



WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

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SALVATION

Questions.

1. What must I do to be saved?

A friend, from Algeria

2. How can sin be overcome?

Mr. G.K.Y., Beni Swaif, Egypt.

The salvation of mankind is indeed a very important subject. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that salvation is the most important subject for man to consider. It has occupied the mind of God from the very beginning. God appeared in flesh in order to bring salvation about. Therefore, since salvation is so crucial, we must find out about its nature, meaning and significance. We must discover what salvation is and from what we need to be saved.

We understand from the Bible and from the nature of the mission of Christ, that salvation involves being set free from slavery to sin and, consequently, deliverance from it. The Gospel declares that the Son of man came to seek and to save those who are lost. This means that the goal of Christ's coming into the world is to save those who are perishing in transgressions and sins. To achieve this goal, he prepared everything for salvation even to the extent of laying down his life for the sinner, impelled by the abundance of his love and mercy.

On his deathbed the Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria of England, was visited by his doctor who tried to console the Duke by saying, "Be consoled, my Lord, by the high office which Providence bestowed upon Your Highness". The Duke replied, "This may be true, but my salvation does not depend upon my prominent office, but on my confession that I am a sinner and that Christ came to save me". He was echoing the words of the apostle Paul, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst" (1 Timothy 1:15).

What must I do to be saved?

This question was asked by the Philippian Jailer of the apostle Paul and his companion Silas nearly two thousand years ago. The answer was "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your

household" (Acts 16:31). It is clear that man is not asked to do anything to save himself. He must only believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because there is no other way of salvation. The angel of God said of the blessed Virgin Mary, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). When John the Baptist saw Christ, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Full faith in salvation, however, must be first preceded by confession of sin in accordance with the scripture: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Secondly, it must be accompanied by repentance. "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Assuredly therefore, faith, accompanied by the confession of sin and repentance, in general bestows on men:

1. Salvation from the debt of sin

In many of his parables Christ explained sin as a debt. He said about the wicked servant, "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him" (Matthew 18:23,24). In another parable he said, "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,[a] and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" (Luke 7:41-42).

Sin is indeed a great debt which sinners owe God and indeed whether the debt is great or small, it is more than they can afford to pay. Therefore, it is subject to the judgement which says, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). But God, in his great love, which is full of kindness and mercy, is ready to forgive and pardon under conditions laid down in the Gospel, whatever and however great the sins may be. It is written, "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Romans 5:20). This makes the consolations to the overwhelming and terrifying power of the Law. Having bought forgiveness for repentant sinners through the blood of his

Cross, Christ's Gospel gives mankind the promise of this forgiveness, and his Holy Spirit seals it. Those whose sins are forgiven are bound to love him who forgave them. The deeper a sinner has sunk into sin before regeneration, the holier must he become and the more ready to obey.

2. Salvation from the power of sin

Having been relieved of sin's heavy debt, man now needs to be freed from the power of sin and to abandon evil habits. He must cease to live by his own corrupted desires in his relations with a world which has been cast into the grip of the Evil One. To do so, man must persevere and fight against sin to work out his salvation, as the apostle Paul said in his epistle to the Philippians: "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12,13). Paul also teaches us that a person who is saved by the grace of Christ must practice holiness day by day and free himself from the influences of sin until he attains everlasting glory. This is evident from Paul's epistle to the Romans: "And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11).

In brief, salvation involves the liberation of man from the debt of sin and its enslaving power in spirit, soul and body until he stands before God holy and unblemished in love.

Some may ask, "Why does God take so much interest in a rebellious sinner who sinned out of his own free will? And why does God not let him bear the consequences of his deeds and get what he justly deserves?" There is one answer to this which is contained in the passage about the Lord Jesus Christ: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The story is told of the famous lawyer, Sir John Prentice, who concluded his defending arguments of his case with the following statement in defence of the accused, "I have read in a book that God, in his everlasting counsel, asked Justice, Truth and Mercy if he should create man". Justice replied, "Do not make man because he would tread on all your laws, disciplines and principles". Truth replied, "Do not make him because he would be ugly and would always pursue lies and falsehood". Mercy said, "I know man would be so wretched. But I would take charge of him and walk with him through the dark alleys until I bring him to you in the end".

