

# The Salvation of Mankind

## (GodStory of Redemption)

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"The gospel," writes the Apostle Paul, "is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes" (Rom 1:16). This "gospel" Paul preached was the story of the salvation of man from the powers of sin and darkness. This story is, essentially, God's Story. This is what the word "gospel" actually means. It is taken from the old Anglo-Saxon word, *godspell*, meaning, "God's story." This story, as in all good stories, has players, setting, action, dialogue, and themes, all of which make up a story line or "*schema*" (plot) of the story.

Understanding this story requires that the reader follow the literary features through the story to see what roles they play in the development of the story. The players have a role to play, the stage setting has its role, the action and script have roles, and the themes of the story play very significant roles. The themes give meaning and significance to the action and dialogue of the players. To fully appreciate this story called "the gospel" one should follow out the various roles of the players, setting, action, dialogue, and themes in order to understand the story. The theme of this lesson has to do with God's coming into the world as its Savior; hence, the title of this lesson, *When God Came as the Savior*. In order to develop this theme we will first discuss the terminology associated with this theme (i.e., save, savior, salvation). We will then take this theme through the text of the story (i.e., the New Testament) to see how it is developed in this story called, "the Gospel."

There are different ways the terms, "save, savior, and salvation" may be understood. In the Hebrew Scriptures the concept of salvation carried the basic idea of rescue from physical danger, as

Moses said to the people Israel when the armies of Egypt were pursuing them:

*And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see **the salvation of Yahweh**, which he will work for you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever (Exodus 14:13).*

This aspect of salvation is seen also in the New Testament:

*Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, **save us!** We're going to drown!" (Matt 8:24-25)*

*Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, **save me!**" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him (Matt 14:28-31).*

## The Fall of Man

### *A Story of Self-Destruction*

The idea of salvation with which we are concerned in this study is that of deliverance or salvation from an enslaving power. This enslaving power is the Satanic force by which man has been brought to moral ruin and spiritual alienation from his Creator. The term "lost" is not the best translation of the Greek word of the Biblical text. The word translated "lost" in the New Testament is *apollumi*, which means, "to be destroyed or ruined." To be "lost," is the Biblical sense, does not mean, "not knowing where you are," which is the popular connotation of the word; rather, to experience *apoleia* is to be destroyed. The term is always associated with damage or destruction; in fact, Satan himself is called *Apolluon* or "the destroyer" in Scripture. Salvation in the New Testament sense, then, means to be saved or delivered from a destroyed state or condition. To say *apollumai* is to say "I am destroyed!"

It is clear from Biblical teaching and from observation that man has enslaved himself to the power of sin and stands before God, not as the created masterpiece he was intended to be, but as a being morally destroyed and spiritually alienated from his God. Man's estrangement from God is a result of his rejection of God and the placement of himself at the center of his existence. The story of man's enslavement of himself to the powers of evil is very vividly portrayed in Rom 1:18-32. The story begins with man's disbelief, first of God's word then of his existence. With the displacement of God from the center of his life (Rom 1:18-23) man placed himself there and worshipped and served himself. Man's self-centeredness invariably led to a distortion of his sense of values (Rom 1:24-27) which eventually led to a state of complete moral malignancy (Rom 1:28-32).

### *The Destroying Power of Disbelief*

At every stage of this descent man progressed further and further into enslavement to the power of sin. According to Paul, man cannot deliver himself from this condition. He is as a man addicted to a powerful drug that has taken control of his complete existence and is destroying him. His existence will conclude in death because "the soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezek 18:4, 20; Gen 2:16-17) and, as the Apostle Paul informs us, "all have sinned" (Rom 3:23). In fact, according to Paul, a man enslaved to sin is dead in sin (Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13), his existence is destroyed because his relationship with God has been destroyed. How can man be delivered from such a condition? According to Paul, he must die to that condemned existence (i.e., the old existence destroyed by sin and condemned to death) and experience spiritual regeneration and transformation into a new existence. How does this deliverance occur? As man's estrangement from God occurred through "disbelief," his reconciliation to God will occur through "belief."

Through restoring God to the center of his existence, one's spiritual being can be transformed into new existence. This is a theme Paul labors to develop throughout his letter to the Romans (esp. in chapters 3-6). The Creator again becomes our Creator and creates man anew; and in doing so delivers him from his old existence,

which is condemned to death. In effect, the old Adam, whose existence is characterized by disbelief, disobedience, and death, is put to death and out of the old Adamic man God brings a new man whose existence is characterized by belief, obedience, and life. By means of spiritual recreation or regeneration, God **delivers** us from our old existence and thus **redeems** us from the power of sin and **saves** us from the condemnation of death. By again becoming our Creator, God becomes our deliverer, redeemer, and savior.

