heart. Jeremiah 4:4; Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 9:25

- 1) If God already considers you as righteous or holy why do you need to practice righteousness?
- 2) Is the Lord's gift of righteousness a progressive state of being where you slowly become more holy?
- 3) What is your guide to God's standard of righteousness for holy living?
- 4) Who did God promise give in order to help His saints learn how to live according to His standard of righteousness?
- 5) What are you doing to learn how to live according to His standard of righteousness?
- 6) How does the knowledge of being holy and pure affect your attitude towards trying to practice righteousness in everyday life?
- 7) Are you putting His counsel into practice every day?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Worshipping God

After the resurrection of Jesus worship remains vitally important even though dramatic changes took place.

John 4:23

- 1) How are worship and God's standard of righteousness connected?
- 2) How are worship and God's standard of love connected?
- 3) How are worship and God's standard of fellowship connected?
- 4) When does God expect His saints to worship Him?
- 5) What is the difference between assembling for worship and individual worship?
- 6) How do you think Jesus is trying lead His saints to focus on Him alone?
- 7) Why do you think a singular focus on Jesus is so important?
- 8) How do you focus singularly on Jesus with all of the distractions of the world interfering?

After His resurrection God the Father refocused the entire sacrificial system to one spiritual sacrifice – the life of His holy and pure servant.

Romans 12:1; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 2:17, 4:18

- 1) Why is Jesus so important to your worship focus?
- 2) What happens when worship is distracted by worldly expectations?
- 3) How do you practice worldly expectations and responsibilities while at the same time retaining a singular focus on Jesus?
- 4) Have you ever thought of your life as a saint as a mini theocracy patterned after the Lord's ideal vision of what Israel should have become? What about the church as a whole?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Worshipping God

5) If your life is a mini theocracy where the Lord rules and governs everything in your life how does this spiritual reality affect your moment to moment thoughts, choices, and decisions?

Spiritual circumcision changed when the new covenant arrived, from self-circumcision of the heart by applied righteousness to circumcision of the heart by the work of the Spirit as a result of being considered by God as righteous.

Romans 2:28-29, 4:11; Philippians 3:2-3; Colossians 2:11-14; Deuteronomy 30:1-6

- 1) Before the Lord's death how did the Lord's servant circumcise his own heart?
- 2) After the Lord's death how did circumcision of the heart change?
- 3) How did God circumcise you heart?
- 4) Is circumcision of the heart important?

Obedience to God has made a dramatic change as well. Before the death of Jesus the Lord's servant indirectly served one God. After the Lord's resurrection His servant directly serves God the Father exclusively through Jesus Christ.

John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 10:19-22; Ephesians 2:4-6, 1:20, 1:3

- 1) How do you serve Jesus and no other god?
- 2) How do you maintain your focus on Jesus when the world and personal responsibilities demands so much of your attention?
- 3) What does serving God face to face mean to you?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Hope

Only a saint in Christ is able to understand the full impact of hope. Hope is only developed from assurance in the promises made by God to those redeemed back into His family of holy children. Paul offered insight into the divine aspects of hope when he stated, "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; ... but if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (*Romans* 8:24a-25). Hope is realized by steadfast belief, faith, confession, repentance, and obedience in God the Father through Jesus. It is sustained by confidence in the integrity of His word. Hope is the servant's expectation of a present and future destiny based entirely upon the unseen truth of God's word. Hope realizes God's word.

Hope fuels an inner peace regardless of how difficult life becomes. No one is able to take from a believer his present and future expectation of the fulfillment of his faith in Christ and the promises of God's eternal inheritance. In *Ephesians*, Paul wrote: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (1:18). Hope is peace.

Hope is the believer's inner vision of eternity with God and helps to maintain his focus upon Him regardless of how good or difficult life becomes. Hope looks past the constant conflicts which arise from the flesh, lust, past experiences, memories, and the difficulties involved with maturing in Christ. Hope assures the Lord's servant of his new life, new present experiences, and new future despite continual messages of disparity. Hope is purpose.

Hope turns past conflict and hopelessness into positive forces of meaningful blessing to fellow believers and the lost, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (*2 Corinthians* 1:3-4). Hope gives meaning to past and present experiences in life regardless of how negative they appear from a physical point of view. Hope gives purpose to even the most difficult of memories and pain. Hope is victory.

The writer of Hebrews offered assurance of the solidity of one's hope in God's eternal promise through Jesus Christ when he wrote: "In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Hope

encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil" (6:17-19). Hope stabilizes.

