

Saved from what?

There is the joke about Jesus standing at the door and asking to be let in so He can save the occupant. When the occupant asks Jesus what He needs to be saved from, Jesus replies, “*from what I’m going to do to you if you don’t let me in.*” This is sort of like the lifeguard who throws a non-swimmer into the water and then offers to save him for a price. It’s like extorting money from people by threatening them with violence if they don’t pay up. It’s like the religion of the Pharisees of Jesus’ day who threatened people with the wrath of God in this life and the next, unless they gave generously to the Temple and kept every jot and tittle of the Law. It’s like demanding obedience to an impossible and oppressive set of highly detailed set of rules and regulations in order to earn God’s favor, which is a form of slavery. It’s like telling people they must believe that God loves them, because if they don’t, God will torture them in Hell for all eternity.

Jesus did not come to condemn us, but to save us. He didn’t come to save us from God, but from our failure to realize just how loving God really is, and from our inability to live righteous lives. He died and rose again from the grave to save us from our fear of death. And He imparted his Holy Spirit to convince people that God loves them and will always be with them and will never forsake them.

After His ascension, He commissioned His disciples to go into all the nations to spread this wonderful news. Most of them remained in Jerusalem and at least partially clung to the old ways, so He called out a Jew, named Saul of Tarsus, and directly communicated the true Gospel to him and commissioned him to be the Apostle to both Jews and Gentiles. The Apostle Paul is the one who proclaimed in no uncertain terms that God is the Savior of ALL (1 Tim. 4:10) and that salvation is a gift given by grace (unmerited favor) (Eph. 2:8,9), and that eventually every last one of us will be fully and completely saved by Christ. Paul was unequivocally a Universalist (see Romans 9-11).

God predestined that some of us would be called out to be “*ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors for Christ,*” proclaiming to all who will listen the unconditional love of God for all mankind. Eventually all will be reconciled with God through Christ and every knee will bow to Him, people in Heaven, people on the Earth, even people who have been residing “*underneath the Earth*” (symbolically in the Hells of their own making). (See Phil. 2:10-11)