### *The Gospel: God's Story of Redemption*

The dynamics of this redemptive activity of God are developed throughout the New Testament. It is a "story of redemption," or "redemption drama." There are many parts to this story and all aspects of it play an essential role. There are saviors within this story and there are means by which the salvation of man is effected.

There has been, through the centuries, a great deal of discussion and controversy concerning this topic, especially as relates to the questions of who, what, when, where, why and how in the story of the salvation of man. One of the most common problems is that of "either/or" thinking on an issue that does not lend itself to this kind of thinking, if one is to fully comprehend the story. It is not the case that *either* this saves *or* that saves (i.e., one or the other, but not both). Rather, what we have presented to us in the text of this story is much more developed and encompassing than "either this or that." It is sometimes good to try and simplify something that is complex, but when one is dealing with a story so full of meaning, attempts at simplification can result in significant loss of content and meaning. The result is often a black and white portrayal of something that is wonderfully multi-colored.

The story of God's redemption of the human race has numerous aspects associated with the development of its major theme of salvation or deliverance. There is the major player, "the savior;" but who is he? Is he God, or is he the Messiah, or is he the mysterious and wondrous Spirit of God moving in this world of darkness to rescue mankind from the powers of darkness? Is the savior only one

of these, all of these, or are all of these the same player?

### *Saviors, Deliverers, Redeemers, and Such*

We read in one place that, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim 1:15), then in another place, we read, "we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men" (1 Tim 1:15). Does this confuse us as to who our savior is? To further complicate the matter, the Apostle Peter tells his audience on Pentecost, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation" (Acts 2:40), and then Paul writes in one of his letters, "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12), and in another, "Take heed to yourself, and to your teaching, continue in these things; for in doing this you will save both yourself and them that hear you" (1 Tim 4:16). Does this not leave us with the question, "Who is the savior in this story?" One verse says that Christ saves us, another verse says that God is our savior, and others says that we save ourselves. Who is the savior in this salvation drama? The problem here is not a contradiction within the story; the problem is exclusivistic thinking. It is not a question of "either-or" concerning the identity of the savior, rather, it is a matter of "both-and;" i.e., it is the case that *both* Christ saves us *and* God is our savior, *and* man must do something to save himself. This "false dilemma" of "either/or" is what results from trying to reduce a multicolored concept to one or two colors. The theme of salvation is portrayed in this story as a multicolored concept, not one color, or black and white

### What Must I Do to Be Saved?

When the walls shook and the jail was falling down around at the movement of God in the deliverance of Paul and Silas, the jailor asked the question that has been the subject of debate for at least two centuries. Paul's answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved," (Acts 16:31). The words of this jailor were, reading very literally from the Greek text were, "Sirs, what is necessary (*dei*) for me to do (*poiein*) in order that (*hina*) I may be saved (*sotho*)?" Following his initial response to the man, the text of Acts tells us that "they (Paul and Silas) spoke to him the word of the Lord

with all the one's in his house, and he (the jailor) took them that night washed their wounds and he was baptized immediately (*parachrema*) and all the ones with him." These words of Paul and Silas seem simple enough, but the simplicity has proven to be not so simple. In the "short answer" the man is told to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" but man is told more "they spoke to him the word of the Lord." Why was it necessary to tell him anything else if all that needed to be said, had been said?

Until the time of the Reformation Movement in the sixteenth century those who asked this question were told the same thing this man was told, that his salvation was rooted in the belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior. But accepting the lordship of Christ requires that one submit himself to "the word of the Lord." This is why the man was taken immediately and baptized with his household. The Protestant Reformation's reaction to the concept of "works salvation" which was such a prevalent teaching of the Roman Catholic Church led them to insist that nothing else was necessary to salvation but belief alone. With this all else that the NT had to say on the subject of salvation was set aside as having no efficacy to save. So, the initial answer Paul and Silas gave this man had nothing to do with his salvation and the fact that he was immediately baptized had nothing to do with his salvation.

The problem with what the Reformers did is that they added to the message of salvation what was not there and they eliminated what was there. The word *sola* (only or alone) is never found in association with the words save or salvation, with exception of James 2:24, "you see that by works a man is justified and not by faith only (*pisteos monon*)." Of course, this was in complete contradiction to Martin Luther's doctrine of salvation by "faith only," so he determined that the epistle of James was not inspired of God and should be eliminated from the NT. Running through all of this is a motif of "extremes." No one has the right to eliminate from the NT what is there, neither does he have the right to add to what is not there, as the adverbs "only" or "alone."