The author is conveying the importance and endurance of hope. For hope is empowered by the assurance of God's unchangeable purpose and promise to His children. God cannot lie, the promise and its eternal blessings are reserved in heaven for those who finish their lives in faith, and those who finish this race will receive all of the promises mentioned plus more beyond imagination. Hope is future glory.

The promises of God are the hope all believers have; His promises are the power of hope in the fulfillment of hope. This is why hope is "an anchor of the soul" for it will not change and the promises given by God are never broken. In hope one's soul is steadfast and secure despite the tempest of the sea around him. Hope motivates a steady life in Christ and ensures every believer they are not only going to receive eternal blessings in the future but they are entering into the very throne room of God through Christ each and every day of their lives while on earth. Hope is a promise.

Questions

Salvation is dependent upon faith in the integrity of God's word; hope is the expectation of faith.

Romans 8:24b-25

- 1) Why is hope so important to you?
- 2) What does hope mean to you?
- 3) Why is spiritual hope always focused on something you cannot physically experience?
- 4) What must you do in order to mature your sense of hope?

Hope and perseverance work together to develop peace.

James 1:2-4

- 1) Why do you think hope is so dependent upon patience?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Hope

- 2) Does physical trial affect your hope in unseen spiritual expectations?
- 3) How important is the connection between attitude and hope?

The object of hope is the eternal inheritance.
Ephesians 1:18

- 1) Why do you hope for an internal inheritance?
- 2) What do you expect from God?
- 3) Do you think God is sharing some of His eternal inheritance with you right now?
- 4) Why do you want to be the Lord's servant?

Hope steadies the soul of God's children in the midst of the stormy seas of life.
Hebrews 6:17-19

- 1) Why is hope so important when life goes wrong?
- 2) When physical circumstances seem to take control of your life what generally happens to your level of hope?
- 3) Is it a good thing for hope to cycle from small to great according to circumstances?
- 4) How do you maintain steady levels of hope?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Inner Peace

Peace and hope are built upon the servant's confidence in the ageless promises of God and rest upon the pillar of faith in God through Jesus Christ. Peace is another gift of God's endless grace which the world cannot understand. It is a blessing reserved for only those who express their faith in God through Jesus. In his gospel *John* quoted Jesus, stating: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (16:33). Peace is confidence in Jesus.

Jesus told His children they can enjoy the blessing of peace in heart despite circumstances offering little or no hope in the world. Inner peace is a reality because it is empowered by God Himself. Peace is the natural emotion felt as a result of belief in Jesus, faith in the Lord's gift of life, and hope in the promises of God. Peace is soothing confidence in God's control over circumstances arising in a believers' life, whether good or bad. Peace is confident in tomorrow.

Peace is an inner comfort of knowing the certainty of destiny. Regardless of what life throws in the path of a faithful saint, it cannot alter the reality of eternal destiny against his will. Physical circumstances cannot alter the tender care Christ gives to His lambs when they are troubled, under trial, and persecuted from whatever source. This is one of the reasons why Paul could confidently counsel his fellow believers to "be anxious for nothing" (*Philippians* 4:6a). God already knows and is caring for their needs even before His children have a chance to experience their needs. The believer knows God answers his prayers and will always take care of his circumstances in life regardless of what he experiences and feels. Peace is built upon confidence in God's ability to care for life regardless of perceptions of how life is going. Peace does not fear.

Peace is the result of an inner assurance of God protective care. Even though life often presents seemingly insurmountable obstacles Jesus is always alongside inwardly and outwardly leading the way and giving comfort in indescribable ways. Peace is inner confidence Jesus will never abandon His sheep and will always shepherd His flock with the utmost of loving care. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Philippians*, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4:7). Peace cannot be fully understood yet it immerses the believer in its reality.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Inner Peace

The world only offers spiritual chaos and tribulation disguised as peace.

- 1) How does compromise with the world affect spiritual peace?
- 2) Why does God call for His children to separate themselves from the ways of the world?
- 3) How do you grow in spiritual peace when you have to live within the turmoil of the world?
- 4) How does inner peace develop?
- 5) How are peace, hope, and faith connected?

Jesus offers true peace.

John 16:33; Psalm 4:4, 46:10

- 1) Is Jesus the only source for true inner peace?
- 2) What may happen to your faith if you cannot develop spiritual peace?
- 3) How is peace connected to contentment?
- 4) Do you make it a habit to understand Jesus from Bible study?
- 5) How does fellowship and one another love mature inner spiritual peace?

The Lord's quietness of soul is a feeling of calmness resulting from complete confidence and assurance in His personal attention towards every one of His children.

