

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## Important days in God's calendar: The day of salvation

I got the idea for this new series of talks 'Important days in God's calendar' from the October - November 2012 issue of the 'Uplook' magazine, ([www.uplook.org](http://www.uplook.org)), which contains short articles on this theme. First of all, I should make it clear that days in Scripture are either actual 24 hour days, such as the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16:1-34, or longer time periods, such as the Lord's lifespan upon earth. He meant the latter in John 8:56, when He said to the Jews: "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day*" (English Standard Version). Now, we should ask the question: "Does God really have a calendar?" Well, yes - but not the calendar we use in everyday life. God's calendar covers all the eras of time, the whole history of the universe. It culminates in a future (to us) eternity, when time ceases to exist! And it was God who created time as part of His purposes for man: "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1).

### Series Outline

Let me tell you which of the important days mentioned in Scripture are the subjects in our series. Today I'll talk about "the day of salvation", which is sometimes called "the day of God's grace". Next week's talk will be about "the day of redemption", which brings to a close the present period of grace for believers. The third talk will be on "the day of the LORD", that period of time following the Rapture and leading up to, and into, the Kingdom. The final talk will be on "the day of the Lord Jesus Christ", and will look at the Kingdom in the light of New Testament revelations.

### The day of salvation

Our text for today is 2 Corinthians 6:2: "*For he says, 'In a favourable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the favourable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*" Although quoting from Isaiah 49:8, where the prophet predicted the Servant of the LORD would restore and establish the nation of Israel, a study of the context of this verse readily leads to the conclusion that Paul was writing about the present Gospel era. 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:10 explains the new creation work of reconciliation. Specifically, it's through Christ that people can be reconciled to God. The day of salvation is the era in which believers have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. As Christ's ambassadors, we appeal and implore guilty sinners, wherever they are in the world, to be reconciled to God (see 2 Corinthians 5:20). According to Hebrews 2:3, this wonderful message was first declared by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

After His ascension, the apostles who heard Him carried on the testimony, and that witness has continued until now, today. The Lord's commission was given to His disciples in Acts 1:8. He charged them to take the Gospel from Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria; and from there to the uttermost parts of the earth. The rest of the book of the Acts of the Apostles is the thrilling story of how that strategy was executed:

- by Peter and the other eleven apostles;
- by Philip; by the other disciples; and, finally
- by Paul and his different companions.

At Philippi (Acts 16:11), the message entered Europe. By the end of Acts, it was well-established in Rome, centre of that great world empire. But, praise God, the message proved to be unstoppable. We now know that there are Christian believers in all parts of the globe. Truly, "*their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world*" (Romans 10:18). And I want to emphasise that the day of salvation will continue until the last believer is added by the Lord to His church. Then, and only then, will the present day of grace come to an end - at the Rapture.

### The Person who is Salvation

At this point in my talk, I'd like us to think about why we possess such a glorious message to preach during this era. It's because: "*the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared*" (Titus 2:11, JN Darby Translation). In, and through, the Person of Christ the love and grace of God has been made known. Luke 2:28-32 records an incident which took place shortly after the Saviour was born, when devout Simeon looked upon the Babe in

the temple. A revelation had been given to him that he would see the Lord's Christ before he died. *"He took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.'" 2 Corinthians 5:19* puts Simeon's spontaneous blessing into words of doctrine: *"in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."* This is exactly what the apostles preached: *"there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). And from Matthew 1:21 we know that *"He saves [us] from our sins."*

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins to *"prepare the way of the Lord ... [so that] all flesh shall see the salvation of God"* (Luke 3:4, 6). Yes, the *"salvation of God"* was revealed in the Person of His Son. Therefore He is called the *"Saviour of the world"* (John 4:42). We can say that the day of salvation commenced with the public ministry of the Lord Jesus, which immediately followed His baptism. Throughout His life, many people encountered Him and received salvation from Him. For example, in Luke 5:17-26, the paralytic man was told that his sins were forgiven before he was healed to demonstrate that the Son of Man upon earth had been given the authority to save people. Then the Lord went out of the house to meet Levi, who made a great feast for Him (Luke 5:27-29). When the Pharisees and the scribes continued their objections to the Lord's activities, *"Jesus answered them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance'"* (Luke 5:30-32). Salvation was given to each person on the basis of that person's faith in the Saviour and His ability to save them. For example, when Simon the Pharisee thought that Jesus was wrong in letting a sinful woman of the city even touch Him, the Lord not only assured her *"Your sins are forgiven"*, but added *"Your faith has saved you; go in peace"* (Luke 7:48, 50).

