

Salvation and Christian life

by

K.G Kurian, Kottayam

Salvation and Christian life

Every human being desires salvation for their souls. But how? There arises a big question when we think about attaining salvation or reaching heaven. From whence should one be saved or delivered? What is the element that forbids him to accomplish this? In the light of the teachings of all religions as well as our own experience, it is the deliverance from sin.

Sin is the root cause for our lack of peace and contentment. Jesus Christ is the only one who is revealed as the Savior of sinners. He is called the Savior of the world because He saves the sinners. Paul, the renowned disciple of Jesus Christ, says: *'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'* (1 Tim.1:15). Therefore let us examine the salvation that Jesus Christ offers and the rules for a fruitful Christian life. We use verses from the Holy Bible as proof for this task.

Man is a sinner; moreover he is a sinner right from his birth. This is because of the sinful act of the first man, Adam. The Bible says that *'sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin'* (Romans 5:12). All human beings are the descendants of Adam; therefore all his children are born in his (Adam's) sinful nature. We are not sinners because of the sins committed by us; we sin because we are born in that sinful nature. Since we have the basic nature of sin within us, we produce the fruits of sin.

What is sin?

First of all we need to understand what sin is. Sin can be explained as our disobedience and enmity towards God. It is the breaking of God's commandments and moving away from God's plan. The Bible says, '*...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*' (Romans 3:23). Sin does not vary according to one's religion or tribe. Because of sin, we lost fellowship with God. As we moved away from God's presence, we all have become sinners in His view. That doesn't mean that we all commit evil deeds, but we are possessed with a nature that can commit any evil deed. It is Adam's sin that dragged us in to this situation.

The Bible says, '*The wages of sin is death*' (Romans 6:23). We have seen that it is not because of our deeds that we are born as sinners, but Adam's. Similarly, our own deeds cannot deliver us from death, which is the punishment for sin. We are guilty in God's sight because of our sin; therefore we deserve punishment. Our conscience always tells us this truth. Fear of punishment robs us of peace of mind. The hatred, enmity and violence we see in the world are results of sin. There is no point in denying the fact of 'sin'.

There are many kinds of sinners in this world; religious and non-religious, God-fearing and atheists, wise and foolish, rich and poor. But all are sinners before God.

What is the remedy for sin?

Man has tried many ways to be rid of sin; even now he tries, but in vain. Sin has intruded our thoughts, words and deeds. Some take firm decisions not to sin anymore; but fail time and again. Our good deeds cannot wash away the sins that have already been committed.

Is there a remedy provided by God for this big problem? Yes, the solution is Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. *‘But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.’* (Romans 3:21, 22). The phrase *‘but now’* means, after Christ’s death on the cross and his resurrection. Before that time God gave men a chance to try for salvation through his own deeds. But they couldn’t. God’s righteousness is the sum of His attributes like power, holiness, etc. *‘For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness’* (Rom.1: 18). The ‘wrath of God’ is the attitude of God towards all that is against His holiness.

Way of Salvation

Jesus Christ came to this world to remove man’s sin justly and thereby expressing God’s love and mercy towards him. It was already mentioned that through the first man, Adam, sin entered the world. Similarly through Jesus Christ, salvation is

also now attainable for the human beings. It was not by our deeds that we became sinners; likewise it is not through our deeds that God saves us. *'Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous'* (Romans 5:19). Though the disobedience of Adam made us sinners, the obedience of Christ now makes us righteous.

How should one be saved?

It is through faith that one must attain salvation. *'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved'* (Acts 16:31). It is through our belief in the Word of God that we realize that we are sinners because of Adam's sin. Similarly it is through the belief in the Word of God that we understand the way of salvation. God commands us to believe in Jesus Christ for our salvation. 1 John 3:23 says, *'And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ'*. *'All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.'* (Romans 3:23).

