

TRUE

Salvation



Colin Urquhart

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Colin Urquhart

The Key Questions

"Have you been saved?" This is the challenge of the evangelist. That question prompts another: What does it mean to be saved? Is a person "saved" by giving his or her life to the Lord? Or by asking Him into his or her heart? Is a person saved by "making a commitment" at an evangelistic meeting without any evidence of the commitment being outlived subsequently? Can someone be saved simply by repeating the sinner's prayer after another person?

And there is also that old chestnut that seems to preoccupy so many Christians: "Is it possible for someone to lose their salvation?" Is it a matter of "once saved, always saved"? It seems that this whole matter is a minefield of controversy.

Rather than depend on our own ideas or opinions, we need to take note of the scriptural evidence that will show the way of salvation to any reader who is not "saved", or does not have assurance of his or her salvation.

One thing is certain, God is not concerned about the minimum requirements to get you to heaven! **He wants His children to be disciples, to live the saved life here on earth *and* have a joyful expectation of an eternity with God in His glory!**

As we see what Jesus and the apostles taught about salvation, we will see for ourselves how to answer the controversial questions that surround this whole matter. Does everyone go to heaven? How can a God of love allow anyone to go to hell? What about people of other religions? Is faith in Jesus Christ the only way to heaven?

Of course, in a short book like this, it is not possible to examine every Bible verse that relates to salvation, but I shall attempt to use representative verses, those that speak of various aspects of the truth, that are repeated many times over in other verses not directly quoted.

The first questions we need to answer are: "Why do people need to be saved? From what are they being saved, and by whom?" The Bible is very clear about this: everyone *needs* to be saved, and without salvation that can be no certainty of heaven or of eternal life with God. Why is this?

When God first created man, He created him "in his own image" (Gen 1:27), to reflect His nature, character, personality, so that he could live in perfect

harmony with God!

The account of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden shows us that man was able to live in perfect harmony with God, who provided him with everything he needed. To maintain his unity with his Creator, he had to obey one command: not to eat of the tree in the middle of the Garden. God warned him of the consequences of disobedience:

You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die. (Gen 2:16-17)

Sin, which is being disobedient to God, would result in death; not only physically but spiritually, an eternal separation from God. Sin would alienate man from the One who is Righteous in all He does!

Everything was fine while Adam and Eve obeyed. Satan, the devil, who is described as the liar, the deceiver, the one who "steals, kills and destroys", had already been alienated from God and thrown out of heaven because of his sinful pride. He wanted man to join him in his rebellion against God. He wanted to destroy the unity that man enjoyed with God. So he set out to deceive Eve by questioning the word God had spoken:

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen 3:4-5)

Until they sinned, Adam and Eve lived in blissful innocence, having no experience or knowledge of anything evil. When tempted by the devil, Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and a change came about in her immediately. She lost her innocence and became a temptress herself, offering the fruit to Adam. He had to make a conscious decision. Eve had been deceived by the devil; Adam deliberately chose to sin. He joined the woman in her sin, rather than staying in a righteous relationship with God.

Now both had lost their innocence, they felt they had to hide from God. They even felt self-conscious about being naked before each other. As a result of losing their unity with God, both were expelled from the garden paradise. They had chosen the way of curse rather than blessing, by yielding to the temptation of the devil, instead of remaining true to the words of God.

Sin had now entered mankind, and each successive generation of human beings inherited that desire to please self, to be independent of God, to disobey

His words or even disregard Him altogether.

*There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
(Rom 3:22-23)*

However, God was not going to be frustrated in His purpose for mankind. He had a plan to save men from the consequences of their sin and disobedience, and to restore them to the unity and fellowship (the sharing of life with God) for which He had created mankind! So Paul continues:

Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty he has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. (Rom 3:24 NLT)

In order to "save" man from the consequences of his sin and disobedience, He had to provide a way of taking away the guilt that separated him from God. Clearly mankind could not save himself. No-one could forgive his or her own sin against God. Nobody deserved to be at one with Him, having chosen to please self and oppose His will and purpose instead. People needed a Saviour, and only God could supply One!

The Saviour would deliver men from the punishment they deserved because of their sins: eternal separation from God. He would "save" them, therefore, from the consequences of their sin, from the devil's power, from the condemnation they justly deserved because of their disobedience and rebellion against God.

Immediately we are confronted with the love and mercy of God. After all, if all mankind sinned and rebelled against His will, why should He bother with him? Why not leave man to destroy himself, which was the very intention of the devil?