God made man in the best form, but man fell following his own inclinations, and eagerly immersed himself into the world of corruption. But God's mercy and love followed him and planned his full, complete and everlasting salvation. Put your trust in the love of God in Christ Jesus who said, "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22). "Come now, let us settle the matter," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

Do not hesitate. Open the door of your heart for Christ. He expects you to do so when he says, Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.

THE WAY TO SALVATION

The salvation of man cannot be accomplished outside of God's plan. Only God is able to bring together justice, mercy, holiness and love. God fulfilled this by the wonderful atonement made in the fullness of time on Golgotha. This happened as the Psalmist had prophesied, "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other" (Psalm 85:10).

The marvellous and awesome scene for the atonement was set. God is on one side, for whose holiness, magnanimity and kindness there is no limit. While on the other side, sinful man is stained with his own wrong doings. In the middle stands a cross on which Jesus was lifted up as the Redeemer to express the

love of God— "That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Circumstantial evidence confirms that God's salvation which he had prepared for mankind was not an emergency operation. It was a preordained and carefully worked out plan, perfected in accordance with the perfect wisdom and counsel of God. "He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness

of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding" (Ephesians 1:5-8).

Indeed, the salvation of mankind is founded on this atonement which Christ perfected. For this to be brought about, it was imperative that the Logos (Word) Who in the beginning was with God, became incarnate and partook with mankind in flesh and blood in order to present himself at the altar of the cross to atone for the sins of mankind. It is written: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Hebrews 2:14,15).

Biblical Verses About Salvation

- "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved— your and your household" (Acts 16:31).
- "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19)
- "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)
- "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)
- "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is

Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).
- "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).
- "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).
- "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1John 1:7).
- "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:19,20).
- "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake" (1 Peter 1:18-20).
- "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

VICTORY OVER SIN

You can have victory over sin by means of GRACE. God has not left the believer totally to his own personal effort and endeavour in order to free himself from sin and accomplish his own salvation. God remains active in the believer, as the apostle Paul said; "...Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12,13).

The means of grace are many and include:

1. Continuing Mystic Communion with Christ

Christ is not merely a teacher or figurehead to the believer. Inspired by this truth the apostle Paul

prayed for the Ephesians saying, "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:17,18).

The Bible gives many illustrations about the relationship between Christ and the believers. Christ is described as the vine, and they the branches in John 15:1-3. He is also described as the holy structure, and they the living stones (1 Peter 2:5). Such is probably the relationship which the Lord Jesus meant when he said, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me" (Revelation 3:20). He also said;

"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them" (John 14:23).

Perhaps the most wonderful illustration on the subject is the experience described by the apostle Paul who said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

We need to forget our individual ego and merge completely into the Person of the Lord Jesus in order to "abide in him, and he in us". We also need to abide in his word, so that his word may be implanted into our lives. Then whatever we ask shall be given to us, and victory over sin will be ours for the taking.

2. Bible Study

The Lord Jesus said, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

A review of the lives of men of God who lived victorious lives reveals that they were armed with the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, as seen in Ephesians 6:17. We also know that those who experienced a phase of weakness and defeat were able to regain victory through the Divine Word. For example, David, wrote the following song of victory: Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. "Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart—they do no wrong but follow his ways. You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me. How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:1-11).

In testimony of his victory over his sins, David also wrote these verses: "The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them

your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:7-11).

Here is an example used by the apostle Paul in a letter to his pupil Timothy: "and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2Timothy 3:15-17). Peter used another example to illustrate the effect the Word of God has on man. "We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-21).