## *Hearing the Whole Story*

The salvation God offers mankind is a well developed story in Scripture: there are players, dialogue, action, and themes. The players engage in the dialogue and action in developing the plot of the story. The plot, sometimes called a *schema*, is the scheme of events in the development of a story leading to an ending making sense of the story. In this redemption drama, the plot or *schema* of the story has to do with how the salvation of man is accomplished and what man must do to receive it. How or in what way did the Savior in this story bring about the salvation of man? What were the means used by the savior in bringing about his deliverance?

The answer to these questions lies in the story itself; and not just in some part of the story, but in the whole of it. To limit the story to only one or more of the essential parts is to change the story. The essentials in the development of the theme of "salvation" in this redemption story are all clearly revealed to us in the story as a whole.

## *God Is the Savior of Mankind*

As mentioned above, there is a savior in this story who reveals himself in different roles. The savior is God himself, but he is on the stage of human history as Jesus of Nazareth, he also appears as the Holy Spirit, as well as being off-stage as the director of the whole drama. God is the main player although spoken of in different roles or players, all of which are essential to the development of the story. To eliminate God as Savior in this story of salvation, the story is incomplete.

There are means of salvation by which the Savior of this story brings about the salvation he came into the story to accomplish. All are necessary parts of the whole. The primary player in this redemption story is **God** himself; it is he that saves us.

*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love*

*of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy (Titus 3:3-5).*

In 1 Tim 4:10, the Apostle Paul tells us that **God is, "the Savior of all men,"** and in 2 Tim 1:9, he writes that it is, "**God . . . who has saved us** and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace." This verse goes on to inform us that:

*This grace was given us **in Christ Jesus** before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through **the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus**, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim 1:9b-10).*

Here we have revealed another player in the drama that is, in reality, another role of God himself.

### *Jesus the Savior*

Is the heading of this section in conflict with the heading of the previous section? Not at all, it is Jesus of Nazareth who is introduced "the central figure" of this redemption drama. Paul says the "God was in Christ" reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor 5:17-20). Jesus is the one through whom God dwelt among us. It is true that God is the Savior, but it is also true that Jesus is the Savior in that he and the Father were one. He was not "a god," as some early churchmen would have it, but "God" in the fullest sense of the word.

That God would send deliverance to mankind was revealed repeatedly in the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. Isaiah 40:1-5). That he brought that deliverance himself is revealed in the New Testament Scriptures. The Isaiah 40 text foretold of the coming of "*Yahweh*" (the Lord) "*Elohim*" (our God), an event that would be a revelation of the glory of the Lord (*Yahweh*). According to the Gospel accounts (Matt 3:3ff; Mark 1:1ff; Luke 3:4ff), the one who appeared in the role of "*Yahweh Elohim*," whose appearance was identified as a revelation of the glory of *Yahweh*, was Jesus of Nazareth. It is "Jesus of Nazareth" who is identified in Scripture as "God with us," the one through

whom God became our Savior.

*She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name **Jesus**, because **he will save his people from their sins.**" All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" -which means, "**God with us**" (Matt 1:21-23).*

Jesus' own interpretation of his messianic role was that of a Savior, as may be seen in his words to Zacchaeus:

*Jesus said to him, "Today **salvation** has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and **to save what was lost** (Greek: destroyed)" (Luke 19:9-10).*

This was the heart of the redemption message proclaimed by the apostles of Christ, as may be seen from Peter's speech to the Sanhedrin:

*. . . then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of **Jesus Christ of Nazareth**, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.**" (Acts 4:10-12)*

That Jesus was believed to be both "God" and "Savior" to the early Christians is found in the confessional statement of Paul in Titus 2:11-13,

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of **our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ** . . .*

The Role of God the Holy Spirit is also very prominent in this salvation drama.

### *The Spirit of God and the Salvation of Man*

The role of the Holy Spirit is significant in this redemption story. Man's deliverance from the power of sin is brought about through conversion to Christ. Through this a transformation of one's spiritual existence takes place. Paul calls this spiritual renewal a "new creation," which takes place in our reenactment of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (cf. Rom 6:3-11). This "new creation" is, essentially, a regeneration of the human spirit by the very Spirit of God, an action wherein the old existence "in Adam" is buried and raised out of that old existence into a new existence "in Christ." The presence of God as a moral force indwells the life of the one who has been recreated in Christ, a moral force that may be called upon when needed.

*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. **He saved us through the washing of rebirth (baptism) and renewal by the Holy Spirit (spiritual regeneration),** (Titus 3:3-5)*

This is what Nicodemus was told by Jesus in John 3:3-5:

*. . . Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is **born of water and the Spirit** (the Greek text literally reads, "born out of water and spirit").*

Before one can see the reign of God at work in his life, as opposed to the reign of sin, he must experience a spiritual renewal,

which occurs in relation to water. This is in complete harmony with what Paul teaches in Rom 6. Our regenerated spirit is renewed in the likeness of the spirit of Christ and our lives are to reflect the moral character of Christ. This is God's way of restoring to man the image of God that was damaged in the fall. The presence of God in our new existence gives us the power we need in the development of our moral character, as Paul says in the letter to the Romans.

