

What We Believe – 8. Salvation

We believe in: *“Salvation as solely by the grace of God, accomplished by God the Son and applied by God the Holy Spirit, appropriated by God-given faith through which alone the sinner is justified.”*

A) Introduction

The message of Christianity is good news about salvation – how a sinful human being can be brought into a restored relationship with a holy God. How this happens is of the utmost importance; Christians cannot afford to be wrong here. It is on this point that the Protestant Reformers saw a great divergence with the Roman Catholic Church, and it is important to stress that this divergence continues up to the present day.

B) What are we saved from?

Salvation means rescue or deliverance. It can therefore only be understood in light of perceiving that humanity is in a situation of great peril. Whilst most people in our society would comment that things in the world are not “as they should be”, only the Christian faith can get to the fundamental problem: the wickedness of the human heart (see **Genesis 6:5**). Consequently, only the Christian faith can provide the required solution: salvation.

We can understand our salvation with reference to the past, present and future.

1. Past – we are saved from sin’s penalty

Sin is described in varying ways in the Bible. **1 John 3:4** maintains that *“sin is lawlessness”*. Whether intentionally or by ignorance, all people have broken, and continue to break, the holy Law of God. *“All have sinned”* (**Romans 3:23**) and have real guilt, and therefore are liable to the judgment of God.

The good news of salvation is that God delivers us from this penalty. The Bible describes this using various metaphors, each one focussing on a different aspect of our salvation. These metaphors function like the spokes of a bicycle wheel – they are distinct, but they are also inseparable.

Justification (e.g. **Romans 5:1**): This is a legal metaphor that means to be declared righteous and no longer reckoned guilty as a lawbreaker.

Forgiveness (e.g. **Ephesians 1:7**): This is a financial metaphor that means that the debt that was owed has been cancelled.

Sanctification (e.g. **1 Corinthians 6:11**): This is a moral metaphor that means to be made holy and washed from defilement.

Redemption (e.g. **Colossians 1:14**): This metaphor comes from the slave market and refers to the purchase of people. It also alludes to the redemption of God's people through the exodus.

Regeneration (e.g. **Titus 3:5**): This metaphor refers to the new creation and to being born again.

Adoption (e.g. **Romans 8:15**): This metaphor refers to the legal process of bringing someone into the household as an heir.

2. Present – we are saved from sin's power

God also delivers us from sin's ongoing mastery over our lives by changing our desires through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are new creations (e.g. **Ephesians 4:17-24**) and are therefore called to the new life (e.g. **Ephesians 4:25-32**).

The previously listed metaphors also indicate this ongoing aspect of our salvation. Considering two for example:

Sanctification (e.g. **1 Thessalonians 4:3**): We are sanctified in position, but are called to become increasingly sanctified in our practice.

Redemption (e.g. **Romans 6:17-18**): We now belong to the new Master, Jesus, and are called and empowered to obey Him.

3. Future – we are saved from sin’s presence

The ultimate trajectory of our salvation is in glorification (e.g. **Romans 8:30**) in which we will finally and completely be delivered from sin’s presence. This awaits the life to come.

C) What are we saved by?

Our statement could be summarised by the following three phrases:

1. We are saved by grace alone

God’s grace is His undeserved favour and unmerited kindness (see **Ephesians 2, Titus 2:11**). Salvation is all of grace because it is His work entirely. We have done nothing to earn our salvation; it is a gift.

2. We are saved through faith alone

We receive God’s gift of salvation through faith and not through works (**Romans 3:28, 10:9**).

3. We are saved in Christ alone

The name Jesus means “the Lord saves” (see **Matthew 1:21**). Jesus’ ministry is at the centre of our salvation: He lived the life we don’t, and He died the death we deserve (see **2 Corinthians 5:21**). Being spiritually united with Jesus by the Holy Spirit is the central core that holds the “spokes” of our salvation together.

D) What are we saved for?

1. Worship

God has saved us for His own glory (see **Ephesians 2:7, 3:10**). Salvation is from Him, by Him and ultimately for Him. This is enormously liberating – we are here for God and to seek His will and Kingdom. If instead we pursue our own we invite disappointment and frustration.

2. Security

God saved us when we were sinners (**Romans 5:8**) so He won't abandon us now that we're His. Salvation can neither be earned nor lost. We have the approval of God through faith in Jesus. Again this liberates us to live for something bigger than ourselves.

3. Humility

Salvation teaches us that we need saving and cannot save ourselves. Any boasting or self-righteousness are completely out of place. This is inherently unifying – the ground is level at the foot of the cross.

4. Holiness

We are called to "**work out [our] own salvation**" (**Philippians 2:12**), since "**faith apart from works is dead**" (James 2:26). We are saved to be holy and to put Christ on display.

5. Mission

We're saved to bring the message of salvation to others who also need saving. As John Piper has put it: "Mission exists because worship doesn't". Only the redeemed can worship so the honour of God is at stake. Jesus is the only Saviour and men and women can only be made into worshippers through faith in Him.

E) Conclusion

Salvation in Christ is a reason for constant joy. We must drink deeply from the "**wells of salvation**" (**Isaiah 12:3**) daily to combat discouragement and temptation. As the gospel takes deeper root within us and fills us with joy and peace we will grow in our confidence and conviction to take the message of salvation where it is needed.