Salvation comes through our faith

We cannot attain salvation by our deeds but through faith alone. One must believe that Christ died for his sins and because of Christ's sacrificial death, the punishment for his sin is removed. We may ask: Isn't believing a deed as well? Believing is like receiving with our hands a gift freely given by someone. Salvation is the gift of God. We just need to accept it with hands of faith. Faith does not generate salvation; it is

only a medium for receiving the salvation. *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast* (Eph.2: 8, 9).

Salvation is by God's grace

God saves us not because of our merits. In other words, we do not deserve salvation. As sinners what we rightly deserve is punishment. But God prepared a way for our salvation only because of His grace. Grace is defined as 'the undeserved mercy'. *For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people* (Titus 2:11). *He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy* (Titus 3:5).

Salvation is in Christ, in Christ alone

There are many who ask: "Through which religion or church can we attain salvation?" Salvation is not in any religion; no religion can save. But there is a man who can save; there is a Savior. He is Christ Jesus. Salvation is in Christ - in Christ alone. It is not in Christ and Christianity nor in Christ and church, but only in Christ. *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved* (Acts 4: 12). No rituals can save man from the punishment for sin. Baptism or Holy Communion cannot save man. Sacraments or charity cannot bring salvation. Priests or angels cannot give salvation. Jesus Christ is the only Savior; He is the only Savior of the world, no one else. *I am*

the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me' (John 14:6).

Components of Salvation

1. Repentance

Repentance is not just regret; it is regret with a change of mind. It is parting from sin and turning to God. A true conversion of mind is what is required, not conversion of religion or church. *'In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent'* (Acts 17:30). Repentance towards God and belief in Christ Jesus (Acts 20:21) is required for salvation. Confession of sin and hatred for it is included in the repentance. Judas Iscariot confessed, but did not repent. But Peter confessed and repented. When a person is convinced of sin, repentance will happen. The Jailor asked Paul: what shall I do to be saved? Paul's reply was to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (*Acts 16: 30, 31*). Paul did not mention anything about repentance to the Jailor because his question was as a result of his repentance.

2. Freedom from sin

The first thing that we feel when we are saved is the joy of the freedom from our sins. The Holy Spirit convinces us that as sinners we are destined for punishment. But the essence of freedom from sin is that through our belief in Christ we are excused from its punishment. In Luke 7:48 our Lord Jesus said to the sinful woman, "Your sins are forgiven". *'In him we*

have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins' (Eph.1:7). When a sinner believes in Christ, he is granted forgiveness for all his sins. '*.. everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name*' (Acts 10: 43).

3. Justification

Justification does not make a person righteous; it is the declaration that a person is blameless and without offence. It is the settlement of a decree for punishment. '*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies*' (Romans 8: 33). In short, justification is the cancellation of a decree of punishment by a higher authority.

Who is justified? Paul says, '*the ungodly*', in the book of Romans. '*... the one who trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness*' (Rom.4: 5). The Lord illustrates this through the parable of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee in Luke 18: 10-14. The Pharisee tried to prove himself righteous; while the Tax Collector, burdened with sin, beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner'. The latter went home justified before God. Justification is a step above forgiveness. It is God's act of accepting a sinner who believes in Christ as a sinless person.

Difference between Justification and Forgiveness of sin

Forgiveness of sin is the deliverance from the punishment of sin. In other words, it is the cancellation of punishment for

a committed sin. But justification is the declaration that the above person is sinless or considered righteous. God has provided not only forgiveness but justification also in Christ. In the Old Testament in 1 Kings 8:32 we see Solomon's prayer. There he says, 'The God who condemns the wicked and justifies the righteous'. While in the New Testament, God justifies the ungodly sinner.

Justification is through Grace (Romans 3:24)

Justification is through the Blood of Christ (Romans 5: 9) and

Justification is through Faith (Romans 3:28)

The origin of justification is by God's grace while justification is made possible through the blood of Jesus Christ. And we own the justification through our belief in Christ.

