

The Sure Word Bible Studies
Lesson 13

The Legal Model and the Healing Model

Most people today understand God's plan of salvation in the setting of a judicial or legal, forensic model. There are a number of reasons for this but probably the most prominent reason is a large four-volume work entitled "*The Institutes of the Christian Religion*" written in the sixteenth century by John Calvin.

John Calvin was considered by some as one of the great reformers of the Protestant Reformation. However, John Calvin was educated as a lawyer – not a theologian. Thus his legal training largely influenced his views and ideas. Many of the major doctrines held in mainline churches can be attributed to Calvin's writings, which are still available today. These doctrines, to name a few, include pre-destination - immortality of the soul - eternal punishment in the fires of hell, and the topic we will study in this lesson, the legal or forensic view of the plan of salvation.

We begin our study by defining the words, law , legal, and forensic so that we are clear on their meaning.

Law – A rule of conduct recognized by formal enactment or a rule of conduct having Divine origin.

Legal – Relating to law, or deriving authority from or founded on law.

Forensic – Pertaining to courts of justice or relating to or used in legal proceedings.

Though there can be many variations, the following is a list of the basic points of the legal model.

1. God is the Sovereign Creator of the universe and as such has the authority to proclaim His law or code of conduct to be obeyed by all His creatures.
2. Violators of God's law must be punished.

3. The punishment for violation (sin) is suffering and death.
4. God is the Judge and Executioner of the penalty against sin.
5. To avoid punishment, the guilty party must be pardoned.
6. Since all humans are violators of the law – all are guilty and condemned to suffering and death.
7. The innocent son of God came and paid the penalty on behalf of the guilty.
8. If a person accepts Christ death on his behalf he is pardoned and will not be punished but granted eternal life.

The popular King James Bible, because it was translated at a time when the reformers such as Calvin were having such a great influence on the church, reflects this “legal model.” Thus most people are taught a picture of God as an awesome deity watching over the universe, a loving God, but yet a just God, one who will punish you if you break His law because justice requires it. That’s the way the legal system works.

If a person is at the place in their understanding that they see God in this way, they need to know God will pardon them for breaking His law. So the Bible says – *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins...”* The major focus in the legal model of salvation is forgiveness, or to use the legal term, pardon.

There are a number of problems with this legal model of salvation. The major problem being that with the legal model there is little or no focus on character change because it is preoccupied with obtaining forgiveness or pardon, seeing that as what is needed to avoid the penalty.

Another problem with the legal model is it questions God’s willingness to forgive, thus distorting the truth about His character. When asked why Jesus had to die, many reply, “Jesus had to die so God would forgive our sin.” That only by the sacrificial death of His own Son could we be forgiven! In saying that they are saying that God requires the blood of His own Son before He will forgive us!

This is preached from the pulpit, taught in Bible classes and written in the words of church hymns. The following quotes were taken from a set of widely circulated Bible study guides.

“Jesus had to die so God could forgive us of our sin.”

“Sin can be forgiven only by death.”

“When Jesus died, all our sins were forgiven.”

The problem is that this is **not** what the Bible teaches. For example note the following text:

Psalm 40:6 – *“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: **burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.**”*

Satan has artfully crafted a theory of salvation that makes God look no better than the pagan gods of old!

God does not require that the sinner appease Him in some way before He will forgive. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, what did He cry out? - *“Father forgive them....”* and no one had repented, confessed or asked to be forgiven!

Therefore an important message from the cross is that God has forgiven us even before we ask as we learned in lesson # 6, but of course we don't realize that until we go to the Cross!

The expression, *“Jesus died to pay for our sins,”* which, by the way, is not in the Bible, is not a well thought out statement. If that statement is true, then all people will be saved whether they accept Christ's death or not and we know the Bible does not in any way support this notion. If He paid for all my sins, they are paid for whether I accept it or not. If the bill is paid, it is paid, and no longer owed whether I acknowledge it or not!

