

Straightforward Salvation

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[0 : 0 0] Let me turn back together for a few moments this morning, as the Lord allows to, the chapter that we read, Isaiah chapter 45. And this morning we're going to focus on verse 22.

Isaiah chapter 45, verse 22. Turn to me and be saved, all ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other.

You have seen from the bulletin this morning, from your notices this morning, that the title of our sermon is Straightforward Salvation.

Well, I once knew a man who had spent years wanting to be saved. His parents were believers, he was brought up in a godly home, he was brought up to go to church.

Every Sunday, every Lord's Day. He had friends from university, when he was a student he shared digs with Christian men, men who went on to become ministers even.

[1 : 1 7] He baptized his son. And he brought his son up to go to church and to Sunday school and he made that a focus of family life.

His wife was a believer. She was converted. But he wasn't. And he wasn't saved. He didn't get converted until shortly before he died.

But when he was finally saved, he turned to his wife one day and he said, Why didn't you tell me it was that simple? Why didn't you tell me it was that easy?

It's the most simple yet complex thing that can ever happen to us. And we tend to make getting saved, we tend to make being converted more difficult than it really is.

Because what the Bible says about salvation is really quite straightforward. And we can cloud what we're trying to say with words that make it seem like we've got our own special coded language.

[2 : 3 5] We use words like saved, born again, redeemed, converted. All good words. All perfectly adequate words. Words I use myself.

Words I like using myself. But they can be confusing to people if we're not really sure what it is we mean by them. I worked as a teacher of computing for 30 years.

And made full use of all jargon that we could find. Especially if I wasn't sure what I was talking about. So we need to be clear about what we mean when we use these words.

This morning we're going to look at salvation plain and simple. Straightforward salvation. Because I'd like you all to be able to say that at least once from me you heard a clear straightforward message.

About salvation in Jesus Christ. About how to be saved in Jesus Christ. Something that anybody, everybody can understand. So first things first.

[3 : 4 2] Let's be clear what we mean by salvation. Well the dictionary defines salvation as, well, being saved, yes. But it takes it a little further.

It says salvation is to be safe from harm. In other words, salvation means to be rescued. And there are many ways that we can be rescued.

We can be rescued from financial disaster. We can be rescued emotionally. We can be rescued psychologically. We can be rescued mentally.

But here we're using it to do with our soul. Making sure our soul is safe from harm.

That's what salvation is. But that then brings up another question. What's this soul thing that we talk about? Well it's you.

[4 : 42] You are a soul. In Genesis 2, when God created the first man, when he created Adam from the dust of the earth, he breathed into Adam's nostrils.

And when you read in Genesis 2, what happened when he breathed into Adam's nostrils, we're told that Adam became a living soul. Before that, he was just a body.

It was God's breath in him that made him live. That made him a living soul. You and me, we are living souls. The writer C.S. Lewis said, You are a soul.

You have a body. We spend a lot of time pampering our bodies, taking care of our bodies, feeding our bodies. But all your body is, your body is not you.

Your body is an envelope for you. It's merely an envelope that holds your soul. And what's more important, when you get a letter, a handwritten letter through the post, what's more important to you?

[5 : 45] The envelope? Or what's inside it? Your soul is what is inside your body. Your soul is the only part of you that will last forever.

So when your soul is saved, when my soul was saved, that's something that lasts eternally. There's no end to that. It's something eternal.

Being saved can't fade, can't wear out, can't be taken from us. Do you know what?

We can't even give it away ourselves. This morning we're going to look at four simple questions about salvation. And they're all answered in that verse that I read earlier.

The four questions that we're going to look at are, Who saves? Do we save ourselves? Does somebody else save us? Who saves? And who can be saved?

[6 : 47] Is this a limited offer? Is it something that's just for one or two people? Who can be saved? How straightforward is it to be saved?

Is it a complex process? Is there a long apprenticeship? And how secure is it once we're saved? So hopefully this morning we'll be able to answer all of these questions.

