

Salvation

Our state before salvation

The fall of Adam and Eve resulted in the whole human race being cut off from fellowship with God (Romans 5:12-13). Since then we have all inherited the sinful nature of Adam (Psalm 51:5), and not one of us can claim to be righteous (in right standing) before God (Ecclesiastes 7:20). God hates sin, and as we are all sinners (Romans 3:23) and unrighteous in His sight, He cannot accept us as we are (Romans 3:10-12). Before we came to know God we all led sinful lives (Ephesians 2:1-3) and in this sinful state we are not even able to respond to God's call on our own (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The Law

The covenant God made through Moses in the Old Testament was with His chosen people, the nation of Israel, and the 'law' was the standard that He set for their adherence to this covenant. No one had ever been able to fully obey the law in all its aspects (Romans 3:23) and their 'good deeds' could not make up for their failure to do so (Isaiah 64:6). Hence even Abraham 'believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness' (Galatians 3:6). Salvation in the Old Testament, as in the New Testament, were both by grace, or none could ever have been saved. Paul points out that to be righteous under the law one would have to keep every part of the law (Galatians 3:10 and 5:3). The role of the law was therefore not to justify them but to show us God's requirements, and the extent of all of our sin in falling short of it (Romans 3:20). In the New Testament the Law of Moses was not abolished (Matthew 5:17-20) but our faith in Jesus sets us all free from having to obey all the Mosaic laws, and from the judgement that followed disobedience to it.

Galatians 2:16 Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law." (See also Romans 3:21-22 and 30-1).

Salvation

God sent Jesus to us so that through faith in Him as the Son of God and acceptance of His death as the sacrifice (John 3:16) that paid the penalty for our sins we may be justified and become righteous in His sight (John 1:29). Jesus calls on all of us to repent of our sins and to believe in Him (Mark 1:14-15), and our sins will be forgiven and we will be saved from eternal separation from God (Romans 10:9-10). God not only sent Jesus to die for us a gift to us, but also gives us the ability to respond and to accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is the spiritual new birth, which John compared to being 'born again'.

John 1:12-13 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn - not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

Titus 3:4-5 But when God our Saviour revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

The beauty of salvation is this – it is as if we are entirely new, and have never sinned at all:

2 Corinthians 5:17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

Only way to God

There is only one true God, and only one way that He has given us to be accepted by Him – through faith in Jesus and our acceptance of Him as our Lord and Saviour. The worship of any other 'god' will not help, and neither can we gain acceptance by the way we live our lives, even if we lived holy lives and performed many good deeds.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me".

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

By faith

By believing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, sent to us by God for our salvation. By repenting for our sins and accepting Him as our Lord and Saviour we are saved from the judgment for our sins.

Romans 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

The deep realization of our sinful nature and our inability to regain God's favour by our own efforts, along with faith in Jesus and His death on our behalf as atoning for our sins, which we now freely and openly accept, results in our salvation (Romans 10:9-10). Our spirit which was dead to the things of God now becomes alive to God. This is the re-birth or renewal of the spirit within us, or being 'born again' that Jesus explained to Nicodemus (John 3:3-8 and 1 Peter 23-25). As disciples, or followers, of Jesus He now promises us eternal life with Him (John 10:27-28).

Obedience to God

The mere knowledge and mental acceptance of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God who came to die on the cross to reconcile us to the Father does not save us from the judgment for our sins.

As James (the half-brother of Jesus, a leader in the church in Jerusalem) says in his letter, even the demons know who Jesus is, but they are still condemned. (See also Acts 19:15).

James 2:19 *You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.*

Our salvation is not about works - the things we do - but about the attitude of our hearts, in accepting Jesus not only as our saviour, but also as Lord over our lives, and hence doing our best to obey Him at all times, turning away from our previous lives of deliberate sin.

Luke 6:46 *Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?*

Matthew 7:21-3 *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"*

Hebrews 10:26-7 *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.*

Relationship

Paul, Peter, James and Jude each referred to themselves as a 'slave' of Jesus Christ. The Greek word 'doulos' is translated as a 'slave' or 'bondservant'. A bondservant is a slave who becomes a freeman yet still chooses to give up his/her personal rights of freedom to stay and serve a master. This describes our relationship with Jesus – we are called to total submission to His commandments and to His will for our lives. But when we accept this and regard ourselves as the Lord's slaves, He then accepts us and calls us His friends!

John 15:14-15 *You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.*

Spiritual growth

God wants us to become more like Jesus (Romans 8:29). With salvation comes regeneration - a spiritual renewing or re-awakening through the Holy Spirit to the things of God (Titus 3:5). It necessarily involves both a love for and desire to please God and a loathing and rejection of our previously sinful nature and life style (Galatians 5:24-5). The key is to renew our minds – the way we think and hence act, because of our new faith in Jesus.

Our part

We are encouraged to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12-13), to live by the Spirit, not to gratify or to give in to the desires of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:16), and to display the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). We are to both put to death the works of the body (Romans 8:13), and to present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2). The goal we are told to strive towards is perfection (Mathew 5:48).

What changes have taken place?

We are a new creation

The salvation experience is the most important event in our lives; it is as if we are 'born again' - we have the opportunity to start a completely new and different life and lifestyle in Jesus, with a re-created spirit. All our past sins have been forgiven, and our spirit which was dead to God, and the things of the Lord, now becomes alive to God.

