

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 1:

God Saves Sinners Who Confess Their Sins

God is perfectly holy. There is no sin in Him at all. He is too holy for sin to even live in His presence. How gloriously magnificent and pure is He!

But we are all sinners. We have all chosen to rebel against God and His good ways. Not only can we not live in His presence because of our sinfulness, but we deserve to be shut out of His presence forever because of it. And there's nothing sinful people like us can do on our own to make ourselves acceptable to God.

We would be without hope, except for God's amazing grace and mercy! He, Himself, has done what was needed. He sent His Son Jesus to live a perfect life and offer it up as the perfect payment for the sins of His people when He suffered and died on the cross. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, showing He had beat sin and death. Yes, He had fully paid for the sins of God's people. He has made salvation a gift.

How can we receive this wonderful gift? God offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who confess their sins to Him and trust in Jesus as their Savior. When we do this, turning away from living life our own way and living for God instead, He will give us this gift! He will make us His people forever!

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 1 Bible Verse: 1 John 1:8-9, NIV 1984

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

CASE STORY

Luke 15

Our story is called:

The Case of the Ridiculous Runner.

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

1. Who was the Ridiculous Runner? Who thought his running was ridiculous? (Ridiculous means something silly that you wouldn't expect them to do).
2. Why did he run even though it was thought ridiculous? Who did he run to? What does the Ridiculous Runner tell us about God?

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

Some men walked together down the street. It was easy to tell: these were important people! What proud long beards, what beautiful robes, and what showy prayer shawls with long tassles they had! Yes, they were important people. They were Pharisees and teachers of God's law. And in Israel, there was hardly anyone more important than them.

As these men walked along, they noticed a crowd of people who were just the opposite of them: very unimportant people. They were what many would call big sinners. Terrible people, like greedy tax collectors. The Pharisees were disgusted by this swarm of disgusting people, but they were also curious as to know why they had gathered together.

Soon they had their answer: Jesus! Oooh! That frustrating new rabbi (teacher of God's law)! They hated how Jesus cared for sinners! He welcomed them. He even ate with them, as if they were friends! "Why does a good teacher like Jesus spend time with sinner?!" the Pharisees grumbled. "Doesn't He know He makes himself unclean before God when He does that?" they exclaimed.

But it was what Jesus taught those sinners that made them even angrier. "It's not the well who need a physician but the sick. The Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost. Whoever comes to me I will never turn away," Jesus told these people. Jesus was inviting these sinners to come to God!

"These people are so sinful that they aren't even allowed in the synagogues or the Temple," the Pharisees exclaimed. "They have broken God's laws on purpose. Jesus knows the law offers no sacrifice for people who do that," the Pharisees complained. "Who does Jesus think He is, to give these sinners the hope of forgiveness! Only

God can do that!"

But Jesus knew the Pharisees had something wrong. No one could ever keep God's laws well enough to please God. All people were sinners who deserved God's punishment! All needed to turn away from their sins and confess them to God. All needed a Savior to forgive them of their sins. There were no exceptions! These Pharisees need to hear this message just as much as the tax collectors, though they didn't know it. So Jesus began to tell a story that would make this clear.

"There once was a good Jewish father who had two sons," Jesus began. "The older son was obedient and -the Pharisees as much as these people they called sinners. hardworking for his father as a son should be; but, the younger son was not. He did not want to stay home and did not want to keep his father's rules and way of living. So he went to his father and said, "Father, when you die a part of all your things will be mine. I don't want to wait until then. Give me my share now!"

"What a wicked son! What a sinner he is!" the Pharisees were probably thinking. "Asking for any of your father's things while he's still alive is like saying to him 'I wish you were dead. Give me your money!' That was even worst than what the tax collectors did!"

Jesus continued, "Even though it was terrible of the son to ask his father his share of the property, the father decided to give it to him anyway. The son took all his father had given him and sold it for cash. He took the money, packed his things and left home for a faraway Gentile country where he spent all his money living and wild life doing whatever pleased him."

What a sinner this younger son was! Everyone listening to Jesus' story could see that! Disgracing his father and brother! Taking all of his father's hard-earned money and spending on a bunch of Gentiles!

Everyone in that crowd knew that the younger son deserved to be cut off from his family and never allowed to return. Perhaps that had even happened to sinners gathered right there at Jesus' feet. Hadn't they embarrassed their families by their big sins?

Jesus went on with the story: "Life got worse for the young man when his money ran out. A bad famine—no rain for a long time—hit the land. Crops and animals died. Everyone was just barely getting by. No one needed extra help or had extra food to share. Finally the young man

became so desperate that he got a job feeding the pigs of a Gentile (non-Jewish) farmer!

Feeding pigs for a Gentile farmer might not sound so bad to us, but it was a terrible thing to the Jews listening to Jesus' story. Jews weren't supposed to have anything to do with Gentiles, let alone work for them. They weren't supposed to eat or even touch pigs. Many even believed that a person who raises pigs is cursed by God! "This son is really in trouble with God now!" the listening crowd would have thought.

Jesus went on. "The young man fed the pigs, but even the pigs got more food than he did. He was so hungry he would have even eaten the pigs' dry pods, but nobody even offered those to him.

At last the son began to think: "What a sinner I am! What have I done?! Taken my father's things, runaway from home, spent all his hard-earned money doing all sorts of wicked things! Now look at me: working on a pig farm with not even enough food to keep me from starving. Life is far better than this for my father's workers. He gives them good work and gives them so much food that they have leftovers. I have disgraced my father. I could never be his son again, I know that, But, perhaps if I confess my sin against him and God, he will take me as one of his servants.' So the young man left the pig farm and started the long trip back home."