Another problem with the legal model is it leads to presumption, because it leads many to feel forgiveness is all they need to be saved. Since Jesus has secured that for them, that's all that matters. Thus they have no lasting motivation to change or to live a righteous life. This is the foundation of the “once saved always saved” doctrine.

Thought question: Will simply being forgiven save us? Will forgiveness change our nature? Will being forgiven make a violent person safe to live with?

The obvious answer to each of these questions is “No.” Only a new heart and right spirit will make us safe to live with, now, or in the hereafter. When Nicodemus came to Jesus that night asking Him about salvation – did Jesus say to have eternal life “*You must be forgiven?*” or “*You must be born again?*” Jesus said we must be born again! (John 3:1-3) Jesus was saying that God’s grace changes a person so drastically that it is like being born all over again. One becomes “*a new creature in Christ.*” (II Corinthians 5:17)

We need to re-examine the age-old question – “*What must I do to be saved?*” Let’s put aside the old “*legal model*” and begin looking at salvation in a new way, within the setting of a “*healing model.*”

In this model, instead of seeing all human beings as being born as guilty criminals under the sentence of death, all human beings are born with a terminal illness that will destroy them if they are not healed. This is a spiritual infection, they are “sin-sick.” The major focus in this model is not forgiveness, but finding the remedy whereby one may be cured so that they will not die. This model, as with any other teaching, must be found true to the scriptures to be accepted. The following verses are just a few that clearly demonstrate this model is biblical.

Isaiah 1:5,6 – “*Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is **sick**, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.*”

Isaiah 53:5 – “*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes **we are healed.***”

Jeremiah 17:14 – “*Heal me, O LORD, and **I shall be healed**; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.*”

Mark 2:17 - *“When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, **but they that are sick:** I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

It is clear that these texts are not referring to the healing of diseases of the body, but rather spiritual healing of the heart and mind. We are all familiar with the New Testament term used for salvation, the word “saved.” The Greek word is “sozo” - and it means, “to be whole” “to be well” or “to be safe.” This word can be understood as “being healed,” as well as “being saved.” It is translated in the following ways:

Mark 5:22,23 – *“And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be **healed**; and she shall live.” In this verse the word “healed” is the Greek word “sozo.”*

Mark 5:25-28 – *“And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall **be whole**.” In this verse the Greek word “sozo” is translated “be whole.”*

Mark 10:25-26 – *“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be **saved**?” In this verse the Greek word “sozo” is translated “saved.”*

Another example of the healing model is found in **Matthew 13:15**

*“For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, **and I should heal them.**”*

As in the previous texts we examined, obviously this passage is not speaking of physical healing but of spiritual healing of the sin-sick heart and mind.

In all these passages we can clearly see the Bible supports the “*healing model*.” By looking at salvation in the setting of this model we will begin to find answers to our questions that make sense. Questions like, how did we get in this sinful condition in the first place? As we learned in lesson # 2 the sin problem began in the mind of Lucifer and then later spread to this earth.

Isaiah 14:12 – *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! **For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.**”*

“Thou hast said in thine heart...” that is, in the mind. A person’s thinking is not done in the organ called the heart, but in the mind. When Adam and Eve made the decision to follow the suggestion of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, their brains were changed, literally. Something happened inside their brain, there was a physical change. This “brain damage” was passed on to their children. Note the following statement from the book, **The New Brain – How the Modern Age is Rewiring Your Mind** by Richard Resak, M.D. Published by Rodale 2003

“We now recognize that our brain isn’t limited by considerations that are applicable to machines. Thoughts, feelings, and actions, rather than mechanical laws, determine the health of our brain. Furthermore, we now know that the brain never loses the power to transform itself on the basis of experience, and this transformation can occur over very short intervals.”

The brain can transform itself, and that change can occur over very short intervals. When God created Adam and Eve they were created with their minds “wired” for righteousness. But when the serpent introduced the new thought to their minds that God could not be trusted, and they made the decision that Satan was right and ate of the tree which God said not to eat of, their brains were

changed. Their brains were actually rewired and they began to think differently. As result, they had alienated themselves from God. If God had not intervened on their behalf, they would not survive the damage they had done to themselves.

