

God's Salvation as Revealed in the New Testament: An Overview

by Ron Kangas

If we read through the New Testament with care and concentration, focusing on the revelation regarding salvation, we will surely be impressed with the fact that there is more than one kind of salvation, or more than one aspect of salvation. Contrary to the common view held by evangelical or fundamentalist theologians, the salvation unveiled in the Scriptures cannot be reduced to the belief that God's salvation is simply a matter of deliverance from sin, justification by faith to be righteous in the sight of God, and receiving eternal life so that we will not perish but, as usually asserted, live in heaven forever. God's salvation has a number of aspects, affecting our spiritual situation not only in eternity but also in the present age and in the coming age of the millennial kingdom. The following brief sampling of verses should cause serious students of the Word of God to have at least an initial realization that the salvation provided by our Savior God is rich, full, and multifaceted:

—[The Lord, the God of Israel] “raised a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant” (Luke 1:69).

—“Salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us” (v. 71).

—“To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the forgiveness of their sins” (v. 77).

—“My eyes have seen Your salvation” (2:30).

—“All flesh shall see the salvation of God” (3:6).

—“Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house” (19:9).

—“There is salvation in no other, for neither is there

another name under heaven given among men in which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

—“To us the word of this salvation has been sent forth” (13:26).

—“These men are slaves of the Most High God, who announce to you a way of salvation” (16:17).

—“Let it be known to you therefore that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also hear it” (28:28).

—“The gospel...is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

—“If we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled” (5:10).

—“With the heart there is believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth there is confession unto salvation” (10:10).

—“Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (13:11).

—“Whether we are afflicted, it is for your comforting and salvation” (2 Cor. 1:6).

—“Behold, now is the day of salvation” (6:2).

—“Sorrow according to God works repentance unto salvation” (7:10).

—“In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph. 1:13).

- “Receive the helmet of salvation” (6:17).
- “I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19).
- “A proof...of your salvation, and that from God” (v. 28).
- “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (2:12).
- “God did not appoint us to wrath but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thes. 5:9).
- “God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thes. 2:13).
- “That they themselves also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10).
- “From a babe you have known the sacred writings,

- of many, will appear a second time to those who eagerly await Him, apart from sin, unto salvation” (9:28).
- “Who are being guarded by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5).
- “Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (v. 9).
- “As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation” (2:2).
- “Count the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation” (2 Pet. 3:15).
- “Beloved, while using all diligence to write to you concerning our common salvation” (Jude 3).
- “They cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb” (Rev. 7:10).

If we approach the Word by being poor in spirit and pure in heart, we may be enlightened to see that there is more to God’s salvation than is contained in and expressed by traditional theological systems.

- which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (3:15).
- “The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me into His heavenly kingdom, to whom be the glory forever and ever” (4:18).
- “The grace of God, bringing salvation to all men, has appeared” (Titus 2:11).
- “Those who are to inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14).
- “How shall we escape if we have neglected so great a salvation?” (2:3).
- “Having been perfected, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation” (5:9).
- “We are persuaded of better things concerning you, beloved, and things which belong to salvation” (6:9).
- “Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins

- “Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ” (12:10).
- “I heard as it were a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power are of our God” (19:1).

In the light of such a varied speaking concerning salvation, we are not faithful to the divine revelation if we adopt a reductionist approach to God’s salvation by being selective in what we receive or by reducing salvation to a few basic elements that comport with a particular theological tradition. Although this overview of God’s salvation as revealed in the New Testament is merely a brief sketch, it is written with an underlying appeal to the reader—that all who believe in the Lord and honor the Word of God would be poor in spirit and pure in heart (Matt. 5:3, 8) as they read and study the Scriptures regarding the full, complete salvation of God. If we approach the Word in this way, we may be enlightened to see that there is more to God’s salvation than is contained in and expressed by traditional theological systems.

Viewing God’s Salvation from Two Perspectives

As the writings of Paul indicate, we may view God’s complete salvation from two different, but not incompatible or contradictory, perspectives—the human perspective or viewpoint and the divine perspective or viewpoint. In Romans we view salvation from the human perspective, beginning with humankind in a dreadfully fallen condition

under the righteous judgment of God and proceeding toward and eventually entering into God's purpose. In Ephesians we view salvation from the divine perspective, beginning with God's actions in eternity past to carry out the good pleasure of His will, the desire of His heart, and then considering the human need for redemption and salvation in relation to the will, plan, and purpose of God with its glorious consummation.