Clearly God could have made such a decision and the story of Noah and the flood teaches us this lesson. If God was to judge all mankind as he deserves, all would be destroyed. His decision is to save, not destroy; so Noah, who lived a righteous life, is an indication that trusting in God makes it possible to be saved from the punishment we deserve. Noah obeyed the Lord and built a boat in the middle of a desert! He believed God and trusted in His word. As a result, he and his whole family were saved.

This event is only the prefiguring of the great work of salvation that God was going to accomplish for the benefit of all mankind, of any who would turn to Him, believe His word and put their trust in Him.

God's Purpose

Salvation has always been God's purpose. Before He sent Jesus to be the Saviour of the world, God had revealed to His chosen people, Israel, that He is their Saviour and Lord. He saved the whole nation from their bondage in Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. And throughout Israel's history, He showed that He wanted to save His people from the punishment and death that was the consequence of their sin and rebellion against Him.

I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live! (Ezekiel 18:32)

Instead of the death they deserve, God urges His people through His prophet to turn back to Him and to His ways – and live! He makes great promises to anyone who loves Him:

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." (Ps 91:14-16)

There are several truths about salvation that can be learned from these verses:

- Salvation comes from God above. Man cannot save himself.
- Salvation involves a relationship of love for God.
- This salvation relationship means that God will rescue the one who loves Him from those things that would otherwise destroy him.
- Living in a salvation relationship with God means living in His protection.
- God's salvation is given to those who call upon Him; He answers them by delivering them from trouble and honouring them.
- Those who love Him can expect a long and satisfying life, a life of fulfilment, and God will show them the wonder of His salvation.

This helps us to see that God's saving purposes are for this life here on earth;

not simply a way of getting us to heaven! To choose to live for God and to serve Him is to choose the way of life rather than death:

I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land. (Deut 30:19-20)

Again we see the heart of God. He wants to bless His people, not curse them. He desires them to live in His love, to hear His voice and be strong and constant in their faith in Him. For He is their life; **He is their salvation.**

Salvation is found in the Person of God, in relationship with the One who is your Saviour. His purpose is that you should know and trust Him, enjoying the blessings of His salvation now and for eternity in heaven. So the prophet urges:

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. (Isa 55:6)

Receive His salvation now by calling on Him and coming into relationship with the One who will save you now and for all eternity! Moses could declare:

The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. (Ex 15:2)

This is quoted from the great song that Moses sang, praising God for His amazing deliverance from the Egyptians. This is another foreshadowing of the eternal salvation that would be accomplished through Jesus Christ, delivering people from the power of the enemy, setting them free and enabling them to enter into the fulfilment of all He promised them, His abundant and eternal blessings!

Whenever His people, Israel, walked in obedience to Him, the Lord blessed them and caused them to prosper as a nation. When they disobeyed Him and disregarded His Word, He would warn them of the consequences of the curses they were bringing on themselves. Often these warnings went unheeded, and the nation would once again either be overrun by her enemies, or sink into a sad state of spiritual and moral decline.

Yet whenever the people turned back to Him with repentance, their Saviour was always ready to restore them because of His wonderful love, mercy and grace:

Cry out, "Save us, O God our Saviour; gather us and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, that we may glory in your praise." (1 Chron 16:35)

These are some of David's words at such a time of spiritual awakening, as the Ark of God's Presence was restored to its rightful place in Jerusalem.

These are only a few of the instances in the Old Testament of God's desire to save His people from their enemies, and the consequences of their sin, disobedience and rebellion against Him. He wanted His people to live in a relationship of love and trust in Him, so He could save them from future distress and enable them to prosper as a people.

It is God's nature to save. Therefore, He wanted His salvation to extend beyond Israel as a nation, and to be available to all mankind; not only a salvation that would lead to deliverance and blessing on earth, but also to an eternal inheritance with Him in heaven! A full and permanent salvation, that was no longer dependent on the obedience or disobedience of His people, but the result of His own gracious activity.

God's Plan For Salvation

The plan for salvation was conceived in heaven and carried out on earth. God is holy; the people He had created had become unholy. He had given them free-will so that they could enjoy a loving relationship with Him; for without free-will, the ability to choose, love is impossible. Yet men had abused that free-will by choosing to please themselves rather than God, to fulfil their own wills rather than His. They had sinned and rebelled against the Lord's authority through agreeing to the devil's temptations. There was no way in which they could make their own way back into His favour or into a loving relationship with Him. Only God Himself could save them from the separation that had taken place between God and man; and this He longed to do.

However, God is not only holy; He is just. He could not say that sin did not matter, neither could he pretend it didn't exist. His just, holy and right judgment on sin is that it brought condemnation and death, an eternal separation from the Holy One. The penalty for sin would need to be paid to satisfy that justice. A sinner could not die on behalf of another sinner to satisfy that justice, for all had sinned, and all were therefore under the same judgment and condemnation.