Philippians 4:6a

- 1) How does spiritual peace connect with confidence in the integrity of God's word?
- 2) Does doubt affect spiritual peace?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Inner Peace

- 3) Do you doubt God's work in your life?
- 4) Is spiritual peace affected by worldly distractions?
- 5) Is spiritual peace affected by compromises with the moral standards of the world?

Peace stands guard over the heart and mind by overcoming the anxieties of doubt, fear, and negative feelings.

Philippians 4:7; Matthew 6:25-34

- 1) How do you feel peace and anxiety connect with each other?
- 2) What does Jesus say about anxiety?
- 3) What causes the troubles in your heart which rob your inner peace?
- 4) Are you trying to do anything spiritual to develop peace?
- 5) Does following the Spirit's counsel concerning how to live according to God's standard or righteousness have anything to do with inner peace?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Heritage in Christ

The people redeemed by Jesus have returned to God the Father and are included in a very exclusive family. The members of this family reach as far back in history as Adam and Eve and onward into history to the second coming of Christ. This is the family of the faithful righteous in God before the resurrection of Christ and the faithful righteous in God the Father through Jesus Christ after His resurrection. This is the family of the promise which God first revealed to Adam and Eve. They are the ones for whom God fulfills the blessings of the eternal inheritance.

After reminding his fellow-believers about their faith and how they expressed it in baptism, Paul noted the spiritual importance of their belief and faith motivated obedience. The Spirit recreated their spirits with Christ resulting in complete unity, "clothed ... with Christ" (*Galatians 3:27b*). Every faithful believer "clothed ... with Christ," must first experience spiritual death with Jesus, a spiritual burial, and a spiritual resurrection, "baptized into His death ... buried with Him ... in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (*Romans 6:3b, 4a, 4b*).

They had also undergone a spiritual circumcision by the hands of the Holy Spirit, "In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (*Colossians 2:11*). And as a result the resurrected saint is considered righteous by God. He is holy because His newly recreated child is free of sin debt and spiritually circumcised.

During this spiritual process former sins are separated from the new life by death. The spirit dies and is resurrected new. The new spirit is separated from the old life and flesh, this is his circumcision. Sin does not disappear from the flesh but is separated from the new spirit. The spirit's resurrection with Christ results not only in forgiveness but a complete absence of sin history, innocence, and righteousness. This is why God considers the Lord's new creation justified.

The righteousness given by God is the same righteousness as God blessed Abraham with, "So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham the believer" (*Galatians 3:9*). How? When a slave of sin is redeemed by the blood of Christ, his entire spiritual being is being recreated. The whole experience of servant's death, burial, resurrection, and circumcision is spiritual and depends upon his belief in the word of God and faith in the integrity of His word. Belief and faith are only realized when worked out with full expectation in the unseen promises of God.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Heritage in Christ

God considered Abraham as righteous because he believed Him and responded with obedient faith in His unseen promises. Those who have received righteousness as a result of their redemption and recreation in Christ are considered by God as righteous and included into His family of righteous saints reaching back to Adam and Eve. Both pre and post resurrection saints are considered as righteous by God because of why they responded to His will.

Those who belong to Christ--the singular spiritual seed of Abraham's lineage are the true son's of God through Christ. His children in Christ are "fellow-heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (*Ephesians 3:6b*). In Christ the promised blessing of being included in Abraham's spiritual lineage and promise regardless of physical identity, is fulfilled.

As a result of receiving righteousness through Christ – the seed of Abraham, the new believer in Christ is entitled to receive the promised inheritance because he is one with Christ, "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (*Galatians 3:29*). The Promised Land and promised eternal life are both present and future realities.

Paul referred to this when he wrote: "for the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For this reason it is by faith that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be given to all descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, 'A father of many nations have I made you')" (*Romans 4:13, 16, 17a*).

Later in his same letter Paul wrote, "That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants" (9:8). With this short statement Paul bluntly revealed how a circumcised Jew could be physically God's child and yet spiritually separated from His presence. The promise requires belief, faith, obedience, and heart circumcision. It always has and always will. And His will does not depend upon what anyone thinks is right or wrong.

The family of Christ is an exclusive family of only those who are one with God the Father through their unified belief, faith motivated obedience, and spiritual circumcision; as demonstrated by all of the righteous saints through the ages and will continue until Jesus returns.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Heritage in Christ

Every new born child of God is “clothed ... Christ”.

Galatians 3:27b

- 1) Try to imagine your naked and exposed new born spirit protected and clothed by Jesus, what does this mean to you?
- 2) How do you think Jesus protects you spiritually?
- 3) How are you assured of your position in His body?
- 4) Are you completely assured of your position in His body?