After an introductory section on the gospel of God (the subject of the Epistle to the Romans), we have a lengthy section on condemnation (1:18—3:20); this section reveals God's condemnation on various categories of persons and concludes with a word of judgment on the whole world totally (3:9-20). Salvation in Romans therefore begins with the human viewpoint as it details the fallen, inexcusable, and hopeless condition of sinful human beings. The Epistle continues with marvelous sections on justification, sanctification, and glorification. Here we have good news: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (3:23-24). God is righteous and "the One who justifies him who is of the faith of Jesus" (v. 26). "Therefore having been justified out of faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1). Then in verse 10 there is a momentous turn: "For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled." Much more! The believers must realize that Romans does not end at 5:9. Much more than what has gone before—propitiation, justification, reconciliation—we need to be, and we will be, saved in God's life, in the eternal, uncreated life of the Triune God. In this life we are sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified, and in this life we grow from children of God to sons of God and brothers of Christ so that we may be members of the Body of Christ, the perfect will of God.

Ephesians presents God's salvation from the heavens, from eternity, from the will and purpose of God, and from the desire of God's heart to have the church, the Body of Christ, as the one new man, the dwelling place of God, the fullness of God, the bride of Christ, and the warrior dealing with God's enemy to bring in the kingdom of God. In contrast to Romans, Ephesians begins with God's eternal purpose made in Christ. Before the foundation of the world—in eternity past, before anything was created—God chose us to be holy (1:4) and predestinated us unto sonship (v. 5). To be holy is to be the same as God in nature, and to possess the divine sonship in Christ is to be the same as God in life; thus, in eternity God determined that His chosen ones would become the same as God in the divine life and divine

nature for the eternal, corporate expression of God. It is in this light and from this perspective that Ephesians speaks of God's salvation. According to chapter 2, we have been raised with Christ in resurrection, we are seated with Him in His ascension, and we have been saved by grace through faith in order to be His masterpiece and His dwelling place now and for eternity. This is salvation viewed from the divine perspective.

Both perspectives are crucial if we are to have an accurate and balanced understanding of God's full salvation. On the one hand, we need to see salvation from the human side and realize that in Romans God begins with fallen sinners and ends with sons of God as members of the Body of Christ. On the other hand, we need to see salvation from the divine side and care not only for our desperate condition and need for salvation but also (actually, even more) for the desire of God's heart to save His chosen people for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. Salvation from fallen man to God and salvation from the eternal God to fallen man—this is the proper, twofold view of the salvation of God revealed in the New Testament.

Although we may readily confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior, we must advance in our spiritual understanding to see that our Lord is salvation itself. When Christ comes, salvation comes, for Christ is our salvation.

God's Salvation Being a Person—Christ Himself

The salvation graciously offered to fallen human beings by a loving God is not merely an action nor only a procedure, and surely God's salvation should never be regarded as a "ticket" that admits one to heaven. Of course, God's salvation involves an altogether marvelous series of actions, and it certainly entails a judicial procedure that fulfills the requirements of the divine righteousness, holiness, and glory. Although the actions and the procedure are indispensable and are worthy of eternal praise and thanksgiving, believers nevertheless need to realize that, above all else, salvation is a person. The full salvation of God is more than an action, a procedure, or a thing—salvation is Christ Himself. Although we may readily confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior, we must advance in our spiritual understanding to see that our Lord is salvation itself. When Christ comes, salvation comes, for Christ is our salvation.

This is clearly and emphatically revealed in the New Testament. That Christ Himself is salvation is indicated by

the name given to Him by God—Jesus. “You shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Joshua (Num. 13:16), which means Jehovah the Savior, or the salvation of Jehovah. Hence, Jesus is not only a man but Jehovah, and not only Jehovah but Jehovah becoming our salvation. (Lee, Recovery Version, Matt. 1:21, note 1)

Jesus, the God-man, a divinely human person, is our Savior and our salvation.

