

God as Savior and Salvation in the New Testament

In the New Testament, God is revealed as our Savior in the person of Jesus Christ, who became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection. He is not only our Savior but also our salvation. Based on His judicial redemption, God's full salvation in its organic aspect, which is focused on God's life, is carried out in three stages, affects our tripartite being (our spirit, soul, and body),¹ and occurs in three time frames (the past, present, and future). Salvation comprises an initial stage in the past, in which our spirit was regenerated; an ongoing, progressing stage in the present, in which our soul is transformed, renewed, and sanctified dispositionally; and a consummate stage, in which our body will be transfigured, conformed to the body of His glory, and glorified.

In this article we will look at the meaning and use of the Greek words for *salvation* and *deliverance*. Then we will consider God as our Savior, His titles, and His process to become the source of and direct agent of our salvation. Finally, we will look at the three stages of salvation in terms of our experience, including the order of salvation that brings our tripartite being into God's full salvation.

Words Denoting Salvation

There are two main roots in the New Testament denoting salvation or deliverance. The first and most common is the root of the verb σώζω ("to save, to deliver"), which comes from σως (σάος "safe," "sound," and "free from harm") with a causative ending -ίζω and means, literally, "cause to be safe and sound." It occurs one hundred and six times in the New Testament. It has two main senses, a predominantly physical sense and a spiritual sense. The physical sense continues the Old Testament sense of salvation (occurring in the New Testament more than thirty-three times, mainly in the Gospels and Acts) and mostly indicates either to heal from sickness, to restore to health (Matt. 9:21-22; Acts 4:9), or to save from danger of destruction, even from death (Matt. 8:25; Acts 27:20, 31). Sometimes the verb *save* is used with ψυχή to indicate the saving of life (i.e., the faculties of the soul embodied in and including the body, Mark 3:4) or saving out of death (e.g., by resurrecting Jesus, Heb. 5:7).

The spiritual sense of the verb σώζω indicates saving from God's condemnation, wrath, and eternal judgment (Rom.

5:9), enlivening the believers who are dead in offenses and sins (Eph. 2:5, 8), and saving them from perishing so that they might have eternal life (John 3:16-17). The believers are also saved from more intrinsic problems, such as sin, Satan, the world, and the self, into Christ's Body in the present age and into His eternal kingdom and glory in the future.

The noun σωτήρ ("Savior," "Deliverer," "Preserver") indicates the agent of salvation and occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament. Only God and the Lord Jesus Christ are indicated in the New Testament as the Savior.

There are two abstract words indicating the action of salvation—the noun σωτηρία ("salvation," "safety," "deliverance," "preservation") and the adjective σωτήριος ("saving," "bringing salvation," e.g., Titus 2:11). The noun σωτηρία occurs forty-six times in the New Testament (one hundred six times in the Old Testament). The adjective σωτήριος occurs only five times in the New Testament (thirty-seven times in the Old Testament), including four times as a neuter substantive τό σωτήριον (as quotes of or illusions to the Greek Old Testament (Luke 2:30; 3:6; Acts 28:28; Eph. 6:17)). The -ι- infix in the words σωτηρία and σωτήριος forms an abstract noun of quality, indicating salvation, deliverance, or the means to obtain safety.

The first occurrences of the noun σωτηρία occur in the speech of Zachariah and has an Old Testament physical sense of salvation from enemies (Luke 1:71; cf. Psalms 106:10) as well as a spiritual sense of salvation by the forgiveness of sins (Luke 1:77; cf. Psalm 79:9), which becomes a more common notion in the New Testament (Matt. 1:21; Acts 5:31).

