

Basics

¹ *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you —unless you believed in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:1–2 ESV)*

¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 ESV)*

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (Jude 1:5 ESV)

What Does It Mean To Be Saved?

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Matthew 1:21

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Introduction:

Good morning! This morning we are continuing on in our Basics series revisiting some of the essential issues associate with the Christian life and message. Last week we began with the most basic question of all. We went into the Bible looking to answer the question: “What is the Gospel?” This week we are asking the question: “What does it mean to be saved?”

We know that Jesus saves us from our sins – we learn that at the very start of the New Testament. An Angel of the Lord shows us to explain why the Virgin Mary is pregnant – her fiancé Joseph was wondering about that and the angel tells him:

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21 ESV)

You will call his name Jesus. His name means “God saves”. That’s who he is and that is what he came to do. Jesus is all about saving people from their sins. That’s what we want to talk about today. We are trying to understand method and effect – we are looking at what Jesus did and does and will do and then we are trying to understand the effect that has on all those who believe.

Basically we are going to look at what we are saved by and then we are going to look at what we are saved from. Let's begin with what we are saved by.

We Are Saved By...

The Bible says that we are saved, first of all by:

i. The obedient LIFE of Jesus

The obedient life of Jesus fulfils the conditions for blessing laid out in Genesis 1-2. God wants to share his life and blessings with people who love and obey him. Adam was supposed to do this. Adam was supposed to obey God and secure blessings for all his children and grandchildren but he failed. Jesus, the second Adam succeeds where Adam failed. He obeys God perfectly and now possesses an infinite store of blessings to share with all God's children. We are saved then, first and foremost by the obedient LIFE of Jesus.

Secondly, we are saved by:

ii. The substitutionary DEATH of Jesus

His death – if you lay hold of it in faith – can be the death you owe God. The wages of sin is death. Someone will die for your sin. It can be you or it can be Jesus. Just like the Israelites were taught to put their hands on the head of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement to transfer accountability for their sins onto the substitute animal so we must put our hands upon the cross of Calvary and confess our sins and by faith claim the death of Jesus as the death that we owe God. Just like the Israelites had to hide beneath the blood of the lamb over their doorposts on the night of Passover when the Angel of Death passed through the land of Egypt – so we must hide under the blood of Christ to be sheltered from the wrath of God and so be saved. We are saved, the Bible says, by the substitutionary death of Jesus.

Thirdly, we are saved by:

iii. The promissory RESURRECTION of Jesus

Where the head goes the body will follow. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead then neither would you, but because he did, if you are united with him by faith, then so will you. The Apostle Paul said that in 1 Corinthians 15:

²⁰ Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:20–22 ESV)

Christ went first! He is the author and finisher – the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Where he goes WE WILL FOLLOW. We are saved by the powerful and promissory resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, we are saved by:

iv. The present SESSION and REIGN of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ reigns NOW to the glory of the Father. We often forget that – we often stop talking about the grace of God in Christ at the point of his resurrection but the Apostle Paul said to his people in Colossae:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (Colossians 3:1 ESV)

Press past the fact that you have been raised with Christ – that's awesome – but see further than that. See Jesus seated RIGHT NOW at the right hand of God making intercession for you. The king of the universe – SITTING NOW, REIGNING NOW over all things – cares about you and he is being generous toward you. You are saved by that Paul says. To the Ephesians he added:

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”
(Ephesians 4:8 ESV)

Jesus ascended – he didn't just rise from the dead – he rose all the way to heaven and he has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God and he GAVE GIFTS TO MEN! He took his seat and he began to reign so that he could be generous to his people. The Bible says that the seated Jesus gives gifts – SPIRITUAL GIFTS – to every man, woman and child who trusts in

Christ for salvation. The first and foundational gift is the gift of the Holy Spirit. You are saved therefore by the glorious session and generous reign of Jesus Christ.

And then lastly we will be saved, ultimately and finally, by the return of Christ at some point in the future:

v. The future RETURN of Jesus Christ

About that day the Apostle Paul says:

¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 ESV)

In 1 Corinthians 15 he says:

⁵¹Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51–52 ESV)

That day is coming – but it is not here yet. The last act of our great and glorious salvation still lies in the future. One day we will be fully and FINALLY saved. On that day - the LAST day, when the trumpet sounds and the Lord descends we SHALL BE SAVED! He will come, we will change and we will meet the Lord in the AIR and SO WE WILL BE WITH HIM ALWAYS – before the Face of God, BEHOLDING HIS GLORY – and enjoying him forever. That is the fullness of God’s grace to us in the life, death, resurrection, session and return of Jesus Christ – THAT’S HOW YOU ARE SAVED if you are in Christ through faith - THANKS BE TO GOD. Amen? Amen!

