

# Salvation, Who Needs It?

## Opening words and Chalice lighting:

The entire world is a very narrow bridge.  
The essential thing is to have no fear at all.

~ *Reb Nachman*

**Welcome and check-in** (A time to share what is on your mind in order to clear it and be in the present.)

## Reading for discussion

**Definitions of salvation** vary so much that it is difficult to find a common ground. Is it based on the biblical idea that people are born in sin and must be saved? Oddly, even though this is central to Christian theology, most Christians today reject the idea.

*Note: The following citations were taken from the Internet.*

**Universalists**, who take their name from the belief in universal salvation, are said to be Christians who believe that all people will eventually be reconciled with God.

**For a Buddhist**, salvation is reaching Nirvana. Nirvana is a transcendental, blissful, spiritual state of nothingness--you become a Buddha. To reach Nirvana you must follow the Noble Eightfold Path.

[The Noble Eightfold Path is: 1. Right Understanding: accepting the Four Noble Truths. (The existence of suffering; the cause of suffering; the end of suffering; and the end of pain.) 2. Right Resolve: renounce the pleasures of the body. Change your lifestyle so that you harm no living creatures and have kind thoughts for everyone. 3. Right Speech: do not gossip, lie or slander anyone. 4. Right Action: do not kill, steal or engage in an unlawful sexual act. 5. Right Occupation: avoid working at any job that could harm someone. 6. Right Effort: heroically work to eliminate evil from your life. Through your own effort develop good conduct and a clean mind. 7. Right Contemplation: make your self aware of your deeds, words and thoughts so that you can be free of desire and sorrow. 8. Right Meditation: train your mind to focus on a single object without wavering so as to develop a calm mind capable of concentration.]

Following the Noble Eightfold Path requires that a person do the above eight things. Salvation is through what a Buddhist does. It is through human works.

**In Islam**, there are two ways to get paradise:

1. Your good deeds are weighed against your bad deeds. If you have done enough good deeds when compared to your bad deeds, you will eventually get to paradise, after spending some time burning in the fires of hell.

2. Muslims who die as martyrs defending Islam go directly to paradise.

(This is Allah speaking through his prophet Mohammed.) *"There is not one among you who shall not pass through hell; such is the absolute decree of your Lord. We will deliver those who fear Us, and leave the wrongdoers there, on their knees."* (Sura 19:71-72)

Salvation is through what a Muslim does. It is through human works.

### **Jewish view of Salvation**

Salvation is not a Jewish concept, as it implies a focus on the afterlife, which is not a significant focus of Judaism. Judaism is about being good to be good and to have a healthy relationship with God, man, and oneself--not to be saved. In fact, focusing on issues of reward and punishment to some extent mitigates the good one is doing by tainting it with selfish motives. The role of Jewish law is to provide tools to learn how to do that, and values that one ought acquire.

### **Salvation in Taoism**

Taoism is not a salvific practice. There is nothing that one needs to be saved from, and belief in salvation would lead to belief in damnation in the same manner as belief in good leads to belief in evil. Although they do not accept the false duality of salvation vs. damnation, living simply in harmony with Te and Tao, and not excessively pursuing material wealth, stature, or prestige, will lead to a joyful life.

### **Excerpt: The Unitarian Church - A Study Outline: Salvation by Character by Braxton Greathouse (1992 )**

#### **IV. Unitarian teaching of Salvation.**

A. "Unitarians believe in "salvation by character." They hold that as man develops a society where moral values and spiritual insights are treasured, man will find the road to peace, justice and brotherhood. God's help is not likely to come to those who cast all their burdens on the Lord. There is practical wisdom in the saying: "God helps those that help themselves." (*Karl M. Chworowsky, What is a Unitarian?*)

B. "Unitarians speak warmly of salvation also, but in terms of character. We prefer to think of it as an achievement dependent on deeds rather than creeds" (*Jack Mendelsohn, Why I am a Unitarian*)

C. "We are concerned with the ethical relations and understanding of life, not about the salvation of souls. For us, salvation is by character; religion is a matter of deeds, not creeds; and this natural world is the center of our lives." (*George Marshall, Why I am a Unitarian*)

#### **Questions for Discussion:**

- Do people of all religions in general seek salvation? Is it a basic human need?

- How do your own views on salvation correspond to those of UU? How different?

**Check-out** (A time to share likes and wishes, such as “I like how we...” “I wish we would...”, or express how you felt about the group.)

**Closing words and extinguishing the Chalice:**

(#596 from Singing the Living Tradition)

Boundless Goodwill

Let us cultivate boundless goodwill.

Let none deceive another, or despise any being in any state.

Let none in anger or ill-will wish another harm.

Even as a mother watches over her child, so with boundless mind should one cherish all living beings,

Radiating friendliness over the whole world,

Above, below, and all around, without limit.

~ Metta Sutta

***Thanks to everyone for their participation and commitment to our group!***