In the New Testament, God and our Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior not only accomplish salvation for the believers but even are the salvation of the believers. Salvation is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ, who fulfills the meaning of His name Jesus—"salvation of Jehovah" or "Jehovah Savior" (Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:9).²

Another root/verb that indicates salvation or deliverance is δέομαι ("deliver"), which occurs seventeen times in the New Testament. God is the agent of the action of the verb

ῥύομαι. It has both a physical sense and a spiritual sense. We are delivered from the hand of our enemies (Luke 1:74), from the disobedient (Rom. 15:31), from unreasonable and evil men (2 Thes. 3:2), from persecutions (2 Tim. 3:11), from trial (2 Pet. 2:9), and from every evil work (2 Tim. 4:18). We pray for deliverance from the evil one, the devil who is the source of evil, from the evil that is out of him (Matt. 6:13), and from death, including the body of this death (Rom. 7:24), which is “weak in acting to please God. Sin energizes the fallen body to sin, whereas death utterly weakens and disables the corrupted body, so that it cannot keep God’s commandments” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 24, note 2). God has delivered us out of so great a death (2 Cor. 1:10) and out of the authority of darkness, the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:26), and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13). We await God’s Son from the heavens, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath which is coming, the wrath of the coming judgment of God (1 Thes. 1:10; Rom. 2:5-6, 8-9).

God as Our Savior

The Triune God as our Savior went through the process of incarnation, human living, and death on the cross to become our Redeemer in order to solve our problems with God judicially, and in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit to be our pneumatic Savior, compounded with the elements of Christ’s process to save us intrinsically and organically.

In the New Testament the word σωτήρ (“savior”) always refers to God; a number of names or designations are used in conjunction with the word *Savior*: *God*, *Jesus*, *Jesus Christ*, *Christ*, and *Christ Jesus*. These names or designations indicate that God has gone through a process to become our Savior.

God is indicated as our Savior eight times. Mary’s spirit exulted in God her Savior prior to the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:47). Our Savior God desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3-4). He is the living God, the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe (4:10). The kindness and the love to man of our Savior God appeared in order to save us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:4-5). According to the command of God our Savior, Paul was an apostle (1 Tim. 1:1), and according to the command of our Savior God, he was entrusted with the proclamation of the word (Titus 1:3). Slaves should adorn the teaching of our Savior God (2:10). Jude concludes his Epistle with a doxology: “To the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, might, and authority before all time and now and unto all eternity” (v. 25). The designation *God our Savior* emphasizes God as the source of salvation.

The incarnated God-man is named Jesus because He will save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Jesus was brought by God to be the Savior of Israel (Acts 13:23), and He was exalted by God “to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (5:31). The name Jesus emphasizes His humanity, His suffering, His living, and His death.

Jesus Christ is referred to as our Savior seven times. Through Jesus Christ our Savior, God poured out the Holy Spirit upon us richly (Titus 3:5-6). Twice the expression *our God and Savior, Jesus Christ* is used, proving that Jesus Christ is God³: the believers have been allotted equally precious faith in the righteousness our God and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:1); and the believers are awaiting the blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). Four times Jesus Christ is designated our Lord and Savior, emphasizing His humanity, anointing, and lordship: We escape the defilements of the world by the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 2:20); we need to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (3:18); by adding virtues to our faith, an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly and bountifully supplied to us (1:11); and we eagerly await a Savior from the heavens, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20). The name Jesus Christ indicates that the man Jesus is anointed by God to carry out His commission.

At Jesus’ birth an angel stated, “A Savior has been born... Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). Christ is the Savior of the world (John 4:42, 29), and Christ is the Head of the church and the Savior of the Body (Eph. 5:23). The title *Christ* emphasizes the anointing of the man Jesus by God to be the Messiah, the anointed One, both at His baptism (Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38) and in His resurrection (2:36).

Christ Jesus our Savior “nullified death and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). In Paul’s letter to Titus he greets him with grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior (1:4). The expression *Christ Jesus* emphasizes the God-anointed Christ who is also the man Jesus.

According to these designations, God has gone through a process to become our Savior. He was incarnated to be a man in the person of Jesus, who suffered and died on the cross, nullifying death, to accomplish a judicial redemption on our behalf and to bring us back to God. In resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit, bringing His incorruptible life to us. The man Jesus was also anointed by God as the Messiah or Christ, and was made Lord to carry out God’s commission in order to save humanity from its fallen condition and accomplish God’s purpose of building up the church as the Body of Christ. The Lord

Jesus Christ, our God and Savior, is the Savior of Israel (Acts 13:23), of the world (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14), of all men—especially of those who believe (1 Tim. 4:10)—and of the church as the Body (Eph. 5:23).