As the aged Simeon received the infant Jesus into his arms, he “blessed God and said, Now release Your slave, Master, according to Your word, in peace; for my eyes have seen Your salvation” (Luke 2:28-30). We know from verse 26 that “it had been divinely communicated to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” As he looked upon Jesus, the Lord’s Christ, he realized that he was looking upon God’s salvation. The Lord’s Christ is God’s salva-

God always acts according to His righteousness. Through Christ’s death on the cross and the shedding of His blood, God’s righteous requirements were fulfilled, and Christ’s redemption accomplished salvation for us.

tion. Simeon believed that he would see the Christ, yet when he saw the Christ, he declared that he had seen God’s salvation. Christ is God’s salvation given to us.

Two other portions in the Gospel of Luke confirm this. In 1:69 Zachariah declared that the God of Israel “raised a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant.” The horn of salvation is Jesus the Savior, who came out of the house of David (Jer. 23:5-6). In Luke 19 the Lord Jesus referred to Himself as salvation. Observing Zaccheus, who had climbed up in a tree in order to see Him, Jesus said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay in your house” (v. 5). Certain onlookers “murmured, saying, He has gone in to lodge with a sinful man” (v. 7). According to verse 9, Jesus said to Zaccheus, “Today salvation has come to this house.” When Jesus came into the house of Zaccheus, salvation came, for Christ, the person, is God’s salvation.

Redemption—the Accomplishment of Salvation

God’s salvation as revealed in the New Testament is

centered on Christ, but it is accomplished by the redemptive work of Christ. To redeem is to possess, or repossess, something through paying the required price. For example, if I lose a valued book that had my name written in it, and I find it in a used book store, I cannot rightly insist that the book belongs to me and walk away with it. Rather, I would have to buy, to repossess, the book by paying the required price. In doing so, I would redeem the lost book. The principle is the same with Christ’s redemption. Although we belonged to God by creation, we became lost in sin and in the world. Through His death of the cross, the Lord Jesus redeemed, repossessed, us by paying a tremendous price—His precious blood. We were lost, we were bought by Christ, and now we belong to Him and are qualified to receive and enjoy God’s salvation.

Salvation is accomplished through Christ’s redemption (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:18; 2:24). Through His own blood Christ obtained for us an eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). When we believe in Christ and receive His redemption, this redemption becomes our salvation. No one who refuses to honor and receive the redemption of Christ can obtain God’s salvation. Apart from the death of Christ for redemption, God cannot save anyone, and our sins cannot be forgiven. God is righteous and must always act according to His righteousness. Through Christ’s death on the cross and the shedding of His blood, God’s righteous requirements were fulfilled, and Christ’s redemption accomplished salvation for us.

Because salvation was accomplished by redemption, one cannot reject redemption and receive salvation. Salvation is redemption applied to us through faith in the person and work of Christ. As soon as a new believer receives Christ’s redemption, he obtains God’s salvation. We may say that whereas redemption is objective, existing as a reality independent of how we think or feel, salvation is subjective in the sense of being real to us personally and experientially.

Once we receive objective redemption, it becomes our subjective salvation, especially in our knowing that our sins have been forgiven. “In whom [the Beloved] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses” (Eph. 1:7). “In whom [the Son of God’s love] we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14). A central factor in the joy of salvation is the release that issues from our sins being forgiven. Christ’s death accomplished redemption unto the forgiveness of our sins.

The forgiveness of our offenses is the redemption through the blood of Christ. Apart from the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). Redemption is what Christ accomplished for our offenses; forgiveness is

the application of Christ's accomplishment to our offenses.
(Lee, Recovery Version, Eph. 1:7, note 2)

This is objective redemption becoming our subjective salvation. The more we appreciate the redemption that accomplished salvation, the more we will appreciate and be secure in the salvation that is Christ and also the issue of His redemptive death.

Eternal Salvation

The basic truth concerning God's salvation is that, in Christ, we may have eternal salvation. All the results, benefits, effects, issues, and provisions of eternal salvation are of an eternal nature and thus transcend the conditions and limitations of time. Those who have believed into the Son of God, the embodiment and expression of the divine life, and who confess that God, having accepted Christ's vicarious, redemptive death on our behalf, raised Him from the dead are eternally saved and will enjoy eternal life with all the glorified sons of God as the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. We are saved once for all from our sins and the judgment of God, and we now have eternal life because we have believed into the Son of God (John 3:15) and have been born of God to become children of God possessing the life and nature of God (1:12-13; 1 John 5:11-13). Christ Himself is the source of eternal salvation, and because this salvation is based not on our works (before or after we believe in the Lord) but on the person and work of Christ, the Son of God, eternal salvation is unchanging. Once we have been saved eternally, it is impossible for us to become unsaved. God has forgiven our sins and has forgotten them, and we have been born of God in our spirit, and we cannot be unborn, for regeneration is irreversible. The Lord, His love, His grace, and His work are all eternal and unchanging; therefore, the salvation He gives us is also eternal and unchanging.

