

## The First Century Church - The Salvation Offered in Christ - Part 1

Introduction: Since the church is the saved who have been bought with Christ's blood, it is important to understand the salvation offered in Christ. Salvation involves both God's provision and man's response; in other words, God's promised grace and man's response through faith in that promise. In this first lesson on salvation we will study man's lost condition and need for salvation, and what God has done to save us. Other lessons will deal with man's response in faith and submission to the gospel.

### 1. Definitions:

- A. Sin: all unrighteousness, disobedience to the law of God, doing evil, failure to do good (Greek, literally, "missing the mark"). We "all have sinned and fall short..." - see Romans 3:20, 23; 1 John 3:4; 5:17; James 4:17;
- B. Righteousness: giving to each his due, being without debt or condemnation, being without sin, measuring up completely to the requirements of God's law.
- C. Atonement: the price paid to satisfy God's justice and to remove the deserved wrath of God when we have sinned. Through atonement ("at-one-ment") peace is restored between man and God because the debt of sin is removed. Jesus gave his life as an atonement to God for our sins, being punished in our place - Romans 5:11; Isaiah 53:4-6.
- D. Grace: the free and unmerited favor of God, his goodness and kindness toward us although our deeds have never made us worthy of such help - Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5.
- E. Justification: being counted as righteous before God; being counted as without sin and having all debts or charges against us taken away - Romans 8:1. When we believe in Christ, we are justified by his blood, because his blood has paid the debt of our sin and taken away the case against us. The account is marked "Paid." Because God has forgiven us, we are now justified (counted righteous) as though we had not sinned at all - Romans 5:1.
- F. Sanctification: being cleansed from sin and made holy as the personal possession of God. There are two senses in which we are sanctified, legally and experientially. *Legally* we are instantly sanctified (made saints or holy people) when we are washed with Jesus' blood at conversion and baptism to remove the uncleanness of past sins - Acts 22:16; Revelation 7:14; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. We are "clothed in His righteousness." This legal sanctification is maintained as we confess our sins and are forgiven and continually cleansed by his blood - 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1. Experiential sanctification, or actual holiness of character, begins as we turn our backs on sin at conversion, and continues as we grow in Christ, putting off more and more of the old person we were, and putting on the new person who is like Christ - Colossians 3:1-17. Sanctification is accomplished by the Holy Spirit who gives us power to overcome sin - Romans 8:13 - and to have a Christ-like character - Galatians 5:22,23; and by the word of God which washes our hearts as we learn more of God and his will and change our desires and behavior accordingly - John 15:3; Ephesians 5:25,26.

### 2. The evil of sin:

- A. Sin brought sorrow, corruption and death into the world - Romans 5:12; Genesis 3:16-24.
- B. Sin separates a person from God - Isaiah 59:1, 2.
- C. Sin is rebellion against the authority and goodness of God - 1 John 3:4.

- D. Sin defiles and deceives a person's conscience so that he or she no longer fears to sin, nor even recognizes sin as sin - 1 Timothy 4:2; Romans 1:21-25; compare 2 Corinthians 4:4.
- E. Sin separates people from each other and makes them enemies - Genesis 4:1-15. It destroys fellowship and peace between people.
- F. Sin produces more sin - Matthew 26:35,40,51,52,58,69-75; 1 Samuel 11 and 12.
- G. Sin brings shame and sorrow and trouble to a person - Matthew 26:75; 27:3-5; Genesis 3:7-10.

3. How are we saved from sin and the condemnation that follows?

- A. All mentally responsible people of accountable age are sinners - Romans 3:23. There is no perfect or sinless person (except Jesus) before God.
- B. God's just sentence has always been, "The person who sins will die" - Ezekiel 18:20. "The wages of sin is death" - Romans 6:23. The death mentioned is the "second death," eternal punishment - Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:14, 15; 21:8. Because we have all sinned, we have forfeited our lives. We are worthy of the second death.
- C. In order for us to be saved from punishment and have eternal life, a price must be paid to satisfy our debt of sin and redeem our lost life. But what can we offer in exchange for our lives?
  - 1) The life of an animal (as in Old Testament sacrifices) cannot redeem the life of a person - Hebrews 10:4.
  - 2) Repenting, praying, or worshiping at church do not profit God anything so as to pay the requirement of God's justice. We already owed such actions to God.
  - 3) Contributing our money cannot redeem our lives, because money is no match for the life of a person, and everything we have already belongs to God - Matthew 16:26; Psalm 50:10-12.
  - 4) Good deeds, even in great numbers, or being right about certain religious issues, cannot pay the debt of past sins, because we already owe God any good we can do. Even if we could do enough to suffice for today, we could not replace yesterday's failures - Luke 17:10.

Truly we have nothing to offer which would pay the debt of sin and redeem our lives. Without the help of a sinless person who has more to offer than we do, we are condemned and lost.

- D. "If God is merciful, why can he not just forget our sins and forego punishment without demanding atonement?" It is true that God is merciful. But he is also righteous and just. He must pay to every person his due, whether good or evil. God is the king of kings, the ruler of the universe. If any earthly ruler or judge stops punishing people for wrongdoing, what happens to society? How much more must God, who is perfectly just, administer justice? (Those who object to God's punishment of sin are usually those who have not appreciated how evil sin is).
- E. But God is also love - 1 John 4:8. Because we had no way to redeem ourselves, God gave his own sinless Son to die for our sins on the cross - John 3:16; Romans 5:6-11. Jesus was

punished in our place - Isaiah 53:4-6, 11, 12; 1 Peter 2:24; 1:18, 19. Jesus' life was given as a ransom for ours. When we come to God through Christ in obedient faith, we find life and peace. Jesus has taken away the condemnation that was against us - Romans 8:1; Colossians 2:13, 14. In this way, through the sacrifice of his Son, God could be just and still be gracious, forgiving and forgetting our sins - Romans 3:25, 26.

F. The grace offered in Christ includes:

- 1) Salvation from the guilt of sin through forgiveness - Hebrews 10; 17.
- 2) Salvation from the bondage and power of sin through the indwelling Spirit - Romans 8:13; Ephesians 3:16; Galatians 5:22, 23.
- 3) Salvation from the effects of sin through the eventual redemption of our bodies at Christ's coming - 1 Corinthians 15:22; Philippians 3:21.

**Conclusion:** The song "Amazing Grace" only begins to express our wonder at the greatness of God's goodness and love to undeserving sinners. We were helpless and without hope until Christ gave himself for us.

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