

## The Gospel of Salvation

The Gospel is to be proclaimed to everyone everywhere so that all may have the opportunity to obey and be saved.

‘Saved’ is a common expression in Christian circles, and a little thought soon reveals the meaning. The fact is that the whole of humanity has sinned against the God who formed them, so we all deserve the death of both body and soul, which is the righteous punishment for disobedience to our Creator’s requirements of us. But Jesus, both Son of God and Son of man, lived a perfect life, and sacrificed that life in order to be a proxy acceptable to God for the sins of mankind. So when Christians talk about ‘being saved’, what they mean is that mankind is saved from the terrible death that should have been theirs were it not for the substitutionary death of Jesus on the Cross. The very name, Jesus, means ‘Saviour’, ‘for He shall save His people from their sins’.

Does this then mean that every person in the world has been saved willy-nilly, and that no one has anything to worry about? No, that is not the meaning, because not *all* people are *His* people. Everyone attaining Heaven will no more serve God’s purposes in creation as committing the whole of humanity to Hell. There are two absolute requirements for being classed as one of ‘His’ people. The first is sorrow for sin and a turning from it, and the second is belief in God and the power of the death of Jesus to blot out the consequences of sin, *i.e.* repentance and faith. Christ’s death was a free gift from our loving God to mankind, but being a gift, it does need to be accepted and received.

Let us look at the bare necessities for Salvation. Using the word ‘man’ to stand

for any man or woman, what is required for a man to be saved?

Firstly, a man must believe that there is a God. If there is no awareness of anything beyond the cunning of mankind, there is little hope unless God intervenes in a most spectacular manner. Humanly speaking, the agnostic is a slightly more hopeful case than the atheist, but is still not ready to accept salvation. The agnostic needs to look further into the fundamental alternatives and to ask more radical questions in order to grasp a degree of belief in the existence of God. The Bible tells us that even the devils believe in God and tremble, and if they believe, it doesn’t say much for any man’s intelligence if he or she disbelieves.

Secondly, there needs to be an awareness of right and wrong. If a man is unable to distinguish between the two, repentance is hardly possible. Man may be in a sorry state compared with God’s original perfect creation, but most of us still have a conscience that tries to guide us in the paths God wishes us to follow. The problem with conscience is that if a person constantly offends against it, it becomes progressively weaker until its voice is no longer heard. The Bible speaks of persons having their conscience seared with a hot iron, and such are in a very sorry state.

Thirdly, action is required. The person who perseveres in seeking after the truth reaches the point where they are struck by God’s perfection and holiness, and their own sinfulness and unworthiness. This is more than just head knowledge. The total contrast between God and ourselves is overwhelming to our emotions and our whole being, resulting in the strongest of resolutions to put our sinful past behind us and to endeavour to be more as God would wish us to be. We understand our

contribution towards nailing Jesus to the Cross, and claim Christ's atoning death as our only plea before Almighty God. Repentance and faith! For some this occurs suddenly, and for others is spread over a period of time. For all, though, it is real.

So this is the Gospel, the good news of a solution to the problem of sin. Put simply, if we acknowledge that our sin is wrong before a righteous God, turn from it and trust in the saving power of Christ's perfect sacrifice so that we can truly call Jesus 'Lord', our sins are forgiven, and we can please God by showing our trust and obedience to His commands.

This is so straight forward that it may be understood whatever our mental capacity. But we do like to know all the answers, and start listing our "what ifs?". To these, God says to us, don't worry about other people, just sort yourself out. Sound advice!

What if a person has no sense of right and wrong? What if a person is so disabled that no communication is possible? What if a baby dies before there is any understanding about the world around it? What if someone never hears the Gospel? And so we could go on. But all these cases must be left in the hands of God. God is just, and whatever He does in all these circumstances will be right. We can be fully confident of that. This topic will be raised elsewhere on this site, and will make more sense in that context. But beware, these are deep issues, and dangers beset us at every turn. There are forces that would use such knowledge to our eternal disadvantage.

Regarding salvation, forget about everyone else. I will repeat the Bible's advice to each one of us:

Make *your* calling and election sure.