An innocent man would have to die on behalf of the guilty. Someone sinless would have to receive the death penalty on behalf of sinners. **A Righteous One would need to give His life on behalf of the unrighteous.**

Where could God find a perfect, holy, sinless, totally righteous man? Nowhere! He would therefore need to send His own Son from heaven, to be born into the world as a man. God would have to become man to bring back mankind to Himself, to enable his complete forgiveness and restoration to unity with Himself.

The Son would have to be thoroughly human, sharing the weakness of those He was to represent. He would have to be tempted in every way as they were, yet without ever yielding to temptation. Only one sin in His life would make Him incapable of being the Saviour of the world. After all, Adam only sinned once to become a sinner!

He would need to have a divine nature as well as being thoroughly human to make this possible: both God and man. God in human flesh. This was the cost God would have to pay to bring mankind back to Himself.

And so at God's appointed time Jesus was born. A human mother, Mary; a divine Father, the Holy Spirit. He could not be conceived in the normal way, through the desire of man. His birth was the purpose of the Creator and had to be supernatural; a virgin birth.

A miracle took place. The Word, through whom God had brought all creation into being, was to be born into the world. In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God ... Through him all things were made ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (John 1:1,3,14)

When visited by the angel, Joseph was told to give Mary's baby the name Jesus, Saviour, for this was the mission for which the heavenly Father was sending His Son, to be the Saviour of the world.

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. (Matt 1:21)

Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, is the only man ever to live who existed before His conception and birth. He came from heaven to lead men and women back to heaven.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Tim 1:15)

He came to save sinners from the condemnation and judgment they deserve, to give them the gift of eternal life, God's life. He came to make the gift of God's Kingdom available to them. And so He began His ministry among men by saying:

The time has come ... The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news! (Mark 1:15)

Jesus Himself was that good news. **To believe in Him is to receive not only forgiveness of sins, but God's gift of eternal life.** Those who lived with Him as His disciples could say:

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. (1 John 4:14)

Jesus Himself said: *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* (Mark 2:17) He affirmed: *"The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."* (Luke 19:10)

Jesus, the Saviour, was the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. Receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit marked the beginning of His ministry among men. When He returned to His home town of Nazareth after this event, He went to the synagogue service and read from the prophecy of Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (Isa 61:1-2)

The time had come for God's work of salvation that would make it possible for any who believed in Jesus to be set free from their sin, darkness and bondage; for them to experience the grace and favour of God and receive the gift of His Kingdom. Having accomplished all He was sent to do on earth, He would then be restored to the glory of heaven, from where He had come:

We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. (Heb 2:9)

Jesus fulfilled the mission for which He was sent by His heavenly Father: to be our salvation, the One through whom we could receive God's forgiveness for all our sin and guilt. The One who would take on Himself the punishment of death that we deserved. The One who would thus deliver us from the punishment and condemnation that our sin and disobedience warranted. All this is summed up in the best known verses from the Bible:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)

This is the gospel, or good news, that in Jesus God accomplished everything necessary for our salvation. *"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not recognise him."* (John 1:10-11) He was rejected by those He came to save.

God was making salvation available to all, but He was not going to force His will on anyone. Everyone needs salvation; but today, as in Jesus' time, many

choose to remain in their sin instead of receiving God's offer of salvation. Why should they do this? Jesus explains:

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (John 3:19-20)

To reject Jesus is to reject the salvation God offers. It is to remain under the condemnation that is common to all who have ever sinned, the very condemnation that Jesus came to save us from:

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:18)

The name of that Son is Jesus, Saviour! How dangerous to reject Him, to remain under condemnation in this life and to suffer eternal condemnation as a result. **Better to believe in Him, receive His life now and the assurance of eternal glory in heaven! Peter knew:**

Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

God's Plan For Salvation

We are able to receive salvation as a gift of God's grace. Grace is the free, unmerited favour of God; what He gives to those who deserve nothing. No one could ever earn his or her salvation, or deserve to be saved. It costs us nothing to receive what God gives freely, but the cost to God was immense. First, it involved Jesus having to leave the glory of heaven to accept the limitations of our humanity. Paul explains:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! (Phil 2:5-8)

Here is the cost: He made Himself nothing, the One through whom all creation has come into being! He came as a servant. He humbled Himself. He was obedient to His Father's will, even to the point of dying the painful death of a falsely accused criminal on the cross. This is the work of God's grace, of what He was prepared to do for us because of His great love for us.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2 Cor 8:9)

Jesus knew that the cost to Him was not only to accept the limitations of humanity by leaving the riches of heaven; not only living as a servant meeting the needs of people, but also having to allow Himself to become a sacrifice offered on behalf of those He loved – all mankind! He said:

