

SALVATION JESUS RESCUES HIS PEOPLE FROM SIN by J I PACKER

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 4:12

The master theme of the Christian gospel is salvation. Salvation is a picture-word of wide application that expresses the idea of rescue from jeopardy and misery into a state of safety. The gospel proclaims that the God who saved Israel from Egypt, Jonah from the fish's belly, the psalmist from death, and the soldiers from drowning (Exod. 15:2; Jon. 2:9; Ps. 116:6; Acts 27:31), saves all who trust Christ from sin and sin's consequences.

As these earthly deliverances were wholly God's work, and not instances of people saving themselves with God's help, so it is with salvation from sin and death. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it [either faith as such or salvation and faith together] is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). "Salvation comes from the LORD" (Jon. 2:9).

What are believers saved from? From their former position under the wrath of God, the dominion of sin, and the power of death (Rom. 1:18; 3:9; 5:21); from their natural condition of being mastered by the world, the flesh, and the devil (John 8:23-24; Rom. 8:7-8; 1 John 5:19); from the fears that a sinful life engenders (Rom. 8:15; 2 Tim. 1:7; Heb. 2:14-15), and from the many vicious habits that were part of it (Eph. 4:17-24; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Titus 2:11-3:6).

How are believers saved from these things? Through Christ, and in Christ. The Father is as concerned to exalt the Son as he is to rescue the lost (John 5:19-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:15-18; Heb. 1:4-14), and it is as true to say that the elect were appointed for Christ the beloved Son as it is to say that Christ was appointed for the beloved elect (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Col. 1:13; 3:12; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 John 4:9-10).

Our salvation involves, first, Christ dying for us and, second, Christ living in us (John 15:4; 17:26; Col. 1:27) and we living in Christ, united with him in his death and risen life (Rom. 6:3-10; Col. 2:12, 20; 3:1). This vital union, which is sustained by the Spirit from the divine side and by faith from our side, and which is formed in and through our new birth, presupposes covenantal union in the sense of our eternal election in Christ (Eph. 1:4-6). Jesus was foreordained to be our representative head and substitutionary sin-bearer (1 Pet. 1:18-20; cf. Matt. 1:21), and we were chosen to be effectually called, conformed to his image, and glorified by the Spirit's power (Rom. 8:11, 29-30).

Believers are saved from sin and death, but what are they saved for? To live for time and eternity in love to God—Father, Son, and Spirit—and to their neighbors. The source of love for God is knowledge of God's redeeming love for us, and the evidence of love for God is neighbor-love (1 John 4:19-21). God's purpose, here and hereafter, is to keep expressing his love in Christ to us, and our goal must be to keep expressing our love to the three Persons of the one God by worship and service in Christ. The life of love and adoration is our hope of glory, our salvation now, and our happiness forever.