

Salvation: The Only Solution



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 2:25; Jer. 17:9; Titus 1:1, 2; Rom. 3:19–24; Acts 2:36–38; Luke 7:47; Eph. 2:1–5.*

Memory Text: “ ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life’ ” (*John 3:16, NKJV*).

Key Thought: The sin problem is very big; how thankful we should be that the solution was big enough to solve it.

The “sin problem” refers to the crisis caused by the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, which brought to the earth the great controversy between good and evil. God’s part in the controversy has been to stop, and ultimately eliminate, the deleterious effects of sin, not just on the earth but on the creation as a whole. God’s action to rescue the creation from the destructive results of sin constitutes the doctrine of salvation. And though that battle, at least in terms of salvation, does play out here on earth, the great-controversy motif has shown us that the issues are, literally, universal.

The doctrine of salvation primarily concerns God and His work to save us, of course. But humanity has an important role too. Yes, God has made an incredible provision for the salvation of the human race. Our crucial part comes in the answering of the question, What will be our response to that provision? On that answer, the eternal destiny of souls truly hinges.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 27.*

The Scope of the Problem

Because salvation is God's solution to the problem created by sin, the extent of sin's damage determines the scope of the solution. After all, it wouldn't be a solution if it was unable to solve the problem, no matter what the size of the problem.

What do the following texts reveal about the scope of the sin problem? How have you experienced it yourself or seen around you the reality of these texts?

John 2:25 _____

Ps. 59:2 _____

Jer. 17:9 _____

Rom. 5:12 _____

James 5:1-7 _____

Isa. 5:23 _____

2 Thess. 2:10 _____

Who among us hasn't known deeply, personally, and painfully just how bad the sin problem is? We live every moment of our lives with the reality of sin and its effects. Every aspect of human existence on this planet is, to some degree (a great one, in fact), dominated by the reality of sin. From politics to the innermost recesses of the human heart, sin has infected the race. It is so bad that, without a divine solution, there would be no solution. How grateful we should be that the solution has been given. It's called "the plan of salvation," and its purpose is to solve the problem of sin.

God's Provision: Part 1

The effects of sin did not wait for a “grace period.” The results of sin were immediate and needed immediate attention. It was necessary, therefore, for some kind of provision to be in place when sin manifested itself. Ellen G. White expresses it so clearly: “As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. Christ knew that He would have to suffer, yet He became man’s substitute. As soon as Adam sinned, the Son of God presented Himself as surety for the human race, with just as much power to avert the doom pronounced upon the guilty as when He died upon the cross of Calvary.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1084.

What do the following texts tell us about the plan of salvation and when it was established? What great hope and promise can we take from the texts ourselves?

Titus 1:1, 2 _____

Eph. 1:3–5 _____

2 Thess. 2:13, 14 _____

Rev. 13:8 _____

Dwell on the implications of these texts. What are they saying? Basically, from eternity, provisions had been made by God for the problem of sin. Though God did not foreordain that sin would occur (if He had, He would be responsible for it—a horrific and blasphemous idea), He knew that it would; so, back in eternity He made the provision to meet it.

This is biblical predestination, which is radically different from “predestination” as is commonly understood. It was God’s plan, from eternity, that all human beings would have salvation in Jesus. The fact that some reject this salvation doesn’t annul the force or the breadth of the provision. It only adds to the tragedy of what it means to be lost in the face of what has been done for us.

Dwell on the amazing truth that, from eternity, God’s plan was for you, personally, to have salvation. Think about what that means. In what way should a truth like this impact your life?

God's Provision: Part 2

Throughout salvation history, from the first gospel promise (*Gen. 3:15*) through the early sacrificial system (*Gen. 4:4*), the covenant with Abram (*Gen. 12:1–3*), and the Israelite sanctuary service (*Exod. 25:8*)—everything was to point to, and climax in, the life, death, resurrection, and heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ, God's ultimate provision to solve the sin problem.

The seriousness of the sin problem can, perhaps, be best understood only when we grasp just what it took—the Cross—in order for it to be solved. The Cross alone proves the utter futility of humanity to solve the sin problem by itself. An extreme situation called for an extreme solution, and the death of Christ, *God bearing in Himself our sins*, is about as extreme a measure as could possibly be imagined.

Christ's sacrificial death is presented in Scripture as an atonement for sin, i.e., the means by which the sin problem in all its manifestations is ultimately dealt with. How does the death of Christ provide for humanity's need of salvation? Explore this question from the following perspectives:

1. Justification/Reconciliation (right standing before God): See *Luke 18:9–14; Isa. 53:4–7; Rom. 3:19–24, 28; Zech. 3:1–4.*

2. Sanctification/Regeneration (living right before God): See *1 Cor. 6:8–11, Rom. 6:1–8.*

3. Glorification (assurance of resurrection to eternal life): See *John 5:24, 25; 1 John 5:9–13; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.*

Dwell more on the fact that sin is so bad that it took the Cross to save us from the ultimate result, eternal death. How should keeping the Cross before us at all times be a deterrent to sin?

The Experience of Salvation: Part 1

The sinner is justified and reconciled on the objective basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice for all (*Rom. 5:6–10*). The provision that God has made for the justification and reconciliation of humankind to Himself through the death of Christ needs, however, to be brought into the experience of the believer. It is not enough to just have a theoretical knowledge about justification. We need to experience what it means for ourselves.