In our experience of God our Savior, we receive repentance and forgiveness of sins, the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the allotment of faith, and we can grow in grace and knowledge, adding various virtues to our faith in order that an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior may be richly and bountifully supplied to us as we await the blessed hope of the coming of our great God and Savior. To the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, might, and authority before all time and now and unto all eternity!

Jesus is not only the Savior but also the salvation that comes to the believers. When He came to Zaccheus's house, salvation came to his house (Luke 19:9). There is salvation in no other name under heaven given among men in which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Confession with our mouth that Jesus is Lord results in salvation (Rom. 10:9-10). Christ is the way of the salvation that is announced (Acts 16:17; John 14:6). Christ, as God's Servant, was set as a light of the Gentiles, for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth (Isa. 49:6; Acts 13:47).⁴ Christ was initially sent by God to the Jews (John 4:22). However, due to their rejection of Him, their misstep, salvation has come to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11). He is the Author of salvation (Gk. ἀρχηγός, meaning "leading ἄγω (from) the beginning ἀρχή"), who is leading many sons from the initial stage of salvation all the way into glory, the consummate stage of salvation (Heb. 2:10).

In addition to its direct references to God as our salvation, the Bible also connects salvation to the grace of God, the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and the inner operating God. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, training us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in the present age (Titus 2:11-12). The grace of God is God in Christ for our enjoyment (John 1:17).

The eternal grace of God, the saving grace, was destined in Christ to bring to us God's salvation, the complete salvation that comprises forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, redemption, regeneration, sanctification, transformation, and conformation; to redeem us back to God; to impart God's life to us; and to bring us into an organic

union with God for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Titus 2:11, note 3)

First Peter 1:10 also indicates that *grace* is a synonym for *salvation*: "Concerning this salvation the prophets, who prophesied concerning the grace that was to come unto you, sought and searched diligently."

The bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the inner operating God (Phil. 1:19; 2:12-13) are two particular provisions in the progressing stage of our salvation. *The bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ* is a particular phrase that occurs only once in the New Testament. The Greek noun ἐπιχορηγία ("bountiful supply," which Paul may have coined) refers to the supply rendered for all the needs of a chorus by the leader of the chorus (χορηγός); hence, it is a bountiful supply. The bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ refers to the all-inclusive Spirit compounded with the Lord's suffering humanity, indicated by the name Jesus, and His resurrection, indicated by the name Christ, which enabled Paul to live and magnify Christ in his sufferings for Him.

In his suffering the apostle experienced both the Lord's suffering in His humanity and the Lord's resurrection. Hence, the Spirit to him was the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the compound, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit of the Triune God. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, 1:19, note 4)

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The indwelling, compound Spirit of Jesus Christ is actually the inner operating God in Philippians 2:13, who is operating in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure and thus enabling us to work out our salvation, the salvation that has already been brought into us.

The Stages of Salvation

Salvation consists of three stages, including an initial stage, a progressing or ongoing stage, and a completing or consummate stage. The three stages of salvation affect our tripartite being. They occur in the past, present, and future; this is indicated by the Greek tenses of the verb σώζω. The aorist and perfect tense may indicate the initial stage of salvation; the present indicative and participle, the progressing stage of salvation; and the future tense, the consummate stage of salvation a number of times.

General Salvation

Salvation may refer to a general or full salvation; for example, Jesus saves us from our sins (Matt. 1:21). The Son of

Man “has come to seek and to save that which is lost” with *lost* being a perfect participle meaning “in a state of being lost, or perishing” (Luke 19:10; John 3:17; 1 Tim. 1:15). Our Savior God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth” (2:4). God’s general salvation is a common salvation, that is, a salvation “common to and held by all believers like, the common faith (Titus 1:4),” which is “the things we believe in” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Jude 3, notes 1 and 3).