We receive eternal salvation through faith. "What must I do to be saved?" the jailor asked Paul and Silas, and they replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). "In this One everyone who believes is justified" (13:39)—approved by God according to the standard of His righteousness in order to receive eternal life. "He who believes into the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36). God's unique command to the human race in this age is to believe into the Son of God. To believe into Him is to be saved; to not believe into Him is to perish. Not believing into the Son of God is the unique sin that causes unbelievers to perish. God's grace in His salvation is received by faith. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works that no one should boast"

(Eph. 2:8-9). Eternal salvation and everything related to it is of God; nothing is of ourselves. Even the faith by which we believe into the Son and receive His salvation is not generated by us but originates with the Lord, who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2). God requires us to believe, and He enables us to believe and thereby be saved eternally.

It is by faith that we substantiate all the things Christ has accomplished for us. Through such as substantiating ability, we have been saved by grace. The free action of God's grace saved us through our substantiating faith. This faith of ours is the faith by which we believe in Christ, and it is Christ in us as our faith. (Lee, Recovery Version, Eph. 2:8, note 3).

A Transcending Salvation

We need to be impressed with the marvelous divine fact that eternal salvation is not salvation merely from sin and the judgment of God, as precious as this may be. Through God's eternal salvation accomplished in His Son, we are

Christ Himself is the source of eternal salvation, and because this salvation is based not on our works but on the person and work of Christ, the Son of God, eternal salvation is unchanging.

saved also from deadness, from the age of the satanic world system, and from the rule and authority of Satan, the enemy of God. Before we received God's eternal salvation, we were dead in our offenses and sins (v. 1), and we "walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience" (v. 2). "God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (vv. 4-6). It is by grace that we have been saved out of the dreadful condition of being "apart from Christ" and "having no hope and without God in the world" (v. 12). By grace we have been saved not only from sin and judgment but also from deadness, the world, and the enemy of God, and, in Christ, we have been placed in a transcendent, heavenly position, for God has seated us with Christ in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, who is seated at God's right hand, "far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that

which is to come” (1:20-21). God will “display in the ages to come the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (2:7). We who were dead in spirit have been made alive, raised up from the position of death, and seated with Christ in the highest place in the universe. It is vital that we have a clear view of such a transcending and transcendent salvation.

We were saved not only as sinners but also as dead persons, and not only by Christ’s death with its redemption but also by His resurrection with its resurrection life, and even by His ascension with its transcendency. This is the transcending salvation given to the dead sinners by the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ. (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 5, note 5)

“Our Common Salvation”

Everyone receives eternal salvation in the same way—by faith—and every saved person, every believer in Christ, has the same salvation. Hence, eternal salvation is common among all believers. Jude intended to write about this:

The complete salvation of God includes reconciliation, salvation in life, salvation to the uttermost, daily salvation, salvation of the body, the salvation of the soul, and a growing unto salvation for God’s building.

“Beloved, while using all diligence to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you and exhort you to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3). Common salvation denotes general salvation, eternal salvation, common to and embraced by all believers. As such, common salvation is like the common faith, the faith that is common to all believers (2 Pet. 1:1). Common salvation includes all the essential truths of God’s salvation, and the common faith includes all the aspects of the faith once for all delivered to the saints and thus held by all children of God.

Sadly, due to the inexcusable divisions among true believers in Christ, the sense of a common faith and a common salvation has largely been lost or neglected, as endless debates continue over secondary doctrines. There surely needs to be a recovery of the consciousness of a common salvation universally received by believers everywhere. We all have believed into the Son of God; we all have received the forgiveness of sins through the redemptive death of Christ; we all have been saved by grace through faith; and we all possess eternal life, the divine

life with the divine nature, in our regenerated human spirit. Now we should receive one another based upon this common salvation and the common faith. According to Paul’s weighty word in Romans 14, at the judgment seat of Christ we will give an account to the Lord regarding whether or not we have received other believers as God in Christ has received us. If we treasure our common salvation and common faith above secondary matters, we will surely receive one another in love unto the building of the Body of Christ.