Every new born child of God walks “in newness of life” and has experienced “the circumcision of Christ”.

Romans 6:3b, 4a, 4b; Colossians 2:11

- 1) Have you experienced your spiritual circumcision by the Holy Spirit?
- 2) How is spiritual newness connected with spiritual circumcision?

All of God’s children are heirs of the promise given to Abraham and his righteous children.

Galatians 3:29

- 1) Why do you think belonging to Jesus is so strongly connected with your spiritual lineage with Abraham?
- 2) Does serving Jesus build confidence in your hope of an eternal inheritance in heaven?
- 3) Do you know who you are in the Lord’s eyes?
- 4) Do you ever have second thoughts about who you are in God’s eyes?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Heritage in Christ

Every righteous saint in Christ is a fellow-heir, fellow-member of His body, and a fellow-partaker “of the promise in Christ Jesus”.

Ephesians 3:6

- 1) What does the promise mean to you?
- 2) Do you believe God has placed you within the kingdom which Jesus reigns over?
- 3) Are you a righteous saint? How are you righteous?
- 4) What does being an heir with Jesus mean to you?

The blessings of the promise are only offered to those who choose to receive the “righteousness of faith”.

Romans 4:13

- 1) What is the “righteousness of faith”?
- 2) Why is righteousness so important when it is connected with faith?
- 3) How is faith connected with who you are in Christ?

The spiritual descendants of Abraham, those who are included in God’s promise to Him, are “those who are of the faith of Abraham”.

Romans 4:16

- 1) How can you be related to Abraham?
- 2) How is Abraham connected with the spiritual nation of Israel, your citizenship, and the Lord’s restored kingdom?
- 3) How does this knowledge about who you are to God affect your life right now?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Heritage in Christ

The spiritual Promised Land and eternal life are not promised to any descendant of the physical nation of Israel or of any of the fathers before its creation, only to those who are God's children of righteousness.

Romans 9:8

- 1) Before the Christian age began why did God consider spiritual circumcision of the heart so important?
- 2) How are righteousness and salvation connected?
- 3) Is righteousness necessary for any servant desiring to serve God?
- 4) What is the difference between being righteous and living a righteous life?
- 5) Why do you feel righteousness is connected with your inheritance and your spiritual identity?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

End of Life Inheritance

When a son of God finishes his race and dies in faith, his experiences on earth will be gathered up, refined by fire, and the outcome will be the fine silver, gold, and jewels of his eternal inheritance, “Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it will be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as through fire” (*1 Corinthians 3:12-13*).

God promised long ago to anyone willing to believe in Him alone, and later through Jesus Christ, an inheritance of life in heaven which includes the treasures of their work of service accomplished for God. With this revelation He is also revealing His love for believers who have remained faithful until death but have built their house primarily with the perishable ways of life. He promises eternal life, but without many of the rewards being offered to other servants. He is not saying a believer cannot be lost, but he will suffer eternal losses due to lifestyle choices.

Jesus spoke to Saul about his upcoming work on His behalf; “To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me” (*Acts 26:18*).

The inheritance is promised by God only to those who choose to “turn from darkness to light”. Likewise the sanctified are only those whom the Lord has separated from bondage in sin and the dominion of Satan. All saints live in the kingdom belonging to Jesus. Either spiritual condition is dependent upon the servant’s belief, faith, and resulting obedience to the will of God through Jesus Christ. He is free to serve sin and Satan or Jesus. The quality of eternal life and the blessings of inherited life are options given to every slave of sin upon hearing the gospel message of Christ. If he chooses this new path in life then upon his redemption the Spirit will transfer the new saint “from the dominion of Satan to God”.

In order to accomplish this humanly impossible transfer of ownership, the Lord must first redeem him by His death, burial, and resurrection. The Spirit miraculously unites the servant of sin with the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection. He emerges from the resurrection a new spirit innocent and free from sin – he has received “forgiveness of sins” spiritually separated from his old life and sin.

Once the slave is freed from his bondage to sin debt and transferred to the Lord’s kingdom he is then entitled, as a child of God, to receive “an inheritance” reserved for him in heaven. The new servant of the Lord begins serving God in the Kingdom of Christ under the authority of Christ as his King, Lord, and Master.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Heritage in Christ

He is holy, justified, righteous, and sanctified from his old unholy life in bondage to sin under the authority of Satan. The only reason why Jesus honored the servant's belief, faith, confession, baptism, and commitment to repent is because of his willingness to obey Him through belief, and faith in His unseen promises exemplified by Abraham. His belief and faith are proven through his obedience.