3. Prayer

When the devil tried to tempt the disciples, the Lord Jesus told them to pray that they might not enter into temptation as in Luke 22:40. Temptation, if not kept at bay, leads to lust, and lust when practised, leads to sin. We must, therefore, pray insistently that we may not enter into temptation and through it into sin and finally into death and damnation.

4. Determined Repentance

St. Basil said, It is good that you do not sin. If you sin you should not postpone repentance. If you repent you should not commit the sin again. If you are able to do that, you should know that this is made possible by God, and if you realize this, you should thank God for His grace and ask Him continuously for further guidance.

5. Crucify the Old Self

The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians. "That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:20-24).

6. Resort to Christ's love

It is said that the devil attacked St. Macarius during his prayer, tempting him to harbour a feeling of pride. The devil said, "What a perfect saint you are!" Macarius replied, "You forget my many weaknesses and shortcomings". On another occasion the devil tried to bring despair into Macarius' heart when he said to him. "How lacking you are and how full of unrighteousness". Macarius said, "It is true I am full of unrighteousness and shortcomings, but you have forgotten the love of Christ and his death for me. Through his perfection my shortcomings are made up for".

7. Spiritual Meetings

It is an accepted fact that spiritual meetings are among the best means God provides for believers to grow and progress in the Christian life. We are told in the Acts of the Apostles about the members of the first church. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). So the Apostle instructs, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24,25).

FORGIVENESS

Questions.

1. I would like to dig deeper into the subjects of forgiveness, salvation, and the "crown of life". Please clarify these subjects for me.

A.N.A., Zaqaziq, Egypt.

giveness of our sins, because he atoned for them by his death on the cross. The apostle John illustrates this fact with his testimony when he wrote, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1,2). Forgiveness also means taking away as used by John the Baptist when he said of Christ, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

There may be some who would ask, "Why does God not forgive without atonement?" The answer is first, that God has a moral code for all humanity. His justice and righteousness demand that He respect the law, and the law states that the soul that sins must die. Second, it is in the interest of all humanity that the law be respected, because the upholding of law guarantees peace and order. And lastly, mankind may have had a right to ask such a question with its implied protest if men themselves had been asked to offer the atonement. "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God" (Romans 3:19). We must realize that God is abundant in mercy, and that for his good pleasure, "all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (Romans 3:24,25).

2. I received the following texts:

a) "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown" (Revelation 2:10).

b) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Can you please explain these verses to me?

G.K.Y., Egypt

The word "forgiveness" in the Bible means the covering of sin, to hide it or atone for it. It was used first in Genesis 6:14, in the sense of a covering of "pitch". Its meaning developed further to apply to the covering in the Holy of Holies. In the New Testament, it is used in the sense of atonement for sin through the blood of Christ. Responding to the question raised, "forgiveness" means "the covering up" of our sin by the atonement of Christ.

If we meditate on forgiveness in the Bible, it will become obvious that Christ is our plea for the for-

Man and Forgiveness

No one denies the fact that people who feel the burden of their sins, try to win God's favour by various ways in order to have him forgive them. Some of these means are discussed below.

1. Good Works

Good works as such are fine. But they cannot win God's forgiveness for past sins. The Prophet Isaiah declares this frankly when he says, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isaiah 64:6). This fact became clear to the apostle Paul who left us his testimony, inspired by the Holy Spirit: "not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:9,10).

As Paul illustrates above, good works give no man forgiveness because they are a duty man has to perform and for which he receives no forgiveness of sins. Christ himself deals with this in his teaching, "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Luke 17:10).

Christ is reminding us of the first and greatest commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). This commandment means that our love for God must be accompanied by service offered to him and doing that which is good in his sight.

Perhaps the most splendid example is given to us by King David, when he and his men made an offering of a large quantity of gold for the building of the Temple. He said, "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you" (1 Chronicles 29:14-16).

