

## 003: Three Tenses of Salvation

(based on Ch. 2 from *The End of the Pilgrimage*)

Let's begin with a "pop" quiz, multiple choice. Which answer best describes your relationship with the Lord?

- a. I have been saved.
  - b. I will be saved.
  - c. I am being saved.
  - d. all of the above.
- Of course, the correct answer for all children of God is "d. all of the above."
  - let's take each one of these statements and flesh them out a bit

### 1. I have been saved

- In one word, this is regeneration, the moment you received eternal life
- You were saved, redeemed by the blood of Christ ...
- given an entirely new nature ...
- and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit
- furthermore, you were justified (declared to be righteous) and sanctified (set apart from sin unto God)
- All of that happened in the past tense. It has already occurred
- It is a reality, for Christ now lives in you by His Holy Spirit!
- **1 Cor. 6:11** And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.
- **2 Cor. 5:17** Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Eph. 2:1 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

- **Eph. 4:24** and that you (have) put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.
- **Col. 3:9-10** You have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- Scripture seems to indicate this past-tense transaction of salvation took place within the realm of your human spirit, which is distinct from the soul.
- Some take the position that man is dichotomous, or two parts — physical and metaphysical or material and immaterial.
- and that is true in a sense, for that is mainly how man is described in the OT

However, the NT gives more detail, splitting the metaphysical, immaterial part of man into two parts, for a total of three, if you add the body

- and so, from a NT perspective, man is trichotomous, having three aspect to his being: spirit, soul, and body.
- Consider the following passages:
- **1 Thess. 5:23** May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Heb. 4:12** For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

- While man cannot divide between soul and spirit, God can.
- In fact, Heb. 4:12 seems to emphasize that God — through His Word — wants man to learn the distinction between soul and spirit.
- Why is this so important?
- Because the Bible teaches there are two (metaphysical) salvations, or we could say two key aspects of salvation—
- the salvation of the spirit as something distinct from the salvation of the soul.

The spirit of man is reserved for God-consciousness, and prior to salvation is dead in trespasses and sins.

- It is made alive at regeneration.
- **John 3:6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
- **Rom. 8:10** If Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.
- **Rom. 8:16** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,
- Scripture is clear that salvation has a “past tense” component.
- If you have believed on Jesus for eternal life, then you have been saved — regenerated — and that work of God took place in your spirit.
- let’s go now to our second statement

## 2. I will be saved

- Moving from the past to the future, you will be saved when you are resurrected at the rapture
- The doctrinal term for this aspect of salvation is **redemption** — when the earthly body of corruption will be given a resurrected body, equipped for existence in the ages to come

- **Rom. 8:23** We ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the **redemption** of our body.
- **Eph. 1:13-14** Having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the **redemption** of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.
- **Eph. 4:30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of **redemption**.
- all of these verses refer to future salvation, that is, when we are given new bodies
- **1 Cor. 15:53** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

Some like to use the doctrinal term glorification when speaking of future salvation, and glorification IS certainly future.

- However, I prefer to use the term redemption, because in my opinion, while the bodies of all saints will be redeemed (as indicated in the verses I’ve already quoted), they will not all be glorified.
- Glorification is a concept of exaltation that, in the eternal state, seems to be accompanied by a glow in some degree
- (e.g., Christ’s body on the Mount of Transfiguration, Matt. 17:1-9).
- 1 Cor. 15 speaks more extensively about the varying degrees of glow depending in the degree of glorification, which is conditional
- I would encourage you to read that chapter

Unfaithful saints apparently will not have that glow, for it is reserved for those who have suffered with Christ and have remained faithful and, therefore, will glow with Him in the eternal state

- **Rom. 8:16-17** say that, as believers, we are “children of God and if children, then heirs—heirs of God”
- but the verse goes on to say, “and joint heirs with Christ, IF indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.
- many miss the fact that joint-heirship with Christ is NOT automatic; it is conditional, based on whether or not the believer suffers with Jesus
- if so, then the believer will be glorified together with Jesus
- if not, then no glorification, which implies no ruling together with Him

Paul speaks more about this in Romans 8:29-30

- **Rom. 8:29** For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.
- **Rom. 8:30** Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.
- many Christians believe these verses are talking about the process of regeneration from the divine perspective and where it ultimately leads
- thus, glorification is merely the final result of regeneration, it will happen automatically to all believers at the end of the line, or so they think
- but I believe that interpretation is mistaken