Paul told his fellow believer's, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba! Father! The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ" (*Romans 8:14-17a*).

The blessing of God's spiritual inheritance is only reserved for those whom He considers sanctified – holy and set apart from his old life, self, heart, and Satan's dominion. These are "Spirit led" people because of two vitally important reasons:

- 1) They have received the indwelling presence of the Spirit.
- 2) They are allowing the Spirit to lead them through a life of faith in Christ.

The quality of inheritance received by the Lord's children is dependent upon these two basic realities. God has offered His grace of restoration. The servant has chosen to return to His family. Both work together in unison. Jesus has restored the partnership between God and His people – fellowship. Fellowship will continue onward into the servant's inheritance in eternal life.

A child of God has a very uniquely blessed and bright future. Even though life on earth may involve experiences which are discouraging beyond description the promise of an eternal inheritance steadfastly remains in his heart. He is a child of God, an heir of God, a fellow-heir "with Christ". The future is indescribably bright even though his present life condition may be discouraging and causes spiritual doubt.

When a servant of sin receives the blessings of redemption he joins an exclusive remnant of people who have, "the Holy Spirit of promise, who was given as a pledge of our inheritance" (*Ephesians 3:14a*). The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the unseen and unfelt presence of God based upon belief and faith in the promises of God. The presence of the Spirit assures the fulfillment of unseen promises in a new life, in the present as well as in the future after death.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Heritage in Christ

A Christian's eternal inheritance will be determined by his life.

1 Corinthians 3:12-13

- 1) Do you serve Jesus differently when you are away from other Christian's?
- 2) If you reflect on your chosen life decisions how do you think they will be considered by Jesus?
- 3) What kind of spiritual foundation are you building in your house – your body?
- 4) Reflecting upon your life what would you consider as gold, silver, and precious stones?
- 5) Reflecting upon you life what would you consider as wood, hay, and straw?
- 6) How does the vanity of life connect with wood, hay, and straw?
- 7) Are there things in your life which you could change which could possibly be considered by God as valuable to Him?
- 8) Is it important to consider what is motivating your service to Jesus?

All Christian's will receive an inheritance.

1 Corinthians 3:15; Acts 26:18; Romans 6:1

- 1) Do you think the promise given by the Spirit means God will consider you saved regardless of lifestyle?
- 2) At what point do you think God will reject a Christian and remove His presence from him?
- 3) Does knowing you are promised eternal life even if you have a hard time serving Him offer you any assurance?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Heritage in Christ

All Christian's will share in the inheritance promised to Jesus.
Romans 8:14-17

- 1) Do you think the Lord's inheritance is conditional?
- 2) Are you willing to put "to death the deeds of the body"?
- 3) Are you willing to allow being "led by the Spirit of God"?
- 4) Who is a son of God, how do you know?
- 5) What does Jesus promise to all of His children?
- 6) Why does Jesus offer such a generous blessing to His children?
- 7) Are there things in your life which could be changed in order to facilitate Spirit leadership?

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is a part of the Lord's promised inheritance.
Ephesians 3:14

- 1) How do you receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?
- 2) How do you know the Spirit of God is living within your body?
- 3) Does the Spirit's presence affect your hope of an inheritance?
- 4) How does the Lord's promise of an inheritance affect your hope?
- 5) How does the Lord's promise of an inheritance affect your inner peace?
- 6) Does the Lord's promise of an inheritance affect your attitude towards life and lifestyle decisions in any way?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Eternal Life with God

There are only two eternal existences offered by God:

1) Eternal death or separation from God. An existence reserved for Satan, his angles, and any person who refused to serve the God of creation before the death of Jesus or redemption through Jesus Christ afterwards, “if anyone’s name was not written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (*Revelation* 20:15).

2) Eternal life in the presence of God the Father, His Son—Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, the presence all of His holy created beings, and fellow saints. Remember the special promise Jesus spoke of to His Jewish brethren: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (*John* 3:16).

Eternal life is the opposite of eternal death. Eternal life is in the presence of God and eternal death is outside and devoid of the presence of God. There is no other existence after death. Eternal existence only consists of two starkly different realities, the complete absence of light from God or complete submersion in the light of God.

Eternal life is not an idle promise. His promise offers hope to those held in the bondage of slavery to sin and subjection to Satan. Eternal life is a promise of eternity within the presence of God. Spiritual life is the aim of faith, belief, hope, assurance, peace, and love. Eternal death is the eternal continuance of the servant’s choice to reject the grace of God in order to serve sin and Satan.

