

Our Need, His Provision (The Way of Salvation)

Our natural condition before God

We need to realize that we have no inherent worthiness before God. We are a fallen race, and each of us is born with a sinful nature. On our own, we stand before a Holy God soiled in our own sinfulness and totally unworthy. Even the best of our fleshly works or our own "righteousness" is as filthy rags before Him. We are sinners one and all, and we can never gain heaven on our own merit. In fact, *we have no merit* before Him.

If we accept Christ as our Savior, then He completely changes our standing before Him, not because of our worthiness but by His grace. If we trust in Christ as Our Savior, then He accepts us as precious, dear children clothed in His Son's goodness and righteousness. At that point too, He gives us the ability to serve Him by giving us a new nature that is able to please Him. The following Scriptures talk about our natural, unsaved condition before God.

(Isa 64:6 NIV) "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."

(Rom 3:9-11 NIV) "What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. {10} As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; {11} there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God."

(Rom 3:23 KJV) "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

(Rom 7:18-20 NIV) "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. {19} For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. {20} Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it."

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. Before they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were innocent and without sinful natures. They enjoyed paradise and a right relationship with God. However, when they ate of that fruit, they immediately learned the way of evil. At that point, they possessed a sinful nature that is inclined to sin. Adam's sinful nature and the judgment of death for sin have been passed down to us all. We have inherited this sinful nature from Adam, and we sin because we are born sinners.

(Rom 5:12-15 NIV) "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-- {13} for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. {14} Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. {15} But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!"

A Just God

The Lord God Almighty is a perfect and a just God. In Him, there is nothing less than perfect goodness and total righteousness. His scales of justice must always be kept in perfect balance. In His court, all sin must be paid for in full.

(Deu 32:4 KJV) "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity,

just and right is he."

(Isa 45:21-22 KJV) "Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD? and *there is* no God else beside me; **a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me. {22} Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.**"

(Dan 9:14 KJV) "Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice."

(Rev 16:7 KJV) "And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, **Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.**"

The Wages of Sin

In the eternal scheme of things, a righteous God must keep the scales of justice balanced.

God cannot just "forget" about all our sins and have no payment wrought for them. Even in our world, we cannot knowingly let serious crimes go unpunished. This would not be fair to the one offended. God is the One we ultimately offend with our sin. We don't deserve heaven and eternal bliss. Our sin has to be dealt with in a just manner, and "the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23) Without a sin covering, this would be a final death, a death that lasts eternally. If we stand before God without atonement for our sins, it will be a fearful thing indeed.

(Heb 10:31 KJV) "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*"

(Rom 12:19 KJV) "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

(Heb 12:29 KJV) "For our God *is* a consuming fire."

(Prov 14:12 KJV) "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of **death.**"

(Rom 6:23 KJV) " {23} For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

(2 Th 1:8-9 KJV) "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: {9} Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"

(Notice in this verse that those who do not obey the gospel of Christ are *everlastingly destroyed*. In other words, they are utterly destroyed or dead forever. This is a final death that lasts for all eternity.)

(Rev 20:14 NIV) "... The lake of fire is the **second death.**"

Ransomed and Redeemed by the One, Perfect Sacrifice

Our condition would be hopeless, except for the greatest gift of all time. As previously discussed, the just payment for sin is death. "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (Heb 9:22 NIV) This does not mean that God is a bloodthirsty God. No, quite the contrary, for in the greatest act of sacrificial love of all time, "He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all." (Rom. 8:32) In doing this, He took our place and bought us back. He redeemed us from the power of sin, from the punishment of death, from the power of the grave, and from the wrath to come.

To redeem means to buy something back. I asked my 10-year old daughter to explain Christ's redemption for me. She said, "It's like my dad buys a big bag of candy that I know I don't deserve. He pays for the whole thing himself. I have to tell him that I know I don't deserve it, but could I have it as a gift? Then he just gives it to me because He loves me." Christ bought us back, just as slaves were once bought out of a marketplace. As a new owner, the purchaser could keep the slave or set him free. Christ bought us out of the slavery of sin and death, and He set us free.