After salvation we may look the same and have the same temperament and personality. We may even feel emotionally much the same, but on the inside we are a new creation, with a new relationship with God, and with this a new purpose in life and a new outlook and attitude to everything around us. It is important though to remember that our salvation is not based on our feelings, but on our faith; on the firm and logical decision that we took to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and saviour.

2 Corinthians 5:17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

Ephesians 4:22-23 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.

Justified and declared righteous

Through our faith in Jesus we are justified – regarded as if we had never sinned, as God now looks on the sacrificial blood of Jesus instead of our sins (1 John 1:7). We are justified before God (regarded just as if we had never sinned) and declared righteous (our relationship is restored – in right standing) before God. (See also Galatians 3: 6-15). At the cross Jesus became the sacrifice for all our sins, so that we may become righteous in God's sight.

Romans 3:24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Romans 1:17 This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."

Ephesians 4:24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God - truly righteous and holy.

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God,

We are reconciled to God, and have peace with him through Jesus

Since we are now justified by our faith in Jesus, our sins no longer separate us from God.

Whereas we were once 'enemies' of God, He now calls us His 'friends' (Roman 5 1-11, Ephesians 2:13-18, Colossians 1:21-22, John 15:15). Furthermore, as our Father, God is committed to love, protect and to provide for us (Matthew 6:25-34; 10:29-30).

We have received mercy, grace and forgiveness

We receive mercy and grace - unmerited forgiveness for our sins when we believe in and accept Jesus.

Ephesians 2:4-5 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

1 Peter 2:10 "Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy."

We now have a new family of God

We are now sons and daughters of God, and all other believers from every country and race are our brothers and sisters (Ephesians 2:19).

Matthew 12:50 Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!"

2 Corinthians 6:18 And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Galatians 3:28 *There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Galatians 4:6 *And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father."*

Hebrews 2:11 *So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.*

1 Peter 2:10 *"Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy."*

We have all we need for life, godliness, and victory

We were not created to live in lack or defeat, confusion or depression, aimlessness or self-serving pleasure seeking. God tells us that He has given us everything we need to live Godly lives, and to serve Him as both His kings and priests.

2 Peter 1:3-8 *By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvellous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See also verses 9-15).*

John 10:10 *The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.*

Rom 8:37-39 *No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below - indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

We are now bound for heaven

Jesus says he has gone ahead to prepare a place for us, and in the mean time He is preparing us for that place – the best is yet to come, and God has given us the Holy Spirit as a seal of His promise to us. (See Ephesians 11:11-14).

John 14:2-3 *There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.*

1 Corinthians 2:9 *That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."*

Ephesians 1:14 *The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.*

What should I do now?

Find a church

Find a church where you are accepted and taught more about God, His word, and his all His ways. Jesus gave the church a gift of leaders with 5 different functions, one of which is specifically to teach His word to all the members.

Ephesians 4:11-12 *Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.*

2 Timothy 3:16 *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*

(See also Ephesians 4:11-16).

Study the Word

The Bible is God's instruction manual that he gave us to teach us about Him, what he has done for us, and what he has provided for us. God wants us to study His word – to read, believe and to apply it.

Acts 17:11 *And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.*

Grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus

2 Peter 3:18 *Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen.*

Ephesian 4:15-16 *Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

Love the Lord and everyone else

Matthew 22:37-39 *Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: "Love your neighbour as yourself." ('neighbour' = everyone else!)*

Put on the full armour of God

Ephesian 6:11 *Put on all of God's armour so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.*

Be a doer of the Word

James 2:14 *What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? (We are not saved by works, but works, or fruit, are evidence of what we believe and have become.)*

Be baptised in the Holy Spirit

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is for all believers, and not just for a select few as it was in the Old Testament. It so is so vital to our ability to minister to others that Jesus' disciples were told not to even leave Jerusalem until they had received it.

Acts 1:5 ... *"Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

Living out the new life

Our lives should be a testimony of our newfound faith in Jesus.

Matthew 3:8 *Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.*

James 1:21-22 *So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. But don't just listen to God's Word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.*

John 14:15 *"If you love me, obey my commandments.*

John 14:21 *Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them."*

1 John 2:5 *But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him.*

Matthew 7:21 *"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.*

Remember that we are not working *for* our salvation, but working *out* our salvation – we cannot do a single thing to justify ourselves before God to make us acceptable, but what we can do is to demonstrate the change in our hearts by determining to love and to obey the Lord by keeping his commandments, which are in summary to love the Lord with all our hearts, and to love our

neighbours (everyone else) as much as we love ourselves. Hence it is not a question of what we can do for God, but what He can do for and through us, when we commit ourselves to listen and to and to obey Him.

James 2:14-26 What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? 'So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds." Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless? ... So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone. ...Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.

1 Corinthians 15:10 But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favour on me - and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace.

Can we lose our salvation?

Once we are saved our salvation is protected by Jesus, so no one can rob us of it.

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

John 10:28-29 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand.

John 10:30 The Father and I are one."

But can we rob ourselves of our own salvation?

Since our salvation is by our personal and individual deliberate decision to believe and to accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, what if we renounced that belief and decision?

2 Timothy 2:12 If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us.

There are many inspiring examples in the Bible of the heroes of the faith who refused to be intimidated by the ruling authorities, such as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3, or from fulfilling their calling like Paul.

Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

Acts 21:13 But he said, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus."

We will do well to imitate their faith and determination!

Hebrews 10:35-36 So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that He has promised.

Dr Brian Drury