God’s full salvation, from the forgiveness of sins to having a share in the coming kingdom with glory, is so great a salvation that it should not be neglected (Heb. 2:3). It is the salvation mentioned in 1:14, a salvation that the believers inherit. Christ’s “wonderful person plus His splendid work constitute so great a salvation, a salvation that none of us should neglect” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, 2:3, note 2).

The Initial Stage of Salvation

The initial stage of salvation includes judicial redemption. Witness Lee states,

The initial stage, the stage of regeneration, is composed of redemption, sanctification (positional—1:2; 1 Cor. 6:11), justification, reconciliation, and regeneration...

God...has regenerated us in our spirit with His life by His Spirit (John 3:3-6). Thus, we have received God’s eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9) and His eternal life (John 3:15), and we have become His children (John 1:12-13), who shall not perish forever (John 10:28-29). (*Life-study* 57)

Our initial salvation comes firstly because God chose us from the beginning from eternity past (Eph. 1:4) unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth unto the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thes. 2:13-14). “By the Spirit’s sanctification God’s salvation is revealed and brought to us; by our believing we receive all that is revealed and brought to us by the Spirit, so that we obtain God’s salvation” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 13, note 4).

Our initial salvation comes to us through the preaching of the gospel, and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Through hearing the word of the truth, the gospel of our salvation, and believing in Christ, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise (Eph. 1:13). The sacred writings are able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15); this is the case for both our initial salvation and our ongoing salvation.

The Word tells us how to experience eternal salvation. One example is: “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16; cf. 1 Pet. 3:21).

To believe...is to receive the Slave-Savior (John 1:12) not only for forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43) but also for regeneration (1 Pet. 1:21, 23). Those who thus believe become the children of God (John 1:12-13) and the members of Christ (Eph. 5:30) in an organic union with the Triune God (Matt. 28:19). To be baptized is to affirm this by being buried to terminate the old creation through the death of the Slave-Savior and by being raised up to be the new creation of God through the Slave-Savior’s resurrection...To believe and to be so baptized are two parts of one complete step for receiving the full salvation of God. To be baptized without believing is merely an empty ritual; to believe without being baptized is to be saved only inwardly without an outward affirmation of the inward salvation. These two should go together. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Mark 16:16, note 1)

Other examples are: “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9) and “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (v. 13). The same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him (v. 12). The confession that Jesus is Lord and calling upon the name of the Lord imply that Jesus is Jehovah (v. 13; cf. Joel 2:32). Calling on the Lord enables the caller to contact Him and receive Him both as the Savior and as salvation, and it also causes the caller to enjoy the riches of God in His salvation as Jehovah, the I Am, the self-existing and ever-existing One, and the reality of the verb *to be*; whatever we need, He is.

Initial salvation saves us from God’s condemnation and from eternal perdition (John 3:18, 16) and comes as a result of the forgiveness of sins (Luke 1:77; Matt. 1:21; Acts 5:31; cf. Ps. 79:9). The perfect tense of the verb $\sigma\acute{\omega}\zeta\omega$ is used to indicate the initial experience of salvation but with a resultant state; that is, we have been saved, and we are in the state of being saved (Eph. 2:5, 8). The aorist tense is also used: “We were saved in hope” (Rom. 8:24), and “According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit are two matters that are carried out in the initial experience of salvation.

The Progressing Stage of Salvation

The second stage of God’s full salvation, the progressing stage,

is the stage of transformation...God is freeing us from the dominion [or power] of indwelling sin—the law of sin and death—by the law of the Spirit of life through the effectiveness of the death of Christ working subjectively in us (Rom. 6:6-7; 7:16-20; 8:2)...God is also sanctifying us by His Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16), with His holy nature,

through His discipline (Heb. 12:10) and His judgment in His own house (1 Pet. 4:17)...

