

Salvation: God's Love Forever

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, March 24, 2013

The Many Dimensions of 'Salvation'

In our last study, we introduced various terms that are used in describing the doctrine of salvation, and sought to explain their meanings. But we didn't mention the word "salvation" itself. That's what we'll do in this study.

I. WHAT DOES 'SALVATION' MEAN?

- A. The most important Hebrew word in the Old Testament that is translated "salvation" is a truly wonderful one. It so happens that it is also to be the root word in a name that is important to us. This root word is the word *yasha'*. We see it in used in when the angel told Joseph to give our Lord the name "JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins"¹ (Matthew 1:21). The name 'Jesus' (Joshua, as we would put it in English), means "Savior". Originally, the Hebrew word *yasha'* meant "roomy" or "spacious"; that is, in contrast to the idea of narrow and restrictive. Figuratively, it represented the idea of liberation or deliverance. It could refer to deliverance from danger through a human being such as a judge who "delivered" or "saved" his people (Judges 2:18; 6:14; 8:22; 12:2), or a king who "saved" (1 Samuel 23:2). Sometimes, deliverance from danger or trouble was given by God; and was thus called "salvation" (Psalm 20:6; 34:6). Sometimes, this "deliverance" from God was for a special purpose --that the one(s) being 'saved' would belong to Him (Isaiah 43:11-12). Salvation is, ultimately, of God. As it says in Genesis 49:18, "I have waited for Your salvation, O LORD!" The verb form of this word is one that is used to speak of the price paid for redemption by the promised Messiah (Zechariah 9:9 with Matthew 21:4-5; Psalm 118:25-26 with Matthew 21:9 and 23:39). It conveys the idea of 'victory' in the fullest and most ultimate sense (Psalm 98:1-3; Isaiah 63:1-5).
- B. In the New Testament, the word that is translated "salvation" is the verb *sozo* ("to save"). The noun *soteria* means "salvation"; and the noun *soter* means "savior". Looking back again to Matthew 1:21, we're told that the angel told Joseph to call the Child "JESUS [*Iesous* in Greek for the Hebrew word *yasha'*] for He will save [*sozo*] His people from their sins." The Greek word for salvation can mean many things--"cure", "recovery", "remedy", "rescue", "redemption", or "welfare".² In Matthew 9:22, Jesus used this word for physical healing when He told the woman that He healed along the way, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." But the same word is used to describe "saving" in the sense of delivering someone from eternal death and giving them everlasting life. In Romans 5:9, Paul wrote about Jesus and said, "Much more then, having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." In Hebrews 7:25, the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus is "also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him . . ." The New Testament basis of salvation in this sense is the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross; "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:8-9). And as the apostle Peter said, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

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II. TO WHAT DOES 'SALVATION' INVOLVE?

- A. Obviously, when the word "salvation" is used in a temporal sense, it's application is restricted to the temporal circumstances. When we say that someone fell out of a boat and almost drowned, but 'got saved', we obviously don't mean that they now have eternal life. We simply mean that their body was 'saved' from the potential of drowning; and intend nothing with respect to their soul. But when we talk about 'spiritual salvation', we mean the whole person--not only the soul, but also, ultimately, the body as well. Salvation involves the salvation of the whole person--including the anticipation of the future glorification of the body. As Paul put it in Romans 8:23-24; "Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?" Praise God that when He saves us, He saves us in every respect. He saves our soul, transforms our mind, changes our inner disposition, and even promises to raise our bodies so that we will share in the glories of heaven in our full being!
- B. You can think of salvation in terms of its 'tenses':
1. There is a 'past tense'--our 'justification'. Our sins of the past have condemned us and made us guilty before God. But when He saves us, He completely saves us from the guilt of the past. Paul writes that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:23-26). "Therefore," he writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."
 2. There is a 'present tense'--our 'sanctification'. We are not only being delivered from the guilt of the sins of the past, but we are continually being transformed in our daily lives; so that we are increasingly becoming more like Jesus in the way we live. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:18; "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." As he wrote in Philippians 2:12-13; "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."
 3. Finally, there is a 'future tense'--our 'glorification'--and we truly look forward to it! Paul wrote in Philippians 3:20-21, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." And as he said in Romans 8:24, "For we were saved in this hope . . ."

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version; copyright 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc.

²Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), p. 321.