So let's look at the first one. Who saves? Well look at the verse that we read there. Turn to me and be saved.

For I am God. And there is no other. You'll have seen as we read through all of that chapter there in Isaiah 45. You'll have seen again and again and again.

I am God. There is none other. I am God. There is no one like me. Here it is again. Turn to me. Because I'm God. And there's no other.

[7 : 45] That's crystal clear that verse there. There's no dubiety. There's no doubt about what God's saying here. There's no two which ways about it. We don't save ourselves.

God does. God does the saving. As somebody said, we do all the sinning. He does all the saving. There's only one way to heaven.

There's only one cure for sin. There's only one way to escape hell. And that's God. Turn to me. Because I am God.

And there's no one else. Salvation doesn't come from the church. It's not something that the church can give us. It doesn't come from being baptized.

It doesn't come from belonging to a Christian family. Being brought up in a Christian home. It doesn't come from that. Although that can all help. It only comes from God.

- [8 : 46] Turn to me. Salvation doesn't come from doing good things. Or living a good life. Having a small footprint of wrong things in your life as possible.
- It doesn't come from that. It only comes from God. So how does this plan of salvation, how does it come, excuse me, from God?
- Well, God has a plan. And it's an exclusive plan. And it's an exclusive plan that involves Jesus. Who said in John chapter 14, I am the way and the truth and the life.
- Jesus Christ is the way to God. If you need a million pounds to be a millionaire, then you need Jesus Christ to be a Christian. It's axiomatic.
- You need Christ to be a Christian. People aren't saved just because they're free church. People aren't saved because they're good people.
- [9 : 53] Or because they attend church. Because your pew, your seat is never empty. You're not saved because you've been baptized.
- Or you've made a real effort to live well. And you've watched everything that you've done. All these things are good. In their own way, they're good.
- In their own way, they're valuable. But they can't save your soul. On their own, they can't save your soul. The only thing that can save your soul, the only person who can save your soul, is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- He's the only name given under heaven, among men by which we can be saved. No exception. At the risk of laboring the point, let's be clear.
- We're saved because we believe and we trust in no one and no thing except Jesus Christ. We get to heaven because we know Jesus personally.
- [11 : 01] Because we love Jesus. Only because he loved us first. And because we trust Jesus. We trust him with our lives because of what he did at the cross.
- And we trust him with our death. Know what the hymn writer says? My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.
- On Christ, the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand. If you are anywhere except in Jesus Christ, then you are on sinking sand.
- What's under your feet is quicksand. He is the rock. He is the rock of your salvation. There's nowhere else. Are you saved this morning? If you are, give thanks.
- I'm sure you do. Joy, rejoice that your name is written in heaven. If you're not, do you want to be saved? Are you trying to save yourself?
- [12 : 08] Have I hit a nerve with any of that list of things that are good, but aren't good enough to save you? Well, stop trying to do what's already been done for you. Trust in Jesus by faith.
- He'll save you from your sins. He'll save you from hell. He's done it all. See on the cross when he said, it is finished. It wasn't saying, I'm finished. He wasn't saying, I'm done in.
- I can't do any more. I've done everything I can. What Jesus said was, I've done everything. Everything that's necessary for you to be saved.
- He's done it all. All you need to do is to take hold of what he's done and trust in what he's done. There's only one way to God. There's only one way to be saved.
- There's only one way to heaven and his name is Jesus. You know in Acts chapter 16, the story of the Philippian jailer. He's about to commit suicide.
- [13 : 10] His sword is drawn. He's about to plunge it into his chest. Paul comes and he stops him and he says, what must I do to be saved? The most important question that a human being can ask.

Look how complicated the answer that Paul gave was. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

He is the only way to be saved. So who can be saved? The second question, who can be saved? Well, look at our verse. Look to me, turn to me and be saved.

All ends of the earth. All ends of the earth. One of the things that makes God's plan of salvation is so great is that it's freely available to every single human being on the face of the planet.