It is true that good works are essential because they agree with what is in the mind of God. But good works cannot buy forgiveness; otherwise, the word "grace" would need to be erased from all dictionaries.

2. Prayer

Prayer is not the means for forgiveness. A sinner has already offended God and cannot undo the offence by prayer, nor can he win God's mercy by prayer because God's mercy is tied to his perfect justice.

A sinner cannot enjoy the intercession of the Holy Spirit who brings the soul of man into harmony with God, intercedes in his prayer and makes such prayer effective.

The question might be asked, "Since this is the case, who can pray?" The answer is anyone who has accepted Christ and obtained forgiveness for his sins by the blood of the Redeemer's cross can pray. Prayer, therefore, is not a means to obtain forgiveness. Rather, it is a good relationship that man enjoys with God after his sins have been forgiven.

3. Fasting

Fasting is a form of self-abasement and contrition of the soul, but is not enough to undo the offence done to God because of sin. It does not, therefore, bestow forgiveness on the sinner.

Experience has taught that those who fast in order to win grace with God are not in fact doing any useful work for God or mankind. Nor do they deserve recompense for fasting. God said, "When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted" (Zechariah 7:5).

4. Intercession

There is no teaching in the Bible to the effect that intercession by holy men or saints, who lived before us, forgave sin. The apostolic teaching simply says, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time" (1 Timothy 2:5, 6).

"So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Luke 17:10).

5. Repentance

Repentance is excellent. It prevents many sins from being committed in the future. But, as good as it is, it cannot forgive previous sins. Take for example a murderer who, while on trial, gives a solemn promise to refrain from committing further crime. Would the judge find in the criminal's promise suf-

ficient ground to pardon him? Not at all. The judge has been entrusted to uphold justice. How could the Holy Judge of the heavens and the earth break his own law which dictates: "The one who sins is the one who will die..." (Ezekiel 18:20)?

How then can forgiveness be obtained?

This question has been asked by every sinner in every age and generation whose conscience was awakened from the slumber of death. The answer is that forgiveness is obtained by redemption. We read the following wonderful passage of praise spoken by Paul to the believers at Colosse, "Giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:12-14).

This fact was revealed to men of God who testified to what was revealed to them. The prophet Isaiah writes, "After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the

sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:11,12).

Forgiveness is obtained freely by grace, and Christ is the means of such grace. Because in him the Father has chosen us for everlasting life; in him we have been adopted as sons; and in him we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavens.

Through this grand redemption, Christ has become mediator for our peace with God. The fruit of redemption is the forgiveness of sins. There is no limit to such forgiveness since God is rich in mercy because of his bounteous love. The results of forgiveness are:

1. God's wrath toward a sinner ceases and is replaced by divine pleasure in accordance with the riches of his grace which he has bestowed upon us by his Beloved Son.
2. Termination of unnecessary pain caused by a guilty conscience protesting in man's heart.
3. Suspension of punishment which man deserves for his sins and the healing of his conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

WHY SALVATION?

God created man in the best form. In his wisdom, it was God's will to endow man with a mind able to comprehend and think correctly. In the process of his thinking man tends to ask questions. Perhaps the most important question occupying man's mind since the fall is - "What must I do to be saved?"

When the apostle Paul said, "how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord" (Hebrews 2:3), he was admitting that salvation was the most important subject relative to man. Paul was probably at a loss for words and expressed it as being such a great salvation that it moved the Almighty and occupied his mind to bring it about. "God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship" (Galatians 4:4,5).

If salvation is of such importance, we must examine its significance. I am at a loss to illustrate the advantages of such as salvation or describe it to you. But I will refer to some points about the greatness of this

salvation, from a simple mind of a believer who surrendered himself to the Lord Jesus our Saviour and discovered these truths:

1. The price paid by Christ to obtain salvation for us was of such tremendous significance that it inspired Peter's famous teaching, "Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake" (1 Peter 1:17-20).

