

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Things which accompany salvation: Salvation

Ogres are like onions, at least according to Shrek. It was not that they are green and smelly, or likely to make you cry, but rather that they had layers, and needed to be understood. This morning we resume our series that is looking at salvation, and the things that are inextricably linked with it.

Far from being a simple thing, a momentary choice, we will come to see that salvation is a complex and vast transaction that involves both God and me. Indeed, in his book, *Basic Theology*, Charles C Ryrie writes: "Soteriology, (soteria is the Greek noun for salvation), the doctrine of salvation, is one of the grandest themes in the Scriptures. It embraces all of time as well as eternity past and future. It relates in one way or another to all of mankind, without exception. It even has ramifications in the sphere of angels. It is the theme of both the Old and New Testaments. It is personal, national, and cosmic. And it centres on the greatest Person, our Lord Jesus Christ. From God's perspective, salvation includes the total work of God in bringing people from condemnation to justification, from death to eternal life, from alienation to filiation (that is being a child in God's family). From the human perspective, it incorporates all of the blessings that being in Christ brings both in this life and the life to come. The inclusive sweep of salvation is understood by observing the three tenses of salvation. The moment one believed he, or she, was saved from the condemnation of sin. That believer is also being saved from the dominion of sin and is being sanctified and preserved. And he, or she, will be saved from the presence of sin in heaven forever."

Wow, not bad for six o'clock on a Sunday morning! And yet the youngest child, understanding little more than the fact that

"Jesus loves me, this I know"

Anna B Warner (1820-1915)

can enter fully into the blessings of salvation that Ryrie writes about! Such is the manifold wisdom and grace of God! What He does is able to stretch the greatest human intellect beyond understanding, and yet is totally accessible to the smallest mind with equal reality. What a great God we Christians have!

At the heart of the biblical usage of the word "salvation" is the idea of deliverance. So Paul could write in Colossians 1:12-14: *"Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."*

Without doubt, I think the greatest example we have in the Old Testament of this great salvation must be the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. Where once they had been slaves of Pharaoh, now they were a free people. And yet they did not stay in Egypt! They left that former life behind them and journeyed to the Promised Land, entering into the blessings of a land they had not worked to establish. This neatly illustrates the twofold aspect of salvation. It involves a leaving behind of a former life - what we are saved from, to begin a new life in Christ - what we are saved to.

But to appreciate fully the greatness of our salvation, it is necessary to understand the basis upon which our salvation rests. It could not be that God just thought that I was a nice kind of chap so allowances should be made for me. Nor is it that God is so loving a God that He has to save everyone, no matter what.

I would like to consider four aspects of the work of God that form the legal basis for our salvation. It is of note that on only two occasions in the New Testament are so called believers said to be cursed. One of these is for those who preach and believe a perverted gospel, which in reality is no gospel at all (Galatians 1:6-9). Any gospel, any teaching that does not rest fully on these four aspects of our salvation is truly a perverted gospel, one that has moved away from the reality of what the Bible teaches. The other occasion we find in 1 Corinthians 16:22, when a lack of love for the Lord Jesus is condemned. It really is a serious business to move away from the Lord Jesus and what He has said in His word, to develop our own brand of doctrine. So what are these four cornerstones of salvation?

1. Redemption;
2. Substitution;
3. Propitiation; and
4. Reconciliation.

1. Redemption

There is a twofold aspect to the idea of redemption in the Bible. We can never lose sight of the price that was paid. So we read in 1 Peter 1:18-19: *"knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."* Those things that this world considers to be so precious - silver and gold - pale into insignificance when we consider the price that was paid on our behalf, the unique and precious blood of the only Son of God. But we are redeemed from the slave markets of sin and the curse of the law to be set free to serve a risen Christ in the new life that He gives. So Galatians 3:13 says, *"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us"* and Titus 2:14 says: *"[Jesus] gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."*

2. Substitution

One cannot read the Bible without coming to the conclusion that one aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross at Calvary was substitutionary atonement - that is, He died in my place to take the penalty of my sins. And yet, sadly, this idea is coming under real attack both from without and within the church. Time this morning does not allow us to give a full defence of this truth but we shall just look at a few verses which speak of this vital truth.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all", Isaiah 53:6.

Isaiah is quite clear that we have all fallen short of what God demanded of us, but that He has, as judge, punished Jesus, as our substitute. He bore the iniquity of us all, thus making full atonement. We may not like the idea of being answerable to God, but that is irrelevant, because we are. He sets the rules, and He acts as judge. To see Calvary as just an expression of the love of God is to distort His character and to utterly miss the significance of the work of the Lord Jesus. He died for my sins, as God punished Him so that I could be forgiven!

"...the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me", Galatians 2:20.

The only way that His giving of His life for me makes sense is if my life was already forfeit. I love my wife but she would take a dim view of my throwing myself in front of a bus as I shouted to her that I loved her, and this was the proof. She would rather see me on my knees cleaning the kitchen floor week by week as a proof of my love! However, if she was crossing the road and had failed to see the same bus, and I was then to throw myself in front of her to push her out the way, then she would appreciate the expression of love that had led me to sacrifice my life so she could live.

"Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed", 1 Peter 2:24.

He became cursed by hanging on the tree, taking the right judgement of a sinless God, and by that death we are made right with God. Full atonement by penal substitution - the death knell for the only begotten Son of the Father, the joyous ring of liberty for the once guilty sinner.

3. Propitiation.

Have you ever wondered why Concorde had a bent nose? I am told it was so that when the plane hit its highest speed the heat generated by friction was funnelled into the nose cone rather than across the body of the aeroplane. The nose cone was known as a propitiator.