And there are verses in the Bible that repeat this to us. John 3, 16. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever, whosoever.

[14 : 28] That word is repeated again right at the end of the Bible in Revelations chapter 22. Whosoever will let him come. Salvation in Jesus Christ is not for a select few.

It's not only available for one or two human beings. It is for whosoever. You are a whosoever.

You are included in that whosoever. That's the most inclusive term that you'll ever hear. We hear our leaders and our politicians talking about an inclusive society that they're trying to build.

Heaven is inclusive. Heaven is the most inclusive place there is. Whosoever will. Any man, any woman, any boy, any girl, including you, can be saved.

Because when Jesus died for sin at the cross, when he went to Calvary, he died for your sins too. He died for your sins too.

[15 : 42] And you know what? The cross actually proves that God loves you. Romans chapter 5. Paul writing to the Romans in chapter 5 says this. God put his great love on display for us when Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

And it doesn't matter what your past life's been like. Doesn't matter what you've maybe got hidden away in the closet, what you've done in your past, because God's offer of salvation is available to you too.

Whom so ever. There's no qualification made on that statement. Whom so ever will. He will not turn you away. I read something recently about the actor Steve McQueen.

If you're of a certain age, you'll remember Steve McQueen as a great actor who we all admired. He had a successful, a very successful film career, but problems with alcohol, a failed marriage, all of these things left him empty.

And in despair, he went to a crusade, an evangelistic crusade that was run by one of Billy Graham's associates. And Steve McQueen actually became a Christian.

[17 : 08] He professed faith, but he struggled with the idea that God would give eternal life to somebody like him, somebody with such a checkered past, such a dubious past whose life was littered with mistakes and problem areas.

But God's word is a living word. Written thousands of years ago, it speaks to us even today. And Steve McQueen found his hope in the Bible.

When he died, according to what I've read, when he died, apparently his Bible was open at Titus chapter 1. And his finger was resting on verse 2.

And verse 2 of Titus 1 says this, in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.

No matter what your life has been like, no matter how long you have lived in the enemy's camp, no matter the sin, the degradation, the issues that litter your past, you too can hope in God's promise of eternal life because it's written down and when God promises something, he keeps that promise.

[18 : 36] He cannot lie. And please, this morning, please don't think that salvation won't work for you. Please don't look around at people who are converted, who are Christians and come away with the idea, well, it's good for them, it's okay for them, but it won't work for me.

It can't work for me. If you look to Jesus by faith, he will save your soul. That's the promise.

If he saved people like me, if he saved other people in here, then he can save you too. You've got absolutely no worries on that score.

He is able to save to the uttermost. That means that nobody is beyond Jesus' reach. There's nobody out of reach.

There's nobody that he can't save. There's nobody that he can't get to. There's nobody that he can't turn to himself. Able to save to the uttermost.

[19 : 43] Nobody is beyond his reach. because salvation is not for good people. It's not for people who live nice, tidy, well-ordered lives.

Jesus himself said this. He said, I didn't come to call the righteous. I came to call sinners to repentance. He came to seek and to save the lost.

Salvation, being saved, it's not a badge that we get as we go across the finish line at the end of our lives. It's not a medal that gets pinned on. Well done. You didn't do too badly.

Here, have some salvation. That's not what it is. Salvation is a gift for the guilty. And when God gives you something, it's because you need it.

And boy, do we need this. nobody in eternity will be able to come and to say, well, I tried to come to God. I tried to believe in Jesus, but he wouldn't save me.

[20 : 52] He wouldn't take me. I wasn't on his list. No. If you really want to be saved, you can be saved. Because he's made it possible.

God has made it possible in Jesus Christ. Romans 10, chapter 13. Whoever, there's that word again, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Will be saved. Third question. How straightforward is it to become saved? Look at our verse again.

Turn to me and be saved. Look to me and be saved. The Philippian jailer, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Does it say, turn to me, live right, live a good life and I'll think about saving you? No, it doesn't. Does it say, look to me, turn over a new leaf, promise to never sin again, I'll come and visit you in four or five years' time, we'll see how you're getting on and then we'll decide about it then.

