

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## Key Teachings: Glorification and Salvation - Romans 8:17 and 30

As we draw to an end in our series of some of the truths that are central to Christianity, we have surely left the grandest to this morning. We live lives that are affected by sin – either our own or that of others. We live in a world that has been corrupted by sin. The universe is groaning under the weight of the curse that followed the entrance of sin into this world. So as we begin to think about salvation, it is not to the Gospel preaching at 6:30 on a Sunday evening that we need to turn our thoughts but rather to a God who is working to make right all that is wrong, whether on earth, or in heaven, not just now but from before the beginning of time right until the very end of time. Truly our thoughts must span from eternity to eternity!

This morning we will look at three ways that the Bible speaks about salvation, namely it's past, present and future aspects. We shall then see how this leads into our glorification and how this in turn leads into His eternal glory.

### Past aspects of salvation.

*"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"* (Hebrews 5:9).

*"...whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* (Revelation 13:8).

One aspect of salvation is that it covers a once and for ever commitment to Him. God does not react to events as though they have taken Him unawares. It ought to humble us profoundly to realize that long before the world came into being, before Adam and Eve had sinned, God had already worked out His divine plan of salvation. Satan had fallen, the universe was spoiled and God knew that there would be a day when He would make all things right again. One social commentator glibly criticised Christianity thinking it offensive that Jesus had given His life for everyone when we had not asked Him to. But there was far more at stake than just the salvation of humanity. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, God would reconcile all things to Himself both earthly and heavenly. A righteous God, whose eyes were too pure to even look upon sin demanded the death penalty for sin. A loving God would take that penalty upon Himself so maintaining His righteousness. But of course God cannot die, so in the person of His Son, He took on human form in order that He might die. In the baby of Bethlehem a fully human being was born, yet He remained truly God. He was just like us, although He was completely sinless. As He laid down His life upon the cross, He bore in His own body all the penalty that was due from a fallen creation. So it is that now we are able to receive eternal salvation. As Paul could say to the Romans "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). It is vitally important to realise that from before the foundation of the world, when He was slain in the plan of God, our salvation has been secure. In His foreknowledge, God has known all those who would be saved. Our eternal destiny is absolutely secure. It does not rest upon anything that we can do, but solely upon what He has done for us. We may look at salvation as something we choose as we put our trust in Him. We may see it as something that has been accomplished from eternity past. Both are equally true, although the place they meet is a part of the wonderful mystery of a God who is far bigger than all the space of the universe. I suppose it is a little like when my son asks for a football shirt for his birthday. I automatically get him the latest Liverpool shirt, knowing that he would choose that himself. After all, isn't that what all 17 year old boys would choose? His personal choice has been exercised, even though he hasn't made the choice himself.

Once we accept Him as Lord, we are saved for eternity. Our sins have been dealt with once and for all. They can never be raised again. The penalty was paid, and so for us to have to answer to God for them would make Him unjust, and that He can never be. Let us be quite clear on this. We can never lose our eternal salvation. If I have truly accepted that He died on the cross in my place and that He has now become my Lord, then my eternal destiny is secure. It is simply not possible to lose this salvation. It is a once and for all acceptance that Jesus is Lord. Dear listener, is this your experience this morning? Is Jesus your Lord? If so, then never lose sight of the fact that you are His forever – none can pluck you from His hands, not even yourself (John 10:28-29). The time you accepted Him as Saviour has fixed your eternal destiny once and for all. Let us not become confused by those who would teach that you can ever lose your salvation, or by the texts they use that might on casual reading appear to warn against losing one's salvation. These verses all speak about our second aspect of salvation.

**Present aspects of salvation.**

*“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).*

*“But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner” (Hebrews 6:9).*

All too sadly, too many believers lose out on this aspect of our salvation. We are not now talking about the eternal destination of our souls but rather the showing out of what we really are. In the story of the Lion King, when Simba had adopted a life of self pursuit, rather than of responsibility in leading the pride, he needed to be reminded to remember who he was. How many have taken that initial step in becoming a believer upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and then have gone back to self pleasing. Perhaps we, too, need to be reminded who we are! To the Christians in Philippi, Paul said that they were to work out what God had worked in. Yes, they were saved. Yes, they were justified. Yes, they were sanctified. Now they were to show by the way that they lived what God had done for them. In 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul says that we are Christ’s ambassadors. That is the way that we are to live. My career, my family, my prestige, my bank balance and all else besides are to be subject to His control. In his commentary, Hodge has remarked that “an ambassador is at once a messenger and a representative. He does not speak in his own name. He does not act on his own authority. What he communicates is not his own opinions or demands, but simply what he has been told or commanded to say. But at the same time he speaks with authority, in this case the authority of Christ Himself.” As we understand what He has done for us, then we should increasingly desire only to act for His good. In all that I do, or say, or think, my overriding concern must be to maintain His interests in any particular situation. The writer to the Hebrews rightly highlights the things that should accompany salvation – things such as our work and labour of love. It is not that we work to earn salvation but rather our salvation motivates us to work for Him. The more we understand the immensity of our salvation, the more we will be ready to serve and sacrifice in obedience to our calling.

I remember reading of a man who bought a lottery scratch card. Having scratched off his choices he thought he had won a million pounds. He danced on his desk at work, telling the boss how he really felt at work, before telephoning his wife to share the good news. It was only when he phoned Camelot to confirm his winnings that he realised he had misread a number – he hadn’t won at all! That man should be an example to us all. He wasn’t going to just carry on as before. This was going to change his life completely. As Christians, salvation is far more wonderful than a lottery win and yet, sometimes, we try to carry on as if nothing has changed. We have a hope that is eternal and secure and there is no mistake about it. How much the truth that our sins are forgiven and that Jesus is Lord should change every aspect of our lives. As we increasingly live for Him, then we shall find ourselves ready for the third and final aspect of salvation.