*Those controlled by the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the flesh but by **the Spirit**, if **the Spirit of God** lives in you. And if anyone does not have **the Spirit of Christ**, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet **your spirit is alive** because of righteousness. (Rom 8:8-10)*

Paul also writes in another letter, "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet **our inward man is renewed** day by day," (2 Cor 4:16). So also in the following letters:

*. . . that you put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxes corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that you **be renewed in the spirit** of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God **has been created** in righteousness and holiness of truth. (Eph 4:23-24)*

*. . . lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on **the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him.** (Col 3:9-10)*

God has entered into our world as **Savior** to redeem us by recreating us and translating us out of the reign of sin and death into the reign of grace and life (Rom 5:21). He has entered into our world as one of us in the **Messiah** promised to Israel. His intent was to deliver us from the power of sin and death. This he accomplished through the power of the resurrection of Christ which delivered us from a condemned existence "in Adam" into new existence "in Christ." Further, he has entered into our world in the presence and

power of **his Holy Spirit** in order to save us through the regeneration of our spirits and the filling of our lives with the presence and power of his moral being.

### *The Death of Christ as a Saving Event*

The concept that one is saved by blood seems almost paganistic. Here one's understanding of the term "blood" is very important. To be saved by the blood of Christ is to experience deliverance, which is in some way related to the crucifixion of Christ and his resurrection out of death. The term "blood" is simply a poetic metaphor for the "death" of Christ. This is especially so in the writings of Paul where Christ's blood is synonymous with his violent death, which was followed by his triumphant resurrection from death.

Jewish writers were especially fond of using poetic metaphors to speak of death. In natural death one simply falls into "sleep," where in the case of a death by bloodshed, the term "blood" becomes synonymous with that death. In the case of the death of Jesus of Nazareth, the violent nature of his death (especially the means by which he was put to death - crucifixion) is envisioned in the language describing his death (i.e., blood, cross, etc.).

This violent and bloody death was a part of the redemption event. His death was an essential part of his conflict with and conquest over the satanic forces that were at work in the powers of sin and death. This is the meaning of the language associated with Christ's death (i.e., blood, the cross); all of which were essential parts of the redemption drama:

*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, **Christ died for the ungodly**. Very rarely will anyone **die** for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to **die**. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, **Christ died for us**. Since we have now been justified by **his blood**, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him*

*through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we **be saved through his life!** (Rom 5:6-10)*

*For the message of **the cross** is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved **it is the power of God** (1 Cor 1:18).*

*In him we have redemption **through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (Eph 1:7).*

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace **through his blood, shed on the cross**. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body **through death** to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation (Col 1:19-22).*

*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, but with **the precious blood of Christ**, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who **raised him from the dead** and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God (1 Peter 1:18-21).*

*. . . and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, **the firstborn from the dead**, and the ruler of the kings of the earth, to him who loves us and has **freed us from our sins by his blood** (Rev 1:5).*

It is clear from these Scriptures that the death (blood/cross) of Christ plays an essential role in this redemption story; but there is more.

### *The Resurrection of Christ and Man's Salvation*

We are saved by his death, his blood or the cross, but not by his death (or the metaphors for death - blood/cross) alone; here again we have the problem of adverbs (only/alone). Paul writes that if Christ's

death had been the end of this redemption story, there would have been no redemption. "If Christ has not been raised," says Paul, "your faith is futile; you are still in your sins," (1 Cor 15:17). Here is a point of no little significance. The teaching that Christ's death appeased the wrath of God and removed our sins from us, thus making us acceptable to God, is very difficult to reconcile with this statement of Paul. The problem here is disjunctive ("either/or") thinking.

According to Paul, the heart of the gospel story is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:1-4). It was by his resurrection that he destroyed the power of sin and death and effected man's deliverance:

*For since **death** came through a man, **the resurrection of the dead** comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive (1 Cor 15:21-22).*

*. . . who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God **by his resurrection from the dead**: Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 1:4).*

*For if, when we were God's enemies, we were **reconciled to him through the death of his Son**, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we **be saved through his life!** (Rom 5:10).*

*For we know that since **Christ was raised from the dead**, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but **the life he lives**, he lives to God (Rom 6:9-10).*

*This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of **our Savior**, Christ Jesus, **who has destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim 1:9b-10).*

*. . . he too shared in their humanity so that **by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of***

*death (Heb 2:14-15).*

*When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. **I am the Living One**; I was dead, and behold **I am alive forever and ever!** And **I hold the keys of death and Hades** (Rev 1:17-18).*

*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was **put to death in the body but made alive in the spirit**, (1 Peter 3:18).*

Christ's resurrection from death resulted in the destruction of the powers of sin and death over him; not only for himself but also for all those who are "in him," by means of their recreation into new existence or new birth. Christ's resurrection is an essential part of the redemption story. But there is yet more.