God is also causing us to grow in His life (1 Cor. 3:6-7). He is transforming us by renewing the inward parts of our soul by the life-giving Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6, 17-18; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23) through the working of all things (Rom. 8:28). He is building us together into a spiritual house for His dwelling (1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:22), and He is maturing us in His life (Rev. 14:15) for the completion of His full salvation. (Lee, *Life-study* 58-59)

The progressing stage of salvation is accomplished in the life of God; hence, it involves an organic salvation, which is related to life, as opposed to the judicial redemption and reconciliation accomplished by the Lord's death on the cross. This is clearly indicated by Romans 5:10: "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." Here we also see that salvation is carried out by the divine life and that we need to grow and mature in the divine life. In the progressing stage of salvation we are also being delivered from the world, the flesh, the self, the soul-life (the natural life), and individualism.

The present tense of the verb $\sigma\omega\zeta\omega$ also indicates ongoing salvation. Three times $\sigma\omega\zeta\omega$ occurs as a present attributive participle—"those who are being saved" (1 Cor. 1:18; Acts 2:47; 2 Cor. 2:15)—with one of these times as a contrast to "those who are perishing" (v. 15), the condition of those who are spiritually dead in offenses as a result of the fall. A present indicative is also used to indicate ongoing salvation. Through the word of Paul's gospel the believers are being saved (1 Cor. 15:2). The righteous man is saved only with difficulty (1 Pet. 4:18). This refers to the believer being saved by being "disciplined by God through the suffering of persecution that his life may be purified...from the destruction by God's wrath toward the world" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 18, note 2).

The Lord is "able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them" (Heb. 7:25), indicating that He can bring our ongoing salvation to its consummation.

Two particular aspects of the progressing stage of salvation are the constant daily salvation and the salvation of the soul. In Philippians the noun *salvation* occurs twice to indicate constant ongoing salvation. The first occurrence in 1:19 refers to salvation in a particular situation; the

second occurrence in 2:12 refers to salvation from ordinary things in common situations in our daily living. Paul knew that his imprisonment would turn out to his salvation through the petition of the believers and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Through the petitioning of the believers and the bountiful supply of the compound Spirit of Jesus Christ, Paul would not be put to shame in his difficult circumstances, but could magnify Christ and live Him (1:19-21).

In Philippians 2:12-13 Paul instructs the Philippians to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, since God is operating in them both the willing and the working for His good pleasure. This salvation, carried out by the believers' cooperation with the inner operating God, enables them to do all things without murmurings and reasonings (v. 14) and to shine as luminaries in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, holding forth the word of life (v. 15). Witness Lee states,

We have received God's salvation, which has as its climax our being exalted by God in glory as the Lord Jesus was (v. 9). We need to carry out this salvation, to bring it to its ultimate conclusion, by our constant and absolute obedience with fear and trembling... To receive this salvation by faith is once for all; to carry it out is lifelong. (*Recovery Version*, v. 12, note 3)

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Through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ compounded with the elements of His divinity, humanity, death, and resurrection, and by the inner operating God, we are able to experience the salvation of our soul. The faculty in which the progressing stage of salvation mainly takes place is the soul. To understand the salvation of the soul, we need to distinguish between the faculties of the soul—consisting of the mind, emotion, and will—and the life of the soul, or the soul-life, which is equivalent to the self. When humanity fell, humanity became independent of God, allied with God's enemy, Satan; and the faculties of the soul, which were created in the image of God to express God, were occupied by the soul-life, or self, and expressed the self, even Satan (cf. Matt. 16:23).⁵

In the synoptic Gospels the Lord Jesus indicated that if anyone wants to come after Him (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23) or follow Him (Mark 8:34), he needs to deny himself, take up his cross (daily, Luke 9:23), and follow Him. These statements contain two contrasting indefinite relative clauses that use the verb $\sigma\omega\zeta\omega$. In the first clause the verb *save* is used in a rarer sense in that it has negative

consequences: “Whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it,” whereas in the second clause salvation has positive consequences: “Whoever loses his soul-life for My sake, this one shall save it.”⁶

We will consider the passage in Mark 8. What does the first clause in verse 35—*whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it*—mean? Verse 36 says, “What does it profit someone to gain the whole world, if they lose their soul-life [Gk. Ψυχή]?” These two verses connect saving the soul-life to gaining the whole world. It is also instructive to look at three other similar passages: John 12:25, Luke 17:33, and Matthew 10:39. In these three passages three different verbs or verb phrases are used. John 12:25 speaks of “him who loves [φιλέω, loves with natural affection] his soul-life”; Luke 17:33 says, “Whoever seeks to preserve [περιποιέομαι, lit., “make something for oneself (middle voice) from what is around”] his soul-life”; and Matthew 10:39 says, “He who finds [εὕρισκω, “discovers”] his soul-life shall lose [ἀπόλλυμι, “destroy”] it.”