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matt 20:28)

On a number of occasions He prophesied to His chosen disciples that He would be rejected and crucified; but He promised also that He would be raised

from death:

The Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life! (Matt 20:18-19)

The cross was unavoidable even if Jesus, in His humanity, would have liked an alternative way of salvation. We see the conflict between His humanity and divinity when He agonised for hours in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane immediately prior to His arrest. He prayed:

My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done. (Matt 26:42)

Such submission to His Father's will was the story of Jesus' whole life and ministry. He would not have been thoroughly human if He had not had a will of His own. Yet He kept that will submitted to His Father at all times. He must not sin, even once, otherwise He would have been in need of salvation Himself, and could not have been our Saviour. **Out of love for His Father He lived in obedience to Him and in submission to His will.** We see this from several statements He made, such as:

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. (John 6:38)

He made it clear that although He was the Word of God made flesh, He spoke no words of His own, but only those His Father gave Him to speak. He performed wonderful miracles but said: "By myself I can do nothing". (Jn 5:30) He did only what He saw His Father doing and testified: "I always do what pleases him". (Jn 8:29)

Although the Father had entrusted all judgment to His Son, Jesus made it clear that He had not come to judge but to save. He did not seek glory for Himself, but was secure in the knowledge that His Father would restore Him to the glory from which He had come, once He had fully accomplished the purpose for which He had been sent. Absolute obedience was essential:

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. (John 10:17-18)

Even His life before the crucifixion was an essential part of God's saving purposes. It was essential for Him to live in perfect obedience to the Father and remain sinless. During His ministry He demonstrated God's compassion and mercy towards His people as He forgave, healed, delivered and taught the people. God was concerned about their welfare here on earth, as well as their eternal destiny.

Jesus demonstrated His refusal to condemn, even when under the law such condemnation was deserved, by forgiving the woman caught in the act of adultery. To her He said:

Neither do I condemn you... Go now and leave your life of sin. (John 8:11)

He healed the sick as an integral part of His ministry. The word translated "save" means literally "heal". He wanted to save people in spirit, soul and body. For example, to the woman who pressed through the crowd to touch Him, He said: *"Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed (or saved) you." And the woman was healed from that moment. (Matt 9:22)*

Jesus saw this work of healing as a significant part of His whole saving work. In the remarkable prophecy concerning the cross in Isaiah 53, we see the total work of salvation that Jesus accomplished.

On the cross Jesus identified completely with those who have *"no beauty or majesty"*, with those who are *"despised and rejected"*. He was *"a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering."* (v3) It was even the Father's will that He should suffer in this way!

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. (Isa 53:5)

Every negative that we can experience was laid on Him. He was crushed, oppressed and afflicted. Every human need was placed on Him, so closely did He identify with our condition. By identifying with Him in His death, we are able to be one with Him in His resurrection, to share in His risen life. **He has identified totally with us that now, through faith, we can be identified totally with Him!**

Matthew sees the works of healing and deliverance in Jesus' ministry as an outworking of these prophetic words:

When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases." (Matt 8:16-17)

It may seem strange that Matthew quotes from a prophecy concerning the crucifixion and relates it to what was happening in the ministry of Jesus before He went to the cross. God has only one saving purpose. Jesus demonstrated in His ministry that He had come to overpower and defeat all the evil powers of darkness by setting people free from demonic powers. He showed that it was His purpose to heal and save people from physical sickness. Then, on the cross, what He had done at one time in history, He made available to all mankind of every generation.

But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. (John 12:32)

Jesus not only overcame demonic powers on the cross, but also the devil they serve. He did what was necessary to set people free from bondage, slavery to sin, evil powers and the fear of death:

He too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Heb 2:14-15)

We see, then, a direct relationship between the ministry of Jesus and His death on the cross. During His ministry He forgave, saved people from sins, delivered them from demons, saved them from the power of the devil. He healed their diseases and saved them from sickness. Then, through the cross, the work of salvation became available to all of every generation. What love lies behind both His life and His death! You would think that the people of His day would believe such a Saviour. Not at all!

Of course the devil opposed Him. He tempted Him without success at the outset of His ministry, and then tried on a number of occasions to kill Him. He was unable to do this until Jesus deliberately gave Himself to be crucified, at the Father's appointed time.

You would expect also that Jesus would be opposed by the worldly, secular powers who would not have understood the spiritual purpose for His mission. However, His main opposition came from the religious authorities, those who

had a legalistic concept of religion. They sought to please God by outward conformity to religious tradition and practices, but without having their hearts cleansed and made new. They despised sinners rather than being concerned to reach them with the love, life and power of God. Their religious traditions were powerless to transform the lives of people, heal them, set them free and give them eternal life. Instead of readily receiving Jesus, so they could receive the fullness of life He had come to give, they rejected Him out of jealousy and sought to destroy Him.