### *By **Grace** You Are Saved*

The heading of this section is part of Paul's words found in Eph 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith." Paul goes on to say that this show of God's grace was a gift to man. The grace wasn't earned or deserved, it was freely given; we are God's masterpiece (*poiama*), having been created in Christ for works of goodness (Eph 2:8-10).

God's entrance into this world in order to bring about the salvation of mankind is identified in the New Testament as the appearance of his grace, "For **the grace of God** that brings salvation **has appeared** to all men" (Titus 2:11). According to John the appearance of Jesus in our world was a revelation of God's glory, full of grace and truth:

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the Only Begotten, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth** . . . For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth** came through Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 17)*

The term "grace" in the Greek language has a variety of meanings. It may be understood as an emotional disposition of someone toward another (i.e., graciousness or favor shown or granted; especially, unmerited favor). It may also be used to speak of a special gift someone possesses or a special gift someone is given. In the writings of Paul the grace of God appears to be a force or power of God (i.e., an expression of one of his moral attributes) as well as a special gift of loving-kindness, an expression of the goodness of God. According to Paul, those who have experienced God's deliverance have, in essence, gained access into this grace:

*. . . since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we **have gained access by faith into this grace** in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. (Rom 5:1-2)*

Here Paul speaks of grace as something into which one may gain access. Perhaps, what he has in view is a realm of existence characterized by grace (i.e., a realm of existence wherein grace reigns). This is the way he uses the term in Rom 5:20-21, where he portrays grace as a reigning power set over against sin as a reigning power:

*But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just **as sin reigned** in death, so also **grace might reign** through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 5:20-21).*

Grace, then, as used in the New Testament, appears to be an expression of the intrinsic goodness of God, bestowed as a gift upon the human race (unmerited favor); but it is also a benevolent power which God has set at work in the world, which stands over against the malevolent power called sin. It is this expression of God's goodness (his grace) that has resulted in the salvation of the human race.

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - **it is***

*by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show **the incomparable riches of his grace**, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For **it is by grace you have been saved**, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast (Gal 2:4-9).*

*. . . for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely **by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (Rom 3:23-24).*

Just as our redemption is "in Christ," it is in Christ that God's grace is found: "You therefore, my child," writes Paul to Timothy, "be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," (2 Tim 2:1). It is "in Christ" that new existence is found, that redemption is found, and God's grace is experienced and becomes a reigning presence in our lives. The role of the reigning power of God's grace in the redemption drama is a beautiful and essential part of the story; but there is more.

### *By Grace You Are Saved Through **Faith***

Christians are people who believe what they believe so deeply they have become one with their beliefs and have become so at one with what they believe they have been transformed by their beliefs. One does not "just believe;" rather, one believes *that* something is true or one believes *in* something or someone. Faith must have content and it must be focused. Both the content and focus of our faith is the central figure of the Christian religion, Jesus of Nazareth.

We believe that what he claimed about himself and what those associated with him believed about him are true. These claims are found in the text of New Testament Scripture. Christian belief, then, centers in Jesus of Nazareth: his identity, his teachings, the redemptive activity that brought him into our world, and the teaching about him by his earliest followers. It is "Christological faith" with which we are concerned. This kind of faith has the power to save us, as may be seen in the following.

*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever **believes** may in him **have eternal life**. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believes** on him should not perish, but **have eternal life**. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him (John 3:14-17).*

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever **believes** and is baptized **will be saved**, but whoever does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:15-16).*

*The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved** - you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because **he had come to believe in God** - he and his whole family (Acts 16:29-34).*

*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** (Rom 10:9).*

*. . . for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only **he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God**. (1 John 5:4-5)*

From these texts we learn that belief as the power to save us, and the faith of which these texts speak is faith which has Christ as its content and focus - Christological faith. Further, from the Rom 10 reference we learn that this faith must be confessed and that confession of faith is an essential part of our conversion to Christ - an essential part of the redemption story.