Paul is speaking to believers in Romans 6-8, encouraging us to walk in the Spirit

- at the end of chapter 8 he gives the divine perspective, not on the process of regeneration ...
- but on the process of sanctification unto reward

- those whom God foreknows will choose to follow Him in discipleship after regeneration, He predestines to that goal
- then He calls them to it and justifies them
- justification here is not used in a legal, salvific sense, but in a practical, sanctification sense
- it is God’s declaring righteous those of His children who are living uprightly, walking in the Spirit
- they are the ones who will be glorified

in fact, v. 29 outlines the goal of sanctification:

- which is for that believer to be conformed to the image of Jesus, which qualifies that one to be firstborn son amongst all of God’s children
- only the firstborn will inherit a place of rulership in Christ’s coming kingdom
- this interpretation also fits the context of 8:14-17
- Exaltation seems out of character for unfaithful saints.
- We will touch on this subject again in a future study

for now, let’s get back to our study of the three tenses of salvation

- Technically speaking, the realm of the body is not yet saved. Is that not obvious?
- The body declines throughout its earthly existence until it eventually dies and decays in the ground.
- In Rom. 7:24 Paul called it, “this body of death”
- Nevertheless, the bodies of believers will be saved one day!
- You have been saved.
- At some point in your past, God regenerated you.
- It happened in the realm of your spirit, which the Holy Spirit made alive.

- In the future you will be saved, when God raises you at the rapture and gives you a redeemed body
- What about the present?
- that brings us to the third tense of salvation

### **3. I am being saved.**

- as you live the Christian life, you are being saved
- This aspect of salvation is known as **sanctification**, which is the idea of being set apart **from** sin and **to** God
- to the extent sanctification is progressive, the believer becomes more like Christ
- Experiential sanctification happens in the realm of the soul, which is comprised of mind (intellect), emotions (feelings), and will (volition).
- God has given every believer the provision necessary for progressing in the sanctification of their soul
- However, spiritual progression is not automatic.
- You must choose to appropriate your God-given provision.
- Daily, moment-by-moment choices must be made to depend upon the enabling power of the Holy Spirit within your spirit to lead your soul and then for your soul to lead the body, in that order

When a believer reverses the order, allowing the bodily desires or soulish passions to rule, carnality results, and the Spirit of God is grieved.

- Carnality may be temporary or could potentially continue indefinitely.
- The salvation of the soul is to be distinguished from the salvation of the spirit.
- Thus, it is correct theologically to say the Bible speaks of two (metaphysical) salvations, not merely one.

- Of course, we understand that the soul cannot be saved (progressively sanctified) unless the spirit is first saved.
- As already demonstrated, the salvation of the spirit is a thing of the past and impacts your future destiny, whereas the salvation of the soul is a thing of the present and impacts future rewards (positive or negative).
- listen to these verses about the salvation of the soul
- and, while listening, notice that for your soul to be saved at the judgment seat (which is future) you must live righteously in the present

**James 1:21** Lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

- **1 Pet. 1:7, 9** that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ ... receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.
- **Heb. 10:39** We are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

whether or not the soul of a believer has been saved will be determined by Jesus at the Judgment Seat

- He will make that determination, based on how the believer submits to God's sanctifying work here and now
- if the believer cooperates with God and experiences progressive sanctification – being set apart from sin unto God – then he/she will be rewarded
- the process is called the saving of the soul and culminates at the Bema
- to that end, live for Jesus now!

- **1 Pet. 2:11** I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

At this juncture, I will summarize three tenses of salvation.

- I have been saved – that is past tense and refers to regeneration in the realm of the spirit
- I am being saved – that is present tense and refers to sanctification in the realm of the soul
- I will be saved – that is future tense and refers to redemption of the body in the resurrection
- Someone once asked me:
- Does this mean that only one-third of a believer is actually saved?

Good question!

- It depends on how one defines the word saved.
- From man’s perspective, the whole man is saved, because we are incapable of separating spirit, soul and body. However, God is able to divide asunder the three parts of man, and so theologically, it is accurate to refer to them independently.
- We have a responsibility to recognize what God has done, what He is doing, and what He will do in each part of our being!