Jesus came to save people and establish the Kingdom of God on earth, not begin another legalistic religion. He made it possible for those who accepted Him to become the children of God who would love and serve Him by loving and serving others.

On the cross Jesus became a curse to deliver us from everything that scripture describes as a curse: the devil and his demonic powers, sickness, sin and guilt, poverty and legalistic religion. What He did, He did for all!

This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim 2:3-4)

And so the apostles could affirm positively:

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Acts 2:21)

In His ministry Jesus demonstrated the saving nature of His mission. On the cross He made this salvation available to all. But why the death of a criminal? Why was all the suffering necessary as part of God's purpose for Him?

Jesus took all the guilt of our sin on Himself. **The Innocent One died for the guilty, the Sinless One for sinners, the Righteous One for the unrighteous, the Holy One for the unholy, the Perfect One for the imperfect.**

The consequence of our guilt was condemnation and death, eternal separation from God. Therefore, Jesus had to bear our guilt, although He had none of His own, and suffer the consequences of it. He was innocent, but had to suffer the death of a criminal, of one judged to be guilty.

In reality, it was our guilt that was being judged. Even Pilate, who sentenced Jesus, knew Him to be innocent. It was the punishment that we deserve that caused Jesus to be ridiculed, beaten and then subjected to a most painful death. Because He has suffered that punishment, you can have peace with God and receive the gift of His life. He had to die the death we deserve that we might be able to receive God's gift of eternal life and have the assurance of a place in

heaven.

The good news is this: that if we identify with Him in His death, then we can be identified with Him in His resurrection.

On the cross, Jesus cried out: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Matt 27:46) These are wonderful words, for they show that on the cross Jesus was fully identified with our condition, with the consequences of our sin – separation from God. Perhaps it was this separation that Jesus dreaded more than the physical pain of crucifixion, for being sinless He had not known such separation until He hung on the cross.

In His love and mercy He had prayed for those who put Him on the cross, because they were unaware of what they were doing in crucifying the Son of God. Now He experienced the separation that they and every other sinner know only too well. Yet, before dying, Jesus could call out in triumph that: ***"It is accomplished"***, or ***"It is finished"***, or ***"It is done"***. Everything that was necessary to save men from the devil, from sin, sickness and all that curses them was accomplished. He could yield up His Spirit to the Father, knowing He had fulfilled the mission on which He had been sent.

He had lived in perfect obedience and submission to the Father's will; He had overcome every temptation and device of the devil; He had demonstrated God's will to forgive, heal and deliver. He had become the Lamb of God; the pure, spotless sacrifice that God Himself had supplied for the sin of the whole world.

Jesus had gone to the cross in the certain faith that He would be raised triumphant over death, the judgment on sin. The devil had been allowed to kill Him, but was unable to destroy Him! What must have seemed like a victory to the devil was soon seen to be the very means of his defeat. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, all who believe in Him as Son of God, all who believe in that sacrificial work of the cross, are delivered out of the devil's grasp and the dominion of darkness, saved from the judgment and eternal condemnation that awaits the devil and all who serve him.

Believers in Jesus are saved, not only from the devil and all the sin and evil that could affect their lives; they are saved for God's purposes, both now and for eternity. They become the children of God, pass from the enemy's dominion into participation in God's Kingdom.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col 1:13-14)

By God's grace we have been redeemed; the price has been paid so that we can belong to God, now and eternally. The purchase price was the Saviour's blood. That was the price He paid to purchase you for God:

You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body. (1 Cor 6:19-20)

What does it mean to know you are saved? To recognise that Jesus Christ has paid the price for you so that you do not belong to yourself. **Your life is not your own; it belongs to the One who bought you with the blood of His Son.** He has the right to do with you as He pleases. His will is that you love Him with all your heart, obey His commands and His will for your life here on earth, that you fulfil your call to be a disciple who follows Jesus. And then to take the place He has prepared for you in the glory of heaven!

God's desire is for you to "*seek first his kingdom and righteousness,*" and everything that you need will be given you as well!