At this juncture, we turn to a concise survey of other aspects of the full salvation of God revealed in the New Testament. Concerning these aspects, readers may have different reactions and opinions and perhaps varying degrees of openness. Some may not want to hear about any kind of salvation other than eternal salvation, our common salvation, whereas others may be willing to consider, or reconsider, the entirety of the New Testament revelation of the complete salvation of God—a salvation that includes reconciliation, salvation in life, salvation to the uttermost, daily salvation, salvation of the body, the salvation of the soul, and a growing unto salvation for God’s building as the fulfillment of His eternal purpose.

Salvation as Reconciliation

Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Paul speaks to the church in Corinth regarding salvation in 2 Corinthians 6:2: “For He says, ‘In an acceptable time I listened to you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ Behold, now is the well-acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Although this word regarding salvation needs to be understood properly according to the context, well-meaning evangelists have wrenched this verse out from its context and used it as an appeal to unbelievers to be saved now and to not delay. We agree that the gospel of our salvation should be proclaimed with urgency and that unbelievers should not procrastinate in making a decision with eternal consequences; however, we should seek to understand why the apostle spoke these words to believers. In what sense was it the well-acceptable time and the day of salvation for the believers in Corinth? And why do today’s Christians need to know that now is the day of salvation? In brief, what does the word *salvation* signify here?

According to the context, which is continued from the end of chapter 5, salvation in 6:2 refers to reconciliation. The apostles were authorized by Christ to represent Him to do the work of reconciliation (5:18, 20). The ministry of reconciliation brings sinners back to God so that they have eternal salvation; the ministry of reconciliation also brings believers, who have received eternal salvation, absolutely into God to make them absolutely one with Him.

In order for a person to be fully reconciled to God (and thereby fully saved), two steps are required. The first step is to reconcile sinners to God from sin (v. 19). For this purpose, Christ died for our sins so that we might be forgiven (1 Cor. 15:3), bearing our sins on the cross so that they might be judged by God (1 Pet. 2:24). The result of this step is that sinners are saved and become children of God. Now there is a need for further salvation, and this requires another step of reconciliation. This second step is to reconcile to God believers who are still living in the natural life and according to the flesh. Paul addresses such believers in 2 Corinthians 5:20: "On behalf of Christ then we are ambassadors, as God entreats you through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God." For this purpose Christ died for us, the persons, so that we might live no longer to ourselves but live to Him in His resurrection life (vv. 14-15). In order to accomplish this further step of reconciliation, Christ was made sin on our behalf so that sin itself might be judged and done away with (v. 21; Rom. 8:3). The believers at Corinth needed to be reconciled to God not from their sins but from what they were in the flesh, the self, and the natural constitution. They were believers with eternal salvation and partial reconciliation, but they needed another kind of salvation and the second step of reconciliation. They needed reconciliation not through the objective cross but through the subjective experience of the cross applied to all the elements of their fallen being, and then, in the resurrection life of Christ, they needed to become in Christ the righteousness of God. This is full reconciliation and full salvation. Only when we have been fully reconciled to God are we fully saved (2 Cor. 6:1-2; Rom. 5:10; Heb. 7:25). If we are willing to see this, we will realize that "now is the day of salvation."

Salvation in Life

Paul's word about salvation as reconciliation is intrinsically related to his deep, profound, and mysterious teaching concerning salvation in life, or what we may call organic salvation—the part of God's complete salvation involving the life of God as distinct, but not separate, from the part involving the righteousness of God displayed in His judicial redemption. "If we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled" (Rom. 5:10). Since Paul said "much more," we should acknowledge the need for much more spiritual understanding of the significance of being saved in the life of God.

God's complete salvation has both a judicial aspect and an organic aspect. The judicial aspect, the aspect pertaining to God's righteous requirements, is a matter of God's judicial

redemption, which is according to the righteousness of God and through which the righteous requirements of His law were fulfilled by Christ's redemptive death on the cross. The result for believers is the forgiveness of offenses (Eph. 1:7), the purification of sins (Heb. 1:3), justification (Rom. 3:24-25), objective reconciliation (5:10), and sanctification in position unto God. As a result, the believers are qualified to enter into the grace of God (5:1-2).

