

What It Is To Be Saved

By John Bunyan

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This question supposes that there is such a thing as damnation due to man for sin; for to save supposes the person to be saved to be at present in a sad condition; saving, to him that is not lost, signifies nothing, neither is it anything in itself. "To save, to redeem, to deliver," are in the general terms equivalent, and they do all of them suppose us to be in a state of thralldom and misery; therefore this word "saved," in the sense that the apostle here uses it, is a word of great worth, forasmuch as the miseries from which we are saved is the misery of all most dreadful.

The miseries, from which they that shall be saved shall by their salvation be delivered, are dreadful; they are no less than sin, the curse of God, and flames of Hell for ever. What more abominable than sin? What more insupportable than the dreadful wrath of an angry God? And what more fearful than the bottomless pit of Hell? I say, what more fearful than to be tormented there for ever with the devil and his angels? Now, to "save," according to my text, is to deliver the sinner from these, with all things else that attend them. And although sinners may think that it is no hard matter to answer this question, yet I must tell you there is no man, that can feelingly know what it is to be saved, that knows not experimentally something of the dread of these three things, as is evident, because all others do even by their practice count it a thing of no great concern, when yet it is of all other of the highest concern among men: "**For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?**" (Matt. 16:26).

But, I say, if this word "saved" concludes our deliverance from sin, how can he tell what it is to be saved that has not in his conscience groaned under the burden of sin? Yea, it is impossible else that he should ever cry out with all his heart, "**Men and brethren, what shall we do?**"---that is, do to be saved (Acts 2:37). The man that has no sores or aches cannot know the virtue of the salve; I mean, not know it from his own experience, and therefore cannot prize, nor have that esteem of it, as he that has received cure thereby. Clap a plaster to a well place, and that makes not its virtue to appear; neither can he to whose flesh it is so applied, by that application understand its worth. Sinners, you, I mean, that are not wounded with guilt, and oppressed with the burden of sin, you cannot--I will say it again---you cannot know, in this senseless condition of yours, what it is to be saved.

Again, this word "saved," as I said, concludes deliverance from the wrath of God. How, then, can he tell what it is to be saved that has not felt the burden of the wrath of God? He---he that is astonished with, and that trembles at the wrath of God---he knows best what it is to be saved (Acts 16:29).

Further, this word "saved," it concludes deliverance from death and Hell. How, then, can he tell what it is to be saved that never was sensible of the sorrows of the one, nor distressed with the pains of the other? The Psalmist says: **"The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD"**---(mark, then,) **"then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul,"**---then, in my distress. When he knew what it was to be saved, then he called, because, I say, then he knew what it was to be saved (Ps. 18:4-5; 116:3-4). I say, this is the man, and this only, that knows what it is to be saved. And this is evident, as is manifest by the little regard that the rest have to saving, or the little dread they have of damnation. Where is he that seeks and seeks and groans for salvation? I say, where is he that has taken his flight for salvation, because of the dread of the wrath to come? **"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"** (Matt. 3:7). Alas! do not the most set light by salvation?--- -as for sin, how do they love it, embrace it, please themselves with it, hide it still within their mouth, and keep it close under their tongue. Besides, for the wrath of God, they feel it not, they fly not from it; and for Hell, it is become a doubt to many if there by any, and a mock to those whose doubt is resolved by atheism.

But to come to the question---*What is it to be saved?* To be saved may either respect salvation in the whole of it, or salvation in the parts of it, or both. I think this text respects both---to wit, salvation completing, and salvation completed; for "to save" is a work of many steps; or, to be as plain as possible, "to save" is a work that has its beginning before the world began, and shall not be completed before it is ended.

First, then, we may be said to be saved in the purpose of God before the world began. The apostle said that he **"saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"** (II Tim. 1:9). This is the beginning of salvation, and according to this beginning all things concur and fall out in conclusion--- **"He hath saved us according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus."** God in thus saving may be said to save us by determining to make those means effectual for the blessed completing of our salvation; and hence we are said "to be chosen in Christ to salvation." And again, that He has in that choice given us that grace that shall complete our salvation. Yea, the text is very full, he **"hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world"** (Eph. 1:3-4).

Second. As we may be said to be saved in the purpose of God before the foundation of the world, so we may be said to be saved before we are converted, or called to Christ. And hence "saved" is put before "called;" **"he hath saved us, and called us;"** He says not, "He has called us, and saved us;" but He puts saving before calling (II Tim. 1:9). So again, we are said to be **"preserved in Jesus Christ and called,"** He says not, called and preserved (Jude 1). And therefore God says again: "I will pardon them whom

I reserve"---that is, as Paul expounds it, those whom I have "elected and kept," and this part of salvation is accomplished through the forbearance of God (Rom. 11:4-5). God bears with His own elect, for Christ's sake, all the time of their unregeneracy, until the time comes which He has appointed for their conversion. The sins that we stood guilty of before conversion, had the judgment due to them been executed upon us, we had not now been in the world to partake of a heavenly calling. But the judgment due to them has been by the patience of God prevented, and we are saved all the time of our ungodly and unconverted state, from that death, and those many hells, that for our sins we deserved at the hands of God.

