

## From the DeskOf...So what?

**So that whosoever will may be saved.**

*By Diane O'Brien, Lt. Colonel*

Do you have a favorite doctrine? I don't suppose many of you have been asked that before but it's a fair question.

In case you are wondering, the doctrines are our formal articles of faith, the basis of our ecclesiastical position throughout the world. They explain more of our theological position than the mission statement or any motto we have used through the years. If you need to review them, you can read the 11 points of doctrine just inside the cover of The Salvation Army Song Book, which you should find in any corps building.



I do have a favorite doctrine. Actually, they are all pretty good—Scripture-based and well-written. They begin with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, end with the eternal punishment of the wicked and mention everything in between—exciting stuff! But my favorite is number six, the middle one—five in front of it, five behind it. I do not think it a coincidence that within it is the central point of our statement of faith: “We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by his suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world, so that whosoever will may be saved.”

Why is this doctrine my favorite? It clearly states our belief in salvation—the doctrinal word “atonement”—which at its simplest means that our holy God has provided a way for sinful people to be “at one” with him. It is the good news we have to share. It is the identifying part of our name. There are many armies in the world but we are The *Salvation Army*, and this doctrine explains the plan of salvation.

During Easter week some people will make their biannual visit to some kind of church service. These are the Christmas and Easter Christians—or maybe they go on Mother's Day, too. People will drape crosses in purple and buy Easter lilies in memory of those they love. They will talk about suffering on Good Friday and maybe on Sunday the risen Christ will get a mention, unless he's pushed out in favor of the Easter bunny (or a butterfly, as I heard in one sunrise service from the preacher of a different denomination). Our doctrine teaches that Jesus' suffering and death make an atonement for the whole world. It simply states what Jesus did, and then the big question is: So what?

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So *that* whosoever will may be saved!

Whosoever? To quote a popular posting from the Internet: Jacob was a cheater, Peter had a temper, David had an affair, Rahab was a prostitute, Noah got drunk, Paul was a murderer, Zaccheus was short and John was ambitious.

Or examples from within the Army: David was a convict, Leslie was a druggie, Anthony was a cop, Billy was a neglected boy from the neighborhood, Tracy was an opera singer, Kelly was an officers' kid, Rogerio was a hobo—all people of the “whosoever” for whom Jesus died. No race, age, gender or class discrimination—whosoever.

Then there's the will. My daughter has often suggested to me that it would be easier if God would just zap us all and make us good. But of course he doesn't. It's not a matter of God's will. It is *our* will. It's simple. You can know all the facts, all the doctrinal statements and theological words. But unless you choose to accept what he offers, you know only the facts, not the faith.

Finally we get to the really good news, that whosoever will *may be saved*—saved from all those literally self-destructive behaviors. Saved from being lost. Saved from the punishment we so justly deserve for all the things we have done wrong.

It is the pivotal point in our faith, not just a belief in a creator God or even a knowledge of his offer of salvation. It is the accepting of Jesus as our personal Savior that is the turning point.

Yes, it's my favorite doctrine. What's yours?