

## Good News of Salvation

Salvation is always “good news.” It is news of God’s love and forgiveness, adoption into His family, fellowship with His people, freedom from the power of sin.

Nothing can compare with all that is ours in Christ when we find salvation. Forgiveness. Justification. Adoption. Eternal life. What a glorious life the Gospel offers to those who are searching for purpose and meaning or to those who have found that materialism and sensual pleasure are not the answer to the deepest yearnings of the heart.

The crowning glory of salvation is promised when we enter into the presence of the King. We have a home in heaven reserved for us and awards that await us. No wonder the Gospel is “good news.”

Unfortunately, many people today have distorted the meaning of salvation, saying that it means only political, social and economic liberation in this life. Certainly, Christians should be concerned about injustice and do what they can to promote a more just world. But lasting and complete liberation from social injustice will come only when Jesus Christ returns to establish His Kingdom. Biblical salvation is far deeper, because it gets to the root of our problem- the problem of sin. Only Christ can change the human heart and replace greed and hate with compassion and love.

Do you understand God’s plan of salvation? There are certain points we all need to understand about the heart of Good news of Christ.

**First, all are sinners and stand under the judgment of God.** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, NIV). We might believe that we are good enough to win God’s favor or that we can perform certain religious acts to counterbalance our bad deeds. But the Bible states that we are all condemned, for “there is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:20, NIV).

**Second, we need to understand what Christ has done to make our salvation possible.** God loves us, and Christ came to make forgiveness and salvation possible. What did He do? He died on the cross as the complete sacrifice for our sins. He took upon Himself the judgment that we deserve.

**Third, we need to respond to God’s work.** God in His grace offers us the gift of eternal life. But like any gift, it becomes ours only when we take it. We must repent of our sins. Repentance carries with it the idea of confession, sorrow, turning and changing. We cannot ask forgiveness over and over again for our sins and then return to those sins, expecting God to forgive us. We must turn from our practice of sin and best we know how, and turn by faith to Christ as our Lord and Savior. “It is by grace you have saved, through faith- and that not from yourselves, it is the gift of God –not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV). Christ invites us to come to Him, and God has promised, “to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12, NIV).

**Fourth, we must understand the cost of coming to Christ and following Christ.** Jesus constantly called upon those who would follow Him to count the cost. A person must determine to leave his sins behind and turn from them. Some people may be unwilling to do so. And there may be other costs as well when we decide to follow

Christ. In some cultures, a person who turns to Christ may be disowned by family, alienated from social life, imprisoned or even killed.

The ultimate cost of true discipleship is the cost of renouncing self: self-will, self-plans, self-motivations. Christ is to be Lord of our lives. Jesus declared, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23, NIV). Jesus does not call us to a life of selfish comfort and ease-He calls us to a battle! He calls us to give up our won plans and to follow Him without reserve-even to death.

Yes, it costs to follow Christ. But it also cost not to follow Christ. It cost the Apostle Paul the prestige of high-level position in the Jewish nation. But he declared, "whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things" (Philippians 3:7-8, NIV). Christ calls men and women not only to trust Him as Savior, but also to follow Him as Lord.

**Fifth, salvation is intimately linked to the cross.** The man who hung there between two thieves was without sin. His virgin birth, by the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit, meant that He did not inherit a single human nature. Neither did He commit any sin during His lifetime. Mary gave birth to the only perfect child. He became the only perfect man. As such, He was uniquely to put into action God's plan of salvation for mankind.

Why was Calvary's cross so special, so different from hundreds of other crosses used for Roman executions? It was because on that cross Jesus suffered the punishment for sin that we all deserve. He was our substitute. He suffered the judgment and condemnation of death that our sinful nature and deeds deserve. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV). Paul knew there was a built-in power in the cross and the resurrection.

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2, NIV). Paul knew there was a built-in power in the cross and the resurrection.

I remember a meeting early in my ministry when I walked away from where I was preaching, disheartened and disappointed. A businessman who was with me asked me if I knew what was wrong. I couldn't put my finger on it until he told me. "Billy," he said, "you didn't preach the cross!"

He was right. The message had been theologically sound, and I had preached it as best I knew how. But that vital ingredient was missing. I learned my lesson. From that day to this, I have never preached an evangelistic message without pointing the listeners to the cross.

**Finally, faith is essential for salvation.** But we must be absolutely clear on what we mean when we speak of "salvation by faith." There are various kinds of belief or faith, and not all are linked to salvation. In the New Testament, faith means more than intellectual belief. It involves trust and commitment. I may say that I believe a bridge will hold my weight. But I really believe it only when I commit myself to it and walk across it. Saving faith involves an act of commitment and trust, in which I commit my life to Jesus Christ and trust Him alone as my Savior and Lord.

Let me use a personal example to illustrate this. When I first met Ruth, my future wife, I began to learn things about her- born in China, the daughter of medical missionaries and so on. As time went on, I learned more about her personality and character, and I fell in love with her. But we were not yet married. We became husband and wife only when we took a definite step of commitment to each other on our wedding day.

In the same way, saving faith is a commitment to Jesus as Savior and Lord. It is a personal and individual decision. It is more than assent to historical or theological truth given to us in God's Word. It is faith in the promises of God that all who trust in Christ will not perish but have eternal life.

That is truly good news.