And here lies the reason that long life is granted to the elect before conversion, and that all the sins they commit and all the judgments they deserve, cannot drive them out of the world before conversion. Manasseh, you know, was a great sinner, and for the trespass which he committed he was driven from his own land, and carried to Babylon; but kill him they could not, though his sins had deserved death ten thousand times. But what was the reason? Why, he was not yet called; God had chosen him in Christ, and laid up in him a stock of grace, which must be given to Manasseh before he dies; therefore Manasseh must be convinced, converted, and saved. That legion of devils that was in the possessed, with all the sins which he had committed in the time of his unregeneracy, could not take away his life before his conversion (Mark 5). How many times was that poor creature, as we may easily conjecture, assaulted for his life by the devils that were in him, yet could they not kill him, yea, though his dwelling was near the sea-side, and the devils had power to drive him too, yet could they not drive him further than the mountains that were by the sea-side; yea, they could help him often to break his chains and fetters, and could also make him as mad as a bedlam, they could also prevail with him to separate from men, and cut himself with stones, but kill him they could not, drown him they could not; he was saved to be called; he was, notwithstanding all this, preserved in Christ, and called. As it is said of the young lad in the gospel, he was by the devil cast oft into the fire, and oft into the water, to destroy him, but it could not be; even so has he served others, but they must be "saved to be called" (Mark 9:22). How many deaths have some been delivered from and saved out of before conversion! Some have fallen into rivers, some into wells, some into the sea, some into the hands of men; yea, they have been justly arraigned and condemned, as the thief upon the cross, but must not die before they have been converted. They were preserved in Christ, and called.

Called Christian, how many times have thy sins laid thee upon a sickbed, and, to thine and others' thinking, at the very mouth of the grave? yet God said concerning thee, Let him live, for he is not yet converted. Behold, therefore, that the elect are saved before they are called. "**God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins,**" hath preserved us in Christ, and called us (Eph. 2:4-5).

Now this "saving" of us arises from six causes:

1. God has chosen us unto salvation, and therefore will not frustrate His own purpose (1 Thess. 5:9).

2. God has given us to Christ: and His gift, as well as His calling, is without repentance (Rom. 11:29; John 6:37).

3. Christ has purchased us with His blood (Rom. 5:8-9).

4. They are by God, counted in Christ before they are converted (Eph. 1:3-4).

5. They are ordained before conversion to eternal life; yea, to be called, to be justified, to be glorified, and therefore all this must come upon them (Rom. 8:29-30).

6. For all this, He has also appointed them their portion and measure of grace, and that before the world began; therefore, that they may partake of all these privileges, they are saved and called, preserved in Christ, and called.

Third. To be saved is to be brought to, and helped to lay hold on, Jesus Christ by faith. And this is called saving by grace through faith. **""For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God""** (Eph. 2:8).

1. They must be brought unto Christ, yea, drawn unto Him; for **""No man,""** says Christ, **""can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him""** (John 6:44). Men, even the elect, have too many infirmities to come to Christ without help from Heaven; inviting will not do. **""As they called them, so they went from them,""** therefore He **""drew them with cords""** (Hosea 11:2,4).

2. As they must be brought to, so they must be helped to lay hold on Christ by faith; for as coming to Christ, so faith, is not in our own power; therefore we are said to be raised up with Him **""through the faith of the operation of God.""** And again, we are said to believe, **""according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead""** (Col. 2:12; Eph. 1:19-20). Now we are said to be saved by faith, because by faith we lay hold of, venture upon, and put on Jesus Christ for life. For life, I say, because God having made Him the Saviour, has given Him life to communicate to sinners, and the life that He communicates to them is the merit of his flesh and blood, which whoso eats and drinks by faith, has eternal life, because that flesh and blood has merit in it sufficient to obtain the favour of God. Yea, it has done so (since) that day it was offered through the eternal Spirit a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to Him; wherefore God imputes the righteousness of Christ to him that believes in Him, by which righteousness he is personally justified, and saved from that just judgment of the law that was due unto him (John 5:26; 6:53-58; Eph. 4:32; 5:2; Rom. 4:23-25).

""Saved by faith."" For although salvation begins in God's purpose, and comes to us through Christ's righteousness, yet is not faith exempted from having a hand in the saving of us. Not that it merits aught, but is given by God to those which He saves, that thereby they may embrace and put on that Christ by whose righteousness they must be saved. Wherefore this faith is that which here distinguishes them that shall be saved from them that shall be damned. Hence it is said, ""**He that believeth not, shall be damned;**"" and hence again it is that the believers are called ""the children, the heirs, and the blessed with faithful Abraham;"" that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe (Gal. 3:6-9,26; Rom. 4:13-14).

And here let Christians warily distinguish between the meritorious and the instrumental cause of their justification. Christ, with what He has done and suffered, is the meritorious cause of our justification; therefore He is said to be made to us of God, ""**wisdom and righteousness;**"" and we are said to be ""**justified by his blood,**"" and ""**saved from wrath through him,**"" for it was His life and blood that were the price of our redemption (I Cor. 1:30; Rom. 5:9-10). ""**Redeemed,**"" says Peter, ""**not with corruptible things, as silver and gold,**"" alluding to the redemption of money under the law, ""**but with the precious blood of Christ.**"" You are, therefore, as I have said, to make Christ Jesus the object of your faith for justification; for by His righteousness thy sins must be covered from the sight of the justice of the law. ""**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.**"" ""**For he shall save his people from their sins**"" (Acts 16:31; Matt. 1:21).

Fourth. To be saved is to be preserved in the faith to the end. ""**He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved**"" (Matt. 24:13), Not that perseverance is an accident in Christianity, or a thing performed by human industry; they that are saved ""**are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation**"" (I Pet. 1:3-6).

But perseverance is absolutely necessary to the complete saving of the soul, because he that falls short of the state that they that are saved are possessed of, as saved, cannot arrive to that saved state. He that goes to sea with a purpose to arrive at Spain, cannot arrive there if he be drowned by the way; wherefore perseverance is absolutely necessary to the saving of the soul, and therefore it is included in the complete saving of us ---- ""**Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end**"" (Isa. 45:17). Perseverance is here made absolutely necessary to the complete saving of the soul.