

# Experiencing God's Salvation in Three Tenses

Romans 5:6-11; Colossians 1:9-14

September 13, 2020

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If someone were to ask us if we have been saved, all of us who are Christians would answer yes, and by that we would mean that at a certain point in our past we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour or, to put it in another way, we had a conversion experience. And that would be absolutely true. However, if we feel that that is all that our salvation experience entails, then we are missing out on two thirds of the salvation God desires us to experience. We are all creatures of time, and that also holds true of our experiencing God's salvation as well.

The Scriptures teach very clearly that our experience of God's salvation has a past tense, a present tense, and a future tense, that is to say, there are three distinct phases or stages to our full salvation experience. And in each one of these three salvation experiences, God has a different and distinct objective in mind for us. The late evangelical Bible scholar, William Hendriksen, expressed it this way: "Our salvation has an initial stage, an ongoing stage, and a final stage, and all must be accepted as undeserved gifts of God's grace."

I will give you only the bare outline of this sermon, and allow you to fill in those points and reflections that you consider meaningful for you. However, because I believe it is so vitally important that we as Christians understand our faith as much as possible, and in particular, that we are clear as to what the Bible teaches about God's full plan of salvation for us, I will be happy to give you a copy of the entire sermon, with all the Bible references, etc. That will allow you to study and reflect on this vitally important subject on your own later on.

So for now, let me simply state that in God's full plan of salvation:

1. **We have been saved in the past**
  - a) What does this aspect of salvation pertain to?
  - b) How do we experience it?
  - c) What's the main theological/biblical term for this past salvation experience?
2. **We are being saved in the present**
  - a) What does this aspect of salvation pertain to?
  - b) Give some concrete examples of how this salvation experience should manifest itself in our lives.
  - c) Although all of salvation is a gift of God's grace, in this present work of salvation in our lives, which is ongoing and progressive, both God's sovereignty *and* our human efforts are involved. How do you understand this seeming paradox?
  - d) What's the main theological/biblical term for this present salvation experience?
3. **We will be saved in the future**
  - a) What does this aspect of salvation pertain to?
  - b) When you think of what this entails, does it increase your longing for heaven? does it motivate you to live any differently in the meantime?
  - c) What's the main theological/biblical term for this future salvation experience?