

SALVATION

Everybody feels the need to be saved from something or someone at some point in their lives. People around the world cry out to be saved from things like cancer, a burning building, depression, a crushing mortgage, scars from past wounds, guilt and regrets, shame, an addiction, a destructive pattern, an abusive relationship, an oppressive government, a prison sentence, slavery and death itself. In such situations the word salvation means something to people.

But when life is going well, the word salvation may not mean much to us. If someone says, “You need to be saved!” we might respond, “Saved from *what?!?*”

That’s an important question. We *do* need to be saved from all the things listed above. And here’s the good news – in the Bible God *does* promise, ultimately, to save us from all of those things and every other kind of misery and evil in our broken world.

However, the miseries and evils listed above point to a deeper problem, a deeper root cause. Unless that root problem is properly diagnosed in our lives and in our world, we cannot be saved from it or any of its miserable effects. The Bible diagnoses that root problem as SIN.

Sin is not just bad things we do or breaking God’s rules. Sin is a spiritual heart condition that every human being is born with. Here’s a description of this heart condition:

- **Rebellious:** I reject God my Creator as my #1, my highest good and my rightful owner and ruler. I put myself on the throne in His place as #1 to be master of my own life and to pursue happiness on my own terms. Deep down, I resent God’s interference.
- **Self-centered:** Having replaced God as #1 with myself as #1, what I want becomes #1 and I view other things, other people and even God as existing to serve me and my desires. This motivates all kinds of wrong (sinful) and destructive patterns and actions. It leads to conflict and misery in relationships. It cuts me off from God and others in relationship.

This condition is fatal. The God who made us to live under His care and control in relationship with Him declares every one of us *guilty* of rebellion and treason against Him. His just *sentence* is the eternal death penalty – an eternal existence cut off from Him and others in a state of endless rebellion, self-centeredness, dissatisfaction and anger against God and others. We call this hell. This is the destination of all who do not trust in Jesus as Savior or submit to His rule as Lord.

We need to be saved from this spiritual condition *and* God’s verdict and sentence against it. God sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world to save us from our sin and God’s verdict and sentence on it. Jesus came to save us from the miserable consequences of sin in our lives and relationships. Jesus also came to save us and our world from all the miserable effects our first parents, Adam and Eve, brought into our world when they rebelled against God – things like natural disasters, disease, death and hell.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (*John 3:16*). Jesus took our place to receive God’s guilty verdict for our sin instead of us and to suffer God’s eternal death penalty instead of us. That’s what happened when Jesus died on the cross. He wasn’t just physically suffering and dying. He was suffering the full brunt of God’s just judgment and anger against our sinful rebellion.

So how does Jesus' suffering in our place actually *save* us? "Whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (*John 3:16b*). Salvation is a *gift*, paid for by Jesus Christ, that we must *receive* from God. To receive this gift:

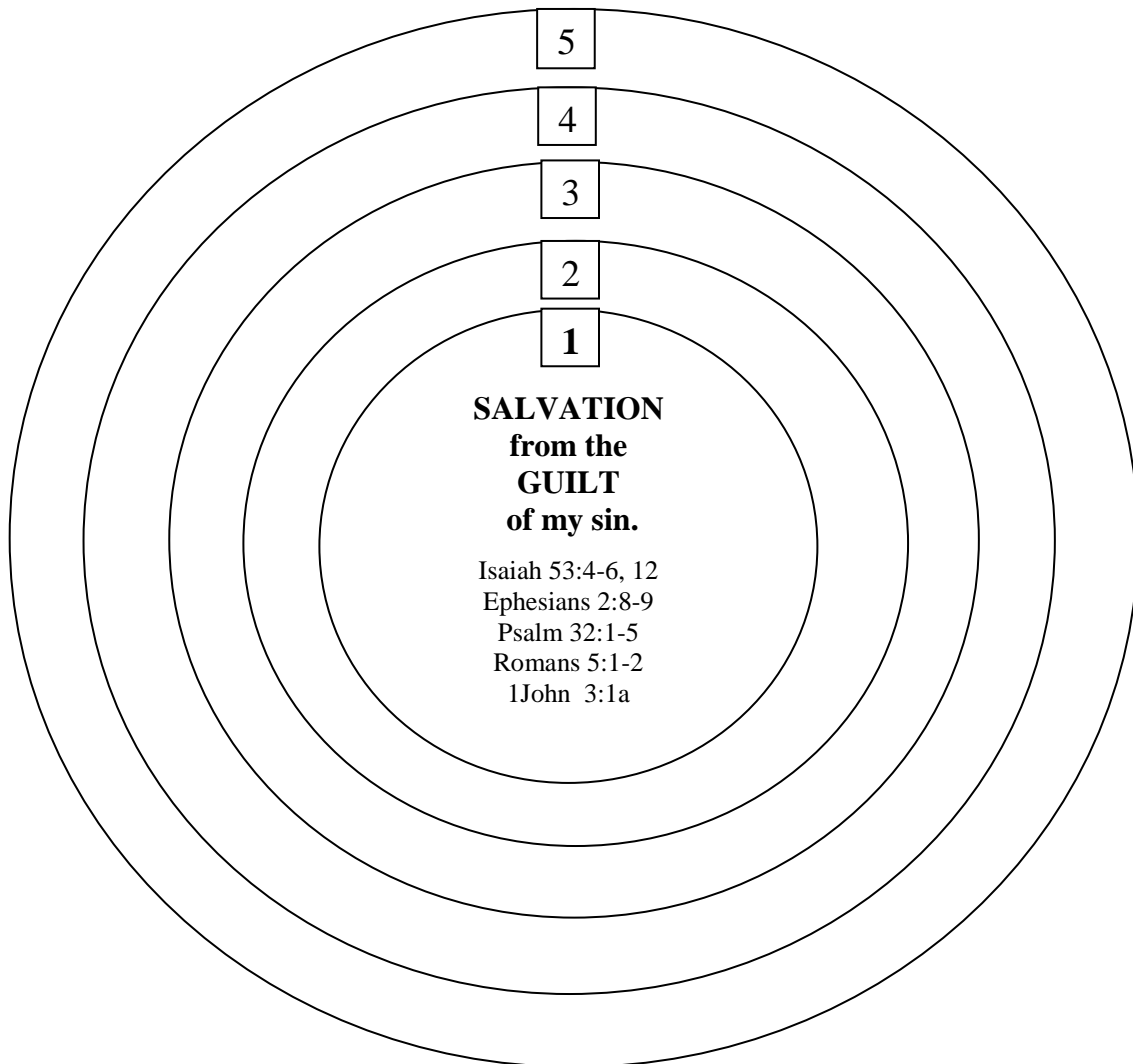
- Trust that only Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross can save you, not your efforts to pay for your own sin.
- Trust that, by suffering the death penalty in your place, Jesus paid for all your sin and guilt before God – even those things you regret most and cause you the most shame.
- Repent. Confess to God that you are a rebellious, self-centered sinner by nature with a heart condition that you are powerless to change. Confess your sins to him.
- Ask God to forgive you, to release you from His verdict and sentence, to receive you as His child, and to change your heart and your life.

Then God will forgive you and accept you as His forgiven, loved child. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness" (*1 John 1:9*). "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God!" (*1 John 3:1*). God will restore you to enjoy your place and your purpose in His family in relationship with Him and others. He will also begin to change you from the inside out and gradually liberate you from your spiritual heart condition and all the misery it causes in your relationship with Him and others. Ultimately, God promises to rescue His children and even the entire creation from *all* the miseries and evils that sin has brought into our broken world – the very things we described in the first paragraph and more.

Finally, it is important to ask, "Saved *for* what?" not just "Saved *from* what?". What did God send Jesus Christ to save us *for*? Jesus Christ came to save us *for* restored relationships with Him and others. He came to save us *for* life under His perfect rule as King. He came to save us *for* lives of love and meaningful worship, work and service as restored people in a broken world where others need to be saved and brought under His rule again. King Jesus came to save us *for* partnership with Him in His mission to make right all that is wrong in our broken world. One day Jesus will return to complete that task. Jesus Christ came to save us *for* the perfect life that our first parents, Adam and Eve, enjoyed in the Garden of Eden under God's rule with Him and each other. Jesus himself said it best: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (*John 10:10b*).

Jesus: Our Savior
Matthew 1:21

CIRCLES OF SALVATION



- 2** - Salvation from the **Power** of my sin
Romans 8:28-30; Philippians 1:6; Romans 6:1-7; Ezekiel 36:24-27;
Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 60
- 3** - Salvation from all the **Effects** of sin
Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 45; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Peter 3:3-5;
John 11:25-26; Psalm 103:1-5
- 4** - Salvation of the whole **Church**
Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 7:9-12; Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 54
- 5** - Salvation of all **Creation**
Romans 8:18-25; Revelation 21:1-5

Jesus is making all things new! (Revelation 21:1-8)