Eternal life is the fulfillment of belief, faith, hope, confession, obedience, baptism, repentance, assurance, hope, and life serving God the Father through Jesus. It realizes the eternal power of peace and love. Life is the servant’s continued destiny in Christ if he chooses to remain faithful through life to death. *John* wrote in his *first* letter, “And the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--” (1:2).

Paul said eternal life is a gift from God to those who are willing to respond to His call in Jesus. The Lord must first purchase him before he is able to serve God. He announced in *Romans*: “the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23b). Eternal life is free because no one is able to earn it through the righteousness of law, moral purity, benevolence towards humanity, or whatever a person may believe in order to appear justified before God. It is simply humanly impossible to achieve eternal life through any type of effort perceived as righteous.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Eternal Life with God

There are only two eternal life destinies, life with God or separation from His presence.
John 1:12-13; Acts 3:22-23, 4:12

- 1) Is eternal destiny forever settled before or after your physical death?
- 2) Why is the maintenance of a faith led and Spirit counseled life so important?
- 3) Do you ever meditate upon the blessings which God has promised to you upon your death?
- 4) Do His eternal promises affect your ability to suffer through life with a steady eye upon Jesus?

Eternal life is a servant's reward for choosing to serve God the Father through Jesus Christ.
John 3:16

- 1) How do you envision eternal life?
- 2) How does your hope connect with God's promises?
- 3) Does the hope of eternal life affect how you are living right now?
- 4) What do you think the purpose of life is once you begin serving Jesus?
- 5) How do hope, purpose of life, and eternal destiny connect in your heart?

Eternal separation is certain for any servant who chooses to remain in service to sin and Satan.
Revelation 20:15

- 1) Who are serving sin and Satan?
- 2) Why is this lifestyle and spiritual choice so devastating and hopeless?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Eternal Life with God

- 3) Is a Christian given the spiritual freedom to return to serving sin and Satan?
- 4) Why is compromise with the world so important to understand?
- 5) Why is “good and “evil” so important to understand?
- 6) Why is it so important to understand your lust?
- 7) By what standard does God measure compromise with the world?

A servant of sin must choose to worship God the Father exclusively through Jesus Christ in order to receive eternal life in heaven.

Romans 6:23b; 1 John 1:2; Acts 4:12; John 14:6; Acts 3:22-23

- 1) Do you ever feel Jesus is a bit too restrictive?
- 2) What if your closest relative does not believe in Jesus?
- 3) Do you ever think about where your dead relatives and friends are spending their eternal existence?
- 4) The truth of the Lord’s plan of salvation reveals the dividing line between real and pseudo salvation. Does the thought of condemning your friends and relatives, both alive and dead to eternal separation from God cause you to consider compromising God’s word concerning how a servant is saved?
- 5) Why is eternal life important to you when so many people deny its existence?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Resurrection after Physical Death

Death for a righteous servant of God is an indescribable blessing. It is the fulfillment of a lifetime of belief, faith, assurance, hope, and service to Jesus. Physical death finalizes his separation from the world. Death completes his sanctification from evil.

Death is final for everyone, whether enslaved to sin or freely serving God through Jesus. The writer of *Hebrews* revealed: "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (9:27). A second chance in life is only the product of well intentioned imagination and pseudo hope. A second chance to reform and change ones destiny after death is a deception of futility. Judgment is set and the conscience of the dead person is sealed.

Death for a servant of sin finally and forever exposes him to the reality of his position as an enemy of God. He will be judged by the very God whom he has rejected throughout his life in sin and service to Satan his lord. Paul revealed in *Romans*, "In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my Gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (2:15-16).

However, for a believer death is a time to rejoice for it's time to meet Jesus his Lord and Savior. *John* quoted Jesus speaking about the coming resurrection: "He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (5:27-29).

Judgment is as certain as death. The purpose of one's life determines whom he will live through eternity. Everyone is equally born with three possessions: body, soul, and spirit. All equally die with nothing but their soul and spirit. All appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ.

Jesus clearly defined two opposing types of people, the good who are righteous and those who practice evil. Both groups are determined by who they choose to serve within their limited lifetimes. God does not define the boundaries of good and evil by human acts of righteousness. The perception of righteous works in life, regardless of how good and self-giving, is not a factor in whether the servant is judged good or evil. Good and evil are spiritual realities and standards established by God alone. Only God determines how a servant must act in response to His will. It is up to the servant to decide how he is going to respond. As a result of his freedom of choice he is fully accountable to God.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Resurrection after Physical Death

Even though God has given all people the freedom to determine who they will serve, He has not given them the power to determine the standard of righteousness by which to serve.

