
CORE BELIEFS SERIES

DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

SAVED BY GRACE

QUOTES

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Baptist Faith & Message¹

Salvation is by faith alone – All human beings are born with a sin nature, separated from God, and in need of a Savior. That salvation comes only through a faith relationship with Jesus Christ, the Savior, as a person repents of sin and receives Christ's forgiveness and eternal life. Salvation is instantaneous and accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. This salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ and not on the basis of human works. All the redeemed are secure in Christ forever.

Student Life Bible Study²

SCRIPTURE (MAIN PASSAGES)

Gen. 3:1-24; **Rom.** 3:23-24; 5:12; **2 Cor.** 5:15-21; **Eph.** 2:1-10; **Col.** 1:21-22; 2:13

KEY TRUTHS

- Humanity is in need of salvation
 - We are guilty of breaking God's law
 - We stand condemned before a holy God
- God, through Christ, has provided the means of salvation
 - Jesus fulfilled all of the requirements
 - Through the Holy Spirit, we respond with repentance and faith
- Christians live now for Christ and forever with Christ
 - Sanctification – daily becoming more like Jesus
 - Glorification – future state in heaven

1. HUMANITY IS IN NEED OF SALVATION

We might be tempted to believe that we are okay on our own, that we don't need God's salvation, but this is not true. It is not uncommon to find people who pick and choose what part of religion to believe – whatever makes them feel good – but we are called to faith in the whole counsel of God. In His Word He clearly teaches us that we are in need of salvation. This is because we have broken God's righteous standard, which has brought spiritual death: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins..." (Eph. 2:1).

WE ARE GUILTY OF BREAKING GOD'S LAW

This point is covered in both the Creator God and the Man Core Beliefs (a good example of how each doctrine affects other doctrines), but it deserves some attention here. Beginning in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), man has disobeyed God's command. The term for this is called *sin*, and the Bible says that all of us have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Look at what the Bible teaches us about our sin:

- **Sin spread to all through Adam** – "...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).
- **We inherit sin at birth** – "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5).
- **Our sin affects us to the core** – "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure" (Jer. 17:9).
- **Even our "good" works are tainted with sin** – "...all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6).

Isa. 53:6 says that all people have gone their own way like sheep. James W. Sire explains the tough truth this way:³

In this manner people of all eras have attempted to set themselves up as autonomous beings, arbiters of their own way of life. They have chosen to act as if they had an existence independent from God. But that is precisely what they do not have, for they owe everything – both their origin and their continued existence – to God.

WE STAND CONDEMNED BEFORE A HOLY GOD

Sin would not be a big deal to us if it wasn't a big deal to God. But God is holy and righteous. He hates sin. Consider the following:

- “Once you were **alienated from God** and were **enemies**” (Col. 1:21).
- “The **judgment** followed one sin and brought **condemnation**” (Rom. 5:16b).
- “One trespass led to **condemnation for all men**” (Rom. 5:18).
- “We were by nature **objects of wrath**” (Eph. 2:3).

These are just a few examples of the guilt we have because of our sin. It is important to know that there is no human remedy for this. Think of life as one big exam. The requirement to pass is a 100%, and there are no bonus questions. After just one sin, you have failed. It doesn't matter how much you get right after that, because the sin keeps you from passing.

2: GOD, THROUGH CHRIST, HAS PROVIDED THE MEANS OF SALVATION

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). While we were in our hopeless situation, Jesus provided hope for us!

JESUS FULFILLED ALL OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR OUR SALVATION

Jesus took the penalty for sin and became our substitute. How did this work? Paul Enns writes, “He died in place of sinners that He might purchase their freedom, reconcile them to God, and thereby satisfy the righteous demands of a holy God.”⁴ What did Jesus accomplish on the cross?⁵

- **Jesus is our Substitute** – He died in our place; as a representative for us, he bore our punishment (2 Cor. 5:21). “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed” (1 Pet. 2:24).
- **Jesus redeemed us** – To redeem means to buy back. There was a debt that needed to be satisfied. According to Herschel Hobbs, “Salvation...means the full redemption of the whole man...God paid the ransom to Himself in order to satisfy the demands of His holy, righteous nature.”⁶ Our salvation is costly – it was paid with God's own life! (1 Cor. 6:20; Rev. 5:9).
- **Jesus reconciled us** – This involves making peace with God. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, God took away a barrier that we put up but could never take down: our sin. Removing that barrier means we can have peace with God (Col. 1:21-22; 2 Cor. 5:18-19).
- **Jesus satisfied God's demands** – The technical term for this is propitiation, removing the wrath of God that we deserved.⁷ Think of propitiation as a covering for our sins to avoid God's wrath. God cannot overlook sin, but Jesus paid the penalty and covered our debt (1 John 4:10; Heb. 2:17).
- **Jesus brought forgiveness** – Forgiveness means that the offense has been released. Col. 2:13 says that God has “forgiven us [Christians] of our trespasses.” It is the removal of sin.
- **Jesus provides justification** – Forgiveness removes unrighteousness, but justification adds righteousness. It means to be declared righteous by God. See Rom. 3:24.

THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE RESPOND WITH REPENTANCE AND FAITH

How do we experience salvation? People phrase it differently: “ask Jesus into your heart,” “receive Christ,” “believe and be baptized,” “confess and believe,” etc. Scripture affirms many of these wordings, and some of them are even taken directly from biblical passages. When we investigate the totality of what the Bible says, however, we are correct to list *repentance* and *faith* as the two elements of **conversion**, the human side of regeneration. Herschel Hobbs writes, “Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.”⁸

Repentance means a change of the mind, emotion, and will. Regeneration does not occur without repentance. “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). A person sees the futility of his ways and turns from his sin. It is incomplete and simplistic to say that repentance means being *sorry* for sin. More accurately, a person regrets the uselessness of sin, hating it while loving God. That is why Wayne Grudem defines repentance as “a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.”⁹ And Hobbs writes, “Thus, one abhors sin not only because of what it does to one’s self but to God.”¹⁰ See also Ps. 32; 51:8.

Faith must also accompany repentance. But faith is not simply intellectual agreement. Rather, it is a “confiding trust.”¹¹ This means that in addition to intellectual assurance (which is indeed important), there is a firm conviction of this truth (see Rom. 10:9, “believe in your heart”). Faith also involves actually trusting in Christ as the object of faith. That is why John 3:16 says that eternal life comes to “whoever believes in Him.” Grudem notes, “Here John uses a surprising phrase when he does not simply say, ‘whoever *believes him*’ ..., but rather ‘whoever *believes in him*.’¹² There must then be a conscious placing of one’s faith in Christ for His work in order to experience conversion.

3: CHRISTIANS LIVE NOW FOR CHRIST AND FOREVER WITH CHRIST

Okay, believers are saved. Then what? What happens after salvation? The Bible is clear that not only *have we been* saved (at conversion), but also we *are being* saved. This is called **sanctification**. In addition, we will one day be fully saved from sin’s power at **glorification** in heaven.

SANCTIFICATION – DAILY BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS

2 Cor. 5:15 says, “And He died for all that those who live **should live no longer for themselves, but for Him** who died for them and was raised again.” In other words, when we are saved by Christ, we now live for Christ. Two verses later we are told, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...” Then we are told that Jesus became sin for us so that “we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (5:21). Jesus died for us so that we could live for Him. That is what sanctification is all about. See also Eph. 2:8-10.

1 Thess. 4:3 tells us that our sanctification is God’s will for us. So what is sanctification? It means to “set apart.” In other words, we have been set apart from the rest of the world to be more like Christ. How does this relate to salvation? The power of Christ that saved us is the power that works in us to remove sin – giving us the ability to overcome it by God’s power. When Paul tells the Philippian believers to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12), he is reminding them that they were saved to live holy lives before a holy God. The same is true for us.

GLORIFICATION – FUTURE STATE IN HEAVEN

Sanctification will always be a struggle, for we will continually battle our old nature and temptations.¹³ One day, our bodies will be redeemed and this war with sin will cease (Rom. 8:22-23). Those bodies will not have fleshly temptations; they will be incorruptible and able to fully respond to the will of God. When this happens...

- ...we will be like Christ (1 John 3:2)
- ...we will be faultless (Jude 24; Col. 1:22)
- ...we will come into our inheritance from God (1 Pet.1:3-5)

This is something amazing to look forward to! We can echo Paul's words in 1 Cor. 2:9: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love Him."

IMPLICATIONS

Understanding this Core Belief fundamentally affects our views in the following areas:

- God planned carefully for our salvation – It was not an afterthought on God's part to save us. Our salvation has been central to God's plan *even before* day one!
- Our salvation was costly – What Jesus did to secure our salvation cost a great deal. His death on the cross was a requirement for our salvation, not just a mere symbol of His love.
- We must repent and believe – We are wise to reflect on our experience and make sure that we are saved. Learning the facts in Sunday School doesn't save; neither does feeling bad about our sin. True repentance and genuine faith are central to conversion.
- We must strive daily to be more like Christ – Salvation is more than just a one-time event. It is a process whereby we become more like Christ. This is our sanctification, being apart to Him.
- We have a lot to look forward to! One day we will receive renewed bodies free from the corruption and entanglement of sin. Whenever we feel burdened by our present state, we can remember that God has a plan that will ultimately wipe the curse of sin from our lives.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

In the course of your lesson, there may be certain questions that come up. Listed below are some possible questions, along with a biblically appropriate response.

Right now these are placeholders for questions that may come up but are not yet answered in these notes.

CAN PEOPLE GO TO HEAVEN IF THEY BELONG TO ANOTHER FAITH?

CAN YOU LOSE YOUR SALVATION?

DO PEOPLE GET A CHANCE TO TRUST IN CHRIST WHEN THEY DIE?

WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD THE GOSPEL?

MORE QUESTIONS

As you teach and get questions, please pass them on. Our goal is to make these notes helpful for teachers by including several questions that arise in the teaching time. Thanks!

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¹ (Southern Baptist Convention 1999-2011) <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>

² (Student Life, Inc. 2011)

³ (Sire 2009, 39)

⁴ (Enns 2008, 333)

⁵ (Enns 2008, 333-338) The bullet list is adapted from sections developed by Paul Enns.

⁶ (Hobbs 1996, 49)

⁷ (Grudem 1994, 580)

⁸ (Hobbs 1996, 52)

⁹ (Grudem 1994, 713)

¹⁰ (Hobbs 1996, 52)

¹¹ (Enns 2008, 343)

¹² (Grudem 1994, 711)

¹³ Not everyone believes this. Some, like Wesleyans or those who embrace the Holiness movement (like Keswick thinking) believe there is some spiritual plan that Christians may achieve in a moment of breakthrough. When they do this, they are able to live perfectly holy lives. Pentecostals believe something similar happens at the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Both Scripture and experience tell us that we will always be tempted and that our best efforts will still be tainted with sin. We should see spiritual growth over time while understanding that full freedom from sin will come at our glorification.