

# The Divine Plan of Salvation

One of the most gripping verses in the entire Bible is the one which says, “For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). All persons who have reached the age of accountability, and have never surrendered their wills to the will of Jesus Christ, are lost. And the word “lost” is a chilling word to anyone who has ever had the experience. Our emotions become stirred and whole communities become aroused when a little child strays away from home, and wanders off into the woods, and gets lost. It is a terrifying experience to be lost. Jesus, when speaking of those who are lost, said, “It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

It is God’s will that each human being should be saved—and the Good News announced in the Bible, is the fact that God has provided a way by which we can be saved. We want to look at the plan of salvation.

## 1. The Need for Salvation

The very word “salvation” implies that humans are lost, and need to be rescued. According to the Bible, man comes into this world with an inborn nature to go astray. Every one of us has practiced and done that which is sinful and wrong. And these evil practices are more than mere outward acts. They are the outcropping of an evil nature within us. People don’t **become** bad; they are **born** bad. The same urge to lie and cheat and steal and hate and think impure thoughts, lies deep-rooted within every human breast. We might be able through careful training to hide many of these evil tendencies outwardly, but underneath our neat clothing and behind our reputation as good moral persons, there is an inbred tendency to do wrong.

The Bible is honest with us; it tells us the truth about our condition. It is not merely our **outward** conduct that is wrong, but deep down within, **the heart** is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. The Bible says, “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21). David confesses, “Behold I was shaped in iniquity” (Psalm 51:5). You and I have inherited something that’s more than 6,000 years old. We may have hailed from many differing backgrounds, but there is one thing we have in common—we are members of the human family, and as such our natures are tainted with sin. The Scriptures declare, “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no not one” (Romans 3:11-12). Some have sinned more than average; some have sinned less than average; but everyone has sinned —and thus every one of us is guilty before God, and every one of us **needs** to be saved.

The Bible further declares that every act of sin is a transgression against the holiness of God, and that God’s holiness demands a penalty for sin. If God would **let us get by** with sin, **and pass over** our transgressions, He would no longer be a just and holy God. God’s righteousness demands that we be punished for our sins, and **the penalty for sin** is announced in these words: “The wages of sin is death.” And death is not cessation of being, but a separation from the presence of God. This means that **unless**

**something is done about sin**, there can be no hope of eternal life with God, because sin separates from God.

## 2. The Basis of Salvation

The glorious news of the Gospel is that **God has done something about sin**. John 3:16 explains it very simply: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish (should not pay the wages of sin), but have everlasting life.” The glad tidings that the Gospel of Jesus Christ sets forth, is the fact that **we sinners don’t have to die, because Jesus Christ died for us**. John the Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The penalty for sin stood against us because we have sinned, but Jesus Christ came to take it away.

Everywhere in the Scriptures from beginning to end, salvation is always said to be based on the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark 10:45 records the words of Jesus, “For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom (a payment) for many.” Romans 5:10 says, “We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” The prophet Isaiah looked down through the centuries and declared of Jesus Christ, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Paul says of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7), “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” The Scriptures teach very clearly **that the death of Jesus Christ has made satisfaction for sins**, and that in His death, the penalty for our sins has been completely paid. When Jesus suffered on the Cross, He was suffering as a **substitute** for you and for me. The Apostle Peter says of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:24), “Who bore our sins in his own body on the tree.” Jesus was the just one, who suffered for us the unjust ones, that He might bring us to God. Christ died **for** us—that is, He died in our place.

## 3. The Appropriation of Salvation

The death of Jesus Christ is sufficient to save every human being. The Bible says He has become a propitiation (one who turns away wrath) for the sins of the whole world, but salvation will only become effective to those who accept Him and believe on Him. The sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary is absolutely worthless and meaningless for those who reject Him. **There must be a response on the part of each individual.**

The question was asked by the Philippian jailor. He said to Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” The word “believe” involves the thought of trusting and accepting and receiving (see John 1:12). Real saving belief is not only a knowledge of certain facts about Jesus, but it is believing those facts so sincerely that I am ready to act on them. More than five decades ago I learned to know the girl who was later to become my wife. I began to build a long series of beliefs about her. I believed she was a good sincere Christian girl. I believed her tastes and mine were closely related. I believed she would make a good wife. But simply believing that long creed about her, made no difference whatsoever in our personal relationship—until that never to be forgotten day when we stood by each other’s side, and I said as we

exchanged our marriage vows, "I take you to be my wife." That one definite act established a life transforming relationship. **I acted** on my beliefs, and from that time on, she took my name and she became my wife. And just so you may believe a great many things about Jesus Christ, but until you say, "Lord Jesus, I take you to be my Saviour," your life will not be changed and you will not be saved. There is something for you to do.

When Peter preached the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost, many believed the Word he had preached, and they cried out, "What must we do?" What is the response required on our part? And Peter answered (Acts 2:38), "Repent and be baptized every one of you." Jesus says that entrance into the kingdom is only for those who "repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Paul says, "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Repentance involves the **intellect**. There must be a knowledge of sin. We must acknowledge that we have transgressed the law of God. Repentance also involves the **emotions**. There must be genuine grief and hatred and sorrow for sin. Repentance also involves the **will**. There must be a determination to forsake sin and to turn from it. And if the sinner has wronged another person in the past, he will attempt to make restitution for the wrong. After Zaccheus (the man of small stature) met with Jesus, he repented, and said, "Behold Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." He simply meant that from that very moment, he was going to try and make right the ugly sins he had committed as a crooked tax collector. God demands a complete repentance.

The way of salvation is clear. The plan is very simple: **All have sinned**, and therefore every one of us stands condemned before God, and every one of us needs salvation. **Jesus Christ has died**, and His death was solely for the purpose of paying the penalty that stood against us. **A response is required** on our part. Each individual is expected to exercise faith in Jesus Christ as the Sinbearer, to turn from his life of sin, and to receive water baptism. If you have ignored Jesus, why not forsake the broad road that leads to destruction and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? He will forgive every sin. He will make you right with God. He will stifle selfishness and other unholy sins in your life. He will make you a new creature, with new desires and new ambitions. "Through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

-Harold S. Martin

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#### **BIBLE HELPS**

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