

Heaven, alternatively, is pure. It is pure love, pure light, pure mercy, pure life, pure joy. Our impurity, however, does not mean we cannot go there; it means we will to not go there. We reject heaven. We choose to be selfish, to remain indifferent. We rationalize this by comparing ourselves to others, but others are not the standard. Heaven is our standard. God is our standard. In other words, we willfully reject God and heaven. We reject life when we choose anger, indifference, and whatever other loveless attitude we harbor or action we perform. In short, we choose to sin, and sin is a living death. We choose self over others. We choose our own will over God's. Therefore, remaining in death what we are in life, we will continue in this choice. We will continue to reject pure love, to reject pure light, to reject pure life. In short, we will continue to choose death and so we will die eternally.

Therefore, we need to be saved from ourselves. God, then, would save us from this, the consequence of our own willful evil. This is why He sent His Son to die on the Cross. The Cross is God's method. All the sin in our heart acts like a great weight, causing us to sink. It is like friction in the soul. Therefore, sin freezes us, arrests us, immobilizes us. This is the essence of death. On the Cross, Christ died. Being absolutely sinless and righteous, however, being God in the flesh, He rose from the dead, for death had nothing by which to hold Him. Christ thus defeated death. In Him, therefore, we receive the victory over death He won on our behalf. He shares with us His triumph. He identified Himself with our weakness, but in dying He grants us His power. He became sin who knew no sin, but in dying He gave us His righteousness. He died, but in dying He gave us His Life. Christ, therefore, saves us. And not only saving, He Himself is our salvation.

In sum, we really do need to be saved, saved from our own sin and death. There is no way around, we all must pass through that gate. So God freely gives the needed Way of escape, of being made one with Him: living faith in Jesus Christ. In Him we are made free from the consequences of our own evil, and what is more He comes to live in us, transforming us into bearers of His Light and Life, so that we can shine the radiant light of this Gospel of Salvation, of eternal Life to all.

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*Essentials Series*

## Do I Really Need to be Saved?

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## A Closer Look at a Controversial Question

by

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There is a pervasive assumption in today's culture that salvation is totally unnecessary. One may encounter not only doubt at the suggestion of a personal need for salvation, but also confusion, offense, or perhaps even outright indignation: "How dare someone suggest I need to be saved?" If not confused or angered by the suggestion, some may simply reply that "No one is perfect," that all people make mistakes, and as such mercy and salvation must be taken for granted. God is merciful and loving, and so salvation is simply to be assumed. But there is a large difference between assurance of mercy and salvation, on the one hand, and careless, brazen presumption, on the other. Therefore it is extremely worthwhile to take a closer look at why a person might actually need to be saved.

The natural question, then, is, "Saved from what?" In order to answer that question a few basic assumptions from the common contemporary mindset must be addressed.

First, all major and most minor religions, including the popular New Age beliefs, agree that death is not the end of our personal existence. Not only religion, but science also increasingly admits to the evidence of life after death, and the persistence of consciousness. Therefore, even apart from Christian teachings, the idea that there is life after death must be taken seriously, not only according to Christianity and the other major and minor religions, but also according to many scientists. The fact of such wide-spread agreement points to the reality of the phenomenon of life after death. There is clearly a universal, inbuilt intuition in human beings that there is more to this life than our earthly existence.

Second, there are consequences from this life which persist into the next. Although the major and minor religions do not agree exactly on the details, the entrance into the next life is largely, if not entirely, determined by the choices we make and by the way we live our current life. Therefore, not only must the idea of the next life be taken very seriously, the manner of entry there is also of paramount importance. Many people, in an attempt to be fair-minded, will affirm that all religions have different beliefs, and that they should all be respected. That is certainly a noble social goal, but if it is taken so far such that a person ends up not having or acting on their own beliefs, then it ends up causing a person not to take the reality of their own death seriously, nor the consequences extending into the next life. Since there are consequences extending from this life to the next, one better faces them now.

Third, beliefs do not materialize out of thin air, nor can all religions be true. Each religion has a long history with many ideas, ideas that all mutually depend on and reinforce each other. Since the religions have mutually contradictory claims, the serious adherents of the respective religions all recognize that they are in deep disagreement with the other religions. Therefore, although it is a very common practice today, it does not work to simply take a random collection of favorite ideas from different religions and make up one's own belief system. A belief system patched together by one lone individual is really only an arbitrary, personal, and egocentric opinion. One must follow a coherent belief with care and attention.

But why are we taking so much time and space approaching the question of the need for salvation in this way? The reason is because, even if vaguely agreeing with the above, most people still do not take salvation seriously. And the assumption that everyone is different seems to reinforce the cavalier attitude that everyone is mostly okay. As a consequence, salvation is made to seem a non-issue. The reality, however, is that the fact of life after death is agreed, as is the fact that there are consequences beyond this life, and so the importance of the issue cannot be minimized merely because of the diversity of opinion. Rather, it is enhanced. We tend to minimize disagreements socially in order to get along, which is laudable, but in this case it is literally a matter of life after death, therefore it will not do to take salvation for granted or ignore its importance. The method or way of salvation is not agreed over, but the need for it is, nonetheless, universally recognized.

The foregoing leads to the fourth point, which is precisely that of method. The need for salvation generally agreed, none agree as to the method or way of salvation. Now, the problem is that we continue in death what we are in life. We are all a mixture of good and evil, therefore the reality is we are all in a position requiring salvation from the consequences of our own evil. The method of salvation must deal with this problem and is therefore of utmost importance. We love our families, but hate our enemies. We bless those who bless us, but curse those who curse us. We give, but are egocentric. We are indifferent and selfish. Although we do see good in us, there is also this impurity. The impurity within us, however, complicates matters and cannot be ignored. It is not something that can be wished away, for its source is actually connected to our desires and choices, to our very heart. We are therefore not impure superficially or merely by accident, and so the way of salvation would have to deal with this impurity at its deepest level.