

Understanding Salvation as a Lifelong Process

As we saw last week, salvation is the overall term that is used to explain the many different aspects that are included in this all-encompassing word. The primary meaning is we have been rescued from our entrapment to eternal death. John records Jesus as saying:

²⁴ 'I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged: he has crossed over from death to life. (Jn 5:24)

To help us get into the understanding of salvation as a process, we are going to look at separate three Bible verses and have a think about what they are saying to us. We need to be thinking about the tenses, whether past, present, or future that are being used in these verses.

⁹ He has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time... (2Tim 1:9)

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1Cor 1:18)

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope...⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1Pet 1:3, 5)

So, what do these different verses say to us???

We have been saved –

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We are being saved –

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1Cor 1:18)

We will be saved –

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope...⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1Pet 1:3, 5)

There is yet another way we can look at this salvation process by using other biblical words that reveal this same process at work. In doing this we are going to have the opportunity to unpack what these different words mean in relation to our salvation.

These biblical terms are – Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification.

Let's unpack what these biblical words mean:

Justification speaks about our being in a 'right relationship' with God through faith in Jesus.

In fact, it is our human spirit is 'born again' by the infusion of the Holy Spirit within us, on the basis that Jesus paid the penalty of our sin himself, something only he could do, in order that we could be brought back into right relationship with God – righteous before God.

Paul reminds us in Rom 5:1 –

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... (Rom 5:1)

²² *This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* (Rom 3:22-24)

Sanctification speaks of our ongoing growth in the grace and knowledge of God.

The reality is that God loves us too much to simply leave in the state of being in right relationship with him, as wonderful as that is. **He immediately sets about to build that justified righteousness into our lives so that we can begin to actually live his righteousness out through our changing attitudes and behaviours.**

This is what produces a constant transformation in our thinking, our behaviour patterns, and our relationships with those around us – particularly our intimate relationships. This is our walk of discipleship with Jesus. Our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and relationships are being healed over time.

Paul also said:

² *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be (being) transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.* (Rom 12:2)

Glorification refers to our resurrection into God's immediate presence in the new heaven and new earth, when we will be completely transformed into the perfect image of Christ.

Paul again says in Philippians 3:20-21:

²⁰ *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Now you may have noticed we can also see this outworking through our human structure as spirit, soul, and body –

Spirit – starting with our human spirit, which is reborn as we come to faith in Christ – we have been saved – justified and made righteous!

Soul – as we grow in our faith in Christ, it is our soul-realm that is being incrementally healed as we grow in him. Our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and relationships are being healed over time – we are continually being saved, so to speak.

Body – the completion of this lifelong process takes place when even our physical bodies will be totally transformed to be like Jesus' glorious body.

The Bible is so very clear – God loves his creation!

In fact, he loves us so much he was willing to come himself in his Son, Jesus of Nazareth, to create the opportunity for us to respond to his love and enter again into a living relationship with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we too, can be confident that he will raise us to him in our own resurrection when he comes again, as he promised he would.