(1 Cor 7:22-23 KJV) "For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ's servant. {23} Ye are **bought with a price**; be not ye the servants of men."

If we truly believe this, then we want to serve Him wholeheartedly out of gratitude for this greatest gift of all time. "We love Him because He first loved us."(1John 4:19)

God Himself stooped to take the form of a man and stooped yet further to die a shameful slave's death on the cross. Yet the grave could not hold Him, and He rose again to great glory. He did all of this for our sake.

(Phil 2:5-11 NIV) "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: {6} Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, {7} but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. {8} And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! {9} Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, {10} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, {11} and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

(2 Cor 5:21 NIV) "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

(1 Tim 2:5-6 KJV) "For {6} **there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all**, to be testified in due time."

(1 Pet 1:18-19 NIV) "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, {19} but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

(1 Pet 3:18 NIV) "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God..."

(Rom 5:8 NIV) "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

(Mat 20:28 KJV) "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

(Mat 1:21 KJV) "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

When we accept Christ as our Savior, God doesn't just save us from horrible things; He also adopts us as His dear children. Moreover, He prepares a wonderful eternal inheritance for us. As C.H. Welch says, "He saves us *from* the gutter-most *to* the uttermost."

(Heb 7:25 KJV) "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

(Gal 4:5 KJV) "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

(Rom 8:15 KJV) "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

(Titus 3:5-7 KJV) "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the

washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; {6} Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; {7} **That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**"

God's Way and No Other

There are not many ways to God. There is only *One Way*, and that is by the precious blood of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

(Isa 45:21b NIV) " And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is **none** but me."

(Acts 4:12 NIV) "**Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.**"

(John 14:6 KJV) "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Our Response

What does God require of us to make this free gift of salvation ours eternally? As Corrie Ten Boon once said, "It is not do, but done. It is not win, but won." We just need to admit that we are unworthy sinners, and truly believe that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, and that He died and rose again for our sins. We need to fully trust in Christ alone and His work on our behalf. "It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." (Titus 3:5) Salvation is found in Him and Him alone. Trust Him on this. It is true.

The original Greek word in the New Testament for "believe" means to trust in, rely on, or adhere to. Therefore, believing in Christ involves a personal trust in Him, which is more than simple head knowledge of Him. Here's a good example of the difference. Suppose I went to see a tight ropewalker ride a bicycle across a high wire over the Niagara Falls. Suppose he asked me just before his trip across the wire if I believed he could do this. I say, "Sure, I believe you can do it." Now suppose he says, "If you really believe I can do this, then get in the basket of the bike and let me take you across with me." Ah, now there is not just a belief in my mind, but also a personal trust in that tight ropewalker for my safety. There is a difference.

Think of your unsaved destiny as though you are a drowning person being swept down a raging river to the rapids of your death. A Hand comes down to pull you out and save you. Our faith is not a work in itself. It is merely that dying hand reaching out in trust in the One who accomplished the entire work of salvation on our behalf. Our heart's belief in Christ is only that smallest last link in the chain that binds us to the God of our salvation.

(John 3:16-18 KJV) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. {17} For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. {18} He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

(Rom 10:9-11 NIV) "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. {10} For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. {11} As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

(If we truly believe that Christ is our Savior, then it will naturally follow that we will say this aloud. If it is indeed the most important thing that has ever happened to us, how could we not tell it to others?)

(John 3:36 KJV) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life;

but the wrath of God abideth on him."

(Acts 16:31 KJV) "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Clothed in His Righteousness

Notice in the following Scriptures, we are not righteous in ourselves, but God counts us as such when we believe in Christ. Someday we will stand before Him. If we have trusted Him as our Savior, then He not only strips away our sin; but when He looks at us He will only see the righteousness of His blessed Son.

(Phil 3:9 NIV) "And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

(Rom 4:3-5 KJV) "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. {4} Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. {5} But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

(Isa 61:10 KJV) "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness..."

Sum it up

To sum up the greatest human need and His marvelous provision:

(1 John 4:14 NIV) "... The Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world."

(1 John 5:12 KJV) "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

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