

Salvation Experience

What does it mean to “experience” salvation?

Salvation is being saved from our sins and accepting God’s gift of eternal life. When you accept God’s salvation, you can be at peace about your future. You don’t have to live in fear because God has promised to save you from the eternal consequences of sin.

When we choose salvation, we accept that we are God’s children.

“As many received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12).

God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to make the ultimate sacrifice and redeem us from sin. Sin leads to death, but since Jesus died in our place, we are no longer condemned to die forever. We can claim this gift through our belief and allegiance to Him.

But let’s dig into the significance and process of salvation through Jesus Christ:

- What salvation really means
- Why humanity needs salvation
- What humans have to do to be saved
- The role of repentance and forgiveness in salvation
- Salvation’s effect on our lives today

The salvation we find in Jesus is the most precious gift imaginable. It affects our lives eternally, and in the here and now.

THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION: IN A NUT SHELL

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, Substitute and Example. This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God’s grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God’s sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God’s law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; Isa. 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab. 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:1-4, 14-17; 5:6-10; 10:17; 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8.)

WHAT IS SALVATION?

Salvation means we are delivered. We are saved. Though humanity is subject to the eternal consequences of sin, God has given us a way out through the sacrifice of His only Son, Jesus.

Salvation is God’s gift to save us from eternal death.

Ever since the beginning of the earth, humans have chosen to disobey. But God, in His great love, chose to redeem us. We were doomed to destruction. But God gave His Son *“that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)*.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ made our salvation possible. He gave His perfect life to make a way for us to be saved. Salvation satisfies the demands of God’s Law and His wrath against sin while at the same time showing God’s love for sinners.

“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Roman 5:8).

Seventh-day Adventist Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to receive salvation. *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)*. His life, death and resurrection secures our salvation.

WHY DOES HUMANITY NEED SALVATION?

Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, chose to disobey God’s command. He had given them permission to eat the fruit from all the trees of the Garden, except for one.

“Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,” He told them. *“In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17)*.

When tempted by the devil talking through a serpent, who promised Eve she would be *“like God” (Genesis 3:5)*, she decided to disobey. The idea was so strangely tempting. So Eve tried the fruit, gave some to Adam, and He ate it also.

It was not a big, fancy test. God did not set up an incredible challenge. Yet, insignificant as it was, God’s command required obedience. It required faith. It required trusting God’s way as perfect, even when presented with opposing circumstances.

When Adam and Eve chose to follow their own desires and curiosity instead of trusting God, it illustrated humanity’s ability to be selfish, to be deviant, to abuse the gift of free choice. That’s why the Godhead had to put Plan B into place.

“Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now he might reach out with his hand, and take fruit also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’—therefore the Lord God sent him out of the Garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken” (Genesis 3:23).

Without a Saviour, humanity was doomed. God’s law had been broken. And to prevent a sinful existence from lasting forever, the penalty was death.

IS THERE HOPE FOR HUMANITY?

Even though God wanted Adam and Eve to obey, He already had a plan for their redemption if they chose to disobey. He loved them too much to leave them without hope.

That evening, when God came to meet with Adam and Eve, they hid. When He found them, He asked, *“Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat” (Genesis 3:11)?*

Instead of taking responsibility, Adam blamed Eve. When God asked Eve what happened, she blamed the serpent (Genesis 3:12,13).

Sin had begun its sad work of causing division, distrust, and self-preservation.

In that moment of tragedy, God uttered the first promise. Speaking to the serpent, He vowed,

“I will put enmity between you and the woman. And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15).

These words pointed forward to the promise of salvation. Jesus would come to earth to be tempted and killed by Satan and his forces. He would have His heel “bruised” (Genesis 3:15). Jesus would sacrifice His life for us, but He would live again.

Because of His sacrifice, Jesus would win the victory over sin and Satan. He would “bruise” the “head” of evil (Genesis 3:15).

Jesus will win the victory, and Satan would be forever a conquered foe.