To save our soul-life, or our self, means that we love it with our natural affection; we seek to gain from the world around us physical, material, or psychological (e.g., education) things in order to make something for ourselves, and we find, discover, and develop ourselves in these things. However, this kind of pursuit without God issues in the expression of the self and the destruction or loss of the proper function of the faculties of the soul, which were created to express God.

What then is the meaning of the loss or destruction of the soul-life for the Lord’s sake resulting in the saving of the soul in the second indefinite relative clause in Mark 8:35? The loss or destruction of the soul-life is tied to the previous verse, which speaks of denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following the Lord. In the parallel passage in Matthew 16, the saving of the soul in verse 25 is related to a reward, or repayment, at the coming of the Son of Man in the glory of His Father, mentioned two verses later, in verse 27. Receiving this reward is opposed to being ashamed at His coming mentioned in Mark 8:38 and Luke 9:26. It is also instructive to look at the three other similar passages with their three different verbs or verb phrases. In Matthew 10:39 he who “loses his soul-life” “shall find it” (εὕρισκω); in Luke 17:33 he will “preserve it alive” (ζωογονέω, lit., “beget” or “bring forth alive or in life”); and in John 12:25 he shall “keep [φυλάσσω, “guard”] it unto eternal life.”

The loss or destruction of our soul-life, our self, issues in our finding or discovering the proper function of the soul in our experience and enjoyment of expressing God. This is accomplished by receiving God as eternal life into our spirit and allowing the spreading, begetting, or the bringing forth of life into the faculties of our soul (cf. Rom.

8:6). This, in turn, issues in our keeping the faculties of our soul unto eternal life, that is, our soul being eternally kept and preserved by the imparted divine, resurrection life. This will be our reward at the coming of the Son of Man with the glory of His Father. We will express, or glorify, Him in the faculties of our soul in the same way that He expresses, or glorifies, the Father in His soul.

The experience of losing the soul-life is accomplished through the experience of the crucifixion of Christ, which is one of the elements in the compound Spirit of Jesus Christ. This experience is seen in Galatians 2:20. Paul says, “I [the old ‘I,’ the soul-life, the self, “our old man” in Romans 6:6] am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me [the faculties of the soul]; and the life which I [the new regenerated and transformed ‘I’] now live in the flesh I live in faith.” “The old, terminated ‘I’ was without divinity...The new ‘I’ came into being when the old ‘I’ was resurrected and God [as life] was added to it” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Gal. 2:20, note 2).⁷

One verse connects the salvation of the soul to the word of God. We need to “receive in meekness the implanted word [ἔμφυτον λογόν], which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). Similarly, “the guileless milk of the word” (λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα) is necessary for those who are like “newborn babes” to “grow unto salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2).

First Peter 1:9 speaks of “receiving the end [τέλος, “consummate goal”] of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

We are of three parts: spirit, soul, and body [1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12]. Our spirit was saved through regeneration (John 3:5-6). Our body will be saved, redeemed, through the coming transfiguration (Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8:23). Our soul will be saved from sufferings into the full enjoyment of the Lord at His revelation, His coming back. For this we must deny our soul, our soulish life, with all its pleasures in this age, that we may gain it in the enjoyment of the Lord in the coming age (Matt. 10:37-39; 16:24-27; Luke 17:30-33; John 12:25). 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 (Heb. 10:39 and note 3). This salvation is more precious than the salvation of the body, which the children of Israel expect to receive. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, 1 Pet. 1:9, note 2)

The believers are characterized as those who have faith to the gaining (περιποίησιν, “saving,” “preserving,” “possessing”) of the soul (Heb. 10:39). This gaining, or possessing, of the soul is the gaining of the proper function of the soul to enjoy, experience, and express God. “This gaining of

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).