As you can imagine, a battle rages for your soul.

- It is the part of you that is being saved (or not) in the present, and it is the aspect of your being that will be judged at the Bema.
- Satan wants to keep your soul from being saved, but Jesus wants you to be an overcomer.
- Indeed, He died so you can have victory.

- Incidentally, the battle is not between the new nature (a regenerated spirit) and a so-called old nature, as if they were level playing fields.
- The Bible makes clear, Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new, 2 Cor. 5:17.
- Thus, the battle is between your righteous spirit and your sinful soul that lives in an unredeemed body.
- The soul and body are partners in crime, working together and collectively referred to as the flesh.
- This prompted Paul to cry out in:
- **Rom. 7:24** O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

The apostle's sinful soul was working in league with his unredeemed body, holding him back from serving God.

- in Rom. 8:2 he refers to it as “the law of sin and death”
- in 7:17 he calls it “sin that dwells in me”
- But Paul also reveals the secret of victory over this law.
- It is another law, the law of the spirit of life in Christ that frees believers from the law of sin and death (8:2)
- Some call it the law of counteraction.
- It is like a hot air balloon pilot overcoming the law of gravity by heating the air inside the balloon.
- If he refuses to believe the hot air will lift the balloon, he will never apply the heat.
- So it is with a child of God who does not appropriate the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christ life.

The sinfulness of your soul can be overcome by the righteous One who lives within your spirit (which has been made righteous).

- In the spirit realm of your being the seed of God (Greek, sperma) remains, and you cannot sin (1 John 3:9).

- Therefore, your soul is being saved to the extent you are letting the law of the Spirit of life counteract the law of sin and death in your members.
- **The degree of your reward (positive or negative) at the Judgment Seat will be determined by the extent to which your soul is saved in this life.**
- It is critically important to understand the difference between the two metaphysical salvations.

SALVATION OF THE SPIRIT	SALVATION OF THE SOUL
What lost people need	What saved people need
Good News about eternal life (also bad news about sin & eternal condemnation)	Good news about inheritance (also bad news about disobedience & disinheritance)
Jesus as Savior	Jesus as Lord and King
Occurs at the moment of belief	Lifetime process
Results in regeneration and eternal security	Results in sanctification and inheritance
A gift based on faith	A reward based on Spirit-enabled works
Unconditional - heirs of God	Conditional - co-heirs with Christ

Many students of the Scriptures fail to differentiate between the two salvations and thereby commit a serious hermeneutical (interpretative) error.

- For instance, passages that refer to the saving of the soul, intended for Christians, are frequently applied to unbelievers and their need to get saved.
- religious denominations that make this interpretive error arrive at the conclusion that salvation is by works
- Passages about the possibility of losing the soul are equated with going to Hell.
- Passages about the kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God are relegated to Heaven, not the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These are all dreadful mistakes and result in misinterpreting the book of Hebrews and passages in James and Matthew and, for that matter, much of the New Testament.

- It is a tragedy, for the church of Jesus Christ has not been taught to prepare for the Judgment Seat and the kingdom to follow.
- For children of God to be prepared to give a good account at the Judgment Seat they must go all the way with Christ in discipleship so that He deems their soul to be saved and worthy of reward.
- Contrary to popular opinion, the soul is not automatically saved when the spirit is saved.
- Soul-salvation is a lifelong process, and Jesus does not instantaneously declare all saints perfectly sanctified at the Judgment Seat.
- He announces a verdict for each one, whether positive or negative. The verdict determines how they live out their kingdom existence, as we shall see in future studies.

While eternal salvation is determined at the moment of belief, it is only the beginning.

- The work of salvation in its complete sense (from God's perspective) continues over one's lifetime.

- Though we often refer to the ongoing aspect as progressive sanctification, it is technically part of God's complete salvation "package," and is accurately described as salvation of the soul.
- How you fare regarding the saving of your soul will be determined at the Judgment Seat.
- as we close this study, understand that salvation of the spirit is a gift from God (John 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9) that anyone can receive now, by faith alone in the finished work of Christ;
- whereas salvation of the soul is a reward from Jesus, based on the quality of one's work for Him, that only believers will receive in the future ... or not.
- are you prepared to meet Him in judgment?
- I challenge you to THINK ON THESE THINGS!