*With the Mouth Confession Is Made unto Salvation*

*. . . 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. For with the heart man **believes** unto righteousness; and with the mouth **confession** is made unto (Greek *eis* - into) salvation. (Rom 10:9-10)*

It is not confession of sins that is under consideration here, it is confession of faith; and, more significantly, it is confession of faith in Christ. The faith here under consideration has Jesus of Nazareth as its content. Expressing with our lips what we have come to believe in our hearts is an essential part of the conversion process; it is owning to others what we have come to believe as true with reference to the identity of Jesus of Nazareth (Matt 10:32-33). The major question running through the New Testament Gospels is "Who is this Jesus of Nazareth?" or as expressed by his disciples, "Who is he that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Matt 8:27). The conclusions reached by those who came to faith in him are expressed throughout the New Testament in the form of Christological confessions:

*When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God**" (Matt 16:13-16; see also v 20).*

*They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and **we know that this man really is the Savior of the world**" (John 4:42).*

*You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. **We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.**" (John 6:67-69)*

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in*

*me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." (John 11:25-27)*

*Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:27-28)*

*"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36)*

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:9-11)*

*. . . while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of **our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ**, (Titus 2:13).*

*And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent **his Son** to be **the Savior of the world**. If anyone **confesses that Jesus is the Son of God**, God lives in him and he in God. (1 John 4:14-15)*

In each confessional statement, belief is expressed with reference to the Messianic identity of Jesus; and at the heart of each confession is a Christological title ascribed to Jesus: the Messiah/Christ, the Son of God, the Holy One of God, the Savior of the world, Lord, God, and our Great God. It is significant to note that in each of the roles designated by one of these titles, Jesus functions as a redeemer figure - the deliverer or savior of the human race. Our believing and confessing our belief in him are essential to our reception of this deliverance; but, again, there is more.

### *Repent and Be Converted*

These are the words of Peter at the conclusion of his second sermon in Jerusalem, found in Acts 3. In the Greek NT the word

“repent” (*metanoeo*) means, “to change ones mind” and the word “convert” (*epistrepho*) means, “to turn around.” Both are actions that are often found together. The concept of repentance, as it relates to salvation, has to do with the moment one determines that he needs and wants deliverance God is offering. Before conversion can occur, one must come to the realization that he is in a state of self-destruction and desire to be delivered from that condition. He is enslaved to the satanic powers of sin and death. This is the crisis of human existence to which this redemption drama speaks.

In repentance, one is making a decisive movement from something to something: from disbelief to belief, from rejection of Christ's identity to acceptance of who he was, from disobedience and rebellion against God to obedience and submission to God.

In addition to a change of mind is the role of the emotions in repentance. This is drawn more from the Hebrew concept of repentance than the Greek. The Hebrew word is *nacham*, which literally means, "to sigh or breathe deeply, to feel a strong or deep sense of sorrow." Both the Greek and Hebrew senses of repentance are at work in the concept of repentance as used in the New Testament. This may be seen in such texts as Acts 2, in Peter's speech to those who had consented to the crucifixion of Christ:

*Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "**Repent** and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. (Acts 2:36-41)*

They repented (*metanoeo*) changed their minds with reference to the identity of Jesus of Nazareth and were stabbed in their hearts at the realization that they had consented to the crucifixion of the very Messiah they had longed for. This portrayal of repentance may be seen in other texts: Acts 3:19; 17:30; 2 Cor 7:10.

A change of mind and remorse or sorrow for one's behavior are

both aspects of repentance, and repentance is an essential part of what must happen to man in the redemption story; but, there is even more.

### *Baptism also Now Saves You*

This heading is taken from 1 Peter 3:21 wherein Peter saying to his reader that God's patiently waited while Noah build the ark, and then makes the analogy (from type to antitype) that as the water of the flood bore the ark up and thus saved Noah and his family so also the water of baptism has a similar function in man's salvation. Peter's words, translated very literally from the Greek text, read as follows:

*. . . the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being a prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls were saved through water, which also in like figure baptism now saves you, not a removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:20-21).*

Baptism, as a part of the redemption drama, not as a work that earns one salvation, but in the sense that Peter uses it; it is a piece of typology which reenacts an event which is a part of the story of God's salvation of man. In Peter's analogy it is the act of God saving Noah and his family. In Paul the analogy is that dying and rising again. In the words of Paul, the act of immersion into the waters of baptism is a reenactment of Christ's burial in the tomb following his death. As Christ died to his old existence in Adam and that existence was buried, so the believer dies to his or her old existence in Adam and that existence buried in the waters of baptism; and as Christ arose out of the tomb as the first fruit of new existence, so is the believer raised up out of the water into new existence in Christ.