Throughout Luke's Gospel, there are incidents about people who receive salvation. The parable in Luke 15:1-32 highlights the fact that everyone is lost until they repent of their sins. This message brought hope to the sinners and tax collectors who readily socialised with the Lord and eagerly listened to the Gospel. In Luke 19:1-10, one of the tax collectors, Zacchaeus, was converted: *"Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost'"* (Luke 19:9-10). (This text, *"the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost"* (Luke 19:10) gives the overall message of Luke's Gospel and can also be regarded as a description of what the Lord is doing during in the day of salvation.)

At His crucifixion (Luke 23:26-49), the Lord saved the dying thief who asked to be remembered by Him when He came into His kingdom (Luke 23:39-43). The Lord Jesus assured the thief that there was salvation for him, there and then, by speaking those wonderful words: *"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise"* (Luke 23:43). Luke ends his account with the Lord's own words which convey the divine intent for the day of salvation: *"Then [Jesus] opened [the disciples'] minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high'"* (Luke 24:45-49). I previously mentioned this commission was taken up by the disciples in the book of Acts.

## The work of salvation

I now come to a fundamental fact of the Gospel of our salvation. 2 Corinthians 5:21 explains: *"for our sake [God] made [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin ... that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* What a statement! What an amazing truth! How great the cost of our salvation! No wonder Paul regarded it of foremost importance to deliver this Gospel message to the Corinthians. In order for us to be saved, Christ had to *"[die] for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures"* (see 1 Corinthians 15:2-3).

As the hymn says,

*"He took the blame, bore the wrath,  
I stand forgiven at the Cross"*

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*"In accordance with the Scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:3) means that our sins had to be dealt with in a way which satisfies a holy God. In his *'Expanded paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul'*, (ISBN: 9780853640363) FF Bruce has a footnote about the word 'sin' in 2 Corinthians 5:21. He comments that Paul was conversant with the Hebrew Bible in which the word for 'sin' can also mean 'a sin offering'. He concludes that Paul probably had Isaiah 53:10 in mind: *"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand"*, King James (Authorised) Version. The Lord Jesus Christ made propitiation for our sins when He died upon the Cross. But also,

as the ultimate sin offering, by and in His death God condemned the root cause of all our transgressions, sin in the flesh (see Hebrews 2:17 with Romans 8:3).

### The day of wrath

Having mentioned propitiation, I must point out that if people refuse to accept Christ as Saviour during the day of salvation, they face God's judgment on the day of His wrath. That wrath is His settled attitude towards sins, sin and sinful humanity. Propitiation is the turning away of the righteous wrath of God by Christ's perfect and complete sacrifice for His people's sins. It was by His blood for: *"without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins"* (Hebrews 9:22). It's necessary to stress that coming judgment is also an important fact of the Gospel message we preach. Paul taught it in Romans 2:2-16, from which I'll read part of the passage: *"We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on [sinners]. Do you suppose, O man ... that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard ... heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works ... for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek ... For God shows no partiality ... on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus"* (Romans 2:2-16). Notice that the person who refuses the Gospel is "storing up wrath" for his or her self. But the judgment is righteous because God is keeping a record of the details of each person's life and this record will be opened at the judgment throne (see Revelation 20:12). Peter (2 Peter 2:4-8) cites three example groups on whom God's judgment has already fallen:

- the angels that sinned (2 Peter 2:4);
- the violent and corrupt world of mankind which perished in the Flood (2 Peter 2:5); and
- the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:6-8).

He concludes that since God did not spare them, *"[He] knows ... how to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment"* (2 Peter 2:9).

