

"You and Your Beliefs"—The Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)—part 1

Several years ago we came home from vacation and discovered that our fish "Clam" (who lived in a Gumball machine aquarium in the kitchen) was nearly dead. The once lively creature was just lying around motionless, a sickly color. There he was, looking at us, helpless, powerless.

Sherry said, "I think he's got 'ick'." She put some drops of ick medicine in the water. We heated his water up, and waited. If you had visited our house a few days later, you would have seen the once almost-dead fish swimming as happy as he could please around his home.

Why did I tell you that story? For this reason. Tonight, in our study of "You and Your Beliefs," we're going to investigate perhaps the most amazing of all doctrines.

Turn to and read the following passages. What theme is repeated in each?

Psalm 34:18 "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and **saves** those who are crushed in spirit."

Isaiah 45:22 "Look unto Me and be **saved**, all the ends of the earth, for I am God..."

Jonah 2:9 "**Salvation** is of the Lord."

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of man is come to seek and to **save** that which was lost."

Romans 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the **salvation** of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

Eph 2:8 "For by grace are you **saved**..."

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

Perhaps the greatest theme in all of the Bible is this grand theme of SALVATION. The God of the Bible is a God who saves! He is a God who saves helpless, hopeless men and women, boys and girls, just like us.

As the old song put it, "Ye have heard the joyful sound, Jesus saves, Jesus saves!"

What makes the doctrine of salvation so magnificent? We'll never understand or appreciate fully God's salvation until we come to grips with what the Bible has to say about 3 topics. We've already studied these in previous weeks, but let me review:

1. The Doctrine of God

God is the Creator (Gen 1-2). God created all things for Himself.

2. *The Doctrine of Man*

God created Mankind (Gen 1:27 "So God created man in His own image..."). For what purpose? God designed man to know and serve and glorify Him.

3. *The Doctrine of Sin*

Man rebelled against God's purpose. Man sinned against God. The consequences were severe, as Romans 5:12 states, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

But the Creator God is gracious. It is His nature to give, to give to the undeserving. And that's what He did. What did God provide for sinful, fallen man? God provided *salvation*.

Key: The message of the Bible is the message of salvation. The Bible is the record of redemption. To reiterate, salvation is rooted in the grace of God. And as we'll see, salvation was no afterthought for God either. He designed salvation before He ever created the world (Eph 1). Adam's sin did not catch God off guard. Before time, God had established His decree to provide an atonement for undeserving rebels.

That's what makes God's salvation so marvelous. It was unsolicited and unmerited on our part. It was God's work from beginning to end.

Let's ask a very fundamental question. Just what is salvation? We're going to spend tonight and our next study exploring this grand theme.

Tonight: We're going to see that in the Bible, there are three aspects of salvation.

Next time: We'll delve into the various terms relating to salvation: Redemption, Regeneration, Substitution, Calling, Atonement, Justification, Sanctification, Glorification, and others.

Main Idea: The Bible speaks of three aspects of Salvation, three tenses.

I. Past Tense Salvation: We were Saved from the Penalty of Sin.

Key Verses: Eph 2:8; Lk 7:50; I Cor 1:18; II Tim 1:9

II. Present Tense Salvation: We are being Saved from the Power of Sin.

Key Verses: Ph 2:12-13; II Th 2:13; II Cor 3:18

III. Future Tense Salvation: We will be Saved from the Presence of Sin.

Key Verses: I Pt 1:5; Rom 8:23; Rom 13:11; I Jn 3:2

I. Past Tense Salvation: We were saved from the **penalty** of sin.

Key Verses: Eph 2:8; Luke 7:50; 2 Tim 1:9

Listen to the past tense verbs...

Eph 2:5 "...it is by grace you have been saved."

Eph 2:8 "For it is by grace you have been saved."

E.g.—In Luke 7 a woman with a very sinful past came to Jesus and began to anoint His feet, not only with expensive perfume, but with her tears. Her actions caused quite a scene in the house that day. They also brought out this amazing statement, for Jesus told the woman in Luke 7:50, "Your faith **has saved you**; go in peace."

Answer this. What is the definition of a Christian from these verses? A Christian is one who has been *saved*. Which raises the question, saved from what? Saved from the wrath of God, saved from perishing, in short, saved from the *penalty of sin*.

2 Timothy 1:9 "Who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time..."

Paul says that God both "saved" and "called" us (past tense). On what basis did God save and call us? It was NOT because of anything we have done (not our works). It WAS because of His own purpose and grace.

According to this verse, when did God design our salvation? Notice the phrase, "before the beginning of time." God gave us a gift before we were even able to receive it, before we even existed. Before time began, saving grace was given to us.

