

Ready to Live

Study 5: It's God Who Saves

Paul says we need to take God's salvation as a gift and wear it for protection (Ephesians 6:17). Apart from this, we will be overwhelmed.

- ❑ This does not mean becoming a Christian, but that we need to live in the victory God has won over our enemies.
- ❑ This includes our own sinfulness, the world that hates God and Satan who supervises it all.

A Christian is someone who knows they need God to save them from the trouble they are in.

- ❑ If there's no God, we may think our difficulties are visible, discoverable and solvable.
- ❑ In fact, we are created to reflect God. Only he can fix what he has made.

By sending his Son into the world, God has already made the winning move, has the end game all arranged, and has included us in his victory. We need to know this and live in it.

- ❑ Without this, we become afraid—quickly, and even constantly. We may believe the gospel and try to please God, but have no energy. Satan gains the advantage. He hasn't taken us over, but he has us contained.

The world is good at being afraid. Opinion writers and governments can stir up anxiety easily because it's part of living in the world without God (Hebrews 2:14).

- ❑ We are in danger of taking on this sense of being overwhelmed. But we don't need to.
- ❑ Compare Israel's spies reporting on conditions in their promised land. It matters how we see the battle (Heb. 3:14-19). Confidence before God translates to confidence before our enemies.

Paul has spelled out what it means that we are saved in his letter.

First, our salvation *has* happened, convincingly.

- ❑ We used to drift along with the world, basically, being guided by our passions.
- ❑ Without us realising, Satan had us doing his business.
- ❑ We had to live with dread because we couldn't change the fact that we are made by God and would have to face his anger one day (2:1-3).
- ❑ God has given us life. The message of Jesus, about his life and death and resurrection, came to us as mercy from heaven, relief for our conscience, hope for our future. Simply, we believed (1:13; 2:4-10).
- ❑ This message was convincing because it didn't come from us. It came *to* us, from God. Anything that starts with us is going to be shaky.
- ❑ And then, we knew we'd been saved to do good things—things God wanted done. A new life was already in progress. We were launched!
- ❑ 'Receive this gift—every day! Wear it as protection for your head. Don't ever think you are on your own.
- ❑ If this is settled, we can put away our fears. We can expect God's help in everyday things because he's looked after our most important thing. We will never have to face his anger. We know God as our Father! We have been set up for a useful life. We can love each other because we are no longer anxious about ourselves.

Second, our salvation *will* happen, comprehensively.

- ❑ God is always getting us to look forward to what he is going to do. In a coming age, he has more kindness to show us that we can imagine at present (2:7).

- ❑ Elsewhere, Paul calls this ‘helmet’ the *hope* of salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8).
- ❑ God has included us in his plan to have the entire creation working harmoniously under Christ (1:9-10).
- ❑ We have been marked for inclusion in this inheritance by the gift of the Holy Spirit (1:13-14). This Holy Spirit has already enabled us to call Jesus Lord, and to call God our Father.
- ❑ Already, he is producing changes in our lives (Galatians 5:22-25).
- ❑ This helps us to hope for more amazing things to come.
- ❑ Imagine God looking at his world now—like he did at creation—and calling it good. Everywhere, creation is struggling to be the beautiful place it was intended to be (Romans 8:22-23).
- ❑ Fancy God looking at us—stumbling and suffering—and saying, ‘That’s good enough.’ God would be ashamed of us if we only thought he could do what we are seeing now (Hebrews 11:13-16).
- ❑ What God has begun in us is not the finished product. We have been saved to participate in the renewed creation. This means us—immortal and perfected. It means our environment—unpolluted and glorious. It means nations bringing their glory into God’s kingdom. There won’t be a place where Jesus isn’t known and revered (Isaiah 11:9). Righteousness and joy will be total.
- ❑ Paul acknowledges that this involves some suffering in the present but he insists it is like the suffering of a woman giving birth. It’s suffering with a joyous outcome (Romans 8:18-21).
- ❑ Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed’ (Romans 13:11).

Third, our salvation is happening, continuously.

- ❑ This is what Paul has in mind when he says we should wear our salvation confidently (6:17). It’s what we are receiving now. We are *being* saved (1 Corinthians 15:12).
- ❑ This does not mean that salvation is gradual. It doesn’t mean the result is in doubt. It just means that what God is doing isn’t complete yet.
- ❑ We need this present time for our faith to toughen up, our character to develop, our hope to grow. We need this time for God’s love to be poured into our hearts (Romans 5:3-5).
- ❑ Why wait until Christ returns to enjoy what he has done? Take it up now! Live in its certainty and hope. Relish the love that will then be total. Let that perfect future infiltrate every day. Understand that what you are doing now is eternal.
- ❑ Receive and wear God’s salvation. Don’t let the pessimism of the world, or its despair, ruin your faith. Jesus tells us, ‘When these [calamities] begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near’ (Luke 21:28).