Paul eloquently develops this imagery in his letter to the Romans (6:1-4), which follows his words in 5:21, that the believer cannot continue a life of sin because the reign of sin has been replaced by the reign of grace. Baptism, then, is a way burying an

existence enslaved to sin and being raised out of that water into a new existence ruled by grace:

*But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! **We died to sin**; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that **all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death**? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may be raised in newness of life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that **our old self was crucified with him** so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should **no longer be slaves to sin** - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. **The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.** In the same way, **count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, **as those who have been brought from death to life** (Rom 5:20b-6:1-14).*

In the new birth of the believer a death to his or her existence in Adam occurs, that existence is buried in the waters of baptism, and the believer is raised into new existence in Christ. This is what Paul says happens to us in our conversion from life "in Adam" to life "in Christ." "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come," (2 Cor 5:17). The role of baptism in the salvation drama may be seen in additional New Testament texts.

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to*

*all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16)*

*Peter replied, "Repent and **be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)*

*[Saul of Tarsus is told following his having seen the risen Jesus], and now what are you waiting for? Get up, **be baptized and wash your sins away**, calling on his name. (Acts 22:16)*

### **Is Obedience In Any Form Essential to One's Salvation?**

The role of obedience has been a controversial issue in Christian theology and dogma. As mentioned earlier, this controversy is rooted in the "faith only" theology of the Reformation Movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> century led by Martin Luther, who developed this view in opposition to the "works only" teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. "If obedience is necessary," the argument goes, "then it is the case that we are being saved by works and not by grace or faith?" As has been stated earlier, this is disjunctive thinking (i.e. **either** we are saved by faith only **or** we are saved by our obedience), "either/or" rather "both/and." The concern that produced this type of thinking was that if any obedience was required on the part of man, then he was earning his salvation.

This attitude assumes that the role of responsibility on the part of man was completely foreign to the redemption drama. But God created man to be a responsible being, as is evident from Gen 1-3, and this has not changed from the time Adam awoke to life in the Garden. The role of responsibility has always been a given in the relationship between God and man. Man's response to God in the Garden resulted in man's estrangement from God. If God no longer requires obedience then he is neither just nor righteous and is not the same today, yesterday, and tomorrow.

Theologians from ancient times have insisted on an "either/or"

way of seeing God's expectations of man. However, it is more often a matter of "both/and" we see presented in Scripture. This has been clearly demonstrated throughout this presentation. Of course, God expects obedience from man; the very idea that he has in some way waved obedience and replaced it with a "faith only" response from man cannot be substantiated from a responsible or thorough reading of the NT.

If we have confessed Jesus to be our Lord, how can we possibly argue that obedience to this Lord is unnecessary or nonessential to our salvation? Such a way of thinking betrays a complete misunderstanding of the title "Lord" and the meaning intrinsic within it. In Luke 6:46 Jesus says: "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46); and in Matt 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Simply calling him "Lord" is not enough. One must respond to him as a Lord, i.e., as one who has authority over our lives (Matt 28:18).

One would have to admit that there a little "double-speak" involved in saying that all one must do to be saved is accept Jesus as Lord and Savior" and then insist that it is not essential to render obedience to him as a Lord. Such thinking is inconsistent on the very face of it. If man is not willing to accept Jesus of Nazareth as his Lord, he cannot expect him to be his Savior. The writer of Hebrews assumes a clear connection between obedience and salvation; he calls Jesus the author or cause of the salvation of the sons of glory (2:10); and in chapter 5, the writer of the epistle says of Jesus,

*Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and being made perfect, he became to all who obey him the author/cause [aitios - the cause of something] of eternal **salvation** (Heb 5:8-9).*

The essentiality of the role of obedience to Christ is also seen in the Gospel of John:

*The Father loves the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He*

*that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but **he that obeys not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.** (John 3:35-36)*

## **The Gospel of Our Salvation**

In Eph 1:13, Paul uses the expression, "the gospel of our salvation," which he identifies as "the word of truth." The very story we have been discussing has an essential role in our salvation. In fact, Paul says of the gospel, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." (Rom 1:16). He identifies the core message of the gospel in the following:

*Now, brothers, I want to remind you of **the gospel** I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. **By this gospel you are saved**, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:1-2).*

This story called "the gospel," is a story of salvation and it plays an essential role in communicating to mankind the drama of God's deliverance of his creation. The story of God's scheme of redemption is revealed and preserved in the writings we call Scripture. God has always seen that the stories he wished men to know and believe concerning his activity on the stage with man be preserved in a special way for generation after of generation of man. The source of this communication has always been the special collections of such writings called "Scripture." Paul writes to Timothy concerning the role the Scriptures play in man's salvation:

*But you remain in the things that you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them. And that from a babe you have known **the sacred writings that are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired of God and is profitable for teaching, for***

*reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.*

In John 5:39 Jesus says to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, "You search **the Scriptures**, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and **these are they which bear witness of me.**" Then he goes on to say, "but you will not **come to me** that you may have life." It is not the stories themselves, or the writings containing these stories, that grants the gift of eternal life man. Rather, it is the one these stories are all about, the one who emerges as the savior in all these stories, the main player of this redemption drama - God who was here in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

### **The Matter of Hearing the Whole Story, Again!**

This story is more multicolored than one colored or black and white, far more involved and involving, and far more critical in terms of human need than any other story ever created or told. Because of the nature of this the story it must be heard in its entirety in terms of its essential intent, the redemption of mankind. All that is revealed concerning that which is associated with the salvation of man must be accepted as revelation from God and essential to belief, acceptance, and obedience.