A servant of sin is only considered by God as righteous by His grace through the divinely created response of belief, faith, and obedience to His will. This Abraham like response realizes the servant's confession, commitment to repent, baptism, and service to his Lord—Jesus Christ. Worship involves serving Jesus through the rest of life in faithful obedience and repentance, glorifying Him as Lord which glorifies God the Father. In his letter to the *Colossians* Paul wrote: "For although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, and engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless beyond reproach--" (1:21-22).

Paul helped to reveal the divine standards of evil and good deeds. Those who are committing "the evil deeds" are the ones who have not received redemption from Jesus. Regardless of who or what a person is in life, before God he is, spiritually speaking, openly "hostile in mind" and "alienated" from His presence and practices "evil deeds" as a normal way of life. Only those who appeal to God for redemption will be "reconciled ... holy and blameless and beyond reproach." Their appeal must be fulfilled by belief and faith motivated obedience in the will of God through Jesus Christ in order to receive righteousness through Christ.

One's resurrection after death is certain; however the quality of the resurrection will be determined by the decisions made within his lifetime as well as God's judgment of his life in its entirety. God's judgment is righteous because He looks at the servant's heart and the reasoning motivating his decisions, "for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts" (1 *Chronicles* 28:9b). Those who appear before the judgment seat of God are actually being judged by the witness of their own heart, experiences, and conscience. Jesus is truly an impartial judge.

For a believer the resurrection of a glorified body is assured. Paul wrote: "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised" (1 *Corinthians* 15:13). The reality of the spirit of a dead saint being reunited with its newly created and perfect body is as real as the Lord's newly resurrected body. Later in the same chapter Paul wrote, "And just as we have born the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (15:49). What a glorious future awaits the saint who has chosen to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Resurrection after Physical Death

Death for the Lord's servant is a transition from one life to another.

- 1) What does death mean to you?
- 2) What is the basic purpose for death?
- 3) Do you think once death takes place you are annihilated from existence?

Death is a final transition; there are no other options to redo life or repentance.
Hebrews 9:27

- 1) Do you think the spirits of dead people are given a second chance to repent?
- 2) If death finalizes the spiritual achievements in life should the spiritual aspects of life be taken more seriously?

Both the servant's of sin and servant's of righteousness and obedience will be judged after their death.
Romans 2:15-16

- 1) What do you think is the major difference between the two judgments?
- 2) What do you think happens to a Christian who is judged?

The results of the judgment will be dramatically different between a servant of sin and a servant of the Lord Jesus.
John 5:27-29

- 1) Does knowledge about judgment affect your practice of faith in Christ?

Both types of servant's will experience a resurrection.
John 5:29

- 1) Do you think God is cruel for eternally separating people who rebelled against Him from His presence?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Resurrection after Physical Death

2) Do you think God is in control of the lost and their eternal existence in Hell even though He is not personally present?

Both types of servant's receive judgments based upon their own lifestyle and attitude choices.

Colossians 1:21-22; Ephesians 2:1-5

- 1) Do you ever think about the eternal destiny of lost relatives and friends?
- 2) Do you feel guilt for not having done enough to convert them to Jesus?
- 3) Do you feel guilty of spiritual negligence if a close relative dies in sin?
- 4) Are you guilty in any way if a relative dies in sin? Should you feel guilt?
- 5) Does personal choice have anything to do with lifestyle and beliefs?
- 6) Does God expect you to compromise inner peace because of another's lifestyle and belief choices?
- 7) Are you willing to compromise the gospel in order to preach the gospel in a more acceptable way to the lost?
- 8) Is believing you are a Christian enough to assure eternal life with Jesus?
- 9) Does a deathbed conversion justify compromising the integrity of the gospel?
- 10) Is what a person thinks is spiritual right or wrong justified to God if it does not conform to His word?

Even the best of people will commit evil and remain hostile to God if they do not repent and accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

Romans 8:7-8; Colossians 1:20-22; James 4:4

- 1) Is anyone entitled to enter into heaven based upon an extraordinary life?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Resurrection after Physical Death

2) Is it fair for God to consider a good, moral, and loving person evil and hostile to Him?

God's judgment is fair, righteous, and impartial because it is solely determined by the servant's heart, thoughts, conscience, and who he chose to serve.

Romans 2:15-16; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, 3:17; 1 Corinthians 4:5

1) Who determines how a person is judged?

2) How does God judge impartially?

3) By what standard of truth is a servant judged?

4) What is the source of testimony used in judgment?