Crucified With Christ

How are we able to appropriate what Jesus did for us on the cross? Even though at the time of the crucifixion Paul was opposed to Jesus, he came to understand:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

Paul realised that Jesus took not only our sin to the cross, he took us, the sinners responsible for those sins. We died with Him to the old life of sin, a life lived without the life of God's Spirit within us, in order that we might have a new life, to become a new creation. For this to happen we need to be born again, as Jesus Himself made clear. This new birth would give us an inheritance in His eternal Kingdom:

I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. (John 3:3)

Jesus affirms: "**You *must* be born again**". (v7) To become a Christian this is essential. It is a work of God's Spirit when someone repents and puts his or her faith in Jesus and what He has done on the cross. At this point, a person not only receives an inheritance in God's Kingdom, but is incorporated into Christ Himself, as Paul explains:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. (Eph 1:13-14)

The gospel is the good news of your salvation. First you hear it, then you believe it and then you receive the Holy Spirit; God comes to live in you as a sure sign that you have an eternal inheritance with Him in His Kingdom. Jesus said:

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. (John 5:24)

In other words, he has been 'born again'. He now belongs to God's Kingdom.

From the outset of His ministry, Jesus said that the appropriating of His Kingdom comes through repentance and faith. Repentance involves two distinct things. First, forgiveness made possible through the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. He took your sins and guilt upon Himself so that when you confess your sins God forgives you, the sinner. He cleanses you from all unrighteousness, making you righteous, holy and blameless in His sight. He does this because He faithfully honours the price paid for your forgiveness and acceptance by Jesus.

He is just and knows that your punishment has already taken place through all that Jesus suffered for you. He therefore declares you, "not guilty".

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Paul declares to the believers: *"You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."* (1 Cor 6:11) Washed clean of all sins by the blood of Jesus, the sacrifice made on your behalf. Sanctified, and made holy, set apart for God and His purposes, because He purchased you with that blood and has given you His Holy Spirit to enable you to live a life pleasing to Him. Justified, made righteous and totally acceptable, not by anything you have done, but by what He has done for you:

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)

The work of salvation is totally the provision God has made for us. It comes to us as a gift of His grace, not because of anything we have done.

The second aspect of repentance is to give your life to Jesus. You give your

sin to be forgiven. You give your life that you might be born again of the Spirit and receive a new life. In other words, you give your life to Jesus, with all its weakness, wrong-doing and failure, and **He gives you His life, eternal life, the fullness of God's life of love, power, joy, peace and everything that is good and wholesome.** This is a very good exchange from our viewpoint! A new life in Christ for the old life lived apart from Him:

Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

Baptism in water is a recognition that the old life of sin, a life lived without God, is dead, buried and finished with. Now the believer has a new life at one with Jesus Christ:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised in Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Rom 6:3-4)

Paul goes on to explain that if we are united with Him in His death, we shall certainly be united with Him also in His resurrection:

Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. (Rom 6:6-8 NLT)

The initial experience of new birth is the entrance into a new life, Jesus has saved us from the old in order that we might not only have a new life, but live the new life.

The initial act of repentance, forgiveness of our sins and the surrendering of our lives to God is to be followed by a life lived in submission to His will. Similarly, the initial act of faith in who Jesus is and what He has done for us is to lead to a life of faith, a relationship of continual trust in Jesus.

After Paul had spoken of being crucified with Christ, he said: *"The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (Gal 2:20)

The idea of an initial act of asking God for forgiveness and a new life, only

to return to the old life-style, is clearly totally alien to the thinking and teaching of the New Testament. The idea that someone could make a token act that would secure eternal salvation does not make biblical sense.

Clearly, salvation in the New Testament is a process. We have been saved by the work of the cross and the power of God's Spirit at work within our lives. The old life without Christ has gone. To the man that is born again, a new heart and a new life has been given. The evidence of this will be seen in the change of life-style he exhibits. He does not return to a life of sin. He forsakes his former way of life. He repents by turning away from the old to embrace the new life. He not only possesses that life; he lives that life!

The new heart he has been given brings into his life a new motivation, not to live for himself, but for God. He recognises his life is no longer his own. He has been purchased by God for His purposes. Because of his love for God, he wants to see these purposes fulfilled in his life and he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable this. **He can enjoy a close walk or relationship with Jesus, trusting Him and living in obedience to His will.**

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:9-11)

Jesus is describing Himself to the disciples as the "True Vine". They are branches of that Vine, whose purpose is to bear fruit for the glory of the Father, the Vinedresser who tends the Vine. Apart from Him, outside of the Vine, the branches can do nothing; they need to draw life out of the Vine in order to be fruitful.

Jesus tells the disciples that the fruitless branches are cut out of the Vine by the Father. They only draw on the life of the Vine for themselves, but produce no fruit. Those who remain in the Vine are given great promises by Jesus:

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:7-8)

They remain in Him by obeying His commands, by living in "the obedience of faith", of which Paul speaks.

The initial act of salvation grafts the disciple into the Vine as a branch. This is a work done for him by God, for no one could graft himself into Jesus. The

disciple has the clear responsibility to abide, to remain, to live continuously in the Vine. The one placed in Christ is to live continually in Him.

