

# *A Relational View of Salvation: Rediscovering the Heart of the Gospel*

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Many people reduce salvation to a list of conditions—repentance, baptism, or sacrifices to make—rather than seeing it first and foremost as a living relationship with God. This article proposes that a relational understanding of salvation not only precedes but reshapes how we present the Gospel. A Gospel without relationship is no Gospel at all.

When salvation is stripped of relationship, it often devolves into a self-centered construct. We present the message in ways that are:

- **Self-centered rather than God-centered**
- **Focused on eternal security rather than relational fidelity**
- **Viewed as a one-time event rather than a lifelong process**
- **Preoccupied with the next world rather than transformative in this world**
- **Sin-focused rather than concerned with the whole person**

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## **1. From Self-Centered to God-Centered**

Too often, salvation is presented as a transaction to secure benefits: forgiveness, heaven, escape from hell. It is about *my* prayer, *my* repentance, *my* assurance. But salvation is not a divine vending machine. It is a covenant relationship. Just as marriage is not about food, sex, and clean laundry but about mutual love, salvation is not a self-serving escape plan but an invitation into communion with God.

God *is* the good news. Salvation is not merely being rescued from punishment—it is being rescued *from ourselves*, because we have found Him. To be saved is to no longer live for ourselves, but for God. Emotional and physical blessings are part of the package, but they are not the essence. He is our portion. He is our reward.

## 2. From Eternal Security to Present Faithfulness

The question should never be “can I lose my salvation?” but “am I walking with God today?” Our relationship with God is not a certificate we file away in a drawer—it’s a life of ongoing communion. Scripture—particularly the book of Hebrews—contains serious warnings. These are not about earning salvation, nor are they meant to keep people living in fear, but they challenge any belief that treats salvation as a past transaction instead of a living reality. Hebrews warns against drifting, hardening the heart, and falling away—not to terrify us, but to call us back into faithful relationship.

Some people need reassurance. Others need to be awakened from false confidence. A person who constantly worries, “Maybe I’m not saved,” may need to grasp God’s grace. But a person who says “I’m saved,” while showing no hunger for God, no love, no obedience, no fear of the Lord—should be deeply alarmed. Biblical assurance is not given apart from relational faithfulness.

We should also be very cautious when offering others assurance. If someone asks, “Do you think I’m saved?” our first response should be “Do you know and love the Lord right now?” because that is what matters most. Anything else is speculation. Only God can see the heart.

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## 3. From One-Time Event to Lifelong Process

Romans 5:10 reminds us that we are not only reconciled to God through the death of His Son, but saved through His life. Salvation begins with a decisive moment of faith, but it doesn’t end there. It continues through a lifelong journey of growth, repentance, and communion.

Throughout Scripture, salvation is spoken of in the past, present, and future. We *have been* saved (Ephesians 2:5), we *are being* saved (1 Corinthians 1:18), and we *will be* saved (Romans 5:10). The spiritual life is not static—it is a progressive transformation into the image of Christ. The New Testament consistently calls believers to endure, to remain faithful, and to persevere. The metaphor of a race is used not to describe a moment of conversion but a sustained effort to reach the finish line.

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## 4. From Next-World Obsession to This-World Transformation

For many, salvation is all about the afterlife—about going to heaven and escaping hell. But Scripture presents salvation as deeply relevant to this world. Jesus spoke of eternal life not merely as duration but as quality—a life that begins now in relationship with the Father (John 17:3).

In the Hebrew Scriptures, salvation was always concrete and immediate: deliverance from enemies, healing from sickness, restoration of justice. Jesus continued in that tradition, healing bodies, feeding the hungry, and proclaiming good news to the poor. The message of the Kingdom is not just about the sweet by-and-by but about real change in the here and now.

Of course, the future hope matters deeply. We await the resurrection, the restoration of all things, the new heavens and earth. But biblical hope is not about escaping the earth—it's about its renewal. The work of salvation involves restoring broken hearts and broken systems, bringing justice, healing, and peace.

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## **5. From Sin-Centered to Whole-Person Renewal**

In many circles, salvation is reduced to the forgiveness of sins. While this is essential, it is only part of the picture. The Greek word *sozo* means to save, to heal, to deliver, to make whole. The Gospel touches every dimension of human life.

When Jesus said, “Your faith has saved you,” He was often speaking not only of spiritual forgiveness, but also of physical healing and emotional restoration. True salvation makes us whole—spiritually, physically, emotionally, and relationally. It restores the image of God in us. It liberates us from guilt, yes, but also from fear, addiction, bitterness, shame, and despair.

A salvation that doesn't change our daily lives, our relationships, our emotions, and even our bodies is incomplete. God wants to heal and renew the whole person.

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## **6. From Man-Centered to Creation-Centered**

Finally, salvation is not just about saving individuals. The Bible tells a much bigger story. Human rebellion affected the whole cosmos, and God's plan is to restore all things. Romans 8 says that creation itself waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. The curse of sin brought suffering not only to humanity but to the earth itself. The Gospel is good news for the entire creation.

Jesus is not only the Savior of souls—He is the Lord of all. The Gospel has implications for justice, for nations, for the environment, for economics, for culture. Redemption extends far beyond our personal lives. Salvation means restoring everything that sin has broken.

## **Conclusion: Salvation as Relationship**

Before arguing about the conditions of salvation, we must agree on its nature. Just like in marriage, the way we define the covenant affects how we enter and live in it. If salvation is a living relationship with God, then the essential requirement is love—and the fruit is transformation.

Salvation is not a doctrine to memorize, a formula to apply, or a one-time prayer to recite. It is a journey into the heart of God. It is communion. It is restoration. It is a life of walking with the One who made us and loves us.

When we preach the Gospel, are we inviting people into that kind of relationship—or are we offering a contract with fine print? The Gospel is not just about avoiding punishment; it is about loving the One who gave everything for us. Let us return to the heart of the Gospel: He is the good news. He is our salvation. And He is enough.