Assurance of Salvation

One must attain salvation during his life on earth. The Bible does not give even the slightest hint that salvation can be attained after death; all evidence says it is not possible. Nor does the Bible refer to anyone who was saved after death. Not only can one attain salvation in this life, he can also live in that confidence. This confidence is known as the 'Assurance of Salvation'. Some doubt if anyone can confidently say that he is saved; others say it is boastful to say so.

See what the Lord says: *'I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life'* (John 5: 24). 'Passing from death into life' is a clear and definite experience. This does not mean that one will pass to life after his death, but has already passed to life the moment he believed. It is a clear transition from the state of death to the state of life.

Apostle Paul also says this in Ephesians 2:1. *'And he has made you alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins'*. Here salvation is compared to resurrection. If a dead person comes back to life, we can surely say that he is alive. Again in v.8 he says: *'For it is by grace you have been saved'*. Not that you will be saved or you may be saved – but 'you have been saved'. It is a definite thing which has happened already. This proves that there is a state where we can confidently say that 'we are saved'. *'For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord'* (Eph.5: 8). Paul also writes to the Corinthians, *'And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God'* (1 Cor. 6: 11). He talks about a past life, spent in misconduct, and a present life where deliverance was obtained from the past. Therefore salvation is a real experience.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is given immediately with salvation. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of God is not a saved person. *'In him you also, when you heard the word of truth,*

the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (Eph.1: 13, 14). *'And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ'* (Romans 8: 9). After attaining salvation, there is no need to wait or pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. But we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5: 18). Those who are filled with the Holy Spirit will walk in step with the Spirit; they will produce the fruit of the Spirit (*Gal.5:25*). *'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'* (Gal.5:22, 23). Ephesians 5: 18-33 detail a believer's duty after being filled with the Holy Spirit.

What must a believer do?

1. A saved person must obey the Lord in baptism

Baptism is an important commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ (*Matthew 28:19, 20*). It should be in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, i.e., in the name of the Triune God. When a person is baptized in the name of the Triune God, he is confessing not only the divinity of the Father, but the divinity of the Son and the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit also. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are not three different persons, but three personalities of the one and only God. Baptism is a commandment of the Lord. On the day of the Pentecost, Apostle Peter asked the three thousand Jewish men who were saved to take baptism (*Acts 2:38*). Apostle Philip preached in Samaria and baptized those who believed (*Acts 8:12*). It is written that men and

women were baptized; there is no mention of children as the apostles baptized only those who believed. The eunuch was baptized after he believed (*Acts 8:38*). It is clear from the eunuch's question, *'What prevents me from being baptized?'* that Philip mentioned the need of baptism also along with the gospel. It is the Lord who commanded to baptize those who believe. We are obeying that commandment when we baptize people. Thus the baptist and the baptized both obey the Lord's command.

Paul was baptized after his salvation (*Acts 9:18*); in Cornelius' home, those who believed were baptized (*Acts 10: 47, 48*); Lydia and her family were baptized after they believed (*Acts 16:15*); the Jailer and his household were baptized after being saved (*Acts 16:33*). Here 'family' and 'household' stand for those members who believed. Phrases like *'Spoke to everyone in that house'* and *'his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God'* (*Acts 16: 32, 34*) affirm that those who were baptized were baptized upon their belief and were not children.

The significance of Baptism

Baptism proclaims to the world that a person who believes in Christ has died, been buried and resurrected with Christ (*Rom.6:3, 4; Col.2:12*). Baptism is not a means for salvation, but a declaration of one's salvation. The right method is the baptism of immersion; sprinkling of water is not baptism at all because it cannot portray the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The order we see in the New Testament is to believe

first and then take baptism. The New Testament teaches only about believers' baptism, not adult baptism. A person's belief, not age, is important to obey this command. Christ did not command his disciples to baptize children. There is not one evidence in the New Testament about a child being baptized. It talks about baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit after one has believed.

