



What Is God's Spectacular Plan for You?

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (Ephesians 2:10, NLT)

God, who created the heavens and the earth and every living creature, says that you are his masterpiece or workmanship. The word masterpiece in the Greek language implies "work of art." Think about it. God, the artist, created you a new person in union with Christ Jesus to do the good things he planned for you. He brought you into a new family with a new King. However, just as you were physically born a baby, you were spiritually born a baby. You need to grow up! As an artist wants to complete his painting, so God wants you to mature. That is all part of his spectacular plan for you. The forgiveness of sin, the gift of eternal life, the process of growing into a mature Christian and living forever in heaven is all included in that awesome word – salvation!

Past salvation

What is salvation? It is God's forgiveness of sin and gift of eternal life when you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for you and rose again. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians: *"But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, that even while we were dead [spiritually] because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. It is only by God's special favor that you **have been saved**.... It is a gift from God!"* (Ephesians 2:4-5, 8, NLT) You have been saved from the guilt and penalty of sin. Jesus took your punishment on the cross. God has made you a new person and adopted you as his child. It is a done deal! Your body will die some day, but your soul and spirit (with a new body) will live in heaven with Jesus forever. Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again.* (John 11: 25, NLT) However, there is much, much more.

Present salvation

Because you are spiritually a newborn baby and need to grow up, the Bible explains that you are in the process of being saved from sin's power. *"I know very well how foolish the message of the cross sounds to those who are on the road to destruction. But we who are **being saved** recognize this message as the very power of God."* (1 Corinthians 1:18, NLT) "Being saved" is that inner process by which the Holy Spirit (as you study the Word and pray) changes your attitudes, beliefs and actions to be in line with the way Jesus thinks and acts. Called "**sanctification**," the process begins the moment you become a Christian. There will be struggles, battles, failures and victories. The Holy Spirit reveals and convicts you of sin, encourages you to repent and empowers you to change. On your own strength

and willpower, you will find it impossible to change. That's why the Bible says, "*For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.*" (Philippians 2:13, NLT) However, you have to cooperate! The Bible says to "make every effort" to be holy. (Hebrews 12:14) Every step of obedience is an act of faith (believing, trusting) and a small step of growth. The Bible says that the righteous (those right with God) live by faith from first to last. (Romans 1:17) Perhaps looking at the Apostle Peter's life will help you see how this process of spiritual growth works.

When Peter, a commercial fisherman, first met Jesus, Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, but you will be called Peter," which means rock. (John 1:42) Jesus saw him not as he was but what he would become. Now Peter was anything but a rock. He was impulsive and unstable. However, when Jesus said, "Follow me. I will teach you how to fish for people," Peter left his fish boats and followed.

One day the disciples were out in the lake and a storm came. Jesus walked on water to their boat. Peter yelled, "Lord, if that is you, tell me to walk on the water!" What faith! Jesus said, "Come." Peter courageously stepped out of the boat and started walking on the water to Jesus. Then he looked at the high waves and his faith failed. "*You don't have much faith,*" Jesus said, "*Why did you doubt me?*" (Matthew 14:31b, NLT)

Another time, when Jesus talked about being crucified and coming back to life in three days, Peter took him aside and sternly said, "Don't say things like that!" Jesus said, "*Get away from me, Satan! You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's.*" (Mark 8:33b, NLT) Peter's faith failed. He was seeing things from his own desires, not God's! However, he was growing in faith. One day Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" Peter answered; "*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*" Jesus said, "*My Father in heaven revealed that to you.*" (Matthew 16:16-17, NLT)

Peter now was so sure of his faith that he told Jesus, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will!" Jesus said, "Peter, you will soon deny me three times!" When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, Peter impulsively pulled out his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus rebuked him and healed the man. Then Peter and the other disciples ran and deserted Jesus. (John 18:10-11) When people accused Peter of being one of Jesus' followers, he denied it three times! Fear overwhelmed his faith. Afterwards, Peter wept bitterly. When Jesus resurrected, he tenderly restored his fellowship with Peter and commissioned him to feed his people spiritually. Peter had matured. Humbled, he was ready to serve Jesus.

On the day of Pentecost, filled with the Holy Spirit, a mature Peter preached to thousands of people, and God saved 3000. (Acts 2) When he was arrested and told to quit preaching about Jesus and healing people, he boldly refused to do so. Although Peter experienced imprisonment and persecution, he went on to do the good deeds God had planned for him. He took the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles. He wrote 1 and 2 Peter to encourage those

who were suffering. In the end, the Romans crucified him for his faith. Peter became a “rock” a day at a time.

God sees you not as you are but what you can become. Jesus said, *“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross **daily**, and follow me.”* (Luke 9:23, NLT) Obedience brings daily blessings in this life and wonderful rewards in eternity. What a great God!

Future salvation

However, there is more. The Bible teaches that you **will be saved** in the future. *“So also Christ died only once as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again but not to deal with our sins again. This time he will bring salvation to all those who are eagerly waiting for him.”* (Hebrews 9:28, NLT) Future salvation, called **“glorification,”** is the act by which God will honor you by removing the very presence of sin and giving you a new and perfect body fit for heaven. Think about it! You will never have a wrong thought or do a wrong thing for eternity! How glorious that day will be when you are with God forever! (For a description of this future life read Revelation 21.)

Earth life temporary

Since that is true, then life here on earth is a temporary assignment. Even if you were to live to be a 120, is that any time compared to trillions of years? Your years on earth are to prepare you to learn to reign with Jesus forever in a new heaven and new Earth. He will use everything he allows in your life, good or bad, to transform you into the likeness of his Son and to prepare you for that day. What a challenging faith adventure!

Imagine graduation day! You are standing in front of Jesus who will lovingly welcome his masterpiece. If you have trusted, obeyed and followed his plan for you, how wonderful his words will be: “Great job. Come, and get your reward!” He said, *“See, I am coming soon, and my reward is with me, to repay all according to their deeds.”* (Revelation 22:12, NLT) The struggles on earth will not always last. God gives a precious promise to all believers. Some day we will be like Jesus. *“But we do know that when he comes, we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.”* (1 John 3:2b, NLT) What a spectacular plan!

Attitude Check:

- What attitude changes do you need to make to cooperate with the Holy Spirit?

Explore:

- Read “God Gives Hope to Our Troubled Hearts” (John 14:1-4).
- Write in your journal one way you plan to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

Talking with God:

- Thank you, Father, for your wonderful plan of salvation. Remind me daily that life on earth is temporary. Open my heart to do all you have planned for me.