The Consummate Stage of Salvation

The third stage of God’s full salvation, the completing stage, is the stage of consummation. This stage is composed of the redemption (transfiguration) of our body, conformity to the Lord, glorification, inheritance of God’s kingdom, participation in Christ’s kingship, and the topmost enjoyment of the Lord.

In the completing stage of salvation, God will redeem our fallen and corrupted body (Rom. 8:23) by transfiguring it into the body of Christ’s glory (Phil. 3:21). He will conform us to the glorious image of His firstborn Son (Rom. 8:29), making us holy and absolutely like Him in our regenerated spirit, transformed soul, and transfigured body. He will also glorify us (Rom. 8:30), immersing us in His glory (Heb. 2:10) that we may enter into His heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 4:18; 2 Pet. 1:11), into which He has called us (1 Thes. 2:12), and inherit it as the topmost portion of His blessing (James 2:5; Gal. 5:21), even to reign with Christ, to be His co-kings, participating in His kingship over the nations (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4, 6; 2:26-27; 12:5) and sharing His royal, kingly joy in His divine government (Matt. 25:21, 23).

Our body will be freed from the slavery of corruption of the old creation into the freedom of the glory of God’s new creation (Rom. 8:21), and our soul will be delivered out of the realm of trials and sufferings (1 Pet. 1:6; 4:12; 3:14; 5:9) into a new realm, full of glory (4:13; 5:10). In this new realm we shall share and enjoy all the Triune God is, has, and has accomplished, attained, and obtained. (Lee, *Life-study* 60)

The future tense of the verb σώζω sometimes refers to the consummate stage of salvation; for example, “He who has endured to the end, this one shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22; 24:13). Here, to be saved means to be saved into the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens, which will be a reward to the overcoming believers. “If anyone’s work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Cor. 3:15). *Loss* here refers to the loss of the reward in the kingdom age, and *saved* refers to the continuing assurance of having eternal salvation. Paul had the assurance that the Lord would deliver him from every evil work and would save him into His heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 4:18), which is a reward to the overcoming saints.

Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many at His first appearing, will appear a second time to those who eagerly await Him unto salvation (Heb. 9:28), which is

the redemption of our body and deliverance from the vanity and slavery of corruption of the old creation into the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:18-23; Phil. 3:20-21). This is to be glorified (Rom. 8:17, 30). (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Heb. 9:28, note 2)

Paul endured “all things for the sake of the chosen ones, that they themselves also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10). Eternal glory is the ultimate goal of God’s salvation (Rom. 8:21).

In the book of Revelation we see the consummation of God’s salvation at the end of the age. The great multitude of redeemed overcomers who are raptured to the throne before the great tribulation “cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb,” indicating their gratitude for God’s salvation (7:10). The rapture of the man-child and the casting down of Satan to the earth also bring a declaration from a loud voice in heaven, which says,

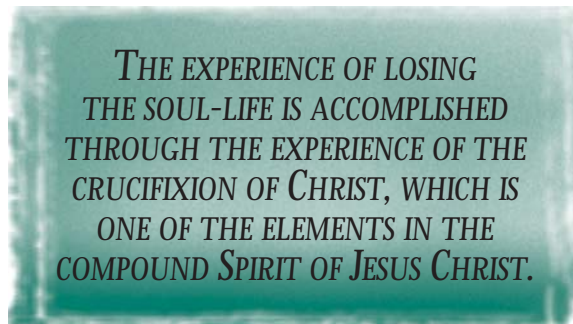
Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of is Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before

our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death. (12:10-11)

This salvation refers to the time of the manifestation of the kingdom, when “the salvation of God will come in full with the kingdom. God’s salvation has already been manifested to us today, but it will come in full in the kingdom age” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 10, note 1). Finally, there is 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) at the time of the destruction of the material and religious Babylon. This salvation is part of God’s clearing up of the universe through the execution of His judgment on all negative things at the end of the age.