Jesus, God’s Son, volunteered to give His life in the sinner’s place. He would come to earth as the Lamb *“slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8)*. He would make the gift of salvation possible.

Sin, or evil, seeks to deny God’s authority and cares only for the self. In the Garden of Eden, it’s as if we became infected with it. But while God’s wrath is against sin, God has infinite love for sinners. God’s law had been broken and a penalty had to be paid. To pay this debt, God’s love, through Jesus Christ, reached across the chasm and made a way of salvation.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16, 17).

Knowing that our future is secure gives us peace that transcends tough times. God’s peace will fill your heart, and help you survive anything life may bring.

HOW DO WE ACCEPT SALVATION?

Jesus freely offers each of us the gift of total redemption from sin. Our part in accepting this gift is straightforward:

“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. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

It’s our belief in Him and our choice for Him that allows us to be saved. And this comes to us free of charge—though it cost Him the dearest price.

And God doesn't just hold this gift out in front of you, hoping you'll catch it. He truly *wants* you to accept His gift of salvation. Once you accept it, He forgives your past sins and looks at you as if you've never sinned. God exchanges your sinful record with Jesus' spotless record. Then promises to help you learn to keep your record clean. He says,

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

God's grace extends to every person. Grace, the unmerited favour of an almighty God, is a free gift given to anyone who asks.

"By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Grace saves us. We can be so thankful for this amazing gift!

God's heart of love desperately wants to save all of humanity. He will leave no stone unturned to make sure every person receives an invitation to accept salvation.

However, while our part is simple, that doesn't mean it's always easy. Accepting God's gift means putting Him first. It means growing spiritually, with Him as your guide, into the person He created you to be.

God also gives us His Holy Spirit to guide us through everything. When you receive salvation, you give the Holy Spirit permission to work in your life.

But it's important to remember that this gift is your choice. Even though God knows His way is best, He will never force you to follow Him.

REPENTANCE AS PART OF SALVATION

To illustrate God's gift of salvation, Jesus told the story of the prodigal son.

In Luke chapter 15, the Scriptures tell us about a rebellious young man who decided to turn his back on his home and his loving father.

"I want my inheritance now, Dad!" he said. Despite his misgivings, his dad gave him the money.

The Bible records that the young man gathered up his money and possessions and went to a far country. While there, he *"wasted his possessions with prodigal living"* (Luke 15:13).

After he spent all his money, the Bible says *"he began to be in want"* (Luke 15:14). There was a famine in the land. With no friends and no money, he was starving. He found a job feeding pigs, and *"would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate"* (Luke 15:16).

He had hit rock bottom.

As the young man fed the pigs, a thought came into his mind. *"How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"* (Luke 15:17).

"I will arise and go to my father," he decided (Luke 15:18).

The young man planned a speech. He would tell his father that he just wanted to be a servant. He would confess his unworthiness, and beg for a place at the servants' table.

With this resolve, he began the long walk back home. Little did he know what was waiting for him when he returned.

"When he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

As the son tried to say his prepared speech, his father told the servants to get him new clothes. His father commanded that a feast be made in his honour and took him back as his son. *"My son was dead and is alive again;"* he proclaimed. *"He was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24).*

Like the man in this story, alone and far away from his father, we may find ourselves far away from God. We sense a lack in our life. We realize something is missing. Perhaps we have hit rock bottom.

While we may not recognize it, God is constantly at work in our lives. Through the Holy Spirit, God appeals to our hearts. *"I will never leave you nor forsake you,"* He says (*Hebrews 13:5, NKJV*). Even when we feel far away from Him, His love is working to call us to Himself. He will leave no means untried to bring us salvation. The Bible says the *"goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4).*

Repentance is the first step in our salvation experience. We must realize we need something more in our life. We must acknowledge that we are not enough. We must see that even when we try to do good, *"all our righteousness is like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).*

But this realization isn't meant to take away our hope. It means we can find our hope through the only One who can truly save us. Only God's grace in our life can help us to follow Him.