This is the great price God paid for salvation. It cost God much more to work out the salvation of man than to create him. Creation was done by a word from his mouth, but salvation was different. "He who did not spare his own

Son, but gave him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). Surely a salvation of such magnanimity, which God himself bore terrible pain to achieve, must be of unique importance.

2. What has he saved us from? He saved us from very terrible sin, from its burden, and from its punishment, which is death. Paul's testimony in this respect says, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst" (1 Timothy 1:15). The Gospel says, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

He saved us from the power of the devil, as it is written, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

3. What are the results of salvation? Those who have been saved experience many spiritual privileges and blessings including:
 - The horn of salvation for us for strength (Luke 1:69).
 - The rock of salvation for firmness (Psalm 95:1).
 - The helmet of salvation for protection (Ephesians 6:17).
 - The cup of salvation for joy (Psalm 116:13).
 - Water wells of salvation for quenching thirst (Isaiah 12:3).
 - Garments of salvation for spiritual beauty (Isaiah 61:10).

By salvation we are also justified and are able to enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This peace brings us into the abundant life which the Lord God wants for us, in preparation for everlasting happiness in Jerusalem, the heavenly city of peace.

Such salvation, which guarantees us the enjoyment of all these spiritual privileges and blessings in heaven must be of very great significance.

Dear Reader, I would like to go back to the question asked by the apostle Paul. How can we be saved if we neglect such a tremendous salvation? Are we safe if we neglect such a great salvation? Are we safe if we neglect the call of the Gospel to a salvation of such magnitude that God himself appeared in the flesh to accomplish it?

Salvation is of greater significance than the religion revealed in the Old Testament with all its rituals and practices. Here are some reasons why this is so:

1. God himself began to speak of it. In the very beginning God said that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent in Genesis 3:15. His mediator the Lord Jesus, who is greater than the angels who were the mediators of the Old Testament, declared it and brought it about by the sacrifice of himself. This has become the cornerstone of the Christian faith, which the Lord handed down to the apostles equipping them with his Spirit to preach it to the nations.
2. It was confirmed to us, in that it was presented in a way certain and worthy of being believed, because it agreed with the revelations of the prophets who gave us the message of salvation led by the Holy Spirit.
3. It was testified to by those who heard it, the apostles who were disciples of the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh, and who received from him directly the word of truth, which is the gospel of salvation, and preached it to the world, beginning from Jerusalem unto the ends of the earth.
4. God himself was witness with these disciples, manifesting various powers and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The apostles' preaching of the gospel of salvation was supported by miracles which God worked out at their hands, such as the healing of the sick, speaking with strange tongues and prophesying.

Now that we are more conversant with the significance of so great a salvation we might ask, "**What must we do to be saved?**" This is the eternal question which every person in every language under the sun keeps asking. There is no answer to it other than what the apostle Paul gave to the jailer of the Philippian prison nearly two thousand years ago. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

Accept the salvation of God with thanks, and Christ will fill your heart with the joy of the Holy Spirit and give you victory and, in the end, the crown of life. Keep yourself unblemished in the love of God, expecting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for life everlasting. Remember a soul is very dear to God to the extent that he bought it by the death of his own Son. Do not neglect your soul; spare no effort to preserve it.

A man once sold all he owned and bought a rare jewel of great value. He took the jewel with him on a voyage to a distant land. On the ship's deck he was examining the beautiful jewel and admiring its brilliance under the light of the sun. He kept playing

with it. He threw it up into the air despite the warnings of his friends about throwing it so high. Then the expected happened. A higher toss than usual sent the jewel away into the depths of the sea. The man cried in anguish, "I lost it! I lost it!"

This is a true story. It serves as a warning to any man who gambles with his life. You might be that precious jewel! You are playing with your soul which God has entrusted to you. Are you neglecting to take due care of it by casting it into the air of worldly lusts? You risk landing it in the depths of corruption and eternal loss.