Researchers have discovered that certain behavior affects the genes and can be passed on to the offspring - alcoholism for example. In the same way the deadly psychological damage incurred by Adam and Eve has passed through the genes and D.N.A. of every generation since that fateful day in the garden.

Romans 5:12 – *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”*

One Bible commentator described the problem in a book entitled **God’s Amazing Grace**, page 313:

“Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed.”

“Selfishness took the place of love” and where did that happen? In the mind! This becomes clear as we realize every child is born with an inherited trait of selfishness. Things like greed, hatred, jealousy, lying, stealing, adultery, violence, murder - are only *symptoms* of the greater psychological disorder of self-centeredness. Every sin can be traced back to self – its all about me – my needs - my wants – my rights! If not checked, this psychological disorder, like cancer or leprosy spreads and grows until it consumes its victim and in the end destroys him! Most of us have seen enough in life to know this, so why do we cling to it - why do we justify it? Have we convinced ourselves we are fine just as we are – that we need no change? Thinking we can go on through life doing the same selfish, sinful things and yet somehow it will come out different for us?

That is insane! It is insanity! As a matter of fact, that's what sin is – it's insanity!

This situation in the setting of the healing model can be likened to a father who has a child who is mentally ill and sometimes behaves badly. The child's father hates what his child does, but he loves his child. He pities the child and he realizes the child doesn't know what he's doing. Therefore the father doesn't punish the child, but does everything he can to help. This helps us to understand what Jesus had in mind when He said - "*Father forgive them – **they know not what they do***"

Understanding this helps us to understand how God loves the sinner while hating the sin. More than that, it helps us see better how we should relate to others whom we see as sinners. We should love them and pity them – the worse they are behaving, the more they need our sympathy and our help! We are all sin-sick, some more than others.

So in this healing model the question changes from "*What must we do to be forgiven*" - to - "*What must we do to be to be healed – made well?*"

What is the healing process? What must one do to be saved – to be healed?

I John 1:8,9 says – "*If we **confess** our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

First Step - We must admit that we have a problem. Some people insist that they do not have problem, like an alcoholic in denial. So the first step, just as with an alcoholic, the sinner must admit, or "confess" they have a problem – they are sick! Even then, if they try to correct their behavior by sheer will power they will fail, time after time. However, once a person is willing to admit they are sick (a sinner) and realize that they can't heal themselves then they are ready for the next step. Remember Jesus said - "*They that are whole do not need a physician, but those who are sick*"

Second Step - Next we need to find a physician. This needs to be done with great care. We don't want to go to a quack, or a doctor who has not proven to be reliable. We want to find one whom we

can trust with our eternal life! The Bible says – *“Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”* (sozo - healed)

As the Lawgiver, Jesus forgives us, as the Creator, only He can *“Create in us a clean heart and a right spirit”* - only He can re-wire our damaged brains. He is also the Great Physician - the only One who can heal us.

Third Step - We must go to our physician. Jesus said, *“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”* – but He will not force us to be well. If we won't come to Him – he can't help us.

Fourth Step - We must faithfully keep our appointments. This includes - daily devotions - Bible study - prayer - witness - keeping the Sabbath. If we are too busy, if other things (even good things) take up our time and there is no time left for treatment, our recovery will be greatly hindered!

Fifth Step - We must do what our physician prescribes. Everyone wants to be well – to be saved, but some don't want to do what the doctor says. The doctor may say they need a little surgery, or they may need to get some exercise or take some medicine. This is an important step. In order for us to get well, we must co-operate with our physician. If we refuse to do what the doctor prescribes can we expect to get well?

No, doctors cannot save their patients who do not trust them, or have enough faith in them, to keep their appointments and do the things they prescribe. Doctors may love their sick patients; they may forgive them for not taking their medicine – but the patient will not get well, because love and forgiveness will not heal the damage.