That’s what God has done in Christ to secure our salvation and that prepares us now to answer the second part of our question: What are we saved from? In what way has Jesus saved us from our sins? What does that mean?

We Are Saved From...

When the Bible speaks about salvation it tends to talk about three things in three different tenses. Meaning it talks about what we HAVE BEEN saved from, what we ARE BEING saved from and what we WILL BE saved from. Let me show you each of those and then we will unpack them one by one. The Bible says that because of what Jesus did for us:

1. We are saved IMMEDIATELY from the PENALTY of sin.
2. We are saved PROGRESSIVELY from the POWER of sin.
3. We are saved ULTIMATELY from the PRESENCE of sin.

First of all then, the Bible says that when we take hold of the grace of God in Christ through repentance and faith:

1. We are saved IMMEDIATELY from the PENALTY of sin

We see that for example in Romans 8:1 which says:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1 ESV)

The Greek word that is translated there as “condemnation” is *katakrima* and it means “punishment” or “condemning sentence”. The Bible says that if you are in Christ through faith you will NEVER be punished by God – you will never be SENTENCED to hell by God. Jesus paid the price for your sin and it would be WRONG of God to receive payment from Christ and then to exact payment from you – we call that fraud and God is not a conman. He is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Christ.

I mentioned that theologians sometimes say that our salvation has 3 aspects and 3 tenses. This is the past tense. When you put faith in Christ your sins are GONE – they are DEALT WITH – PAST TENSE – as far as the east is from the west so far has he removed our sins from us. They are gone. They are IN THE PAST, they don’t exist anymore, anywhere. That is GLORIOUSLY GOOD NEWS but there is still more.

The Bible says that we are also:

2. We are saved **PROGRESSIVELY** from the **POWER** of sin

That's the present tense – that's what's happening right now! We often quote from 2 Corinthians 3:18 at this church and rightly so but listen to the verse that comes before it; Paul says:

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is **freedom**.¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17–18 ESV)

Paul says that when we become a Christian we are given the Holy Spirit – he says that in 1 Corinthians 12:13 – here he tells us what that gift immediately begins to do in the life of the believer. It begins to produce FREEDOM. The Holy Spirit is a force of FREEDOM in the heart of the believer. He slowly but surely breaks the power of cancelled sin. He changes what we love. He changes how we think. He exposes the emptiness of sin and he magnifies the beauties of God in Christ. Slowly but surely, by one degree of glory to the next, the Holy Spirit changes slaves into sons and daughters. He teaches us how to be free.

What does that sound like to you? It sounds like the story of the Exodus in the Old Testament doesn't it? In the story of the Exodus God powerfully delivers his people. He saves them first of all from the penalty of sin – he hides them under the blood of the lamb so that when the Angel of Death goes through Egypt those who have sheltered under the blood are SAFE – the wrath of God PASSES OVER THEM and they are saved. Then he takes them safely through the waters of the Red Sea and then he brings those same waters crashing down onto the heads of their enemies. He SETS THEM FREE! The Egyptian army is gone – the hold of Pharaoh over them is broken. They are free – but they are not able yet to live free. As the story goes on we discover that the Israelites are still slaves in their hearts. It seems hard to believe but time and time again they express a desire to GO BACK TO EGYPT! They lie to themselves about the sweetness of slavery – do you remember? The Bible says:

¹ They set out from Elim and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month **after they had departed from the land of Egypt**.

² And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness,³ and the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” (Exodus 16:1–3 ESV)

Do you see that? After they were free – AFTER God had miraculously delivered them from

plague and judgment and led them safely through the waters of the Red Sea – as a **SAVED PEOPLE** they begin to lie to themselves about the pleasures of life Egypt. They wanted to go back so that they could be fed by their former masters; they had been slaves for so long that they couldn't even think like free men and women. And so what does God do? Does he strike them all dead? No, he begins to give them their daily bread. He sends the manna. He gives them water from the rock. He woos them away from Egypt and he teaches them to trust in him. Slowly but surely – it took 40 years remember – but slowly but surely, he gets their eyes off of Egypt and on to him.

The Jewish people often refer to the wandering after the Exodus as being God's honeymoon with Israel. It was rehab and it was courtship all rolled up into one. God was saving them from their heart of bondage and he was teaching them to love and rest in him. It took 40 years. It took a generation, it took a lifetime. But that's what God did and that's what God is doing right now through the Spirit in the hearts of all believers. He is setting them free **PROGRESSIVELY** from the power and the pull of sin. That is the present tense of our salvation. We are **BEING** set free by one degree of glory to the next. We are being saved from the power and the bondage of sin.

