



6

SESSION 6



DON'T ALL
GOOD PEOPLE
GO TO
HEAVEN?

WELCOME TO THE LAST SESSION OF STORM SHELTER!

Think about our group again. Consider for a moment that each of us represents a much larger group of people, many who sadly are going through life assuming that if they are good they are going to heaven. And though they may not be eager to admit it, their case rests on their desire to see themselves as good people. “After all,” they humbly admit, “there are so many people who are much worse than I am, I should at least get into heaven on the curve.” What they are describing is many people’s version of a storm shelter. And as we’ll see in this session, the reality is that death is the most critical storm we will ever face.

When we started six weeks or more ago, we were rejoicing in the resurrection of Jesus and the way He conquered death. Since then we have seen a number of questions that masquerade as storm shelters for people. Hopefully we have all not only widened our grasp of the answers Christianity has for these errors, but have also deepened our compassion for those who are lost without a real shelter for the inevitable storms of life.

The apostle Paul had a short answer for the question we’re looking at in this session. In explaining the reality of our situation and the only hope we really have, he wrote: *“²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:22-23 NIV). Understanding these verses makes all the difference when it comes to thinking about who gets into heaven.

Enjoy this last session together and give some thought to where the group wants to journey from here. This study may be coming to a close, but there are great opportunities to know Christ even better up ahead!





OPEN UP WITH PRAYER

Thank You God for the last six weeks and for each person in our group. Thank you again for all you have taught us and done for us during these weeks. Help us to fortify our storm shelter by trusting your Word, strengthening our relationship with you, and obeying with a humble heart. Help us to live out the life we have in you in such a way that people notice our hope and ask about it. Give us the answers that allow you to bring that same hope into the lives of others. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

- 1** We've all got a big pile of experiences, lessons, insights, and memories from these weeks. Let's take a few minutes to share with each other one thought or change that came as a result of this study.
- 2** Check in with your spiritual partner one last time or with another partner if yours is absent. Talk about any challenges you are currently facing in consistently living out the Storm Shelter priorities. Tell your spiritual partner how he or she has helped you along the way, and how you might continue to interact. Be sure to write down your partner's progress on page 117.
- 3** **Reminder:** Review with the group what was decided for your next group meeting (i.e. celebration time, new study, host home, snack). It's not too late to consider how you might support each other in the coming storms.

WATCH DVD SESSION 6

Watch the DVD teaching for this session now. We have provided a *Notes* space below. There you can record any key thoughts, questions, and things you want to remember or follow up on. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions in the *Talk It Over* section and direct the discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.

NOTES:



The one thing Pastor Cal misses in small groups is the chance to listen to all of us talking about what he just taught. Getting instant feedback is great for a teacher, but it's even greater for us, processing together and letting one another clarify what we heard. So let's let the rest of the group know what we've been thinking about. If there's one thing we hope you've discovered in this group it's that we're all willing to listen! So, let's talk it over...

4 After describing death as the ultimate storm, Pastor Cal talked about reasons why the “Heaven is for good people” approach remains so popular. What were those reasons? *(See the Study Notes if needed)*

5 Since the “good people” theory was alive and well in Jesus’ day, His response was to “turn the approach on its head” with the statement: **“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5:20) What’s Jesus trying to say here?

6 What is Pastor Cal’s answer to the subjective standard of comparison that causes people to say, “I’ll get to heaven because I’m basically a pretty good person”? *(See the Study Notes if needed)*

7 Pastor Cal used several statements from Scripture to describe the unfortunate condition of all human beings:

Isaiah 59:2 (NIV)

² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Isaiah 64:6 (NIV)

⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

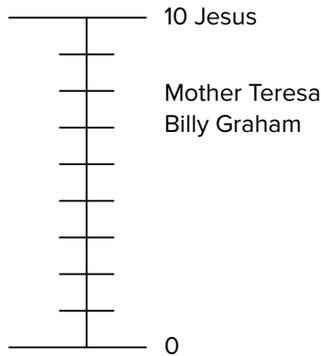
Romans 3:23 (NIV)

²³ For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

- Compared to these verses, how much weight does the statement “I’m a pretty good person” have?
- Do you agree or disagree with this statement: “Not a single one of us is good enough to get into heaven”? Explain.

8

On a “goodness” scale from 1 to 10, Jesus being a 10, Mother Theresa being an 8, Billy Graham being a 7, where would you place yourself? Share with the group if you feel comfortable.



9

Pastor Cal pointed out that instead of making useless comparisons about goodness, the Bible offers this startling good news:

Romans 3:22 (NIV)

²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

“Good people don’t go to heaven; forgiven people do!” What did this mean?

So, if the ultimate objective (being with God in heaven) is now a gift we can receive no matter what our present condition, what’s the compelling reason for pursuing goodness, obedience, and faithfulness in this life? (See *Study Notes* if needed)

Hopefully our sessions together have been helpful discoveries for all of us. We've gotten careful teaching on attitudes and questions we encounter every day. We are certainly getting a chance to think about facing the storms of life with a new frame of thinking. Let's make sure we're getting maximum benefit from this last time of application. After all, we're all working it out.

10 Take a moment to write below the names of at least three people who you suspect are assuming they are good enough to get into heaven:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- These names are between you and God. But brainstorm together some of the best things a Christ-follower can do for someone they think might be relying on their own righteousness rather than Christ's when it comes to heaven.
- Next to each of the names above, note at least one action you intend to take on their behalf.

11

Let's Worship:

Respond to Jesus' sacrifice and God's grace by partaking in communion as an act of worship.