Jesus does not think in terms of a person being saved by a single prayer, but of living the life of a saved person. **The initial act of salvation is to lead to a permanent relationship in which the believer lives in Christ and Christ in the believer.**

This raises an awkward question. Does this mean that a person is saved by the initial act of repentance and faith, or does there also need to be the fruit of an abiding branch to secure his place in heaven? Let us answer this from the biblical evidence. Before His return to heaven, Jesus told the disciples:

Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16)

Salvation is clearly given to the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God who came to give His life on the cross as a sacrifice for us. **That believer is baptised to signify that he has turned away from his old life that is now dead, buried and finished with. He has become a new creation, has a new heart and a new life. His life has been purchased by God, he does not belong to himself and is called to live the new life. He can only do this because he has been saved from the old life, his former life without Christ; he has been saved from the power of the devil and from everything that has cursed him.**

If this is what has happened to him, he will not revert to his old life in a few days or weeks. His whole life is now set on an entirely different course. This will be the evidence or outworking that he has been saved.

We can see, then, that some can make an emotional response to the gospel, or a superficial one, without really being born again. If there is not true repentance, turning away from the old and embracing the new, and a genuine faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ, then it is evident from the fruit in a person's life that new birth has not taken place.

New birth means being incorporated into Christ and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit coming to live in the new believer. If this has happened, there will be visible evidence that this has taken place. Jesus said that you would know where people are spiritually by the fruit you can see in their lives.

The saved person will demonstrate the life of a saved person.

This does not mean he will be instantly perfected, but it does mean that there will be radical changes in him as a person, and in his life-style. Not all these changes will necessarily happen at once. There will be an immediate turning away from previous sin, and the power of his salvation will liberate him from

things that previously bound him.

The Process

The total work of salvation is a process. The one who is born again has been saved, is being saved, and will be saved. What God has begun He will bring to conclusion.

These three stages are called in scripture:

- Justification
- Sanctification
- Glorification

Don't be put off by the words; they are easier to understand than they sound!

Justification

When you first gave your life to Jesus Christ, were cleansed of your sins and given a new birth, you were justified. This means you were made righteous, totally acceptable in God's sight. Put very simply: **to be justified is to be made totally acceptable in God's sight.** This is something He has done and does not need to be repeated. For this act of new birth unites the believer with all that Jesus did for Him in shedding His blood on the cross. He is completely forgiven for all the sin and unrighteousness of his former life and made acceptable in God's sight. No longer condemned, he is now a child of God. The punishment that gives him peace with God was paid by Jesus. So God's justice, His righteous judgment on sin, has been satisfied. So now he can enjoy peace with God in this life, and for ever!

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 5:1)

The new Christian could do nothing to contribute towards this work of being

justified, made righteous and acceptable to God. It is entirely a work of His grace. The believer could only put his faith in what Jesus had done for him. Having tasted of that grace, he is now to continue to live in that grace:

Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. (Rom 5:2)

His relationship with God has begun by faith in His grace and is to continue in this same way. He is to live in the grace of God until the fulfilment of His plan for him when he will reign eternally with Jesus in glory. Believers “*are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus*”. (Rom 3:24)

The key to the work of being justified is the complete washing away of all the sins of the past, everything in his life that has ever grieved God or been opposed to His purposes!

He is redeemed. Jesus has paid the price for him with His blood so that now he may belong eternally to God:

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. (Eph 1:7-8)

Never again will the believer need to be justified. He is born again just once in his life. Although this new life enables him to enter into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, unfortunately he does not instantly become perfect in the outworking of his new life.

Sanctified

Jesus has come to live within him by the presence and power of His Spirit. This Holy Spirit will enable him to walk in a way that pleases the Lord and enables him to fulfil God’s plan and purpose for his life. At the same time, the Holy Spirit will work on his character so that he becomes more and more like Jesus. This whole process is called being sanctified:

From the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying

work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. (2 Thess 2:13)

his verse helps us to see that God's purpose for believers is an ongoing one. From the beginning He wanted the believer to be both justified and sanctified: to be brought into relationship with Jesus, and then to live continuously in that relationship.

God is Holy by His very nature. It is impossible to describe adequately what this means, for He is beyond description. We can only say that He is whole, complete, perfect in Himself. He wants no imperfection in heaven, which is why we need to be both justified and sanctified. To be sanctified is to be made holy, which literally means to be set apart for God.

