

# What do we believe about ... Salvation?

*forgiveness* **Church** *joining* *glory*  
*transform*  
**Salvation**  
*believer* *grace* *God*  
*restore* *harmony* *righteousness* **faith** *peace* *sin* *love*  
*calling* *sinners* *temptation* *weakness*  
*scripture* *Spirit* *justice*



# *What do we believe about* **Salvation?**

## **What is the problem?**

With the whole Christian Church, the United Reformed Church acknowledges that there is something in human nature and experience which is a cause for concern. There is something about us which has fallen short of God's intention and, as a result, there is something about our relationship with each other that is flawed. This is what we call 'sin'.

'Sin' is often explained by emphasizing our depravity or as something which causes us to do 'bad' things. Neither view relates to our experience. On the whole, we try to be good and few of us commit heinous crimes. We sometimes confess our sinfulness as if we need to declare ourselves among the worst of humankind. This is a misunderstanding.

The account in Genesis 3 shows us what our 'original sin' might be. It is not so much that the original human beings disobeyed

God – though the sense of disobedience is clear. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden points us to the reality of a perennial temptation: we want to be like, or we want to be, God.

*'The temptation is for us to place ourselves at the centre of the universe'*

The temptation is for us to place ourselves at the centre of the universe, for self-preservation to take precedence over all else,



for us to put ourselves in the place that God should be. And this is the cause of all other problems in our lives, in our societies, in our world: a failure to acknowledge God and God's sovereignty fully in our lives and how that impacts on our fellow human beings whom we do not love as our self, in whom we do not acknowledge the image of God.

We need saving from ourselves and our natural disposition to place ourselves as more important than God. In being saved, we acknowledge our weakness, our inability to sort everything out, our own – and everyone else's – dependence on the God who graciously deals with us by entering into our world in order to forgive, restore and transform us.

'we acknowledge our weakness, our inability to sort everything out'

This is something we cannot achieve for ourselves, but is something which God graciously achieves on our behalf and offers to us as a gift.

## Solving the problem

In the Bible the salvation of God is often spoken of in terms of putting right or making just. How does God put things right with us? The message of the Christian gospel is that he does so by forgiving us, by renewing us and by starting to restore us to full humanity. Through the forgiveness of sins, God ensures a right relationship between God and human beings. Having been put right, we experience what it means to be at peace with God: 'Therefore, since we have been justified through

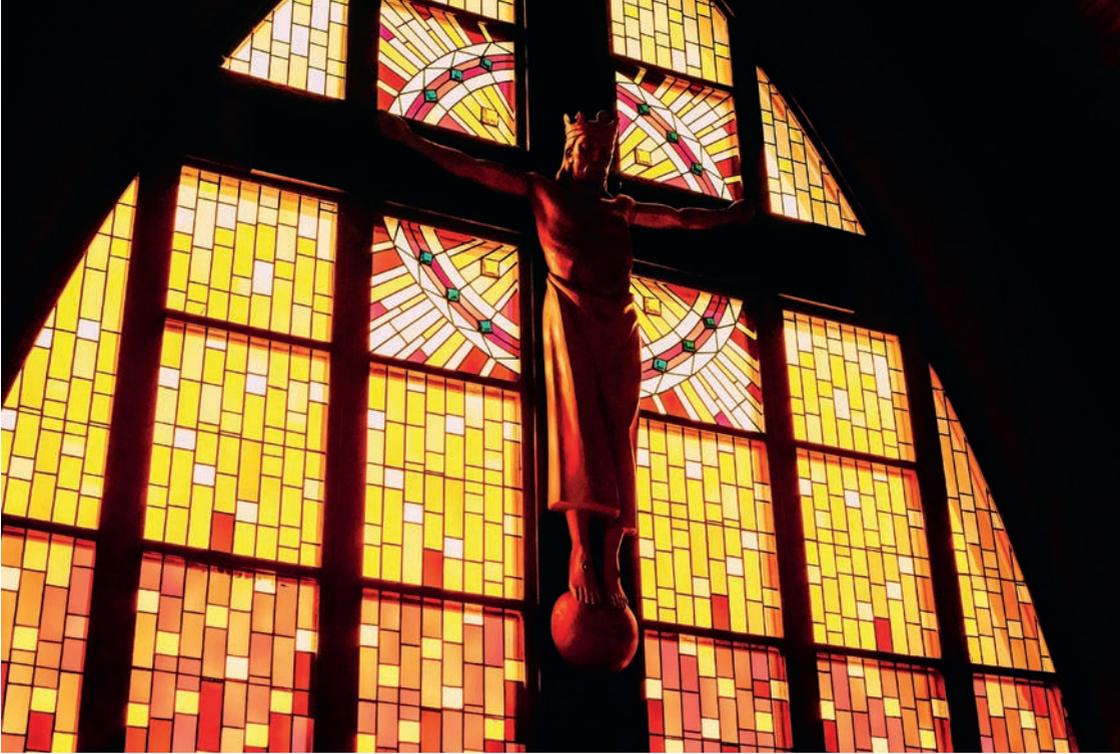
faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand' (Romans 5:1-2).

'Jesus Christ died on the cross to forgive human sin.'

There is a cost to this restoration. The profound, unsettling, and even scandalous response of Scripture is that it was the gift of God's one and only son:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,  
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

With the whole Christian Church, the United Reformed Church believes that Jesus Christ died on the cross to forgive human sin.



## Made whole

The restoration or reconciliation that God brings to our world is a divine gift, the result of God's initiative:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)

Salvation is not deserved or earned. It is not a reward to those who have proved themselves to be most worthy. It is not for satisfied, self-made, self-righteous human beings, but for

the poor in spirit, for the meek and for those who mourn over their failings (see Matthew 5:1-12). It is for those who, in repentance and humility, trust in God's undeserved goodness or grace towards them.

'Salvation is not deserved or earned.'

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

And it is these forgiven people who are God's instruments to make things right in the world, to restore harmony, to seek peace, to fight for justice. In short, to have been saved results in seeking to live the saved life in the world to the glory of God alone.



This is one in a series of booklets about the United Reformed Church. The booklets can be read and downloaded at [www.urc.org.uk/believe](http://www.urc.org.uk/believe)



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