

### Study # 5

#### Cruciformity — The Meaning and Goal of “Salvation”

The purpose of this section is to argue that the words “salvation” or “being saved” refer many times in the New Testament clearly to the process of being changed into the cruciform nature of Christ.

The Greek word for the verb “to save” (*σωζω*, *sozo* — #4982) means “to save, deliver, make whole, preserve safe from danger, loss, destruction.”<sup>1</sup> Of the 54 times this verb occurs in the Gospels, 14 occurrences relate to deliverance from disease or demon possession; in these cases, *σωζω* is often translated as being “healed” or “made whole”; 20 occurrences relate to the rescue of physical life from some impending peril or instant death. These 34 instances reveal the basic meaning of *σωζω* and the related noun “salvation” (*σωτηρια*, *soteria* — #4991); when used in a figurative, spiritual sense, they refer to deliverance from sin, the devil, or hell in much the same way as a person is healed from sickness, set free from demons, or saved from death.

Not only does the concept of salvation refer to the deliverance from physical or spiritual sickness, but it indicates the healthy condition or the quality of life of the one healed, delivered or “made whole”. Jesus was certainly healthy spiritually and was totally cruciform; therefore, the more that we become like Him, the more cruciform we become. Being conformed to His example means being saved from all that is not according to His nature and saved to become cruciform like Him.

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<sup>1</sup>Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 1353.

Further, the tense of the Greek verb  $\sigma\omega\zeta\omega$  in a significant number of cases indicates the **present process** of being healed from spiritual sickness or from present spiritual death, not just a past experience nor only a future state in heaven. Consider these examples where the present process is clear from the verb tenses:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who **are being saved** it is the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:18)

By this gospel you are [**being**]\* saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached unto you . . . . (1 Cor. 15:2) (\*present progressive tense in the Greek)

For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who **are being saved** . . . . (2 Cor. 2:15)

In most cases,  $\sigma\omega\zeta\omega$  occurs in forms (future, subjunctive, infinitive) that do not show in themselves whether there is a process involved or not. In some of these cases, the context shows that the act of saving is to occur at our resurrection; however, in many cases the context shows that the time is the present or the near future for the process of being changed into cruciformity. Examples:

And it shall be that every one who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved . . . Be saved from this perverse generation! (Acts 2:21, 40)

He is able to save them completely . . . because he always lives to intercede for them. (Heb. 7:25)

Many Christians will say that, when they “got saved”, they invited Jesus into their hearts, but many of these people seem unaware that the process of salvation involves the entrance into our lives of the Lord for the purpose of totally changing us into His cruciform nature. This process of change is referred to in a couple of places by the expression “salvation of the soul”: “[F]or you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:9). Note that Peter is referring to the present process of

salvation by using the present tense of the verb “are receiving”. Similarly, James commands his readers to “get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you [your souls — lit.]” (James 1:21). Here the context is clearly the ongoing process of being changed or saved.

In Romans 6, a synonym for “saved” is used: “delivered, set free” (*ελευθερωω* — *eleutheroo* #1659): “You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (17-18). Here, the process of salvation (being “set free”) is considered a past death and resurrection with Christ, but the process was not finished as they were implored to “not offer the parts of their bodies to sin” (13) but “offer them to righteousness” (19). Here again the two sides of a progressive process of salvation are clearly taught: (1) being set free from slavery to everything that is not cruciform and (2) committing to live a new life — a life of righteousness, of cruciformity.

A necessary condition for this daily process of “being saved”, being transformed into the cruciform nature of Christ, is daily repentance, which is discussed later in Study # 12, Part C: “Brokenness and Repentance”.

A final note: in heaven we will be changed into the nature of Christ: “[W]e shall be like him” (1 John 3:2); even our future salvation can be interpreted as being set completely free to be totally cruciform.

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