

Just What do You Mean.....Salvation?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

1961, 1973 edition

Do you realize not one in a hundred knows what salvation is -- how to get it -- when you will receive it? Don't be too

NOTICE! "Being now justified." How? By your works -- by your required obedience to God's Law? No! By the blood of CHRIST! If you have repented, and accepted Jesus Christ as personal Saviour you are already now justified!

But right here is where so many go off into error. They simply do not understand Biblical terms. "Justified" does not refer to the future -- it has to do only with your guilty past! This term "justified" does not mean "saved" as we shall now see. It does not mean the gift of life It means the gift of acquittal of past guilt! It means the penalty of past sins has been paid in full, by Christ, for you!

The law stood over you. It claimed your life -- you were under it. It took Christ's life in payment instead of yours. The penalty stands paid! You are no longer under the Law. It no longer has claim over your life! You are now under grace -- undeserved pardon. You are pardoned from paying the penalty, since Jesus Christ paid it for you! This is not your works. It is Christ's sacrifice. You are now acquitted -- justified -- the slate is wiped clean of a guilty past! In other words -- the barrier between you and God has now been removed! You are now, by Christ's sacrifice, given contact with GOD -- reconciled to Him!

SAVED By His DEATH?

So, continue: "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved by Him." Notice it! You are already justified. Not by works, but by Christ's blood! The past is squared up -- the penalty paid -- the contact with God made. But are you already saved? Look at it! It says "we SHALL BE saved." Not that we already are saved. It says "being now justified" but it does not say "being now saved." It says "we shall be" -- yes, in the future -- saved. That is still future! See it with your own eyes. Don't believe me. Don't believe preachers who say you are already, now, saved! Just believe these plain words in your Bible! It is real plain, isn't it?

Now here comes a surprise. Notice verse 10: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" Here, again, we were reconciled -- past tense. Not by your works -- by Christ's death. When you have truly repented, forsaken your way, sought God, accepted Christ as Saviour and His death as payment for your past sins, you have been, already, reconciled. So the wording here is we were reconciled -- past tense -- to God by the death of His Son.

What was accomplished by Jesus' death? It paid the penalty -- it wiped out your guilty past -- justified you of your guilt -- reconciled you to GOD. But did it save you? Did it? Wait -- don't just glibly say yes -- see with your own eyes what your Bible says! It says, continuing, same sentence: "much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Can you believe your own eyes? There it is, in your own Bible! Already reconciled, by Christ's death; but -- "we shall be saved" -- that is future tense. Not yet saved -- but we shall be -- in the future -- saved. Now are you going to be saved by Christ's death? Can death impart life? There is no stronger law in science than the law of biogenesis which says life comes only from life. Death cannot impart life. Now how shall we -- in future -- be saved? By Christ's death?

No! Notice! Read it! "We shall be saved by His life!" After Christ died, God raised Him back to life. We are saved by His resurrection -- by His life -- by a living Saviour! Read I Cor. 15:14-23.

What Do You MEAN "Not Under the Law"?

Now where do you stand? You are now making progress. You now have real hope. You have repented -- you have sought God, forsaken your way -- turned to God's way, as defined in His Law and all through His Word. You have accepted Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, and His shed blood for remission of sins. You are now reconciled to God. You are justified of -- forgiven -- your guilty past. You are out from under the penalty of broken law. Now, we read the question: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1). You are now under grace -- undeserved pardon!

You deserved only death. You didn't earn forgiveness -- pardon from the death penalty. You received it by grace through Jesus Christ. Now, shall you continue in sin -- that is, continue transgressing the Law? The answer is "God forbid" (Rom. 6:2).

You were under the law, when the law stood over you, claiming its penalty. When Christ paid the penalty, and satisfied the claims of the law, you were no longer under the law, but under grace. Now does that mean you are not under obligation to obey the law -- that you have license to sin -- to break the law? Remember sin is the transgression of the law.

Now read this in your Bible!

"What then? shall we sin" -- that is, according to the Bible definition, shall we break the Law -- "because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin" -- breaking the law -- "unto death" -- penalty for disobedience to God's Law -- "or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:15-16.) There it is! We must not return to rebellion against God's inexorable Law of LOVE -- His right way of life. If we do, we are again under the Law -- again automatically sentenced to death! Jesus Christ did not die to give you license to continue in law-breaking. When you accept, by His grace, remission of sins, it is only for sins that are past! You cannot obtain in advance remission of all the lawlessness you might like to commit in the future.

