

Introduction: Pray for Afghanistan and The Repaint

Our year-long series on core biblical topics now shifts to the doctrine of salvation. Our banner texts for this life changing, eternity altering, topic are Hebrews 2:3 and I Peter 1:10-12.

3 How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels dare to look into these things.

It was once said that everyone wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die to get there. Or that everyone wants to be saved but no one wants to follow Jesus to be so! Nevertheless, these passages tell us that through him we are the beneficiaries of a God initiated, Holy Spirit implemented, long awaited, grace oriented, and great salvation that even the angels are envious of. Sign me up! Today, we look at the three steps of salvation.

Before we do however, let's, in the vein of the comedic gold that is Jeff Foxworthy's, "You might be a redneck if..." play a little game called, "You might be saved if..."

- You are currently enjoying a dynamic, interactive, and loving relationship with the One who created, redeemed, and sustains you.
- You are fully trusting that Jesus is the "Way the truth the life, the only way to the Father" (John 14:6) and that "Salvation is found in no one else, and no other name is given under heaven by which we are saved" (Acts 4:12).
- You have entirely abandoned all hopes in saving yourself either by trying to be good or do good.
- You have journeyed down the "Roman Road" realizing that "All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23) and "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ (Romans 6:23).
- You are banking all your hope, future, and eternity on the only hope worthy person of all, Jesus Christ.
- You fully believe, and have done, the following Scriptures:
 - Ephesians 2:8 By grace you have been saved, through faith—and not from yourselves, it is the gift of God 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.
 - Romans 10:9 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.
 - 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.
 - Titus 3:5 Jesus saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.
- You are daily growing in your love for God, others, and yourself.
- You have fully memorized every word of the single greatest sermon about salvation, John Wesley's, "The Scripture Way of Salvation" (lol).

If these things are true of you then congratulations, you have been saved from sin, death, and a Christ-less eternity. If not, then you will have an opportunity at the end of the message to make sure you are. Now, according to Romans 8:30 we experience this amazing salvation in three distinct steps.

*Those God predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified;
those he justified, he also glorified.*

1st Step: Getting Saved

The 1st step in experiencing this great salvation is an event called getting saved (justified, saving faith, saving grace). Getting saved occurs when we repent of our sins and surrender our lives to Jesus Christ. At the precise moment we do this we are justified in the eyes of an infinitely holy God who now sees us “just-as-if” we had never sinned. In Psalm 32:1-2, David celebrates this justification with euphoric joy:

*Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
Whose sin the Lord does not count against him.*

Incredibly, the moment we put our faith in Jesus Christ all the bad, ugly, and indifferent we have ever committed is instantaneously erased and never counted, nor remembered, by God again. I got saved when I was knee-high to a grasshopper: an event that happened in the middle of a firehall that dubbed as a church on Saturday nights. After hearing some good old-fashioned preaching, I went to a makeshift altar and gave my life to Christ. At that very moment I rejoiced in that every sin I ever committed, have committed, and will commit, has, is, and forever will be forgiven! Now that deserves another “WOW!”

2nd Step: Being Saved

The 2nd step in salvation is being saved. Just like a wedding only starts the process of being married “till death us do part,” being saved is a process that happens over the rest of our lives. Imagine waking up the day after your wedding and saying to your spouse, “That ceremony was great, see you at the funeral.” The two overarching goals of being saved are: (1) To become like Christ and (2) To get the world out of us. Permission to use an analogy? When God saved the Israelites from the Egyptians, he did so in one miraculous event called the Red Sea Crossing. However, the process of getting Egypt out of the Israelites took 40 years! As we stay faithful to what John Wesley called the “means of grace,” i.e., prayer, worship, giving, sharing, serving, witnessing, etc., we get the world out of us more quickly and become more like Christ dynamically. A scripture to keep us motivated during the 2nd step of “being saved” is Colossians 1:23, “We are saved IF we continue in the faith.”

Salvation III: Will Be Saved

Many moons ago I asked some folks why they went to church. Some said for the fellowship, others for the worship. One person chimed, “Because I want to get to heaven, and won’t make it unless the church helps me.” His words echoed that of Cyprian, the 3rd century Bishop of Carthage:

No one can have God for his Father, who does not have the Church

for his mother as she nurtures us on our way to heaven.

If the first step of salvation is getting saved and the second is being saved, then the last step is “will be saved.” This step is also called glorification. Glorification is when we will be with God forever in indestructible, pain free, disease free, eternal bodies. Glorification is when we will see our brothers and sisters who died in the faith long before we did. Glorification is when we get our eternal rewards for every time we glorified God with our time, talent, treasure, and sacrificial and faithful service. Glorification is when God will give us his kingdom (Luke 12:32) and rule with him in the “New Heavens and New Earth” (I Corinthians 6:2). Glorification is when we will hear Jesus say (Matthew 25:21):

Well done my good and faithful servant. Come, share in your master's happiness.

Conclusion

This is the salvation Jesus died to give us. Since none of us are yet in the “will be saved” step, let me first give an encouragement to those who are being saved. Let's keep “Fighting the good fight of faith”? (I Timothy 6:12)! Let's keep “Running this race in such a way as to win it” (I Corinthians 9:24)! Let's keep “Pressing toward the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). We know the eternal joys that await us so let's keep on keepin' on! Now for those who have yet to take the “getting saved” step, listen to the thoughts of John Calvin:

**The gate of salvation is open to all. There is nothing else to hinder us
from entering, but our own unbelief.**

You have absolutely nothing to lose and everything to gain so pray with me now.