

“What Does It Mean To Be Saved?”

There are many ways we talk about people and things being “saved.” Since we moved into our home in Stevens we have redone practically all of our landscaping. One day this summer Nancy asked me to trim some bushes in front of our porch. These are bushes we planted. I cut two bushes rather short, trying to keep them low like the surrounding bushes. Well, when Nancy saw them she wasn’t happy about how short I made them. She said, “What did you do?” I said “Oh, they’ll be ok.” (But I thought to myself, “Uh-oh”. Maybe I overdid it”). I thought we might lose them. She *knew* I killed them! Well, the good news for me is they survived. They were *saved* and are fine now. Whew!

We lose electricity in a power outage. If the power is out for an extended period of time we worry about food in the refrigerator and freezer. We were on vacation a few years ago and our water heater went out, which kicked off power to our refrigerator in the basement. We tried to *save* the food, but couldn’t. We had to throw it out.

Now food can be replaced. Whether or not we can save something can have a more serious side to it. When one of our grandsons was about 2 years old or so he was at our house eating a grape. The grape got stuck in his throat. I was in the kitchen and heard this commotion in the sun room. I ran out, grabbed him, and held him upside down. We were all in a panic – what if he would choke to death. I was never so glad to see a grape pop out of his throat! He was *saved*.

One day when I was in another church I listened to a message on our answering machine. It was from a lady on our prayer chain at the church. The message simply said, “Emma drowned!” (Emma was the child of a family in the church). I thought “Oh no!” Immediately I called their home number but there was no answer. I called one of their relatives. The relative said the child is in the hospital, alive! She had fallen into a pool and was underwater for a short time. The EMT people revived her. I can’t tell you the relief when I found out the child had been *saved*.

There are experiences where something of value, or someone is saved, and this brings joy and gratitude and a sense of relief. *Yet when someone talks about being “saved” in the religious sense, it can often produce a much different response:* that person who mentions being “saved” is a religious fanatic, he or she is old-fashioned and out of touch with the times, to say “I’m saved” means you think you’re better than people who don’t practice the same religion that you do. You’re right, everybody else wrong.

But being saved, and the experience of salvation, is at the heart of Christianity and the Bible

Salvation is the dominant theme of the Scriptures! Woven through the pages of the Old Testament and the New Testament is the story of how God has acted in human history to *save* us! The words “save” and “salvation” are used about 150 times in the New Testament alone! For example, we’ll be looking at some verses in the letter of Titus today.

Titus 2:11 says, “For the grace of God has appeared that offers *salvation* to all people”. In Titus 3:4-5a we read, “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he *saved us*.”

But what is “salvation”? What does it mean to be “saved”? In the Old Testament, Hebrew words translated “save” “salvation” carry the idea of *deliverance* – deliverance from danger or oppression. Another Hebrew word for “save” means “*to be wide*” or “*spacious*” – i.e. to be delivered from tight spots! In the New Testament, the words for “save” “salvation” also carry the idea of *deliverance* or *safety*. Another word often used suggests *healing* or *wholeness*. So, *salvation means God rescues us and delivers us!*

What does God rescue us from? *From things that destroy the goodness of life.* There are a lot of destructive things from which we need to be saved!

Some need to be delivered from bondage to drugs, or alcohol, or sex, or gambling. These not only destroy the person with the addiction, but have a spinoff effect in causing pain and heartache to others hurt by the addict’s behaviors.

Some may not be into these obvious addictions, but are still bound by hurtful things. For instance, here’s a lady with a miserable attitude, a sharp tongue. She has offended people in her church to the point where they’ve left. She looks down on alcoholics or guys into pornography addiction, but doesn’t have a clue that her hateful attitude can be just as destructive.

Then too, some of us need to be saved from negative, critical, unkind and unloving attitudes.

There are other things that are life-destroying, from which we need deliverance: hopelessness and despair. From being crushed by life’s losses and tragedies. Some need to be rescued from drifting aimlessly in life, with no purpose. One of the things that marked my life as a teenager before I was saved was that I felt empty, and was searching to find meaning in my life.

We also need to be delivered from self-centeredness, from self-interest. Pride, putting our self at the center of life rather than God, is the basic sin in the Bible! Me first! What’s in it for me? Think about how much of what we do is governed by putting our own interests first!

And because of these things that bind us, these sins, we are separated from God. Listen to what it says in Ephesians 2:12-13: “Remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” To be saved means we are rescued from *living a life apart from God.*

What does it mean to be saved? It means to be rescued and delivered from the things that destroy life, the things that ruin us and our relationship with God and others.

Now the Bible says that salvation is accomplished by God, through Jesus Christ. We can’t save ourselves. Only God can save us! We can’t be saved by living a good life and trying to pick ourselves up by own moral bootstraps. We can’t be saved just by believing that there is a God or by being religious. We are saved only through what God has done for us in Christ -

His suffering, death, and resurrection, His taking upon Himself the guilt and punishment we deserved for our sins. We don't deserve this. We can't earn it. This is called "*grace*". Again, Titus 2:11: "For the *grace of God* has appeared that offers salvation to all people." God *offers* salvation through Christ as a free gift. Our part is to *accept it* (that's faith). Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast."