[22 : 07] No, it doesn't. It says, look to me and be saved. That simple, that profound look of faith, that symbol of commitment turning towards God, meaning that your focus is moving towards God and away from everything else, that's powerful enough to save you through Jesus Christ.

And this idea of looking goes right back to the children of Israel when they were wandering in the desert. In Numbers chapter 21, we're told the story. The Lord sent poisonous snakes among the people.

They bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, we sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.

So Moses prayed. The Lord said, make a snake and put it up on a pole. Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. So Moses made a bronze snake, put it up on a pole and anyone who was bitten by the snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

They lived. They were healed simply by looking at the snake on the pole, the bronze serpent. Salvation is so straightforward, it seems too good to be true.

[23 : 26] All we've got to do is believe and we're saved. Trust in Jesus and we're saved. We want to have a hand in it ourselves to improve ourselves. We have difficulty accepting it's that simple and that's what makes it complex for us that it's that simple because it's all about Jesus.

The essence of the gospel is in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, Paul says, for I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he rose again the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

He also says in Romans chapter 10, if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved. Salvation is not about your ability to change.

it's not about your big faith. It's simply looking to Jesus by faith. He's done everything that you need to be saved.

It's all done. All the heavy lifting is finished. It's over. All you need to do is believe in what he's done. And we did it with our parents.

[24 : 45] We all did it with our parents when we were little. We looked to our parents for everything. We looked to them for food, for comfort, for warmth. We looked to them when we were hurt, when we were angry, when we were scared.

We looked to our parents. How come we have so much difficulty doing it now? Anybody can turn to Jesus.

If you're young, if you're old, middle-aged, you can turn. Rich or poor, you can turn. good people, bad people, you can turn. The thief on the cross, whatever it was that he had done, he was under sentence of death for his crimes and he turned.

Anybody can turn to Jesus. But nobody else can turn for you. You have to turn to Jesus for yourself.

People can pray for you. People can plead with you. people can pray for you, pray over you, pray with you, but only you can turn to Jesus for your own salvation.

[25 : 57] Only you can do it. So have you turned to Jesus for your salvation? If not, why not?

If not, will you? will you reject him again? Fourth question. How secure is this salvation?

It's there at the end of verse 22. The first line of verse 22. Turn to me and be saved. People who turn to Jesus will be saved.

Action, consequence, consequence, cause, effect. Remember, being saved means that you're safe from all harm and danger because people who aren't saved are under a death penalty, an eternal death penalty in hell.

The Bible tells us that again and again and again. But when you turn to Jesus, you're saved, you're kept safe from this eternal death penalty of sin.

[27 : 11] And as you live and grow in Jesus, you're kept safe every day from the power of sin in your life. You're under new management, as it were. And ultimately, in heaven, you'll be saved forever from the presence of sin.

And some people think that being saved means that we never mess up. We have to live tremendously upright lives and that any slip-ups will cost us our salvation, will put us back on the road to hell.

I'm sorry, if you've got that idea, if that's what you think, then you're not reading your Bibles correctly. Look at the characters in the Bible.

Noah got drunk. Moses, it says he was a meek man, but he also had a temper that caused him to murder an Egyptian with his bare hands.

That's a fearful temper. Abraham was a liar. David, well, we know about David, committed adultery with Bathsheba, covered it up with murder.

[28 : 23] Gideon, the great soldier, was a coward. When we first meet Gideon, he's trying to thresh grain in a hole in the ground to hide from the enemies.

Esther was a very spoiled woman. All of these great heroes of the faith were deeply flawed human beings who mucked up again and again and again and again.

But they were all heroes of the faith. They didn't lose their salvation because they made a mistake. Because when we mess up, and we will, and we do, when we mess up, when we sin, we are fortunate that we have a man, somebody on the inside working for us.

