

Study 0033

Scripture Text: Romans 3:19-31

As we draw the curtain on the foundations of Christian faith, we shall be studying the theme, SALVATION. This is the all-encompassing name which describes all that God has done for us through the finished work of Christ on the cross.

The word 'salvation' means a lot more than many of us may think it to mean. Salvation as used in the bible could mean, 'to rescue', 'to save', 'to deliver', 'health', 'prosperity', 'safety', etc. It is the all-encompassing word that describes all that God did for mankind through the finished work on the cross at Calvary. Thus, salvation is the end result of propitiation, remission, justification, righteousness, redemption, and adoption. Through the propitiation of Christ, our sins have been atoned for, and the penalty of death arising because of that is remitted. Remission leads to the forgiveness of our sins, which means that God no longer imputes upon us sin and the punishment thereof; thus leading to our justification, which progresses naturally to our being declared righteous by God. Our redemption effectively ends every influence of sin over our lives, makes us free from bondage and captivity to the devil, and brings us into the family of God as God's sons through adoption. All these works make for salvation! It is common to link redemption with salvation, because the act of redemption is salvation. To redeem a man from slavery is to save him from the shackles of oppression—and this is what happens when people are saved or rescued from sin and the devil.

In **Matthew 1:21**, the angel of the Lord told Joseph, the surrogate father of Jesus, that when Jesus is born, He should be named, JESUS, because He will save His people from their sins. Thus, Jesus means saviour (as a noun), and salvation (as a verb).

When man sinned in the Garden of Eden, God put in place a rescue plan which was to come through Jesus, 'the seed of the woman' (**Genesis 3:15**). All men are eligible to be recipients of this rescue plan, but not all men actually do partake of it. In **John 3:16**, the Lord Jesus talks of the salvation of 'whosoever' believes in the finished work of Christ on the cross; declaring that salvation is open to all. And in **Ephesians 2:8**, the bible tells us that we are saved by grace (the unmerited favour of God) through faith. Salvation is God's free gift to man, that has come at the cost of Christ's death on the cross, and cannot be worked or paid for (**Titus 3:4-6; Ephesians 2:9**). The provision for our salvation was conceived in the beginning, when Adam sinned, set in motion when Jesus came into the world, and put into effect after Jesus died and rose again from death. The way to salvation is therefore only through Jesus Christ (**John 14:6; 10:9**). It is faith only in the name of Jesus alone that brings salvation to man (**Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:9-10; Proverbs 18:10**). When a person declares or confesses with his mouth, what he now believes about Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind, he is saved, even as he calls on Jesus to save him (**Romans 10:9-13**). The agency through which men come to believe or put their trust (faith) in Jesus Christ for their salvation, is the word of God (the good news of the kingdom of God) which has been declared in their hearing, and which they believe and act upon (**Romans 10:14-17; James 1:21b; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2 Timothy 3:15**). All those who are thus saved; and who would be ultimately saved at the end of the age, are added to, and kept in the church, the family of God (**Acts 2:47; 2 Timothy 1:12**).

So God has sent His ministers out into the world to tell, nay, announce and proclaim, to everyone that there is a plan made available to all men to be made free from the hold of the devil in their lives through sin, and through this announcement, many can be saved (**Romans 1:16**). The salvation of God can be likened to a man who has fallen into a pit filled with all manner of dangerous things (insects, beasts, reptiles, etc.); and to whom a life-line has been thrown, so that he can be pulled out of the pit. This is in essence, what God has done through His salvation plan: all men, having been born in the pit of sin, and being encircled by all manner of dangerous things (sickness, poverty, diseases, falsehood, deception, immorality, idolatry, etc.); the rope of God's rescue (propitiation, remission, forgiveness, justification, righteousness, redemption, adoption) is let down, and the man who grabs onto it in faith (believing that the rope can, and will, bring him out of the pit) is pulled up out of the pit. An illustration of salvation in the Old Testament, which is relevant to the people living in the New Testament era, is the incident recorded in **Numbers 21:4-9**: The people of Israel sinned against God, and as a result, fiery serpents began to bite and kill them. When they realised that the deaths in the camp was a direct consequence of their sin against God, they turned to Moses to help them plead with God. God then told Moses to make a brazen serpent and place on a pole so that all may see it from anywhere in the camp; and to tell the people that if anyone was bitten by the fiery serpents, all that he needed to do was to look up at the brazen serpent, and he would live and not die—no medication, no emotional tears; **only believe!** The fiery serpents represent the sins of man; and, their bite and its consequence of death represent the effect of sin on a person, which is spiritual death both here on earth and in eternity. But when a man realises his sins, confesses them to God, and looks to Jesus by faith, he is delivered from the effect of sin, healed of the bite of sin and can now live again (**John 3:14-15; 12:32-33**).

