

Salvation

Part 3 - The two salvations in the here and now

I don't remember the day I was saved, because it happened two thousand years before I was born. It was only later in my life that I realized I'd been saved already due to Christ's death on the cross.

Other Christians, on the other hand, DO remember the day they were saved. It happened when they believed and accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour. "And that's the day I was saved," they say.

So we have two groups of Christians, one group that thinks they were saved **before** they even knew about salvation, and another group that thinks they were saved only **after** they knew about salvation. The first group, therefore, believes they were saved **without** any acceptance or belief on their part, while the second group believes they were saved **because of** their acceptance and belief.

So who's right?

Well, depending on one's definition of "salvation" both groups can be right. If we're talking salvation as defined by **the first half of Romans 5:10** - "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son" - then the first group would be right, because God totally accepted us - even as his enemies - when his Son died, not because of any conscious acceptance or belief on our part.

But if we're talking salvation as defined by **the second half of Romans 5:10** - "how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life" - then the second group would be right, because there's also the salvation that comes with Christ's life in the here and now. And this salvation does require acceptance and belief, **Romans 10:9**, because it's only "if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

"Saved" here meaning the salvation that comes with the resurrected Christ's life that happens in this life now. And that's what kicks in when a person accepts and believes that "Jesus is Lord."

He understands that Jesus as Lord is now saving us every day from "the corruption in the world caused by evil desires," **2 Peter 1:4**, and that he "richly blesses all who call on him," **Romans 10:12**.

That's the other salvation we receive through Jesus. It's not the salvation we received from his death, it's the salvation we receive from his resurrected life right now, that we experience daily as he transforms our lives into his likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18).

So the gospel offers two salvations in the here and now: the salvation of being forgiven of sin, and the salvation of being able to turn from sin. We're not only saved from the penalty of our sins forever; we're also being saved from the power of sin now.

Which is exactly what Peter preached in **Acts 3:19**, when he told his fellow Jews: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that **your sins may wiped out**" combined with **verse 26**: "When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you (Jews) to bless you by **turning each of you from your wicked ways**." And thousands of Jews believed it, that their sins had been forgiven and wiped out forever (the first salvation), and their lives could be straightened out now too (the second salvation).

That same message then went to the Gentiles in **Acts 26:17-18** when Jesus sent Paul "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so they may receive **forgiveness** of sins (the first salvation made possible by Jesus' death), and a place among those who are sanctified (their lives being straightened out) by faith in me (the second salvation made possible by the resurrected Jesus)." That's why Paul adds in **verse 20**: "I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their **repentance** by their deeds," because in wanting to straighten out their lives, and turning to God to make it possible, real and visible changes would start happening in their lives to prove that they'd cottoned on to the second salvation too.

Salvation, therefore, doesn't stop at forgiveness for our old way of life. It continues on to "living a new life," **Romans 6:4**, in which we now offer the parts of our body to God as instruments of righteousness," to enable us in this life to become really good people bringing glory to God (John 15:8). Because it's both these salvations that the gospel offers in the here and now....(continues in Part 4)