2. A saved person must separate himself from sin

The Church (Assembly) is a group of saved people. Before a person is saved, he would be of a particular religion or any church denomination; but when he is saved he becomes a child of God. It is essential for a child of God to dwell in fellowship with other children of God. Therefore a separation is required from their previous associates; a separation from unbelievers and traditional rituals. The Bible says, "*Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the LORD. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.*" (2 Cori.6:17, 18). They must separate themselves from wrong teachers and their teachings. Since the world holds enmity towards God, we must keep ourselves away from it (1 John. 2:15-17; John 15:18, 19; Rom. 12:1, 2).

3. A saved person must worship the Lord

It is the duty of a believer to worship his God. The basis of our worship is the redemption God has fulfilled for us

through Christ. In worship we do not ask from God, instead we offer him the sacrifices of praise and gratitude (Hebrews 12:15). When we are saved, we not only become children of God but also a royal priesthood, worthy of worshiping in God's presence (1 Peter 2:4, 5, 9). While talking to the Samaritan woman (John 4), the Lord says that worship must be in spirit and truth. '*...the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth*' (John 4:23). It is the children of God who worship; and they worship the Father. Therefore, the unsaved have no right to worship God. No particular place or rituals are required for worshiping God. The New Testament does not give importance to the place of worship, but to the person being worshipped.

In the New Testament worship, the Lord's Supper is highly regarded. '*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer*' (Acts 2:42). By observing the Lord's Supper we remember the Lord and obey His commandment (Luke 22:19). The bread is to remember His body and the wine, His blood. The bread and the wine do not change its properties as the body and blood of Christ. What we eat is the bread and what we drink, the wine. The teaching about the Lord's Supper is detailed in 1 Cor. 11. '*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*' (v.26). Remission of sin does not happen by participating in the Lord's Supper. Only people who are saved and whose sins are removed by believing in Christ should participate in this. The nominal churches (namesake

churches) have turned the two ordinances given to the believers by the Lord, (baptism and the Lord's Supper) as the way of salvation.

The Christian Life and Services

Christ living in a Christian is the real Christian Life. *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me'* (Gal. 2:20). Christ is the Vine and believers are its branches (John 15:5). Our relation to Christ is about life. The sap of Christ's life is flowing to us thereby enabling us to do spiritual services and live a fruitful spiritual life. The vine produces fruit through the branches; similarly because of our union with Christ, we also yield the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). We become capable of doing good works instead of sinful deeds.

Things to remember in Christian Life

Testimony: We must testify with our mouths to others that Christ Jesus is the Savior and Lord. Once, we did confess when we believed and were saved (Rom. 10: 9); but the Lord commands us to testify before others even after that (Matt. 10: 32). This will help in leading them to Christ and to stand firm in our belief.

Good deeds: Our good works are not required for salvation; but we need it as proof of our salvation. *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do'* (Eph. 2: 10). Other religions teach men to attain salvation through good deeds. But the New

Testament demands that we be saved through belief and to then do good works. *'...all who trust in God will devote themselves to doing good'* (Titus 3:8).

Prayer: Prayer is the power station for one's spiritual life. A Christian life without prayer will be full of failures. Prayer is essential in order to overcome the devil's schemes. The Lord tells His disciples to pray so that they will not fall into temptation. It is through our prayers that we realize God's will. Prayer is not just to tell something to God. It is a time to be with Him and strengthened. We have commandments like 'pray at all times' and 'pray without ceasing' (Rom.12: 13; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess.5:17).

Reading and meditating the Word of God: If prayer is the respiration of a spiritual child, God's Word is its food. We must grow by consuming the Word of God, which is like pure milk (1 Pet. 2:1 & 2). The Word of God is not only food, but it is our light as well. *'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path'* (Psalm 119:105). The Word of God also has the power to cleanse us. *'You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you'* (John 15:3). It is the sword of the spirit for us to fight against Satan (Eph.6: 17). We understand God's will through the written Word of God. The Doctrines and Ordinances of the Church are based on the written Word of God, not tradition or history. It is through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we comprehend Scriptural truths. *'All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction,*

and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work' (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17). Not only must we read the Scriptures, they must be meditated upon (Psalm 1: 3). Meditation is like chewing the cud.