THE CROWN OF LIFE

We read in Revelations 2:10 a command and that is to remain loyal which Christ requires from every believer. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. This divine command reflects two very important truths. The first one is that our faithfulness to Christ is a precious gem which we must keep very carefully even though it might involve sacrificing our very lives. The second is that our faithfulness to Christ must continue all through our lives; so that when the end comes, it will be found wholly stable because we ourselves are a trust in the hand of Christ.

Such faithfulness has an invaluable reward, the crown of life. This is the crown which Christ won after crushing the power of death and overcoming the grave. Christ who put an end to death, gives the crown of life to him who overcomes. Here is what the Bible says about it:

1. The crown of splendour and the royal diadem is the crown which the Lord has prepared for the body of believers (the Church) whom Christ bought with his blood (Isaiah 62:3).
2. The crown of glory that will never fade away is given to the faithful shepherds of the flock of Christ (1 Peter 5:4).

3. The crown of righteousness is given to those who live in righteousness as a result of faith in Christ and the hope of his coming. It is the reward for fighting the good fight and completing the course (2 Timothy 4:7,8).
4. The crown of life is given to a faithful believer for facing temptation and coming out blameless. This was the reward of martyrs whom death could not rob of faithfulness to Christ.

This, in brief, is the crown of faith which the Lord promised to those who love him. In the Gospel language it is a symbol of everlasting life and a crown of victory which a faithful believer receives directly from the hand of Christ. Christ commanded us to preserve it when he said, "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (Revelation 3:11). Inspired by this command the apostle Paul bids the Colossians, "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you" (Colossians 2:18).

By this command Christ may have intended to warn his followers not to take liberties as did Esau "... who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done" (Hebrews 12:16-17).

HOW CAN WE BE SAVED?

Question.

How can I be completely saved and forsake sin? Is it enough, for salvation, to be baptized and to believe? What else should a repentant person do after his sins are forgiven?

A.L.G., Alexandria, Egypt

Before his ascension, Christ commanded his disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). We understand, from the way the holy apostles explained the Lord's command, that all mankind is condemned to perish, but he who believes in Christ obtains in his name forgiveness for his past sins and is saved from the power of sin.

In fact, when we ponder over the teaching of the Bible about saving faith, we discover that God has prepared salvation for us and that saving faith has important characteristics which include:

1. Alertness to divine revelations in Holy Scripture and believing in its contents about the salvation which was prepared for us in Christ; acceptance of the truth of the revelations of the Bible about the natural fallen state of mankind and their need of Christ. This mental state, however, is not sufficient by itself to win salvation, but it does guide man in the path of saving faith.
2. Personal conviction brings about a sense of praise and thanksgiving to God for paving the appropriate way for salvation in Christ, prepared freely for our fallen nature.
3. Voluntary dependence on Christ who is our Lord and Saviour. This involves confession of sin and realisation of our lack of merit. This turns on Christ's saving power over us; also, our accepting him as our personal Saviour and holding on to him as our only means of forgiveness, atonement and spiritual life. This is based on many verses in the Bible which explain how we come to Christ to obtain salvation from him.
 - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28,29).
 - "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to be-

come children of God" (John 1:12).

- "But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).
- "Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25,26).
- "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31).
- "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

We might now add that saving faith has both a general and a personal feature. The general is contained in divine revelations, and the personal is none other than Christ and what he did as a Redeemer. Saving faith, in other words, depends on the divine promise of salvation in Christ. The following are some illustrations that Christ is the cornerstone of salvation.

1. Christ's Testimony

Christ often called on people to believe in him. He said that if they did not believe, they would be condemned that everyone who believes may have eternal life. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him (John 3:15,18,36).

2. The need to accept Christ

The texts that declare we are saved by accepting Christ are many.

"We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:9-12).

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well" (1 John 5:1).