From the moment he is born again, the believer is in some ways already sanctified then, for his whole life has been set apart by God and for His purposes. **He has been saved from his sinful past in order to serve the Lord on earth before enjoying the glory of heaven.** Paul says that we are "*sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy.*" (1 Cor 1:2)

Just as the act of justification has taken place and will never need to be repeated, so the act of sanctification has already taken place. **The believer is already set apart for God. This is something He has done by placing him in Christ Jesus.**

The Christian may experience times when he feels that he is yielding more of himself to the Lord. In reality, the disciple is entering more fully into the truth that he already belongs totally to the Lord. By withholding part of his life from God, he has been stealing from God what He has already paid for! The more he yields himself to God, the more the amazing work of sanctification can take place, making him more and more like Jesus:

Now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation – if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. (Col 1:22-23)

We are sanctified through the cross, made holy in God's sight through Jesus' sacrifice. He sees us as His holy, set apart children. The ongoing work of sanctification takes place progressively within us, enabling us to live holy lives, pleasing to the Lord. **Made holy in Christ, we are expressing that holiness increasingly as we yield more and more to the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives!**

Because of our life in Christ, God can see the process already completed. He

can even see us seated with Him in heavenly places. We do not serve Him through legalistic religious attitudes or traditions that “*nullify the word of God*”, (see *Matt 15:6*), but by faith in the One who saved us.

Paul could scarcely believe that the Galatians had come to know Jesus through faith, had received the Holy Spirit and seen God work miracles among them, only to return to religious and traditional attitudes and ways. Religion focuses on what man does; faith puts the focus on what God has done for us in Christ. He came from heaven to share in our humanity that He might make believers a holy, set apart people for God – holy in His sight and dedicated to His purposes:

Our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:13-14)

To live a holy life is, therefore, to do what God wants, as well as to be the kind of people He desires.

The more we reflect the character of Jesus, the more we will reflect His actions, doing what He did. We will love God and others, and will obey the Lord as the outworking of that love. This obedience is the outworking of God’s sanctifying work in our lives. For the better we know Him, the more we want to please Him:

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

This obedience is an essential part of God’s purpose. **We are to live in the fear of the Lord, in awe of God; eager to please Him, and hating the idea of displeasing Him.** The commission given to the Church is to make disciples who will obey everything Jesus commanded His first disciples:

He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. (Heb 5:9)

We are to work out our salvation with “fear and trembling”. These are not works that contribute towards being saved; they are the actions we perform because we are saved! They are the works that demonstrate we have a living faith, for “*faith without deeds is dead!*” (*James 2:26*)

Glorified

God sees the believer already glorified, seated in heavenly places in Christ. He is the Beginning and the Ending. He knows what will be as well as what has been, because He lives in eternity.

There is still a sense in which we shall be saved, though. Everyone will have to come before the judgment seat of Christ. Because you are saved this will not be a terrible time, as it will be for the unsaved. Because you have been saved, and are living now in the good of your salvation, you can have every confidence that you will be saved. God will complete the process He has begun:

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet 1:3-5)

This process began with your new birth; you were justified and are sanctified in Christ Jesus. You died with Him when He went to the cross; you have been raised to a new life with Him. **And you can be confident of your heavenly inheritance when you will have a new spiritual body!**

Your inheritance is kept for you in heaven. But notice that Peter speaks of the coming salvation that is to be revealed at God’s appointed time.

Many want to know what happens to someone who has been justified but does not live a sanctified life. Does he have an inheritance in heaven? It is not for us to judge individuals; that is God’s prerogative alone! His purpose is for the whole process to be outworked in our lives: justified, sanctified, glorified. Paul says that “*those he justified he also glorified*” (see Rom 8:30) He sees the newly born again believer in Christ, both on earth and in heaven. However, at the judgment, each will be rewarded for what he has done. So the nature of the reward each receives appears to depend on how wholeheartedly he has sought to live a sanctified life! Jesus says: “*He who stands firm to the end will be saved*”. (Matt 10:22, 24:13) And Paul explains what will happen at the judgment.

His work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. (1 Cor 3:13-15)

It seems that the alternatives are living to please the Lord or being saved “*as one escaping through the flames.*” The choice is yours!

The host of heaven “cried out in a loud voice: “*Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb*”. (Rev 7:10) We need to take this truth to heart: salvation belongs to God. He is the Judge of the living and the dead.

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments.” (Rev 19:1-2)

Once you are on the side of Jesus, He is on your side! Even now He is interceding for you in heaven. His blood continues to keep you safe from the judgment you deserve, for even as one who is saved, you continue to sin:

Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. (Heb 7:25)

Our Christian lives began by faith in God’s grace and this is how we are to live to our dying day. Then we shall receive justice at God’s hands, salvation, not condemnation because of all Jesus has done for us. And we will take our places in that great multitude that will eternally proclaim His praises:

You are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Pet 1:9)

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