



SALVATION IS LIFE'S COVENANT

My eyes have seen your salvation.

Salvation is life's contract between our soul and our God. Tested faith is the means to our salvation. No other can accept the challenges of our faith in our place. Christ stands at the entry by an open gate, raising twin lanterns of faith and knowledge. But salvation is always a choice, and we alone select the heart of our soul, the success of our journey, and whether or not we choose to enter through the gate.

Scripture:

Luke 2

21. On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.
22. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord
23. (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord,")
24. and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."
25. Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.
26. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.
27. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,
28. Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:
29. "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.
30. For my eyes have seen your salvation,
31. which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
32. a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."
33. The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.
34. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,
35. so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."
36. There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,
37. and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.
38. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

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SOTERIOLOGY

“Picture Salvation”

Do you know the word Soteriology?

Soteriology is the study of salvation. There is a whole field of theology devoted to the study of salvation. It covers the means by which salvation is

achieved, and the results of achieving it. In our scripture today, the old man Simeon says that the baby Jesus IS his salvation, and the salvation of many.

So what is he talking about?

Salvation can mean three related things:

- being saved from something, such as suffering or the punishment of sin - also called *deliverance*;
- being saved for something, such as an afterlife or participating in the Reign of God - also called *redemption*
- social liberation and healing, such as in liberation theology.

The New Testament contains 138 verses that, in English translation, use the words "salvation" (45), "save" (41) or "saved" (52).

One way to look at the Holy Scriptures is as "salvation history."

So what are the ingredients in a life that is saved?

- **Belief in Jesus:** "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).
- **God's love:** "When the kindness of God our Savior, and his love toward humans appeared ..." (Titus 3:4)
- **Sin:** Another component of a "saved" life is acknowledgement. Sin separates mankind from God. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"(Romans 3:23)
- **God gives eternal life** because Jesus Christ atoned for our sin: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)
- **Saved (from sin) by asking God for forgiveness just as we forgive others:** "For if ye forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: *But if ye forgive not others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" (Matthew 6:14-15)
- **Saved by baptism (you must also believe to be saved):** "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in

the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:" (Romans 6:3-5)

- **Saved by God's grace:** "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9). The word grace is further clarified and defined in Titus 3:5-7:
 5. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
 6. which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior;
 7. that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."
- **Saved by Works:** "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2:24), see also Epistle of James. This passage is disputed as to the meaning of the word justified.

**Is it baptism, grace or works?
The scriptures make a case for all three.**

JESUS' SALVATION SERMON

Jesus' greatest instruction about salvation is the Sermon on the Mount. It includes the beatitudes:

- The hunger for righteousness in our own time
- Purity of heart.
- And a call to righteousness as well as a definition of what is holy and what is profane.

Do these things and you will know salvation. Salvation is achievable.

PROLOG TO SALVATION

Our scripture today is prolog to all that. It is a touching and emotional moment, and it needs to be included in the birth stories because it tells us why they are important.

In our scripture today, Simon says that God has put a face on salvation and it is Jesus Christ.

Simeon took the eight day old baby Jesus into his arms, and told everyone, now I have found my champion. Now I can rest in peace.

30. For my eyes have seen your salvation,

31. which you have prepared in the sight of all people,

32. a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Now my hope is complete, now I have beheld my salvation.

Simeon knew the prophesy of the messiah, and he was amazed to find that toward the end of his days, he actually got to see it.

It was the fulfillment of a dream – but not the completion. His dream was also the dream of every Jew. The words come from the mouth of Simeon that this is not just my savior, but our savior.

AT LAST, I SEE HIM FACE TO FACE

That glimpse of the savior was the climax of last year's Choir Cantata. One of the most moving songs in the program was the bass solo by a man with a beard singing, "At last I have seen messiah face to face."

But for us, it is not just the words of scripture that are moving, it is also the man who sang them to us who seems as full of faith as Simeon himself.

JIM'S SONG

In a moment, I am going to play a track from last years Christmas Cantata. They are the words of Simeon who sees the child who represents the quest of all the children he has met, all the people whom he has ministered to, and all the songs he has ever sung before God, "I have seen him face to face." Simeon's words are sung by Jim Reif.

I sat at the foot of Jim's bed on Friday, and I told Jim that I would play this for you in worship this morning. I hear these as words of Jim's faith as much as they are Simeon's. I would expect no one to argue.

YOUR SALVATION

Before we hear this music, I need to ask you to put a face on your own salvation. What is YOUR salvation?

The word means rescue, recovery, deliverance. Salvation is not a place, it is not a street address, and it is not a permanent condition. It is a process; it is an attitude; it is living a life of grace. It is knowing that God welcomes your life; God gave you your skills. Because God made it all, then salvation is that condition in which we live together in peace, in harmony, and in forgiveness and forbearance. It ties in so well with the angel's prophesy of peace on earth and good will toward all. That will be salvation.

SALVATION ARMY

Salvation is people working together to help, rescue, recover, and deliver anyone who needs to be rescued, recovered, and delivered. I'm going to put a face on salvation next Saturday down at the Santa Rosa Mall between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. I have great respect for the work of the Salvation Army, and even more respect for it in our own community because of the work of Blaine and Sidne Goodwin. I'm not doing it because I like the sound of that annoying bell. But I should be able to tell you some stories of salvation and the reaction of people to the bell that asks them to help rescue, recover, and deliver someone who is lost. I hope you will drop over to my kettle, and give me a little encouragement.

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

"Picture Salvation." What do you see?

Anyone can provide a list of all the things that lead you away from God. But when all is said and done, that is not a very important list.

What leads you toward God's kingdom and what you can do to help others realize that dream too, that is an important Christmas list.

Tested faith is the means to our salvation. No other can accept the challenges of our faith in our place.

The Song of Simeon recalls the culmination of a life's search.

**At last I behold the promise.
At last I see him with my eyes.
I touch him with my hands.
I marvel in the presence of the great, "I am."**

**Now my soul can be at rest.
I smile, and I receive him.
At last I see him, this holy child.
O come let us adore him, this holy child.**



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December 16, 2007**