It is evident from the above verses that all that is required of us for salvation is to accept Christ and the testimony which God records concerning his Son— faith that Christ is the Son of the living God. Christ himself is the object of faith which ensures salvation. Faith, therefore, means looking to Christ, having faith in him and surrendering ourselves to him.

3. The apostolic teaching

Likewise Paul taught that we are justified by faith in Christ. Faith, here, is not only mental or mere general faith in God, in divine revelation or in eternal facts, but it is faith in which Christ is the object. Paul says, "This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Romans 3:22).

To the Galatians he says: "Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified" (Galatians 2:16); "Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed" (Galatians 3:23); "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

4. Christ's offering himself a ransom for us

We read in the Bible that Christ gave himself to redeem many and that he made himself an atonement for sins and offered himself a sacrifice to God. We also read that people are saved only by the merit of his righteousness and death.

As he is our Redeemer and the atonement for our sins, and since by faith in him we are reconciled to God, we must accept him as such and place our trust in him. The Gospel is geared in its entirety to provide for the fact that Christ, in himself and by what he has done, is the object of faith and the basis of trust.

5. Our life is in Christ, by faith

This is proved by the many texts which relate the believers to Christ. The Bible says that "we are in him by faith", "he abides in us", "he is the head and

we are the parts in him", "our life is from him", "he is the vine and we are the branches", and that "he is the author of our faith and its perfecter". All these and similar verses exclude any suggestion that mere general faith in God or the Bible assures our salvation. They also confirm that "Saving faith" ends up in Christ who becomes our God and Saviour personally.

We also read in the Bible that God sent forth his Son into the world to save the world. Further, Christ died for our sins and was raised to justify us, and that he was meant by God to be wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption for us. Those who accept such a Saviour, as he reveals himself to be, those who surrender their souls into his hand, and those who devote themselves to his service are the true believers as the Bible intends them to be. They are consequently saved by grace.

There is no doubt that every believer accepts Christ and regards him as his Saviour from the evils of sin. The Bible says this to Jesus' followers. Christ is Prophet, Priest and King. It also says he is the source of life, light and happiness and the object of worship and love.

If salvation is of such crucial importance for the deeper life and for eternity, we are bound to raise a question about its nature and meaning in every sense. What then is salvation?

Indeed, Christianity's total theme from beginning to end is the only way of salvation. Its founder and builder is the Incarnate Word of God, who came to the world with the name of Jesus which means "God saves". Salvation is illustrated by the message of Christ, and Christianity involves saving man from sin. The angel said to the Virgin Mary, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Christ said of himself, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

By now, you will have perceived that a repentant person does not obtain salvation by the mere intervention of a priest to absolve him of his sins. There is no priest, saint, prophet or angel who has power to absolve anyone of sin. Only one Person has this power. He is Jesus Christ. It is written of him, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

QUIZ

If you read this book carefully, you can answer these questions:

1. What is salvation?
2. Which of the New Testament characters raises this question: What must I do to be saved?
3. How would you illustrate from the Bible that sin is a debt?
4. What is the way of salvation?
5. Write down seven verses about salvation.
6. What are the means which give a believer victory over sin?
7. What is meant by the word "forgiveness" in the Bible?
8. Do we obtain forgiveness through good works?
9. Is the ritual of prayer a means of forgiveness?
10. Can the intercession of saints forgive our sins?
11. Does repentance wash away past sins?
12. What is the price Christ paid for our salvation?
13. What did Christ save us from?
14. What is the crown of life?
15. Does the Bible mention other crowns?
16. What did Christ command his disciples to preach?
17. What are the merits of saving faith?
18. Quote a verse which stresses the fact that faith in Jesus merits eternal life.
19. Give some verses which invite people to accept Christ.
20. What answer did Paul and Silas give to the Philippian jailer?

If you answer 15 of the above questions correctly, we will enroll you in our correspondence course. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper. Please write your address clearly and mail to:

Call of Hope

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