With the judicial aspect of salvation as the foundation, we may follow Paul to advance to something "much more." Unfortunately, those who are satisfied with eternal salvation, are focused on joy in heaven, and have no heart for God's eternal purpose may sense no need for further salvation; hence, with them there is no Pauline "much more" and, throughout their life on earth, there is no organic salvation, no salvation in life. We need to receive mercy to enter into Paul's view of salvation in life and see why we need it desperately. Paul's view of being saved in the divine life includes six crucial experiences of the Triune God as life: regeneration, dispositional sanctification, being renewed, transformation, confor-

Paul's view of being saved in the divine life includes six crucial experiences of the Triune God as life: regeneration, dispositional sanctification, being renewed, transformation, conformation, and glorification.

mation, and glorification. Through regeneration believers receive another life—the divine, eternal life, the life of God—in addition to their created human life. Through dispositional sanctification believers are permeated with the holy nature of God and thereby become holy even as God is holy. Through renewing (12:2) believers experience the element of God's eternal newness discharging the element of the old creation in their soul and causing the element of the new creation in their regenerated spirit to saturate their soul to make them new for the New Jerusalem. Through transformation believers undergo a living, metabolic process that causes them to bear the image of the resurrected Christ for His expression. Through conformation believers are saved from self-likeness, peculiarity, and every form of self-expression into the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God in resurrection. Through glorification believers are saturated and permeated with the divine glory as it spreads from their regenerated spirit into their transformed soul and eventually into their mortal body, causing the body of humiliation to be a body of glory. As we will see when we come to God's building as the goal of His salvation, these

“much more” experiences of salvation are not an end in themselves but are steps to the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose, the desire of His heart, for which we were created and for which we were saved and are being saved organically in the divine life.

Saved to the Uttermost

“He, because He abides forever, has His priesthood unalterable. Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:24-25). These verses were written to genuine believers, who had obtained eternal salvation, who had become sons of God and holy brothers (2:10; 3:1), who were partners of Christ and partakers of a heavenly calling (vv. 14, 1), who had come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the church of the firstborn, and who had come to “Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant” (12:22-24). Nevertheless, their salvation had not yet been completed, for they still needed to be saved “to the uttermost,” that is, completely, entirely, and perfectly. To be saved to the

saved fully and completely and brought wholly into God’s eternal purpose. Even in the matter of seeking and receiving eternal salvation, fallen human beings may be, and usually are, self-centered, happy that their sins are forgiven and that they will have eternal life, but they may not see, much less even care, that God’s eternal salvation in Christ is not mainly for their benefit and blessing but for the fulfillment of His will, good pleasure, purpose, and economy. Thus, believers need to view salvation from God’s point of view, from the perspective of the desire of His heart and ultimate goal.

Christ lives to intercede for us, and He is able to save us to the uttermost, but all those who would be saved in this way must fulfill a specific condition—they must come forward to God through Christ. In Himself the Lord’s ability to save to the uttermost is unlimited, but as this ability relates to believers, it may be, and presently is, limited by their failure to come forward to God through the Son, as revealed in Hebrews 4:16, which charges us to come forward to the throne of grace. Only those believers who come forward to God by coming forward to the throne of grace will be saved to the uttermost under the heavenly ministry of the ascended Christ as our High Priest. We urgently need this utmost salvation, and we must come forward to God through Christ in order for it to become a reality to us here and now.

As the One who is faithful toward God and loving toward us, Christ is continually praying for us to the end that we would be saved fully and completely and brought wholly into God’s eternal purpose.

uttermost is to be saved to the fullest extent; to be saved in this way is to be saved to the utmost, to the greatest and highest degree. Clearly, this is distinct from a believer’s obtaining eternal salvation. Just as we need to be saved “much more in His life,” we also need to be saved to the uttermost. Do today’s Christians realize their need to be saved much more, even to be saved to the uttermost? Where are the messages and the writings concerning this? Who is telling believers that they must advance in their understanding and experience of God’s complete salvation until they are saved to the greatest and fullest extent? Where are those who are open and willing to hear such a sober word of righteousness (5:13)?