I once heard an interview on Premier Radio with the author Adrian Holloway in which he was asked what caused him to write his books 'The Shock of your Life' and 'After Shock' about what happens in the coming judgment day. I was disturbed at his reply. He said he wrote the books because not only unbelievers but also many young Christian believers are totally ignorant and unaware that there is a day of wrath entry on God's calendar! As Paul points out in Romans 2:2-16, there will be a different character of judgment for believers compared with unbelievers. Nevertheless, God will judge every person who has ever lived. For believers, it will be an assessment of their Christian lives and service. But for unbelievers, it's a judgment which none can endure and so they will be eternally condemned to the lake of fire (see Revelation 6:17, 20:11-15 and 21:8). Christians rely on the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is their Deliverer from this coming wrath (see 1 Thessalonians 1:10) and rejoice that: *"God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

### Crunch Time

Some Christians I know on Tyneside, where I live, have an interesting Geordie way of expressing when it was they were converted to Christ. They say: "it was when I got converted!" Not quite Bible language, for it is God who saved them, but I know what they mean. Well, whatever expression you'd use, I've reached the point in my talk when I must ask the questions: "Are you saved?" and "Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation?" I've just pointed out that doctrinally it means to be saved from the consequences of our sins and the judgment of God that awaits those who reject or ignore or neglect the message of salvation. Maybe you're like me and you cannot remember a time or place when or where you believed the Gospel, but you do believe it. It's 'believing' which is all important! Not that I once believed but no longer do so for that is false security. The word 'believes' in John 3:16-18 means to do so in a continuous sense: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. [He who] believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."* As WE Vine explains in his 'Dictionary of New Testament words, "perish" does not mean a lack of being, that is, of existence, it means a lack of well-being! Notice that the Saviour rescues us from perishing but gives us eternal life. Whilst salvation is primarily 'to be saved from', it then becomes something very positive - what we are save for or to. To me, the most meaningful expression in this respect is that believers *"obtain the salvation in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"* (2 Timothy 2:10)!

Notice, too, that salvation is *"in Christ Jesus."* Once I have truly believed in Christ, I possess eternal life, which is a gift from God. There's no way I can ever be lost! Everything depends upon Christ's sacrifice. By His blood He has obtained an eternal redemption and He is the source of eternal salvation (see Hebrews 9:12 with Hebrews 5:9). But I

said it was crunch time, decision time. Hebrews 2:3 searchingly asks: *"how shall we escape if we neglect so a great salvation?"*

### The poignancy of the present moment of time

I'd like to finish my talk by returning to the text I've used from 2 Corinthians 6:2. This verse reads like an emphatic newspaper headline, which becomes obvious when I paraphrase it: "Listen! Now is really the only 'right time'! Now - the 'day of salvation'!" The use of the word 'listen' means God is calling people to sit up and take notice of the gospel message. Whenever unbelievers hear the message of salvation, the 'now' of the text is very poignant. It's at that very moment in time they're called upon to believe. To them, the day of salvation is not a period of time, nor even a day - it's that very second. WA Bradley's hymn expresses it this way:

*"Each moment as it passes by, with vast results is fraught;  
You may accept, you may reject, the [salvation] for you bought."*

Imagine if Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) had not obeyed the Lord's command - he would have missed the opportunity of salvation. Why? - because the journey through Jericho for the Saviour was the way to Jerusalem and the Cross. He would not pass that way again! It was the one and only chance that Zacchaeus was given. The same was true of blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52). That's why he was so persistent in calling out for blessing (Mark 10:48). EE Hewitt's hymn captures this thought:

*"This his opportunity, for him salvation's day:  
Lord, I would my sight receive, have mercy, now, I pray."*

The fact that the day of salvation has lasted over 2,000 years, whilst an indication of God's longsuffering grace, does not mean that anyone can put off believing the Gospel to a future day. Rather, it indicates the reverse:

*"fast to its close speeds the day of God's grace"*

(Arthur Cutting 1854-1928)

And I must point out that, unlike our calendar, the days on God's calendar have been fixed and are not subject to change: *"[God] has fixed [the] day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by [Jesus Christ] whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising [Christ] from the dead"* (Acts 17:31). So I urge every listener to make the present moment of time the 'now' for your salvation!

Finally, there's a 'now' of living for all Christians: *"Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed"* (Romans 13:11). You see, there's a great danger of getting caught up with this present life and of reducing salvation to a ticket for heaven.

Yes, we are saved forever upon believing the Gospel of our salvation, but as 1 Peter 1:5 also teaches, salvation includes final deliverance from the presence of sin. There's also the sense that salvation means being saved now, and each and every day, from the rule of sin over us - we are "being saved" as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 1:18, 15:2 and 2 Corinthians 2:15. Let's make each day a 'day of salvation' until that final day when the Lord comes as our salvation!

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