- a. (BEFOREHAND) Prepare by breaking up pieces of cracker or bread on a plate or tray. Pour juice into small cups or whatever is available. Consider playing quiet, reflective worship music in the background.
- b. Allow/invite people to share what Christ means to them as a result of this study. Close the sharing with a prayer of thanks for the simple act of sharing in the symbols of His body and blood together.
- c. The host (or designated person) can guide communion by reading the following words from 1 Corinthians 11:23-25, **"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, [HOLD UP THE BREAD] he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."** Let's eat the bread together with gratitude.

"In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. [HOLD UP A CUP] do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." Let's drink together with gratitude.
- d. Stay in a quiet place of worship as you come before God.

COME BEFORE GOD:

Take a moment to close your eyes and clear your mind. In your mind tell Jesus what His death on the cross means to you personally. Now pause and allow Jesus to speak into your heart. Write down any thoughts, impressions, pictures or feelings you might have. If you want to share what you received with the group, feel free but there's no obligation.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Lord, this is the testimony: You have given us eternal life, and this life is in your Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. You have had these things written to us who believe in the name of the Son of God so we may know that we have eternal life. As we conclude this Storm Shelter study we thank you for being with us every step of the way. We are grateful we never have to face any storm without knowing you are with us. We humbly thank you for sending Jesus so we could live life to the full. Fill us with your Holy Spirit. Empower us to live each day to your glory.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



NOTE: If you think there might be someone in your group who has not yet accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord, ask if they would like to pray and receive Jesus now. If so, open this study guide back to Session One, Talk It Over, question 5 on page 17. Encourage them to read the prayer out loud and trust Jesus for the first time.

STUDY NOTES

Why “Heaven is for good people” is popular.

1) It seems fair as long as I can see myself as among the “good”; 2) A good God would live in a good place populated by good people; 3) It provides a vague sense of comfort that a good God might grade us on the curve; 4) It echoes what most religions teach—quality of effort will yield a good eternal result. All of these rely heavily on the assumption that “I am or can be good enough” to meet the standard.

Question 6. The statement, “I’ll get to heaven because I’m basically a pretty good person” begs the questions: “Compared to whom? How good is good enough? Where’s the line?”

Question 9. Pastor Cal said:

Now, does that [righteousness from God] mean that it doesn’t matter how good or bad I am in this life? That’s exactly what it means. How good or bad you are in this life is going to determine the quality of life you get in this life and whether or not you walk in the fellowship with and under the blessing of God. But the fact is your good deeds can’t qualify you for heaven (which is really good news if you’re not sure how good you have to be) and your bad deeds can’t disqualify you from heaven (which is really great news if you’ve got a few big mess-ups in your life), because the righteousness you need can’t be earned. It can only be received as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ. And when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, he comes in and changes your life so that you want to do good things as His follower and representative. But you do those good things, not in order to get to heaven, but because you’re already going there.



MOVE IT FORWARD

This week, take what you learned and spend some time putting it into practice. Choose one or more of the following activities to further your spiritual growth and even connect to others in your group. Don't feel you have to complete all of these. Decide what you can commit to and go for it. Share with your prayer partner what you are committing to.

- ... **Prayer Time:** Take a breath and close your eyes to avoid distractions for a few moments before continuing to read. Your mind may be filled with the faces of people you love who are living without hope and without a storm shelter. Don't get overwhelmed by thinking their rescue is up to you. Simply ask God what your next step is and set yourself to depend fully on Him. He is eager to help you live for His glory and use you in His plans even in the lives of those who may seem impossibly far from the kingdom.
- ... **Reflect On It.** Commit to daily connection with God. See suggestions on how to do that each day in the "Reflect On It" section.
- ... **Change your mind.** Memorizing Scripture helps to redirect our mind to God's plan. Take time to give this important practice a try.

“This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:22-23

REFLECT ON IT

Day 1.

Scripture:

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Observation: What are the implications for your own life to be “the righteousness of God”? How is this a done deal and how is it a process?

Application: Jesus said, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). What can I do today to seek His kingdom and His righteousness?

Prayer

Day 2.

Scripture:

Isaiah 53:6

⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Observation: Re-read this verse, inserting your own name in the appropriate places. Look up a definition of iniquity and meditate on it. Why is it important to personalize this message rather than just leave it as a group condition?

Application: What will be different for you today because God laid on His Son all your iniquities? What freedom in Christ do you plan to exercise?

Prayer

Day 3.

Scripture:

1 John 5:11-12

¹¹And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Observation: What difference does it make for you to have God’s written testimony about your eternal destiny in Jesus Christ?

Application: Take a moment to pray this passage again, using the prayer at the end of the session. Reflect for a few moments on the weight of this promise in your life.

Prayer

Each day, read the selected verses and give prayerful consideration to what you learn about God, His Spirit, and His place in your life. Use SOAP as you read and think about the Scripture passages. Listen to God and record your applications, thoughts, insights, or prayer in the section below the verses you read. Continue to experiment using ACTS in your personal prayer times. On the sixth day record a summary of what you have learned over the entire week through this study.

Day 4.

Scripture:

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

Observation: Is grace the gift or is faith the gift—or is it both?

Application: How do you respond to the fact that the most priceless thing you can imagine has been given to you as a gift? Tell someone else today besides God just how you feel about His amazing gift.

Prayer

Day 5.

Scripture:

Romans 3:22-23

²²This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Observation: Why do we need righteousness to be given to us?

Application: Thank God that His righteousness was freely given to you. Contemplate that fact as you spend time in prayer.

Prayer

Day 6.

Summary:

Use the following space to summarize any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at during your Reflect On It time this week.