Acts 2:36–38 and Acts 3:19 bring up repentance as the beginning of the sinner's experience of salvation. How does the nature of repentance as a feeling of remorse help us to connect the experience of justification with the death of Christ?

Ponder the following comment: "Nothing so touches the depths of the soul as a sense of Christ's pardoning love. When sinners contemplate this unfathomable divine love, displayed on the cross, they receive the most powerful motivation possible to repent. This is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance (*Rom. 2:4*)."—Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2005), pp. 135, 136.

Read Romans 3:23–25 and Ephesians 2:8. What is the role of faith in the experience of justification?

We are told in the Bible that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (*Rom. 10:17*). We have also seen that contemplating the love of Christ motivates a person to repentance. Repentance, then, is not the special prerogative of a privileged few. In view of these facts, the importance of the study and the contemplation of God's Word in the experience of justification cannot be overemphasized.

It is the goodness of God that leads to repentance and justification. Thus, if I should repent of sin and experience justification, God is the one to receive the credit. Salvation, then, is truly a gracious gift from God, for, indeed, it is by grace through faith that we are saved (*Eph. 2:8*).

What are some tangible and practical ways in which you may flood your heart and mind with the goodness of God, especially as you think of what He has done for you and what He has spared you from?

The Experience of Salvation: Part 2

The experience of justification places within the life of the believer spiritual realities that initiate change in the person's life. In justification, the sinner is forgiven (*Luke 7:47, Eph. 1:7, Rom. 4:7*), acquitted of the charges of sin and reckoned righteous (*Rom. 5:16, 18; Rom. 8:1*), and given the gift of a new life (*Eph. 2:1–5, 2 Cor. 5:17*).

The foundation of this new experience is the reality that, no matter our past, no matter our sins, no matter how faulty and wrong we have been, we can stand pardoned, forgiven, and cleansed before God.

Think through what this means. Christ's death covers all sin, even the worst; no matter how much your own heart might condemn you (*1 John 3:20*), when you surrender yourself to Christ, in faith, and accept His perfect life instead of your own "filthy rags" (*Isa. 64:6*), then you are at that moment covered in Christ's righteousness. His perfect life is credited to you as if it were yours. Talk about a gift, especially to a sinner!

The question is, How can something like this happen to a person and that person not be radically changed? That change, often called the "new birth," is part and parcel of the experience of salvation.

Read the texts in the above paragraphs and summarize their teachings about justification and the way in which we experience it in our own lives.

The experience of forgiveness ends the sinner's vulnerability to God's wrath and clears away any barriers to reconciliation and fellowship between God and humans. A new life opens up for the sinner, who has the privilege of living in fellowship with Christ under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Repentance is the prerequisite for entering into the experience of forgiveness and justification, and it comes accompanied by confession and baptism (*Acts 2:38, 1 John 1:9*). This helps to explain the fact that although forgiveness is available to all, not all will be forgiven.

Where would you be if you couldn't lean on the promise, every moment of your life, that your acceptance with God is based on what Jesus has done for you and not on yourself or your own performance and law-keeping?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “‘God With Us,’” pp. 19–29, in *The Desire of Ages*; Ivan T. Blazen, “Salvation,” pp. 271–313, in Raoul Dederen (ed.), *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*.

“The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of ‘the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal’ (Rom. 16:25, R.V.). It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. . . . God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, ‘that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Think about how bad sin must be that it took the death of the Creator Himself to solve it. What does the Cross reveal to us about the utter inability of humanity to save itself? What do we think we could add to what has already been done for us?
- 2 Some believe in what is called the “subjective atonement,” the idea that nothing about the Cross changed our standing with God. Rather, the whole point of the Cross was, they claim, to change our attitude about God, nothing more. What’s terribly deficient about such a theology? What does it say about the problem of sin if all it would take is an “attitude adjustment” on our part to solve it?
- 3 How possible is it to have a good deal of knowledge about salvation and yet not the experience of it? What do you make of Ellen G. White’s comment that “consecration to God must be a living, practical matter; not a theory to be talked about, but a principle interwoven with all our experience”?—*Our High Calling*, p. 243. How do we, on a daily and practical level, live out the experience of salvation?
- 4 Dwell on the role of salvation in the context of the great controversy. Why does Satan want to keep as many people as possible from having salvation in Jesus? What are the means he uses against us, and how can we defend ourselves against them?

Our First Choice

I am a Christian, but not a Seventh-day Adventist. My husband follows a different religion. We chose to send our two sons to Zamboanga Adventist Elementary School in the Philippines because we wanted them to study in a school with strong moral values. We looked at several schools, most of which had better facilities, but we chose the Seventh-day Adventist school.

Our boys like this school. They joined Pathfinders and really enjoy the activities. The children and teachers are so friendly. I love working with the teachers and parents. We really are a family!

Our children are learning to be leaders as they take part in chapel programs and other activities at the school. They enjoy Bible class and memorize many Bible texts. My husband even joked that our son could become a pastor because he has learned so many Bible verses.

Even though I'm not a Seventh-day Adventist, I believe in Adventist education, and I thank God for this school and what it has meant to our children.

—Fely Bawari, Zamboanga, Philippines

In 2009, part of your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped to complete a new building for the school in Mindanao so that it could offer secondary education as well as elementary education. Thanks to your offerings, Zamboanga Adventist School is reaching many more students and parents with God's message of hope and love.



*Zamboanga
Adventist School
spreads God's
love on the island
of Mindanao,
in the southern
Philippines.*