

Tell Me About SALVATION



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“Tell me about salvation. What do Christians mean when they talk about being saved?” This lady’s question was sincere. Having visited our church a few times, she had been meeting with one of the small groups for Bible study. Listening to their conversations and observing the conduct of their group, she had been inspired by their Christian example. They talked about personal prayer, conversion, temptation, and spiritual growth. Now she wanted to know more. People have been asking this question for centuries. When they spend time with vibrant Christians, they realize that Christianity is more than accepting a proposition about God; it is a life-changing relationship with God. They want to know more about this relationship. They want such a connection with God too. One may question the authority of the Bible or the teachings of the church, but it is difficult to deny the miracle of transformed lives. This woman could not.

SALVATION REQUIRED Nicodemus, a well-educated Jewish teacher, came to Jesus to discuss theology. Jesus said simply, “You must be born again” (John

3:7 niv). He did not present salvation (spiritual rebirth) as an option but as an imperative—something that every person should experience. The reason? Because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Sin is missing the mark; it is falling short of fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives. In what sense can the Bible say that “all have sinned”? Don’t many people lead upright, morally respectable lives? Yet the Scriptures say that all of us are sinners. Why? In exercising our free moral choice, we choose to separate ourselves from our Creator. This broken relationship with

God cannot be corrected by moral behavior, personal integrity, or participation in the life of the church. It is impossible for us to save ourselves by “works of righteousness that we have done” (Titus 3:5), for “our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth” (Isa 64:6) in the eyes of God.

SALVATION REVEALED Because of our estrangement from God, we deserve to die, but Christ died in our place. His death redeemed us (paid the penalty on our behalf). Our redemption is purchased, not with money, “but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a Lamb without defect or blemish” (1 Pet 1:18–19). When Christ died on the cross, he completed God’s plan of redemption. That is why he cried, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Now all who put their trust in Christ can be

restored to the fullness of God’s love, because “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor 5:19). To put it another way, we are saved by grace (God’s undeserved love), which was expressed by the shedding of Jesus’ innocent blood on our behalf. All of Christ’s teachings and miracles could not save us, for “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin” (Heb 9:22). Truly, as written by songwriter Charles Wesley in “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing,”

He breaks the power of canceled sin, He sets the prisoner free; His blood can make the foulest clean; His blood availed for me.

SALVATION RECEIVED However, we cannot enjoy the benefits of the gift of salvation until we receive it. God does not force it upon us. It becomes ours as the result of intentional, decisive action on our part. We see this illustrated in the experience of the jailer who asked the early Christian preachers

Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). The Holy Spirit had awakened him to his need for God. The Spirit had placed him under conviction (an awareness of his personal guilt before God), and he knew that he must do something in response. Conviction leads to sorrow, which always precedes the experience of salvation. Frank Laubach’s Inspired Letters paraphrase of

2 Corinthians 7:10 describes this sorrow as a kind of spiritual grief: “The grief which God wants men to feel produces a change of heart. Then God can save them.” This godly sorrow is a painful awareness that we have failed God and rejected his offer of an open, honest relationship with him. Godly sorrow leads to repentance. The New Testament word for repent literally means “to change one’s mind” or to “turn around.” So repentance is more than an emotion; it is an action, a decision, a choice to stop doing anything that would displease God. Someone has said that the word repentance could be spelled with four letters: Q-U-I-T. Upon being released from the selfishness of sin, a repentant person seeks to make restitution (correcting the past wrongs we have done to others, paying what we owe to them). Restitution does not produce salvation, but it is clear evidence of a changed life. Remember, salvation is the free gift of God. We do not merit it; we cannot earn it; but we can accept it as we confess our faith in Christ, believe his Word, repent of our sins, and follow him. So Paul told the Philippian jailer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

SALVATION REALIZED What are the results of salvation? What can you expect to take place when you are saved? Here are only a few of the results:

Your sins are forgiven. “If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us

our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). The confession mentioned here is not admitting your sin to a pastor or priest or counselor, therapeutic though that may be, but rather confessing your sins to Christ. He hears and forgives. You are a new person. “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor 5:17). Yes, you will have the same body and the same physical family, but you will be a new person in your attitude and actions, in your character and conduct. Your guilt is gone. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). God has forgiven you, transformed you into a new person, and removed all of your guilt. You can now forgive yourself, allowing God to grant you spiritual strength to remain guiltless each day. You have victory over sin. “Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?” (Rom 6:1–2). Salvation saves you from your sins, not in your sins. You are not saved in name only. You are actually delivered from sin. Salvation and the subsequent work of the Holy Spirit enable you not to sin. You have a Helper. “I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Christ Jesus the righteous” (1 John 2:1). Christ’s Holy Spirit will help you overcome

temptation and help you find God’s forgiveness if you fall. You can finish the race—and gain the prize. “The one who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt 10:22). The Bible says your Christian

life is like a race (2 Tim 4:7–8). Many begin this race but fail to finish it. From the moment you are born again, you are fully saved now, but you also begin a lifelong process of being saved. You need to finish the course, having kept the faith, to enjoy salvation for all eternity.

HERE’S YOUR INVITATION “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isa 45:22). “Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today He is ready to save you” (2 Cor 6:2 lb).

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