Although few believers acknowledge their need to be saved to the uttermost, Christ in His heavenly ministry is keenly aware of this. He knows that we need this utmost salvation and that He is able to save us to the uttermost. In His ministry as the eternal, divine High Priest, “He lives always to intercede for them.” As the One who is faithful toward God and loving toward us, He is continually praying for us to the end that we would be

His saving us to the uttermost, we will experience daily salvation in our environment, as the apostle Paul did. “I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19). *This* refers to Paul’s circumstances, in particular to his imprisonment with its sufferings. By using the word *know* rather than *believe* or *hope*, Paul is referring to what he had learned from previous experiences of God’s salvation in certain situations. To be sure, *salvation* here is not eternal salvation but refers to the living out of salvation in one’s daily life; hence, we use the term *daily salvation*. Outwardly, there are things that can cause us to stumble or to fail the Lord; inwardly, there are the elements of our fallen natural life and being—the flesh and the natural constitution—that may draw us out of the spirit and cause us to live in a way contrary to our life and nature as children of God. In addition, there may be trials and sufferings, and in them we may not be true to the Lord or glorify Him. Therefore, we need a daily salvation, even a moment-by-moment salvation, that comes from the saving life of Christ and His heavenly intercession. If we live in the

Daily Salvation

If we cooperate with the indwelling Christ to experience organic salvation and if we come forward to the ascended Christ to experience

reality of the Body of Christ, we, like Paul, will testify that the daily salvation we need depends on the petition, the prayer, of our fellow members and that, in the Body and through the Body, we will receive “the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

In verse 20 Paul identifies a specific matter from which he wanted to be saved—saved from being put to shame: “According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified.” Paul aspired to be found in Christ by all persons and spiritual beings who observed him in his daily living. For him to be found in Christ would be an honor to him and a glory to God. However, suppose that Paul had not lived in Christ and had not magnified Christ in his circumstances but instead lived in the flesh, displaying anger, or in the self, exhibiting self-pity, or in the natural life, being, and constitution, trusting in his ability to deal with the situation. If this had been the case, Paul would have been put to shame, for he would have failed to live and express Christ. Paul realized that in order to avoid such shame he needed “this” to “turn out to salvation.” Everywhere and at every time Paul needed daily salvation, and so do we.

In order to experience daily salvation, we need to consider Paul’s word in Philippians 2:12-13: “So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.” Because eternal salvation is by grace through faith and does not require (or allow) our work, *your own salvation* here obviously cannot refer to eternal salvation. To work out our salvation is to carry out salvation in our daily life; it is to bring our salvation to a final and ultimate (uttermost) conclusion not by our faith but by our obedience. This is the experience of daily salvation and our living of salvation daily through dependence on the Lord and in oneness with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). If we want to be saved to the uttermost, we must come forward to God through Christ, and if we desire daily salvation, we must work out, carry out, bring to completion, the salvation we received at the time we believed in the Lord Jesus. There is no excuse for failing to work out our salvation in this way, for God does not expect that we can do this in ourselves. Therefore, Paul tells us, “It is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.” We may be passive or unwilling, but God works in us the willing; we may find ourselves totally unable to work out what we will, but God operates in us the working as well as the willing. The willing is inward, and the working is outward; both depend on the operating Triune God. Our working out

plus God’s operation results in daily salvation in the midst of our circumstances, whatever they may be.

Salvation of the Body

Because the full salvation of the Triune God involves our tripartite being—spirit and soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23)—the New Testament speaks also of the salvation of the body. Romans 8:24 and 13:11 refer to the salvation of our body. After speaking of “the redemption of our body” in 8:23, Paul tells us that “we were saved in hope” (v. 24). According to the context, *saved* refers to the salvation, the redemption, of our body. Romans 13:11 says, “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Here salvation cannot denote eternal salvation, which we received when we believed in the Lord and already possess. Rather, the salvation that is nearer now than when we believed is the salvation of the body. In Philippians 3:21 Paul goes on to say the Christ “will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself.”

If we want to be saved to the uttermost, we must come forward to God through Christ, and if we desire daily salvation, we must work out, bring to completion, the salvation we received when we believed in the Lord Jesus.