Like the father in the story of the prodigal son, God is waiting to welcome us home. He longs to give us the gift of forgiveness.

He doesn't care where we've been or what we've done. We just need to sense our need and turn toward "home." After true repentance, all that matters is that we're now walking with God.

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10).

As much as God wants us to be saved, He will not force salvation on us. We have to ask Him. We have to want to be saved. God is respectful of our choice, even if it is a choice against Him. When we choose Christ, He says, *"Come now, and let us reason together."* God wants to talk with us. He promises, *"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).*

After we repent and confess our sins, God rejoices to forgive us. The Bible tells us, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

In the Psalms, David writes, *“You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive”* (Psalm 86:5). He is *“not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). It thrills the heart of God to be able to give the gift of forgiveness.

After we have accepted Jesus Christ, we are called to *“walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:4). God’s Son came to *“save His people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). God wants to show you a better, happier way to live your life.

WHAT DOES SALVATION DO IN MY LIFE?

Salvation gives us a *“future and a hope”* (Jeremiah 29:11). Jesus promises, *“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you”* (Ezekiel 36:26).

In the book of John, the poignant story is told of a woman who was caught *“in adultery, in the very act”* (John 8:4). By Jewish law, her punishment would be death by stoning.

The Jewish leaders, wanting to trap Jesus, brought the woman to Him. They reminded Him of the law of Moses, and then asked, *“But what do You say”* (John 8:5)?

Instead of condemning the woman, Jesus knelt down and started writing in the dirt. As the leaders watched Him, they pressed Him for an answer.

Jesus said simply, *“He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first”* (John 8:7), then went back to writing. As the leaders came closer to read the words in the dirt, the Holy Spirit convicted them of their own sins. *“Beginning with the oldest even to the last,”* they turned and left (John 8:9).

Jesus was alone with the accused woman. He looked up from His writing to see that the accusing multitude had left.

“Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” He asked.

She replied, *“No one, Lord.”*

Then Jesus spoke these words of forgiveness, *“Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more”* (John 8:9-11).

Jesus offered her forgiveness and pardon. His grace held out hope and a future for her. However, His pardon did not give her permission to go back to her life of sin. *“Go and sin no more,”* He told her (John 8:11).

Jesus meets us where we are, and delights in saving us from our lost condition. There is no path too dark for Him to travel to save us. There is no life too sinful that His grace and forgiveness cannot remake us.

Because of His great love, we respond to Him with love and thankfulness. *“If ye love Me,”* Jesus says, *“keep My commandments”* (John 14:15). Our love response to the amazing sacrifice of Jesus Christ is to follow Him and to obey His teachings.

Our works do not earn us merit with Christ. It is not by *“works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” (Titus 3:5)*. However, like the woman caught in adultery, Jesus pleads with us not to go back to our life of sin.

James talks of the relationship between our belief in God’s salvation and how our belief affects our daily choices.

“If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit” (James 2:15,16)?

We can immediately see that telling a needy person we hoped they were helped without helping them would be meaningless.

Just like actually helping those in need instead of only talking about it, so God wants us to actually follow His guidance in our life. It’s not the occasional misstep, or the occasional good deed that counts with God. The way we choose to live our life, the habits that we form by repeated actions—these are what God looks at.

If we profess to love God, but refuse to follow His leadership, our profession doesn’t mean a lot. Our choice to follow His guidance is our response of love for His amazing sacrifice.

Think about it. If we truly believe something, our actions will show it. If someone believes a book will be interesting, they’ll buy it or check it out from the library. If someone believes a person would be a good friend, they’ll spend time with them. So if we believe that Jesus died so that we may live, surely that will have an effect on how we live our lives.

But if we make mistakes or wander astray, God is still there for us.

The night before Jesus was crucified, He warned His disciples, *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:38)*.

Even though we’ve chosen Jesus, we will still be tempted to sin. We may even find ourselves *wanting* to sin. While our mind tells us what is right, we find ourselves to be weak in willpower.