Read that in your Bible: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Romans 3:24-25). We are justified only of sins that are past. We have remission only of sins that are past -- not license to break the Law in the future. Why do some religious people today teach that it is all right for Christians to go right on breaking the Law? Why do they say that grace means license to disobey God's Law? No wonder God found it necessary, through Jude, to warn us to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints by Jesus Christ -- for, as you'll read in Jude 3-4, there are certain men crept in unawares -- deceiving people -- turning grace into license! They are the ones who accuse us of teaching "salvation by works."

Would a governor pardon a man convicted of murder so he could continue murdering more and more people? God's merciful pardon -- His grace -- is bestowed on us because we have repented, with a sincere desire to turn from our wicked ways of lawlessness. If we are willing to live, from here on, righteously, happily as we should have from the beginning, the merciful and loving God has been willing to give His Son Jesus Christ, who, in turn, was willing to give His life, to square up our past law-breaking -- to wipe the slate clean, and give us, by His merciful grace, a fresh, clean start. So, from here on, we must obey -- unto righteousness! (Rom.6:16). Yet you cannot, of your own strength, keep the spiritual Law spiritually. Now let's really understand that!

HOW You Get Eternal LIFE

Many religious people -- many ordained ministers -- will tell you, "It is impossible to keep the Law." Are they telling the truth?

What does your Bible say? Notice! Of the parents of John the Baptist, you will read: "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6).

Why, if it is impossible, did Christ command that if we would enter into life, "keep the commandments"? (Matt. 19:17.) Of those who claim to "know the Lord," often using such sentimental religious phrases as "Oh, how good it is to know the Lord," but who teach we should not keep the Commandments, your Bible says this: "He that saith, 'I know Him,' and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4).

Yet you cannot, alone of yourself, keep the Law spiritually! That is not a contradiction. You can keep the literal letter, but not the spirit. Let's make that plain. At the same time, we shall explain how you receive Eternal life -- that is, how you receive salvation! Back again, now, to you! You have now gained contact with God. You are mortal, possessing only a temporary chemical existence. God only has eternal life. Life can come only from life -- not from death. Christ's death paid the penalty of your guilty past -- it reconciled you to GOD -- gave you access direct to God. But it did not give you eternal life -- did not, yet, save you! Now what?

Jesus Christ said it was necessary for us mortal humans that He go to the Father's throne in heaven (John 16:7) in order to send the Holy Spirit of God for us. This required the resurrected living Christ. So after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to the throne of God that rules the entire universe (Rev. 3:21). Then, some ten days later, on the annual day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to enter into the very minds of all who had sincerely repented of their rebellion against God and His way, and who had been reconciled to God -- had gained access -- by faith in Christ's shed blood for the remission of past sins (Acts 2:14). These first disciples received God's Spirit through the work of the resurrected, glorified, living Christ. The Spirit of the Father is also the Spirit of Christ. Thus it actually was the living Christ, Himself, entering into them -- not in Person, but in spirit! Christ is a living Saviour who does His saving work from within!

Now let's get the connection.

If the Holy Spirit of God actually dwells within you, then as God raised Christ from the dead, He shall also make immortal ("quicken" means energize -- make eternally alive) your mortal body BY His Spirit dwelling in you (Romans 8:11). But (verse 9), unless His Spirit is actually IN YOU, YOU are not a Christian -- no matter how many churches you join! God's Holy Spirit is His LIFE. It imparts His life to you! It imparts more, as we shall now see!

God Doesn't "Kid Himself"

One thing more, the Holy Spirit is divine, spiritual love -- the love of GOD flowing into you from God Almighty -- through the living Christ! (Rom. 5:5.) Jesus explained how we should come to him, and drink in of His Spirit, like drinking in living water -- and how this same Holy Spirit would flow, like a river of living water, on out from us (John 7:37-39). Now let's make all that plain and clear.

God's Law is a law of love -- love to God in reverence, worship and obedience -- love to neighbor in service, kindness, sharing. It takes love to fulfill -- to perform -- the Law. You will read that in Romans 13:10. But, remember? -- we saw, in Romans 7:14, that this Law is a spiritual Law. Science knows only about physical laws. Humans are mortals -- physical. We were born with a capacity only for physical love. The love of a parent for a child, a husband or wife for a mate, or even relatives, friends, neighbors. We also are born with capacity for envy, jealousy, hate.

But this spiritual Law can be fulfilled -- performed -- spiritually kept and obeyed -- only by spiritual love! You were not born with that kind of love. You do not have, naturally, the kind of love required to truly keep this great Spiritual Law! You must go to God to obtain that kind of love. That is a love He gives you through the living Christ. That is His own love. It emanates directly from Him.