Thirdly, the Bible says that:

3. We are saved **ULTIMATELY from the **PRESENCE** of sin**

That is the **FUTURE** tense of our salvation in both the Old and the New Testaments. It was future then and it is future now. The ultimate hope of salvation comes to its fullest expression in the Old Testament in places like Isaiah 65-66. In Isaiah 65 we get some amazing snapshots of what the future will be like for God's people. God says:

The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:25 ESV)

Its going to be a place of peace and its going to be a place of Presence – we will be with God on his Holy Mountain. In chapter 66 we learn that we will stay there **FOREVER**:

²²“For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. ²³ From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come

to worship before me, declares the LORD. (Isaiah 66:22–23 ESV)

That's the end! In the end we are who we were meant to be, we are where we were meant to be and we are doing what we were meant to do. We are filling the earth with the glory of God, we are going in and out before the face of God and we are worshipping him and enjoying him FOREVER. Now listen carefully to the very next verse:

“And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.” (Isaiah 66:24 ESV)

They shall go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who have rebelled against God. Their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

So in the end we are “inside with God”. Outside we see those who have rebelled against God. We see them dead and always dying. They are experiencing everlasting death – eternal, on-going death and exclusion from eternal life and they are an abhorrence to all flesh.

We see something very similar in the New Testament. In the Apostle John's vision of our ultimate future salvation he says some very similar things. He says:

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:1–4 ESV)

Same picture! New heavens, new earth – we are living with God and enjoying him forever but then John – like Isaiah – goes on to say:

Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. (Revelation 22:15 ESV)

Those who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb are inside John says in verse 14 but in verse 15 he says, “outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.” In the end, according to the Bible everyone will be inside or outside. Inside are those covered in the blood of the lamb; outside are the rebels, the refusers, the immoral, the idolaters and everyone who loves and

practices what is false. Heaven wouldn't be heaven if there were people in it who hated God and who loved sin. So in the end, the Bible says, if you love sin and if you hold on to sin then it will hold on to you outside the presence and the glory of God forever. Inside are those who have been saved from the penalty, the power and the presence of sin forever.

Response:

That's our salvation. That's what God has done in Christ for us. Hebrews 2:3 says:

how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? (Hebrews 2:3 ESV)

God has done a big thing and that big thing DEMANDS AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE. Let me speak first of all to Christians. If you have been saved by the grace of God in Christ – a salvation like this one demands:

i. Immediate, heart felt, fulsome, all consuming gratitude before God

In just a moment we are going to celebrate the Lord's Supper also known as the eucharist. The word "eucharist" literally means to be thankful for grace. The word for grace in Greek is "*charis*" – the word *eucharist* means to be thankful for grace. It means to be glad in God, it means to feast and rejoice because God is so good. Brothers and sisters saved by the grace of God -- Be a worshipper today! Don't just go through the motions. Offer your life as a living sacrifice – be thankful to God for his grace in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, a salvation like this one demands:

ii. Long suffering, injury absorbing, prayer offering patience towards other believers

Some of you are well along in your sanctification journey. Egypt is a distant memory for you and it so easy to despise those who still think and act like slaves. Be patient; be gracious, be long-suffering, be prayerful - take the long view. Salvation from the penalty of sin is instantaneous – but salvation from the power of sin is slow and gradual – by one degree of glory to the next. Be patient with people in process.

And then thirdly, a salvation like this one demands:

iii. Risk taking, abuse suffering, life interrupting urgency in evangelism, both home and abroad

Some of us seem to live as if life on this earth will go on forever. But the Bible says that:

the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 5:2 ESV)

The end comes without warning. The end may be your death – no one knows when that will happen – or the end may be the coming of Christ at the end of all things. No one knows when that will happen. All we know is that when it happens there will be no further opportunity for people to be saved by the grace of God in Christ. In Noah’s day, when the rain fell and the door of the ark shut the opportunity for salvation was past. God shut the door and the door wouldn’t open. So will it be in the future. Jesus said:

²⁵ When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.... Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’ ²⁸ In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Luke 13:25–28 ESV)

Some of us are so slow and so passive and so stoic in sharing the Gospel. We always assume that tomorrow will bring with it another opportunity to invite people inside. We are fools! How do we even know that there will be a tomorrow? One day there won’t be. One day the door will shut and people will knock and they will not be let in. It will be too late. And they will be outside forever. Therefore be urgent – be risk taking, abuse suffering, life interruptingly URGENT in sharing the Gospel.

Now, if you are not a believer – if you are not saved – then my advice to you is simple:

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 ESV)

You will be saved; immediately from the penalty of sin; progressively from the power of sin and one day from the presence of sin. This is out there available for everyone in Christ. This is the ark. This is the blood on the doorpost – this is the way home and this is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.