This is where God will work tirelessly to give us power to follow His guidance. He doesn’t leave us alone. *“I will never leave you,” (Hebrews 13:5)* He tells us. He rejoices with us at every step we make towards Heaven. .

“We love Him because He first loved us” shares the apostle John (1 John 4:19). *“For the love of Christ compels us,”* the apostle Paul writes, *“that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15)*.

Paul goes on to say, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17)*.

CAN I BE SURE I’M SAVED?

When we accept Jesus as our Saviour and give our life to His control, we can be sure of our eternal salvation. John writes, *“Little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming”* (1 John 2:28).

As we abide in Jesus Christ, we can be confident we have eternal life.

From the moment we claim Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, God counts us as worthy because of the sacrifice of Jesus. We can be confident in our salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Paul writes, *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:38, 39). When we choose Christ, He will hold us in His hand. He will never let us go, unless we decidedly turn our back on Him.

In Mark, Jesus tells a parable using the life cycle of a grain. *“The Kingdom of God,”* He says, is like a farmer who plants seed in the ground. The farmer tries to make the best conditions for the seed, but he can't make it grow. The seed sprouts and grows, the farmer *“himself does not know how.”* *“First the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head”* (Mark 4:26-28).

Our Christian experience is like that seed of grain. When we begin by accepting God's salvation, we are planted in God's garden. God gives us every opportunity to grow and flourish. When our first leaves poke from the ground, we are a perfect little plant. We don't have fruit. We are just a small, helpless plant. However, we are following God with our whole heart, and growing to the best of our ability.

As we learn more of God's plan for our lives, we continue to grow in Him. Our stalk grows higher, and more leaves come out. We are perfect stalks of grain, but we still don't have fruit. As long as we continue to accept the nutrients that are provided for our growth, we will continue on towards the goal of producing fruit and being ready for harvest.

“The path of the just is like the shining sun,” the Bible says, *“that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day”* (Proverbs 4:18).

As you continue to follow Christ, He will work in your life and will *“dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God”* (Ephesians 3:17-19).

This is His goal for you—to be filled with the fullness of God.

DON'T MISS IT!

God longs to share with you this experience of salvation, this blessed assurance. As you sense your need for Jesus Christ, He will draw you to Himself with His *“everlasting love”* (Jeremiah 31:3). God promises to forgive your sins and He will claim you as His child.

Just as a plant can be perfect at each step of its growth, so you can be *“complete in Him”* (Colossians 2:10) at every step of your journey heavenward.

God saves us from ourselves and from sin, and then works with us to choose Him in our daily life. When this becomes our experience, we can say, with the apostle Paul, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

As we respond to God's love, we can be assured of eternal life with Him in Heaven. *"I go to prepare a place for you,"* He has promised (John 14:2).

The experience of salvation will continue throughout eternity. We will bless the God of our salvation. God will rejoice over us. Scripture tells us, *"The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing"* (Zephaniah 3:17).

Jesus will one day return to earth to take His followers to heaven. On that day, *"the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; sorrow and sighing shall flee away"* (Isaiah 51:11). This is an experience we don't want to miss!

When we experience salvation, we accept God's love for us. Jesus' death on the cross made it possible for every person to receive salvation and to have eternal life.

Jesus Christ took the penalty of sin for us so that we could receive the gift of His righteousness. His sacrifice made it possible for us to experience salvation and to have the assurance of eternal life.

When we repent from our sins and ask God for forgiveness, He covers us with His righteousness. By faith we receive His deliverance from our sinful past.

As we walk with our Lord and Saviour, He leads us in the way of sanctification. Through prayer and Bible study, we discover God's plan for our lives. As God shows us His plan, our response of love is to follow His guidance. God's love leads us to cheerfully follow His way and His will.

There is nothing we can do to merit salvation. It is a free gift of God's love. Our response to this gift is to follow Jesus Christ in our daily lives. This will lead to a change in our behaviour as we respond to God's plan for our lives.