Now understand! True righteousness is keeping "all thy commandments" (Psalm 119:172). It is performing God's Spiritual law with the spiritual love which only GOD can supply. You drink it in from Him -- once the contact is established. It pours on out from you like rivers of living water. Water in a river flows in a certain direction, guided

by the river bed or channel. GOD'S LAW is that river bed which guides the flow -- the expression -- the direction in which the divine love flows! God's Law is the way of perfect spiritual character -- the very character of God.

So -- the very spirit by which God imparts to you His life -- His salvation -- is also His own love which imparts to you His righteousness! It is no longer just you, in your own power and strength "keeping the commandments" -- it is, spiritually speaking, the living Christ IN YOU, keeping His Father's Commandments -- even as He kept them by this same divine love even while He was human here on earth!

Can you brag, or boast, then, about your righteousness? No -- it is not your righteousness -- it is God's! If Christ, by His grace, erased your guilty past, gave you access to God, and now pours forth into and through you the spiritual love that keeps the Law, this is not your righteousness, but God's. And this is not your "works"! It is nothing you earn!

God does not "kid Himself." Some religious teachers tell you Christ lived a righteous life FOR you over 1940 years ago, and since you "can't keep the Law," as they claim, God "imputes" Christ's righteousness of 19 centuries ago to you -- by sort of "kidding Himself" that you are righteous, while you are given license to still be a spiritual criminal breaking His Law! GOD does not impute to you something you do not have. Far from this -- the living Christ by His power makes us righteous! He imparts to us power to actually become righteous. It is His doing!

WHY Not to Heaven NOW?

Once again, back to you! Now where are we?

There are, first, two things you must do. On that very day of Pentecost after Christ had ascended to heaven, many who had joined the mob crying out "crucify Him!" during Christ's trial before Pilate, were conscience stricken and afraid, when they heard the inspired Peter's sermon. They cried out, "What shall we do?" They, too, were helpless. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" was the inspired answer (Acts 2:38). Note it! Two things YOU do:

1) REPENT -- turn from your way, by turning to God's way -- His Law! You repent of sin. Sin is the transgression of the spiritual Law.

2) BE BAPTIZED. The Ethiopian eunuch, coming to a lake of water, asked Philip what hindered him to be baptized. "IF thou believest with all thine heart" was Philip's condition (Acts 8:36-37). Repentance is toward God, for the Law comes from God, but faith is toward Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). Faith in Christ's atonement for sin is commanded to be expressed by being baptized. (Write for our free booklet "All About Water Baptism".) This, then, gains contact with God. That is as far as you can go, on your own. You have reached your extremity! So now GOD does something!

3) You SHALL RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. This is God's gift. It is the presence, conditionally, of Eternal Life.

And now if you faithfully follow God's way -- the way the Holy Spirit leads -- you are already a begotten son of God! "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Get it straight! You are now converted -- a changed person -- for God's Spirit (Eph. 4:23) produces a renewing of your mind.

Your whole concept and direction of life is changed! God's Spirit is His very life imparted to you! You are now a begotten son of God.

But it does not yet appear what you shall be. This scripture does not say "where you shall GO" -- or "where you shall BE." It is talking about a condition, not a place: "what we shall be"! Salvation is a matter of what you become - not where you shall go!

God's purpose is to change you -- from your vile character to HIS glorious character -- not to change the place where you are!

But -- you are now already a begotten son of God -- you may now call Him Father! -- as long as you are led by His Spirit! -- and no longer (Heb. 10:26-27). (Write for our free booklet "Just What Do You Mean -- "the Unpardonable Sin"?)")

And there are still some "if's." You must grow spiritually (II Pet. 3:18). It is "To him that overcometh" that Christ will grant to sit with Him on HIS throne, when He returns to earth (Rev. 3:21). If you overcome -- overcome your own carnal nature, the world and the devil -- and keep Christ's works (not your own works, but Christ's -- by His spirit in you) then you shall reign and rule all nations with Him, in the happy world tomorrow! The real Christian life is, truly, a life of overcoming, spiritual growing -- but it is the only happy life -- the abundant life -- here and now! Yet we must endure and remain steadfast -- for it is he who endures to the end that shall be saved! Read this in your BIBLE -- Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 4:17; John 6:27; I Cor. 9:24-27; Heb. 10:26-27.

So, finally, back again to you! Where are we, now? You have been converted -- changed in mind, concept, attitude, direction of way of life -- you are begotten as a child of God -- you have now eternal life abiding in you -- as long as you are LED by God's Spirit in God's way -- as long as you continue in contact and fellowship with God (I John 1:3) -- all by God's grace as His gift, and not anything you have earned by your works; and now if you continue overcoming, growing spiritually -- and all this actually through God's power -- you shall inherit the Kingdom of God, and be made immortal to live forever in happiness and joy!