The transfiguration of our body is the ultimate consummation of God’s salvation. In His salvation God first regenerated our spirit (John 3:6), now is transforming our soul (Rom. 12:2), and consummately will transfigure our body, making us the same as Christ in all three parts of our being. (Lee, Recovery Version, Phil. 3:21, note 1)

Salvation of the Soul

Often when Christians speak of saving souls, they are referring to helping other human beings (souls) to receive eternal salvation through faith in the Son of God. However, the New Testament teaching concerning the salvation of the soul, or the gaining of the soul, conveys a very different thought. For example, 1 Peter 1:9 says, “Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” As Watchmen Nee makes clear in his ministry on this subject (see pp. 54-68 in this issue of *Affirmation & Critique*), the salvation of the soul is the salvation of the soul from suffering during the age of the kingdom after the Lord Jesus returns to earth in glory. During their sojourn on earth, faithful believers suffer in their souls for

the Lord's sake and even lose their soul-life, but when the Lord returns, their souls will no longer suffer and instead will be saved from suffering and share in the joy of the Lord.

At the Lord's revelation, through His judgment seat, some believers will enter into the joy of the Lord (Matt. 25:21, 23; 24:45-46) and some will suffer in weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:30; 24:51). To enter into the Lord's joy is the salvation of our souls. (Lee, Recovery Version, 1 Pet. 1:9, note 2)

This is confirmed by Hebrews 10:39: "We are not of those who shrink back to ruin but of those who have faith to the gaining of the soul." The gaining of the soul here equals the salvation of the soul in 1 Peter 1:9:

Concerning the saving, or gaining, of our soul, it depends on how we deal with our soul in following the Lord after we are saved and regenerated. If we lose our soul now for the Lord's sake, we will save it (Matt. 16:25, Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25; 1 Pet. 1:9), and it will be saved, or gained, at the Lord's coming back (v. 37). This gaining of

Will our life in this age contribute to the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose and lead to a reward in the manifestation of the kingdom? If this is our desire and longing, we will need "much more" to be saved in the divine life.

the soul will be the reward (v. 35) of the kingdom to the overcoming followers of the Lord (Matt. 16:22-28). (Lee, Recovery Version, Heb. 10:39, note 3)

Growing unto Salvation

"As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2). Since *salvation* here cannot denote eternal salvation, what does it denote? The answer is found in verses 4 and 5: "Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected by men but with God chosen and precious, you yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Christ Himself is a stone for God's building, and in Christ the believers also are stones to be built up as God's dwelling place. We know from Ephesians 2:21-22 and 4:16 that God's dwelling place, His temple (which is the Body of Christ), is built up by the growth of the divine life, that is, by the increase of God within the believers (Col. 2:19). A vital aspect of God's organic salvation is transformation for God's

building, His corporate expression. In 1 Peter 2:2 and 4 through 5 growth is unto salvation, and "unto salvation" here is intrinsically related to God's building. The goal of God's eternal purpose is His dwelling place, and the ultimate goal of God's salvation is also His dwelling place. To experience organic salvation, to be saved to be uttermost, and to work out our salvation all issue in the building up of God's eternal dwelling place, the New Jerusalem. The following footnote by Witness Lee on verse 2 in the Recovery Version is worthy of study:

Growth in life results in salvation. Salvation here, as the result of growth in life, is not initial salvation. God's full and complete salvation has a long span—from regeneration, including justification, to glorification (Rom. 8:30). At regeneration we receive initial salvation...Then we need to grow by feeding on Christ as the nourishing milk in the word of God, unto full salvation, unto maturity for glorification. This will be the salvation of our soul, which will be revealed to us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus...However, according to the context, *unto salvation* here refers directly to *being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood*. (Note 5)

After receiving eternal salvation with justification, forgiveness, cleansing, reconciliation, and regeneration, the believers in Christ should press on according to divine revelation in the New Testament regarding God's complete salvation. It is wonderful to have the assurance that, in the Son, we have received eternal salvation and will be with the Triune God in glory for eternity. But what about our life as Christians here on earth? Will our life in this age contribute to the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose and lead to a reward in the manifestation of the kingdom? If this is our desire and longing, then we will need "much more" to be saved in the divine life, to be fully reconciled to God, to be saved to the uttermost through the intercession of our High Priest, to work out our own salvation day by day, and to grow unto salvation for God's building, His eternal, glorious corporate expression—the New Jerusalem. God's full and complete salvation has many aspects, and we need every one of them, both for our spiritual maturation and for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. If we want our life and service as believers in Christ and as children of God to be pleasing to the Lord and contribute to the carrying out of the divine economy to build up the Body of Christ, to prepare the bride, and to bring in the kingdom of God in manifestation, we need to be saved in God's life, saved to the uttermost. **LFC**

Works Cited

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