One may not eliminate anything from what is revealed in the NT Scriptures as a part of the story without distorting, rewriting, or "mistelling" the story. Whether it is God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, faith in Christ, confession of faith, repentance, baptism, or obedience to Jesus as Lord. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation and that gospel is found in the Scriptures, both are essential to the story and neither may be eliminated in favor of a the dogma of faith "only" or "alone." The death of Christ apart from the resurrection of Christ does not saved, as Paul makes clear in 1 Cor 15:17, "if Christ is not raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins;" both are essential to the salvation of man.

None of these particulars may be set apart from the whole or assigned the adverb "only" or "alone." To eliminate or dismiss any

part of the story of salvation is to be unfaithful to the story. God has not set anything in play in the scheme of redemption that is not an essential part of it. We are to believe this story as true and accept it in its entirety in order to realize its redeeming power.

Man's failure in the beginning came as a result of his desire to believe a distortion of God's word rather than believe the actual words of God. "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;" God instructed Adam, "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall surely die.**" Adam's sin was his disbelief of what God had said and his belief in Satan's alteration of God's words, "If you eat of the tree, **you will not surely die**, but you will be like God himself." Thus came the fall of man and God has been trying to restore him ever since!

## Conclusion

This story is God's story, but it is also our story. It is the story of God coming into the world to bring about the recreation of man. This story began "in the beginning" with God's creation of man in his image; it then tells of the choice given man with the consequences of his choice. Man's relationship to God was rooted in his choice and the responsibility given to man to commit himself to that relationship.

The choice had to do with Adam's belief in God and his belief of God's word concerning man's well-being or happiness. Man chose disbelief rather than belief and thus came man's fall. Through the centuries God has attempted to restore man to his original state, but because man has repeatedly asserted his will over God's will, which has always been for the well-being of man. Because of man's choice of his own will over the will of God, the whole of the existence of the human race has been marked with failure. The word "failure," in both languages of Scripture (Hebrew and Greek), translated as "sin," actually means, "to miss the mark, to fail."

God's efforts have been everlasting to deliver man from the consequences of his/her choice in the Garden. In the last chapters of

this story God has again reached down to man in effort to redeem him. Not only has God reached down, he has come down into the world as man's Savior. His visitation was in the person of a Galilean carpenter named Jesus of Nazareth who was sent to Israel as the promised Messiah. He came not only to Israel but also the whole of mankind, beginning with Israel.

Jesus defines his ministry in the words, "I have come to seek and the save that which was lost/destroyed," (Luke 19:10). The state of being that was lost occurred through disbelief and it would be regained through belief. The belief that will restore man to his original state of being is found in the story called "the gospel," the story of God's love of man and his desire for man's return to oneness with his Creator and the restoration of his original state as a being created in the image of God - the story of "the Salvation of Mankind."

MWLIII

### Questions For Discussion

1. What do you understand by the word "salvation?" (Use word associations.)
2. What is the Biblical sense of the words: save, saved, salvation and savior? From what are we seeking salvation in accepting Christ as our savior?
3. What do you understand by the expressions, "the plan of salvation," "the scheme of redemption," or "the redemption story/drama?"
4. What is the plan of salvation as you understand it or as you have heard it taught?
5. Is it legitimate to emphasize one (or a few) Biblical teaching(s) on salvation over other Biblical teaching on this theme (e.g., God over Christ, faith over baptism, grace over obedience, etc.)? If not, why not?

6. From the above list, what would you consider as those biblical teachings *most essential* to one's salvation? Give the reason for your answer.
7. Do you think anyone ever has the right to eliminate any of the above listed particulars from the collection of Biblical teaching concerning salvation?
8. If the New Testament says that something will save us, does anyone ever have the right to say that it does not save, or that it is not essential to our salvation?
9. If we have truly accepted Jesus as our Lord, are we ever justified in insisting that we do not have to do something he has told us to do?
10. Why do you think there is such a desire to insert the adverbs "only" or "alone" into the Biblical teaching on salvation?