How settled is your salvation? How secure is the believer? Let this sink in. In God's all knowing mind, your salvation was given to you in Christ Jesus...*before* the world ever began!

Discuss: What are some reasons some people lack assurance of their salvation?

But that's not all. There's another aspect of salvation presented in Scripture...

II. Present Tense Salvation: We are being saved from the **power** of sin.

Key Verses: Phil. 2:12-13; 2 Th 2:13; 2 Cor 3:18

Yes, there is a sense in which you are BEING saved right now. Let's examine some texts that speak of this...

Philippians 2:12-13 "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—**continue to work out your salvation** with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you** to will and to act according to his good purpose."

Here's the present dimension of salvation. We are being saved from sin's power. What does Paul here say is involved in our being saved? Two elements...

1. It involves **our efforts** to work out our salvation.

2. It involves **God** working in us.

What biblical term describes the present aspect of salvation? The next text tells us...

2 Thessalonians 2:13 “But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning **God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.**”

What is God's desire for us right now? To sit back and wait for heaven? No. Notice the two things that are at work in your present salvation:

1. *It involves the sanctifying work of the Spirit.*
2. *It involves **our belief** in the truth.*

What does it take to be saved from the power of sin? These two elements. One won't work by itself any more than one wing is sufficient for a plane to fly.

Answer this. According to this verse why might a person fail to overcome sin in his life? Why might he fail in His battle with the power of sin? Two reasons. One—he doesn't have the Holy Spirit who alone can sanctify us. Two—he has the Spirit but isn't cooperating with the Spirit. This latter problem (of not cooperating with the Spirit) could potentially involve a couple more factors. He is not experiencing the sanctifying work of the Spirit because he isn't believing the truth (that's how the Spirit works, through the *truth* of His Word), and he isn't believing it because he doesn't *know* it, or he does know it but isn't *believing* it (placing his trust and confidence in it).

2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

What is happening right now in the life of the believer? He or she is *being transformed*... By whom? By the Lord who is the Spirit. In other words, right now the Holy Spirit is seeking to work out the implications of our salvation. He wants to refashion our lives into the likeness of Christ.

Make it personal. Does sin have less of a stranglehold on your life today than a year ago? It should. We'll never be perfect in this life. But God's desire is to free us from the power of sin (Rom 6) and He has given us resources (His Spirit and His Word) that enable this saving work to occur.

Discuss: Is it accurate to say, “I am being saved...”? Are there dangers in speaking of salvation in the present tense?

III. Future Tense Salvation: We will be saved from the **presence** of sin.

Key Verses: I Pet 1:5; Rom 8:23; Rom 13:11; I John 3:2

Peter talks about this in 1 Peter 1:3-5:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! 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.**”

What is yet to come? Our salvation is. Yes, there's a sense that though we have been saved, we are waiting to BE saved.

Discuss: Discuss both elements. In what sense are we NOT waiting to be saved, and in what sense are we WAITING to be saved? This is a key question because some are waiting for things they already have, whereas others are despairing because they don't yet have what is indeed future by God's design.

Paul's instruction elaborates...

Romans 8:23 "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

What are we waiting for? Our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. We are saved now for sure (in fact, in the next verse Paul states, verse 24—"For in this hope we are saved"), but we will experience the fullness of our salvation in the future? When will that take place? When Christ returns!

See: 1 John 3:2 "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Read: Romans 8:17-25

By the way, what's the term the Bible uses to describe the completion of this final tense of our salvation? We see it in Romans 8:30, "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also **glorified**." It's *glorification*.

Discuss: Suppose a friend says to you: "I don't think a person can know for sure if he's going to heaven, not in light of what God says in Rom 13:11 "...for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed." Sounds to me like we won't know for sure if we're saved until we get to heaven. How do you explain that?"

Use Scripture to support your explanation...

Implications to discuss: We must keep these three tenses in mind when we read the Bible. Why? Here are a few reasons...

--If we focus only on the past tense, it can lead to easy believism. How so?

--If we focus on the present tense alone, it sounds like salvation is incomplete and inadequate, that it depends on us.

--If we neglect the present tense emphasis, we end up living frustrated lives. Why so?

--If we fail to emphasize the future tense, we rob ourselves of joy. How so?

Next Week: Key biblical terms relating to Salvation

[\[1\]](#) These unedited notes were prepared for use in a Wednesday evening, discussion-oriented Bible study at Wheelersburg Baptist Church in Wheelersburg, Ohio. Although the notes are in draft form, I trust the seed thoughts contained will be used by our gracious God for your edification. –Pastor Brad Brandt