A believer's resurrection to life is as certain as the Lord's resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:13

1) Why is the Lord's resurrection so critically linked to all Christians?

2) Does the Lord's resurrection offer hope to you?

3) How does His resurrection offer hope to you?

The reality of spiritual resurrection will result in a spiritual life as normal as experienced in physical life.

1 Corinthians 15:49

1) Have you ever tried to imagine what life in heaven will be like?

2) Do you think eternal life will feel as normal as physical life?

3) Does Jesus offer any clues to what our eternal bodies will be like?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Judgment for the Faithful in Christ

When any person dies he is destined to receive judgment by Jesus Christ. Whether he dies in sin or redeemed, he is promised a fair and righteous judgment. In *Acts*, Luke recorded Peter's gospel sermon to Cornelius, his family, and friends. One of the things mentioned by Peter concerned the reality of judgment, "and they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross, God raised Him up on the third day, and granted that He should become visible, ... And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name every one who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (10:39b, 40, 42-43). In these few short verses the entire gospel is taught plus the ramifications of whatever decision is made. The servant of sin is freely given the opportunity to make a choice determining his eternal future after hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ and whether the choice is maintained through faith from the rest of his life.

When God judges the righteous, He is doing so through Jesus. Jesus is judging His own son and servant whom He purchased. Paul wrote in his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*: "Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as through fire" (3:12-15).

In these four short verses, Paul revealed parts of the judgment experience which all of God's children in Christ will experience. Nothing will be hidden from His sight. It will be fair, righteous, and no one who dies in faith will be condemned to eternal separation, even those whose entire work of life is destroyed by fire. The writer of *Hebrews* stated God is: "...able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (4:12b).

Judgment for a saint is a spiritual proceeding which God uses to determine the eternal position of each and every one of His servants. Not his salvation. It involves at least seven parts:

- 1) After a servant of Christ dies he enters into judgment.
- 2) The judgment will not consider his sin because He has entered into judgment in righteousness. He is a redeemed servant of the Lord. He is holy, righteous, his conscience and heart are innocent.
- 3) His judge is his Savior Jesus Christ.
- 4) Jesus already knows exactly what he has accomplished for Him as His servant and why.
- 5) The works accomplished during his life as a servant will undergo a refinement process by the spiritual fire of judgment.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Judgment for the Faithful in Christ

6) Only the deeds in his life as a servant of Christ, which God considers as gold, silver and precious stones, will determine his position in heaven. Every other work will be burned up as waste causing him to suffer loss as a result of having collected a lesser amount of gold, silver, and precious stones in favor of the combustibles of worldly life.

7) Even though every servant will suffer a certain amount of loss, no one will suffer the loss of eternity in heaven. If he died faithful in Christ he will always remain in heaven with Christ. For a servant of the Lord judgment is the just the beginning of an eternity of glorious blessings reserved exclusively for him by God. Life is good in Jesus.

Questions

All judgment is through Jesus Christ.

Acts 10:42; Romans 3:16; John 5:2, 27; Acts 17:31; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5

- 1) Does judgment make you nervous?
- 2) Are there reasons why judgment may be a fearful time for a Christian?
- 3) Is it comforting to know your judge is Jesus?
- 4) What do you think will be judged?

When Jesus judges one of His servant's He is looking at a child of His Father who is holy, righteous, and innocent of all sin.

- 1) Will the Lord's servant be judged to determine whether he is going to heaven?
- 2) What does it mean to enter into judgment as holy and innocent?

Judgment is fair and unbiased, it is based upon the servant's thoughts and intentions of heart, his works are an expression of his heart.

Hebrews 4:12b

- 1) Who is ultimately responsible for how a servant served Jesus?
- 2) How will a servant be judged?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Judgment for the Faithful in Christ

3) What do you think Jesus is trying to determine from His servant's thoughts and intentions?

Judgment for the Lord's servant is a refinement where useless works are separated from the useful.

1 Corinthians 3:10-17

1) What do you think combustible works are?

2) What do you think jeweled works are?

3) How do you think Jesus determines the difference between jewels and stubble?

4) Is your spiritual purse full of jewels, gold, and silver?

5) Are you trying to change your life in order to accumulate more jewels, gold, and silver in your treasury in heaven?

The Lord's servant will be judged to determine the rewards he will receive, he will not be condemned.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

2) Do you feel more assured about your eternal destiny knowing judgment is not to determine condemnation?

3) How does your assurance of a positive judgment affect your lifestyle and spiritual choices?

4) Do you live life confident and assured of your future?

5) How does your confidence in life bring glory to Christ?