The Bible says God has *“Loved you with an everlasting love”* and that *“His mercy endureth forever,”* but if we harden our heart and will not listen, will not follow God's instructions, He will still forgive us and love us – but He can't heal us – He can't save us!

That means, if we don't go to church – don't study the Bible – don't pray – if we don't do the things the Bible says we should do, God will forgive us, but the changes in our brain we need will not take place. Our characters will not be changed.

Ultimately, we are either in the recovery process, and our sinful condition is in remission, **or** we are getting sicker and closer not only to physical, but to spiritual death as well.

An example of this is a man who smoked two packs of cigarettes a day for 30 years. His doctor did everything he could think of to get him to quit, and he fully intended to, one day...but that day never came and finally the disease has incurably destroyed his lungs and he is dying. His doctor is broken hearted – but there is nothing he can do now but sadly watch him die. Do doctors kill their dying patients? No! They do everything possible to save them! Does God, the Great Physician kill His sick and dying children? No, remember the following text from lesson # 8 on the final death of the wicked.

James 1:15 – *“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”*

Sin is the ultimate source of death – just as a deadly disease like cancer. God is the ultimate source of life, and rather than condemning us, God is trying desperately to save us – not so He won't have to punish us – but so that sin will not destroy us! Sin kills! God heals! God gives life! Sin takes it! But again, we must trust and co-operate with the Great Physician, or healing will not take place and eventually we will be so hardened in sin that we will be incurable! Jesus says the same thing in a different way in the following passage.

Luke 6:47 – 49 - *“Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”*

Note the steps –

- 1) Come – Come to Jesus.
- 2) Listen – Carefully listen to what He says we should do.

- 3) Do – Co-operate, do the best you can to do those things He says to do, and you shall be saved. This is the simple formula Jesus gives us for salvation.

The following chart will help you compare the two models

The Legal Model	The Healing Model
God as the Sovereign Creator of the universe has proclaimed His law by which the universe is to be governed.	God as the Sovereign Creator of the universe and has established law by which the universe is to be governed.
Violators of God's law must be punished.	Violators of God's laws will suffer the natural consequence of violating those laws.
The ultimate punishment for violation (sin) is death (hell).	Sin punishes sin. The ultimate consequence of violation is death by sin, not at God's hand.
God is the judge and the executioner.	God is the Great Physician and only source of life. He alone can heal the sin sick and restore life to the dying.
To avoid punishment, we must be pardoned / forgiven.	To avoid suffering and death one must be healed; forgiveness only being a part of that process.
Since all humans are violators of the law – all are guilty and condemned to death.	All human beings have been infected with sin - sickness, thus subject to death.
The innocent Son of God came and paid the penalty for the guilty so God could pardon us.	God sent His Son that by His life and death we may be reconciled to God and thereby healed of our deadly infection.

If a person accepts Christ as savior he is pardoned and will not be punished but granted eternal life.	If a person will come to God (the Great Physician) and follow His divine instructions (prescriptions) he will be healed and will never die.
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We must realize who our enemy is so that we are not fighting the wrong battle. We blame sin and evil on Satan and rightly so, but if the devil died today it wouldn't change much – the seeds of evil he planted in the minds of Adam and Eve took root and have been passed down from generation to generation to everyone of us. Our worst enemy is within us! Our worst enemy is our selfish, sinful nature and it will destroy us if we don't have help!

Today, if you realize you are sin-sick – if you are not doing well, may I recommend Jesus? He accepts walk-ins - you need no appointment – and He still makes house calls.

He can heal any illness – no matter how hopeless it may seem to you, but you have got to call on Him. You have got to trust Him - *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”*

Response Questions –

1. It is clear to me that I need more than God's forgiveness to be saved. Yes ___ No ___
2. It is clear to me that sin is like a deadly disease. Yes ___ No ___
3. It is clear to me that the healing model of salvation is biblical. Yes ___ No ___
4. I am willing to come, listen, and do the things the Lord says that I may be saved, or healed, and have eternal life. Yes ___ No ___

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