It is therefore the person who realizes the horrible danger of remaining in the pit, who ultimately gets rescued. If a man does not see the danger and suffering that is in the pit of the world system, he is unlikely to reach up for the rescue 'rope' of God's salvation. For this reason, we are told to go into all the world and proclaim this good news of the kingdom: that the 'rope' of God's salvation has been let down into the pit of this world, and that as many as reach out in faith to grab hold of this 'rope' will be delivered from the pit, and all the deadly and dangerous things that can kill them therein. **The essence of our message to the world is therefore to bring them to the place of realization of their sins, and its effect on their lives, now and in eternity; and, God's free offer of salvation to anyone who would reach out in faith and grab it!**

In **Genesis 6:5-22**, when God decided to destroy the first world of humans, he offered this 'rope' of hope to them, through Noah's proclamation—the building of the ark! It took about one hundred years from the time God spoke to Noah, to the day the rains finally came (**Genesis 5:32; 7:6**); and when it did come, the people were going about their everyday activities—nothing warned them of what was going to happen, except the message of Noah through the building of the ark (**Matthew 24:37-39**). And like in the days of Noah, many people today, are not heeding the message of salvation being proclaimed. The same happened in the days of Lot (**Luke 17:28-29**): in spite of Lot's warning, nobody was rescued from Sodom and Gomorrah, except Lot and his two daughters—Lot's wife would not let go of Sodom and Gomorrah, and turned into a pillar of salt (**Luke 17:32**)!

Salvation occurs at three points in our lives. We are saved from the influence and effect of sins of **the past**; we are **presently** being saved from the wiles of the devil and his oppression over sinners, as we live each day; and, we shall in **future** ultimately be saved from the wrath

of God's judgment, and the eternal punishment that is to come upon all men who refuse God's salvation. The Lord Jesus said in **John 3:18-21**, that all those who reject Him while they are alive, will be rejected by Him at the time of judgment. He went further to say that men will be judged because the light of emancipation from the devil and sin came unto them, but they loved the works of darkness and refused the light. Thus, salvation is the saving of the body, soul, and spirit of man from the consequence of the sin of Adam; the oppression of the devil; and the eternal punishment of hell fire at the end of the age. We are therefore able to enjoy the things which Adam and those after him could not enjoy because of sin (health, prosperity, peace, joy, etc.); we are able to overcome the wiles and antics of the devil who wants to keep us bound and oppressed; and, we shall live for evermore in heaven with our Father, God, and His Son and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Let us not only savour and rejoice in our own salvation, but let us also go out there and tell the world of God's offer of salvation.

EXERCISE

Answer true or false to the statements below:

1. The message of salvation is one that proclaims the freedom of man from sin and the devil.
2. The message of salvation is that faith alone in Jesus saves.
3. Salvation could mean 'to rescue', 'safety', 'health', and 'prosperity'.
4. Redemption is what was done by Jesus Christ; salvation is the result.
5. Salvation has a price tag, but it is given for free.
6. Only Jesus can save from sin and the devil.
7. The way to salvation is only through Jesus Christ alone.
8. All those who are saved and who will be saved are brought into the family of God, the church.
9. Salvation affects our past, present, and future.
10. Salvation is God's only rescue plan for man.
11. God's plan of salvation began from the beginning, when Adam sinned.
12. The essence of the salvation message is to bring men to the realization that they need to grab hold of God's offer of salvation.