Everyone was curious to hear what Jesus would say next. This son had sinned terribly against both God and his father! How could he think that either one of them would forgive him after all he's done?! The Pharisees knew that by the law (Deuteronomy 21), that father even had the right to stone his son to death for such rebellious behavior! Asking to be a servant was even too good for him! But what would the father in Jesus' story do? They all waited and listened.

"As the son walked along, he thought about what he would say when he got home: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am not worthy to be your son. Make me like one of your servants....'"

But to the son's surprise, he didn't have to go home to find his father. His father was coming to him! He had spotted his son coming down the road from a long way off and now he was running straight towards him at full speed--something older men just didn't do! This was shocking and embarrassing!

Why was the father running anyway? No one would

have been surprised if Jesus said that the father started yelling at his son to go away and never come back; or even, starting throwing at his son. This was what this son deserved, everyone would have thought. Perhaps some of the sinners listening to Jesus right then knew what this was like. Perhaps this had even happened to them. After all, they had acted shamefully, too.

But the father in Jesus' story didn't do these things. "The father ran until he reached his son," Jesus told the crowd. "He threw his arms around him and kissed him."

Such love the son never expected and knew he didn't deserve! He started his speech: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son....'

But he never got to finish. His father had already forgiven him! This was his son, returned to him! The father was overjoyed! He turned to his servants and said, "Go quickly and bring the best robe in the house...my robe...and put it on my son. Get the family ring and place it on his finger. He will not be some barefooted servant! This is my son. Bring sandals for his feet!" Bring the fattened calf we were saving for a special celebration and prepare it," he ordered them. "We are having a feast to celebrate. I thought my son was lost and dead forever. But he's been found and he's alive! And they began to celebrate.

When the older son came home, his father invited him to celebrate the return of his little brother, but he refused, "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has wasted your money on big parties with sinners comes home, you kill the fattened calf—the best food we have—to celebrate with him!"

"My son," the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

The crowd was shocked with the ending to Jesus' story. This was not at all the way it was supposed to be. A wicked, younger son forgiven and welcomed back into the family! The older son asked to celebrate!! How could this be?

Yet that was exactly what Jesus wanted them all to see: God is like the father in the story and those listening to his story are like the two sons. Some might be rebellious, law-breakers, like the younger son. Others were proud,

law-keepers, like the older son. God wants them all to come to Him, confess their sins and be saved. He wants His people to celebrate every sinner who turns away from his sins and trusts in Jesus as their Savior.

Our Bible Truth is:

God Saves Sinners Who Confess Their Sins

Our Bible Verse is: 1 John 1:8-9:

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Who are we like? Are we like the tax collectors and other sinners, who know their sins and are afraid they are too bad to receive God's forgiveness? Then what good news Jesus' story is! All who come to Him, confessing their sins, turning from them and trusting in Jesus as their Savior, will be saved! No one has been too bad for God to forgive, if they will but turn to Him!

Or are we like the Pharisees? Are we proud about how good we are and look down on others who seem to be bigger sinners than us? We should ask God to work in our proud, hard hearts and help us to confess our sins, turn from them and trust Jesus as our Savior, too. For whether we are the worst of sinners or think we are the best law keepers, we all are sinners who need a Savior!

Let's praise God for being so merciful to sinners. Let's ask Him to work in our hearts, that we might see and confess our sins to Him. And, that we might turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our own Savior.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:

God is perfectly holy. He is too holy for sin to even live in His presence.

Answer: True.

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. Who was the Ridiculous Runner? Who thought his running was ridiculous? (Ridiculous means something silly that you wouldn't expect them to do).

Answer: The father of the two young men in Jesus' story. Everyone in Jesus' time would think it ridiculous for an honored old man to run. The teachers of the law especially would have looked down on this man for running.

b. Why did he run even though it was thought ridiculous? Who did he run to? What does the Ridiculous Runner tell us about God?

Answer: He ran because his son was returning home to him when he thought he would never see him again. He was so happy to see him! He ran to his son. That God rejoices over sinners who come to Him, confessing their sins. He loves them and welcomes them into His family.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:

1 John 1:8-9

"If we ___ to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the ___ is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is ___ and just and will forgive us our sins and ___ us from all unrighteousness."

Answers: claim; truth; faithful; purify.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 6

Verse 2

Upon that cross of Jesus
 Mine eye at times can see
 The very dying form of One
 Who suffered there for me;
 And from my smitten heart with tears
 Two wonders I confess,
 The wonders of His glorious love
 And my unworthiness.

Words: Elizabeth C. Celphane Music: Frederick C. Maker

God's people love to think about what God has done to save them. He loved them so much that He chose to send Jesus, His One and Only Son to suffer and die for their sins on the cross. They are saved because He died in their place! Their hearts are smitten with--that is, overwhelmed-- the greatness of His love for them, such undeserving sinners.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being so merciful to sinful people. We praise You for being the Savior of Your people.

C God, we confess that we are all sinners who deserve God's punishment. We all need a Savior!

T God, we thank You that Your forgiveness is so great that even the worst of sinners can be forgiven by You.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us to confess our sins, turn away from them and trust Jesus as our own Savior.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

If We Claim

PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 7

If we claim to be without sin,
 If we claim to be without sin,
 If we claim to be without sin,
 We deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

But, if we confess our sins...

God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins,
 Faithful and just and will forgive our sins,
 Faithful and just and will forgive our sins,
 And purify us from all unrighteousness.
 First John One, verses eight and nine.

Words: 1 John 1:8-9, NIV 1984 Music: Constance Dever ©2012

These verses remind us that we are all sinners. We deceive ourselves if we think we are not. But, the good news is, that if we admit we are sinners and confess our sins to God, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and save us through Jesus.