

Salvation Part 3 – Our Response

If we look at the chaos and brokenness in our world, we can see that mankind has chosen to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and in doing so, chose to live independently of God. As Romans 3:23 (KJV) states: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." One of the definitions that Thayer's Dictionary gives for "sinned" is "to be without a share in". This perfectly describes humanity's problem. By not eating from the tree of life, by not believing the message of the gospel, we are without a share in eternal life: His Spirit within us. Living separated from God is the root of all the world's troubles, but the bigger problem is our eternal one. This is why God became a man (John 1:14): through His death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-4), He reconciles us with Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Eternal life was humanity's need, and that is what salvation provides. Salvation is God's Spirit within us. It brings us into union with God and establishes a relationship with Him that starts now and lasts for eternity (1 John 1:1-4). Salvation is not merely about being saved from sin; it is about being brought into an eternal, loving, personal relationship with God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Salvation is a free gift from God, offered through grace: His favour, undeserved, unearned and unmerited by us. This beautifully describes salvation. No matter how hard we try or how good we are, we will never deserve eternal life. This is why the message of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus is called *the gospel*, which literally means "good news." It is the good news of salvation by faith, not works. "Grace" is God's act of giving (His gift), whereas "faith" is our response in accepting His gift.

Romans 10:14-17 NLT

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? [15] And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers

who bring good news!" [16] But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, "LORD, who has believed our message?" [17] So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:1,3-4 NLT

Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it... [3] I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. [4] He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.

Salvation starts with hearing the gospel: the good news of Jesus Christ. Many messages claim to be the gospel, but they lack its power. Messages like "Give your heart to Jesus so that you can go to heaven" or "Come to Jesus and you'll be forgiven of all your sins and receive eternal life" are poor attempts at sharing the gospel. Paul said that the gospel is the power of God that brings salvation (Romans 1:16). The gospel must be about Jesus dying for our sins and being raised to life in order to justify us. It is the message of what God did for us in Christ to make salvation available to those who simply believe.

Ephesians 1:13 NLT

And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.

Upon hearing and believing the gospel, we receive eternal life - His Spirit within us, forever.

Romans 4:25 NLT

He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.

Romans 10:9-10 NLT (brackets mine)

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring (confessing) your faith that you are saved.

God is so gracious! In order to be saved, we do not need to be perfect. Nor do we need to pay anything or do anything. Salvation cannot be earned, nor can it be deserved. It's not based on our merits, but on faith in Christ and what He has done for us. Upon hearing the gospel, all we need to do is believe. We must believe from our hearts that Jesus died for our sins and that He was raised from the dead to justify us (make us right with God). We also need to confess that Jesus is Lord - that He is who He says He is (that is, that He is God; Lord over all).

Mark 1:15 NKJV

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

“Repent” means to change your mind. To receive salvation (eternal life), you must repent of your sin, which means changing your mind about your sin. You must stop thinking that you need to pay for your sins to get right with God, and you must accept that He has paid for your sins through the death of Christ. People often wrongly believe that good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell - but we need to change our thinking and start believing the truth that salvation and eternal life are for anyone who has changed their mind and believed the gospel.

Your response to the gospel is essential for salvation. No one gets saved because they were a nice person, because they did good things or because they went to church. Salvation is a personal decision that we must all make. It starts with hearing and understanding the message, followed by a change of mind (repentance) and a heartfelt belief in Jesus' death and resurrection, together with a confession that Jesus is Lord. Our faith in Christ and what He has done for us brings us salvation - which is the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, establishing an eternal relationship with God.

Questions for reflection

1. What stands out for you?
2. What is the message of the gospel?
3. How does someone receive salvation?
4. Have you received salvation?
5. If not, what prevents you from believing, now?