**Future aspects of salvation.**

*“So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).*

*“...who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5).*

*“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11).*

Dorando Pietri was a brilliant marathon runner. In 1908 he had led for most of the race. As he entered the Olympic stadium, he staggered and ran the wrong way around the track. He collapsed from exhaustion only metres from the finish line. A team official helped him up and supported him as he crossed the finish line. Only then did he find himself disqualified as he had not run the entire race unaided. So near and yet so far!

By way of absolute contrast, we are aided all the way to a glorious finish. Jesus came the first time to deal with the matter of sin. Soon He shall come again, not to deal with sin, but rather to call home all those who have acknowledged Him as Lord. And so shall our salvation be complete! Like the amazing life cycles that exist in the natural world, the process that started way back in the presence of God in eternity past will find its fulfilment in the presence of God for all eternity future. Jesus is coming again, perhaps today, and will call up all believers to be with Him for evermore. What a terrific prospect this is! As surely as God has begun a work in our lives, so He will complete it. In his first letter, John says, “Now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). We do not yet know what being in the presence of God will be like and what form our bodies will take. But marvellous thought, we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is! There ought to be nothing more precious to the heart of a believer than the day when we see Him, and become like Him. No longer troubled by our own weakness and failings. No longer fighting against all that would take our eyes off Him. No, forever with the Lord, and never to part again. What a wonderful face we shall

see. But He too will see! He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied (Isaiah 53:11). He saw the joy that was set before Him. As we look at the church today, we see so much disunity as each go their own way disregarding the authority of the word of God. We see breakdown and division. But on that day, He shall see the church, His body and bride, and be satisfied. For the first time in history, the whole church will all be together, perfect and without fault and it shall be something of exquisite beauty. In part of Revelation 21 we get a dramatic description of how the church will look, prepared and beautiful, like a bride adorned for her husband. Paul speaks about our lowly bodies, bodies that now experience pain and frustration and sorrow, being transformed so that we might be conformed to His glorious body. What a promise to the arthritic old lady, bent double but on her knees in prayer! Like His glorious body, strong and gentle. What a promise to the individual unable to overcome inner sin, seemingly bound forever to be its slave! Like His glorious body, without sin. What a promise to the lonely one, unloved and thinking themselves unlovely! Like His glorious body, the altogether lovely One. Such is His love for you and me that He will not rest until each one of us is safely home, with Him and like Him, saved and glorious.

There do appear to be two linked thoughts associated with our glorification. They are suffering and service. I'm told that the energy expended by the butterfly as it emerges from the chrysalis is almost enough to kill the insect. And yet what a beautiful creature emerges. In just the same way, suffering in the life of the believer can lead to the most beautiful of saints. Naturally we shy away from suffering; we shrink from its pain and rage against its presence in what was once a perfect creation. And yet through it, He is able to chip away at our rough edges to produce an inner beauty that starts to resemble the Saviour's. In Romans 8:17-18, Paul clearly says that present suffering is unworthy to be compared to the glory that is to come. The measure to which I suffer now is proportional to the measure to which His glory will be displayed in me in a coming day. Just as in the sky all the stars shine brightly, but some shine brighter than the rest, I believe that those whom He has allowed to suffer the most, those who have accepted suffering as a part of their worship of Him, will be the most glorious in a day soon to come. So take heart and do not give up! A similar thought is given in the verse from Philippians 3:21 referred to earlier. He will subdue, or literally arrange in rank order, all things to Himself. In Rome, a victorious returning general would have closest to Him in his triumph those who had fought the hardest. The Lord takes note of all that is done for Him, and in that day it will not lose its reward. It is interesting that the Greek word at the root of the English words glory, glorious and glorification etc. "doxa", from which we get the word doxology, means to have a good opinion of. We might well ask the question of ourselves, "Have I served in such a way that I have earned the good opinion of God towards me?" What a wonderful thing it will be to receive the commendation, "Well done! Good and faithful servant".

But this most wonderful glorification that accompanies our future salvation is not for our benefit alone. More important than the fact that there is a day to come in which we shall be transformed like unto His glorious image, is the fact that through our glorification He is the more glorified. Imagine you were to come to have a meal at my house. Now you might find that my children obediently did the dishes and cleared the table without any fuss – well, one can always dream! Hopefully you would be impressed and think that here was a well ordered house. Now imagine how you would feel if instead of my children doing the work, it was the prime minister, or some famous footballer or pop star. Then you would really be impressed and think that I was someone special. So it will be in that day. Surrounded by an innumerable throng of glorified and glorious saints and angels, none will be left in any doubt as to the spectacular glory of the Man from Nazareth. The One who came unto His own and was not received by them, but rather rejected by His own creation, will receive universal acclaim. The Head of a glorious body, even those who deny His existence will bow down to Him, and confess Him as Lord to the glory of God the Father. As we come to realise that our own glorification is just another step to His ultimate glory, then how much more we should desire to be the best we can be, to be as glorious as possible. Surely this prospect is enough to keep us as we face suffering and service.

So great a salvation! What assurance to know that He has done everything required so that we can receive eternal life. What certainty we can have that our salvation is permanent and secure in Him. What a challenge to live up to working out in practice what God has made us already, and will reveal in full measure in a day to come. What hope, as we look for the Saviour from heaven, to know that one day we shall awake with His likeness and be satisfied. Free from human frailty, glorious indeed, we shall be to the praise of His glory! No wonder the Spirit and the bride say "Come". Even so, come Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:20-21).

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