The Order of Salvation

Within the three stages of God’s full salvation there are a number of steps referred to by the Latin phrase *ordo salutis*, or the order of salvation. What each of these steps is called varies among different Christian traditions. The



initial stage is mostly emphasized, beginning with predestination (Calvin) and calling (Luther), but it also includes regeneration along with repentance. Most traditions refer to the progressing stage of salvation as sanctification and/or perseverance (Calvin), or sanctification and/or conservation (Luther). The final stage is glorification (Calvin), divinization (Catholic), or Christian perfection (Wesley).

However, a richer, more complete view of God's full salvation includes redemption as the basis of organic salvation and regeneration as the first step of the organic aspect of God's salvation. The second stage includes renewing, dispositional sanctification, and transformation, and the final stage includes conformation and glorification. In future installments we will explore the Greek words used for these notions from the viewpoint of God's economy.

Conclusion

The processed Triune God is our Savior and our salvation from many negative things, bringing us many positive things in both physical and spiritual senses. He is the Savior not just of Israel but of all men, especially the believers for the Body of Christ. He saves us through His being the pneumatic Christ who ministers to us the bountiful supply of the compound Spirit of Jesus Christ in our experience of His salvation in three stages. These three stages are related to our tripartite being. The initial stage regenerates our spirit, the progressing stage transforms our soul, and the consummate stage transfigures our body, conforming it to the body of His glory. These stages contain at least six steps in the order of salvation to consummate God's full salvation. Glory be to Him!

by Roger Good

Notes

¹See Chitwood, who also connects "the tripartite nature of man" ("spirit, soul, and body") with "the salvation of man within its complete scope (past, present, and future)" (6). Perhaps the progressive stage of salvation has been neglected by many Christians because of their lack of distinguishing the spirit from the soul.

²The name Jesus (Gk. Ἰησοῦς) is the Greek equivalent of *Yeshua*, the short form of Joshua, or *Yehoshua* ("the salvation of Jehovah"). See "Glossa" in the previous issue of *Affirmation & Critique*.

³Sharp's rule states,

When the copulative και connects two nouns of the same case, ...if the article ὁ, or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns...and is not repeated before the second noun..., the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun...: i.e. it

denotes a farther description of the first-named person. (qtd. in Wallace 606)

For example, in τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Titus 2:13) there is one article, τοῦ, before the expression *our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*, indicating that Jesus Christ is both the great God and the Savior.

⁴In note 1 on Acts 13:47 in the *Recovery Version*, Witness Lee states,

The apostle Paul applied this prophetic word [a quotation from Isa. 49:6] to himself in his ministry of gospel preaching for the turning of the gospel from the Jews, because of their rejection, to the Gentiles. In His ministry on earth the Lord expressed the same thing to the stubborn Jews in Luke 4:24-27.

⁵In his comments on Matthew 10:39 Henry Alford recognizes a difference between two kinds of ψυχή. "The *first* ψυχή is the *life of this world*, which we here all count so dear to us; the *second*, implied in αὐτήν, the *real life of man* in a blessed eternity" (111). Denying oneself is "the crucifying of the life of this world—the death to sin spoken of [in] Rom. vi. 4—11, and life unto God. And this life unto God is the real, true ψυχή αὐτοῦ, which the self-denier shall find, and preserve unto life eternal" (111).

⁶At the scene of the Lord's crucifixion, there was a certain irony at play related to the negative and positive notions of salvation. Jesus was mocked with a call for Him to save Himself by coming down from the cross. Had He done this, it would have prevented Him from dying as our Savior. However, it was by means of His death on the cross that salvation came to humanity (Luke 23:35, 37, 39).

⁷The experience of losing the soul-life and its enjoyment of things around it can be compared to Paul's experience in Philipians 3:7-9. What things were gains to Paul, he counted as loss (ζημίαν) on account of Christ. Moreover, he also counted all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord that he might gain Christ (in the faculties of his soul, cf. Eph. 3:16) and be found in Him (with the faculties of his soul abiding, or remaining, in Him, cf. John 15:4).

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