Consecration: A believer must consecrate himself and whatever he owns for the glory of God (Rom.12:1). This includes spirit, body, wealth, time and all. Our body is the temple of God; therefore we must glorify God with our body. We are not the owners of anything we possess, but just stewards. We must spend our money for God's work and for fulfilling the needs of God's workers. It is our duty to practice hospitality also (Rom.12: 13; Heb.13: 1; Acts 16: 15). Our lives must be a model for others; otherwise no one will accept our words. We may become a hindrance for the spreading of the Gospel.

Enemies in Christian life

World: We are not of this world; but we live in this world. Therefore the world is against us (John 15: 19). 'World' here means, a situation that has enmity towards God and that which hates divine things (James 4:4). *'Do not love the world or anything in the world'* (1 John 2:15). *'Do not conform to the pattern of this world'* (Rom. 12:2). Worldly pleasures, wild parties, costly costumes, worldly riches, etc. come under the term 'world' (1 John 2:16).

Flesh: This portrays our sinful nature, i.e., our old nature. Through re-generation we received a new nature; but we still possess the old nature. If we go out from the control of the Holy Spirit, we will be controlled by our flesh.

Satan: Just as to God, Satan is the enemy of God's children as well (1 Pet. 5:8). In order to mislead the children of God he sometimes disguises himself as the angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). We should stand firm and resist him (1 Pet 5: 9). God has commanded us to take up the shield of faith, with which we can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one (Eph. 6:16). A believer must put on all of God's armor so that he will be able to stand firm against the strategies of the devil (Eph.6:11). *“Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* (Eph. 6:14-17).

Hope concerning the future

A believer is a person with hope. Before salvation he had no hope at all (Eph. 2:12). Hope is the anticipation of a better tomorrow. Just as Christ is the center of our salvation and life, He is the focal point of our hope also (1 Tim. 1:1). Since this is the doorway to our future blessedness, it is called the 'Blessed Hope' (Titus 2:12).

The object of this hope is the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:1-3). Christ's promise is to keep His people with Him where He is. Not only the believers who are alive but those believers who are dead will also be part of this (1 Thess.4:13-16). When Christ appears in the sky, the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and the living will be transformed (1 Cor.15:52). This is when the Rapture of the Church (the Church being taken into the skies) occurs; i.e., we will be joined with Christ. Our bodies will be transformed to be like the glorified body of Christ (Phi. 3:21). This is the coming of the Lord that the Church awaits (Phi. 3:20, Col. 1:7). Then the Lord will give due rewards to the believers according to the services that they did for Him. This period is called the 'day of the Lord' (2 Tim. 4:7, 8; Phil. 2:16).

After this, the Lord will come back to this earth along with the Church to fulfil His promise to the people of Israel. This is called the coming of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:30). During this period the world will be governed by the antichrist and will pass through 'the Great Tribulation'. This instance is also referred as 'the glorious appearance of Christ'. As a result, Christ will remove the antichrist from his rule and will bring back all the Israelites to their nation and take over the governance of this world. Christ will rule the world for a thousand years, keeping Jerusalem as the world capital, as stated by the Prophets. This is called the millennial reign of Christ. After this period, the final judgement will take place.

All the dead will rise again; those who have not accepted Christ as their Savior will be sentenced to eternal punishment.

Dear friend, where will you spend your eternity? If you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior to receive the remission of your sins while living on earth, you can escape from the dreadful punishment described above and live with Christ forever. 'Indeed, the right time is now. Today is the day of salvation' (2 Cor.6:2). '*... people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment*' (Heb. 9:27). We urge you to own this free salvation before the door of grace is closed.

If you like to know more about Bible truths, please contact:

Bethany Aroma
Post Box 602
Kottayam, Kerala
India