Here's something else about salvation: ***When we're saved, God begins to bring about a change deep inside of us.*** We become a new person in Christ! 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come." Jesus called it being "born again" (see John 3:3). Our text in Titus talks about this transformation that takes place within us.

For instance, Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly." Notice the change from ungodly behaviors, worldly and passions, to becoming self-controlled, upright, and godly.

Titus 3:3: "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another." The Apostle Paul, writing to Titus, characterizes some of the behaviors of unsaved people. It's an ugly description of life lived without God. But then he goes on.

Titus 3:4-5: "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." Notice the change: we can experience the washing of a spiritual rebirth, when new life begins to emerge in us, as we are renewed by God's Spirit.

And then there is Titus 2:14: "He it is, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds." God changes our motives so we *want* to do good.

Kurt Warner, a former NFL quarterback, talked about the change Christ made in his life. "Before accepting Jesus as my Lord I lived my life for only me. I never asked God what he wanted for my life. I was living only for what I wanted. When I was 25 years old I realized I was nothing without Jesus and that I was separated from Him because of sin. I asked Jesus to come into my life and show me his way. He did! Jesus became first in my life and a great change took place." *If I say, "I've put my faith in Jesus and I'm saved", but I'm still pretty much the same person I was before I got saved, then something's wrong!*

Now, it's important to keep in mind that salvation is a process. 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are *being saved*

it is the power of God.” (Notice, to us who are “*being saved*”). It would be terrific if once I get saved, suddenly I go from being a bad person to being this wonderful new person, with hardly any flaws! But this isn’t reality, is it? We become a new person in Christ, but there’s still a lot of the old sinful nature left. Being saved is a *lifelong process* of putting away more and more of the old nature and putting on more and more of the new nature in Christ! God wants us to grow! And we have God’s Spirit living in us to help us change.

Another thing, ***salvation is both a present, and a future, reality.*** Salvation is something I experience here and now, as Christ delivers me from things that are destructive and evil and changes me from the inside out. But the Bible also talks about a salvation that is not yet realized – a *future* reality. Titus 2:13 says, “While we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Notice, we have to wait for the “blessed hope” – i.e. the return of Christ. Titus 3:7 says, “So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” In Christ, we have hope of eternal life!

In days past, people would emphasize that if one got saved it meant that person wouldn’t go to hell. Salvation was a super-duper insurance policy against the fires of hell. A lot of people today don’t worry much about hell, or even believe there is a hell. But while the threat of hell was overplayed in the past, it shouldn’t be ignored. The Bible gives a warning to those who choose to reject Christ and God’s salvation offered through Him. There are some sobering words in 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9: “In flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” (Notice: those who reject the gospel will be shut out from the presence of the Lord and His glory).

I still believe one of the ultimate questions of life is what happens to us after we die. The Christian faith teaches that there is a life beyond this one. And how we respond to the gift of Christ determines what will happen to us after we die. For those who receive Christ and are saved, there is the promise of life with Christ that will last forever. Imagine if being saved only carried benefits for *this life* on earth. We’d be living this new life in Christ. We’d be finding His power to overcome some of the hurtful things of life. We’d know the joy of His presence in us. But then, after we breathe our last breath, it would all be over. Nothing more. Like Jesus is saying, “So long, it was nice knowing you!” That’s it!

But no! The experience of Christ that is ours here and now doesn’t end – it will last forever. And our life in Christ now is just a tiny foretaste of life share with him forever!
Salvation is both present and future.

Brother Andrew is a Christian missionary in the holy lands. He says it is an exciting place for a missionary, for it is at the crossroads of 3 major world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He tells how are many Muslims are open to hearing about Christianity. Forgiveness and

salvation are not assured in Islam. Allah decides at his own whim whether or not to forgive a follower's sins. And a follower's bad deeds can keep him or her out of Paradise. He says every Muslim lives in fear with the knowledge that his or her bad deeds will outweigh their good deeds. There is only one way to right the scales for good, and that's to die in a holy war (jihad). He says many Muslims desperately want to believe there is some other way to salvation besides a jihad, and Jesus offers them that! *This message that we can be saved through Jesus Christ is a message of good news!*

I guess after saying all I've said, the question is: Are you saved? Am I saved? Perhaps you are thinking, "Well, I think I'm a Christian. I guess I'm sort of saved!" But being "sort of saved" is like being "sort of pregnant"! Either you are or you're not!

The question of our eternal salvation is really the most important question of life, even though our generation tends to ignore it. God was so concerned about our eternal welfare that He sent His Son to save us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The Bible says that when we place our faith and trust in Christ as Savior we can know with certainty that we are saved.

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