Jesus Christ, our advocate. Lawyers are expensive. They charge by the hour. He does it for free.

He does it because he loves us. He paid for the privilege. He's the lamb of God who takes away all our sin, past, present, and future sins.

[29 : 37] He forgives all our sins. That doesn't mean to say that we can live a life as we please, because there's chastisement for sin. He brings us back to his way through chastisement, but there's also forgiveness.

Salvation through Jesus Christ is all about being absolutely and eternally saved from the dangers and penalties of sin. Once saved, always saved.

Why? Because, as John 10 verse 28 says, I give them eternal life. They will never perish. Nobody can snatch them out of my hands.

He saves. He keeps. He secures. Supposing you're at the seaside with me. We're walking along the beach. It's a nice day.

And we see somebody drowning, maybe 100 meters out from the shore. So you go and swim out. It would have to be you. I can't swim. So you would have to go out and swim.

[30 : 37] And you get hold of the person and you drag them into the shore and about 10 meters out, 30 feet out, you say, right, that's close enough. We're near. You can see the sand from here. On you go. The rest is up to you.

Are they saved? No. They're not. They're still in danger. They're still in mortal danger. When Jesus saves your soul, he does it completely.

There's nothing left for you to do. He does it permanently and he does it eternally. There's no way that you can mess up your salvation because it's Jesus who saves.

Is that too good to be true, do you think? Does that sound like it's a fairy story? Like it's just too good to be through?

Well, don't take my word for it. What Jesus says in John chapter 6, all that the father gives me will come to me. Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. That word again, whoever.

[31 : 38] I have come not to do my own will, but the will of whom who sent me, that I should lose none of all he's given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my father that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him will have eternal life.

Proof beyond a shadow of a doubt that when Jesus saves your soul, your soul stays saved forever. Wouldn't you like this salvation?

That's our four questions done. Wouldn't you like this salvation if it's not yours already? The thought that all is well between you and God, that you have peace with the creator of the universe, every sin is forgiven, that there's the promise of a home waiting for you in heaven when you leave this world.

These are all promises for you if you're saved in Jesus Christ in your word. These can be yours if you look to Jesus, if you turn to Jesus, if you trust in Jesus by faith.

Maybe you've looked at everything else, maybe you've tried other avenues. Why not try Jesus? Let me ask you a couple of questions.

[33 : 02] What would you think about somebody who was drowning, who couldn't swim, and who refused a life belt? What would you think about that person?

Or what would you think about somebody who had been poisoned, who was dying, and who didn't want the antidote? So what would you think about somebody who was unsaved, but who refuses the only way to get saved, who refuses Jesus Christ again?

If you turn, if you look to Jesus, if you trust Jesus, even with the smallest grain of faith, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief, you will be saved.

That's straightforward salvation. Amen. Let's pray. Eternal Father, we come to you again this morning. We ask that you would bless us, and that we would see, Lord, the value, the preciousness that there is in Jesus, in the spilt blood, in the broken body, in the love that kept him on the cross, till everything was completed.

Lord, help us to turn to him, to look to him, and to be saved, to realize the power in that trust and in that faith.

[34 : 29] For Jesus' sake, Amen. Our final psalm this morning is the Scottish Psalter, the traditional version of Psalm 40.

page 259 in the psalm book, Psalm 40. We're going to sing the first four verses. I waited for the Lord, my God, and patiently did bear at length to me.

He did incline my voice and cry to hear. Down to the end of verse 4. O blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies, respecting not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

these four verses from Psalm 40 to the tune Balerna, to God's praise. I waited for the Lord, my God, and patiently did bear, and led to me.

He did incline my voice and cry to hear.

[35 : 51] He took me from my feet and from the mighty clay.

and on the rock He set my feet, establishing my way.

He put a new song in my mouth, the God to magnify.

Many shall see, yet shall fear, and on the Lord rely.

O blessed is the man if you'll allow me to go to the door after the benediction.

[37 : 37] May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit abide with us all now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.