"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world", 1 John 2:2.

"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people", Hebrews 2:17.

The idea behind propitiation is that He has taken the heat of God's wrath so that what was keeping us apart has now been removed. We can freely approach God in the shadow of the Lord Jesus. The events of Genesis 32 and Genesis 33 give us a good visual example of the reality of propitiation. Why not take time after this broadcast to see

for yourself how we have been brought back to God, except that it is God who has propitiated Himself, through Christ, so that we might be fully at home with Him.

4. Reconciliation

“And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled”, Colossians 1:20-21.

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God”, 2 Corinthians 5:20.

The thought behind reconciliation is to change thoroughly. God has not changed - He is perfect. Nor has man changed - we are ever sinful. However, the barrier between God and man has been taken away. The secondary aspect to reconciliation is our responsibility to enjoy this new relationship, as we become more like Him, and find ourselves closer to Him. Once we accept that the Lord died in our place, the great change that occurs within us is that we no longer stand before God as our judge, but can approach Him as our Father, and that should make all the difference to the way that we live our lives day by day.

The scope of salvation

Having looked at the firm foundation that exists for our salvation, it is necessary to view its scope. When the Bible talks about salvation it does so in three distinct ways.

- a. Its once and for all, completed aspect in the past.
- b. A present aspect to our salvation
- c. A future aspect to our salvation

a. Its once and for all, completed aspect in the past.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”, Ephesians 2:8-9.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”, Titus 3:5.

I became a Christian when I was a child of about nine. I do not remember the exact date, but I know it was a Sunday evening, and I had been in Chester. On that night I was utterly and totally changed. This had nothing to do with me other than I recognised that what God said about me was right and that I was wrong. Only Jesus could be my Saviour. But there and then, He transformed me. Not that you could have told by a look at the outside, or sadly, even because of my behaviour. But from that moment He made me a new creation and I will never be more saved, more of a Christian, than I was at that moment, regardless of how much I may grow as a Christian or whatever I may learn from the Bible.

b. A present aspect to our salvation

However, there is a present aspect to our salvation and we read about this in Hebrews 7:25: *“Therefore He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”*

Though I made a once and for ever commitment to God, the devil will point the finger of accusation at me before God whenever I fail. Who is in Heaven to speak up on my behalf, to claim me as belonging to God? Well He, that is the Lord Jesus Himself, always lives to speak up for me, so though my actions may deserve it, I will never come under the condemnation of God, because of His present and ongoing work on my behalf.

c. A future aspect to our salvation

There is a future aspect to our salvation. Paul speaks about this in Romans 5:9-10: *“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”*

“We shall be saved...” There is no doubt that the purpose of our salvation, that we might worship Him for eternity in His presence, will be accomplished. I do not know when I shall die, or when the Lord Jesus may return to call me to be with Him, but I do know that not one Christian will miss out on their eternal presence with God in Heaven. And it is the

Lord Jesus Himself who will ensure that each blood bought believer is brought all the way home! God has a 100% success rate so far and He is not about to lose that on me! Once forgiven, always saved!

Our wonderful salvation

And that leads us on to our final consideration this morning as we think about our wonderful salvation. How long does salvation last? Quite simply, forever! Eternal security of salvation is an integral part of the Christian gospel. To suggest that we can be saved and then lost is a perversion of that true gospel.

If my salvation depended upon my behaviour, then quite obviously I could be saved and lost. The old self is still alive and well in me, prompting me to do wrong.

If my salvation depended upon my choice, then too I could be saved and lost.

Sadly, many who once trusted Jesus have grown cold, backsliding to the point where they are outwardly no different to an unbeliever.

However, thank God, our salvation is of grace, and is the gift of God (see Ephesians 2:8-10), and once He gives He does not take back. We must not ignore what has happened within us the moment we confess Christ as Saviour. He forgives me for all my sins - past, present and future. He condemns my old nature completely - it is dead judicially. He gives me a new nature that cannot sin. I am sealed by His Holy Spirit, He has promised that He will never leave me, and we could go on.

Though we may have little realised it the moment we became a Christian, so many irreversible things happened as actions of God, that mean we can never be saved and lost. Just think of that for a moment. Sadly, too many believers carry on as though they have to work to maintain their salvation, as though it is somehow up to them. This is simply just not so. It's His salvation, His work.

Ah, then, does that mean we can just do as we please? Well, certainly a life spent in self pleasing would not alter our eternal destiny, but it may well call into question the reality of our confession. I know my wife made a promise to me that for the rest of our lives she would be my wife. Because of her faith and character, I know that is a promise she will keep. I have never for one minute thought that because that is so I can play the field as much as I like, or take advantage by paying her no attention. My love for her does not permit such abuse; they are not even questions to be considered.

So it is with Christianity. I love Him because He first loved me (see 1 John 4:19). He has saved me for ever and set me free from the eternal penalty of my sins. However, because of my, albeit faltering, love for Him, I now want only to please and serve Him. Incidentally, because He is God, I also know that what He wants for my life is better for me than what I think I want for my life. So I do not do myself a disservice by following Him.

"I will not strive my soul to win, but I will serve for love of Him" neatly sums up our response to the wonderful salvation that is ours, and ours for eternity. As we close this morning, we can do no better than repeat the question that we find in Hebrews 2:3: *"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"*

- Great because of the person who offers it;
- Great because of the extent it saves from;
- Great in that it is to all;
- Great because of its endurance;

Dear listener, have you made this salvation your own? If not, then heed the instruction: *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:2).

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