

the second of the 'Four Alls'



All Can Be Saved

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Methodist minister Jacqueline Quarmby explores the second of the 'Four Alls'

See all your sins on Jesus laid
The lamb of God was slain
His soul was once an offering made
That all may heaven gain.

This verse from Charles Wesley's well-known hymn 'O for a thousand tongues to sing' proclaims clearly the gospel message of the first Methodist preachers that, through Jesus, 'All can be saved'. As such, it expresses in song the words of Paul in Colossians 1:19, when speaking about Christ, 'For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross'.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAY THAT WE ARE SAVED?

It is to know that because of the death of Jesus on the cross our sins have been forgiven, and there is now nothing that separates us from the love of God. It is to know the reality of the Holy Spirit within us, granting us strength and wisdom and enabling us to grow in Christ's likeness. It is to know that earthly death is not the end, but the gateway to a new and richer experience of God in his heavenly kingdom.

WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus says '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). Later, having fed five thousand people with loaves and fish, we read that Jesus says, 'Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life. The people reply, 'What must we do to do the works that God requires?' Jesus answers, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent' (John 6:27-29). Here is the good news. To be saved, we just need to believe in the one God has sent – to believe that, through Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we can know the blessings of eternal life. It is as simple as that.

It is important to say, however, that although all can be saved, this does not mean that all will be saved. So:

WHAT KIND OF THINGS CAN HINDER OUR SALVATION?

The first thing is when we don't recognise our own sin. It is interesting that when the Holy Spirit comes in power upon groups of people at times of revival, the first thing that happens is that a person is convicted of their sin. This is necessary, because people who are not aware of their sin see no need of a Saviour. So the Holy Spirit first convicts a person of their sin and then when a person is cut to the heart, the Holy Spirit reveals to them the wonderful news that they have a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has taken away those sins and put them right with God, once and for all. Such movements of the Holy Spirit are, unsurprisingly, often accompanied by waves of emotion, tears of sorrow and outpourings of heart-felt praise.

The second thing is when we see salvation as something to be earned by adopting certain attitudes or performing certain actions. We can sometimes give the impression in the church that to be saved requires more than simply believing in Jesus. The home page of the Methodist Church website, for example, does not focus on Jesus but instead describes what the Methodist Church is and what it does, giving the impression that to be part of the body of Christ requires both an assent to certain attitudes and a commitment to certain actions.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE'RE SAVED?

It is interesting that for many years, John Wesley struggled to try and prove himself worthy of his salvation. It took him until 24 May 1738 – his warmed heart experience – finally to understand that it is not what we do for God that saves us, but what God has already done for us in Jesus. This message of Jesus' love and sacrifice changes hearts and leads to reformed lives. Dallas Willard writes in his book 'Renovation of the Heart' (2002) 'The revolution of Jesus is in the first place a revolution of the human heart. It did not and does not proceed by means of social institutions and laws, the outer forms of our existence. Rather, his is a revolution of character, which changes people from the inside through personal relationships with God in Christ and with others' (p. 19).

This was evident one Christmas in the middle of the Welsh Revival. An eyewitness observed, 'It can truly be said that the Christmas of 1904 was the first real Christmas many children of Wales ever had. Money usually spent in the pubs instead purchased groceries and Christmas toys and where in previous years there has been poverty and misery, this year there was

plenty and joyfulness. Inquiries of the police showed that not a single prisoner was detained during the Christmas holidays. And in one of the local collieries, an official remarked that from morning to night he did not hear a single oath uttered by any of the working men' (Goodrich, Morgan, Roberts and Stead, 'The Welsh Revival and the Story of the Welsh Revival by Eyewitnesses', 2015, p. 141).

In short, Methodists believe that 'all can be saved' and all that is necessary for our salvation is simply and humbly to trust in Jesus, to believe in our hearts that 'his soul was once an offering made, so that we may heaven gain.'

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PRAYER FOCUS

ALL CAN BE SAVED

Pray for the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin across the Connexion and the nation; the knowledge that all can be saved; an awakening and hunger in people to explore faith and find the saving grace of Jesus; for the transformation of lives giving fresh focus and hope in place of fear and despair. (Romans 6:23; Acts 2:38).

FOCUS ON THE CHURCH

Children and Young People: For youth and children's workers to be inspired by the Holy Spirit in bringing the Good News of Jesus into young lives in creative and innovative ways; protection from erroneous teaching; and for enthusiasm amongst young people to seek and find the truth and spread it to their peers, bringing revival in their generation. (Isaiah 54:13; Titus 2:6-8).

FOCUS ON NATIONAL ISSUES

The Government: for Sir Kier Starmer and all members of the Cabinet as they discuss and formulate policies affecting the entire nation, that they may put the needs

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of the nation before self-interests; a return to the Christian values on which the laws of the land were once based; Christian MP's, for their protection and their Christian values to shine out, influencing all discussions and policies. (Psalm 2:10-11; Proverbs 28:2-3).

FOCUS ON WORLD ISSUES:

Israel/Gaza: The Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu; the worldwide rise in anti-semitism; war with Gaza; leaders of opposition groups – Hamas, Hezbollah, PLO & Fatah; adequate aid to reach civilians in Gaza; for all living in Israel and the Palestinian Territories to come to a living faith in Christ Jesus; God's will to be done; pray for the peace of Jerusalem. (Matthew 24:6-9; Psalm 122:6-9).

Planet in Crisis Changing climate and the effect on wildlife on land and in oceans; cleaning up of polluted environments; loss of habitats and extinction of wildlife and destruction of ecosystems due to human activity; the will of governments to act. (Romans 8:19-22; Revelation 4:11).