

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SALVATION?

“Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” 1 Timothy 4:16

What is salvation? Salvation is the process which God saves mankind from sin. God has created all of humanity, but all of humanity has consciously rebelled against Him and His purposes. Mankind justly deserves God's wrath but God lovingly sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross. Christ's death and resurrection from the grave are the only means by which God's wrath upon sin is satisfied. Salvation is referred to as the "Gospel" for it is the "good news" that Christ has come to satisfy man's greatest need. Those who repent from their sin, place their faith and trust in Christ, and believe in His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave receive the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Those who remain in their sinful state will be forever separated from God and under His just wrath in eternal death in Hell. God's offer of salvation through the Gospel is extended to all humanity until the day of one's death or until the day of His return and judgment.

How does salvation happen? God initiates and controls salvation. Although God explains some of how salvation works, He does not fully disclose all of the details. Terms such as election, calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification are all helpful for attempting to understand the process of salvation.

(Romans 8:29-30) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. - Deuteronomy 29:29

"Salvation is from our side a choice; from the divine side it is a seizing upon, an apprehending, a conquest by the Most High God. Our accepting and willing are reactions rather than actions."
A.W. Tozer

How can I be sure I am saved? Check out “How Can I Be Sure I am a Christian?” at www.trustworthyword.com/how-can-i-be-sure-im-a-christian

- (Ephesians 1:13-14) In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
- (2 Peter 1:10) Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

How can I be saved? Check out “How Can I Become a Christian?” at www.trustworthyword.com/how-can-i-become-a-christian

Why do some people believe they can simply make a one-time decision, pray a prayer, walk an aisle, get baptized, and be guaranteed Heaven? People who have this understanding may not fully understand the Gospel call to “die to oneself” and may not see that the Christian life is one of faithfully following Christ in obedience for an eternity (Matthew 10:37-39, Luke 9:23-24, 9:57-62).

What is God’s role in salvation? God is the author and finisher of our faith, sovereignly electing, calling, and giving spiritual life to those whom He chooses.

- even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (Ephesians 1:4)
- (John 6:44a) No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

What is my role in salvation? We are responsible for our sin and are called to respond to His glory in repentance and belief. When God regenerates my soul, I respond in faith-filled repentance and belief, trusting and treasuring Christ above all else as my Lord and Savior.

- (John 1:12-13) But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, [13] who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
- "Since no man is excluded from calling upon God the gate of salvation is open to all. There is nothing else to hinder us from entering, but our own unbelief." – John Calvin

Do I need to pray a prayer to be saved? No special or formulaic prayer is needed, but one should call upon God in repentance from sin, belief in His crucifixion and resurrection, and trust in His Lordship.

- (Romans 10:9) because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
- (Romans 10:13) everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
- (Mark 1:14-15) “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’”

What about those who have never heard the Gospel? Without hearing and believing upon the name of Jesus, there is no hope for eternity in Heaven. A life without Jesus leads to Hell.

- (Romans 10:14-15) How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

Can I lose my salvation? True believers never fall away and never are separated from Jesus. God provides assurance to those whom are genuinely His children but warns that there will be many who call upon Him by name, but never fully treasured Him more than everything.

- (Romans 8:38-39) For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- (1 John 2:19) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

What about people who say they are Christians, but their lives say otherwise? This is an example of false belief. True belief always results in a changed life, bearing the fruit of God's Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26).

- (Matthew 7:21-23) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' [23] And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'
- (James 2:17,19) faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead... You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe, and shudder!

Should we question our faith? We are called to test ourselves to ensure we are genuine believers.

- (1 John 2:3-4) And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. [4] Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
- (2 Corinthians 13:5) Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

Is salvation by faith alone, or by faith plus works? Salvation is by faith alone, through Christ's work alone. True faith is evidenced by good works that honor Christ's name.

- (Ephesians 2:8-10) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
- (James 2:26) For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Is baptism necessary for salvation? No, but it is the first step of obedience as a Christian.

- (Acts 2:37-38) Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- "God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination." - Augustine

What is the atonement? The atonement is a term used to reference Jesus' substitutional sacrifice on our behalf to pay the price of our sinful rebellion against God in order to unite us with Him forever.

- (John 10:15) I lay down my life for the sheep.
- (2 Corinthians 5:21) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Why does it matter? The atonement matters for a correct understanding of who God is and what He has done in His provision for salvation. Our response to His goodness and offer of salvation affects us for an eternity, whether in Heaven or Hell.

- (Colossians 2:14) by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.
- "Is it not wonderful news to believe that salvation lies outside ourselves?" – Martin Luther

Apart from Christ, what are the consequences of sin? The consequence of our rebellion against God through sin is eternal separation from Him in Hell.

(Ephesians 2:1-3) “¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”

“What Does the Bible Say about Hell?” - www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-hell

In Christ, what are the rewards of Christ’s atonement? The reward of our response to Jesus’ atonement through faith is eternal union with Him in Heaven.

- (Isaiah 53:8-12) By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?...[11b] by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities...[12b]because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.
- (Romans 6:5) For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.
- (1 John 5:13) I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

“What Does the Bible Say about Heaven?” - www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-heaven

Helpful Terms and Quotes on Salvation

Antinomy - 1 : a contradiction between two apparently equally valid principles or between inferences correctly drawn from such principles 2 : a fundamental and apparently unresolvable conflict or contradiction (Greek αντι-, against, plus νομος, law) literally means the mutual incompatibility, real or apparent, of two laws. It is a term used in logic and epistemology.

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“I am myself persuaded that the points of the Calvinist alone is right upon some points, and the

Arminian alone is right upon others. There is a great deal of truth in the positive side of both systems, and a great deal of error in the negative side of both systems. If I were asked, 'Why is a man damned?' I should answer as an Arminian answers, 'He destroys himself'. I should not dare to lay man's ruin at the door of divine sovereignty. On the other hand, if I were asked, 'Why is a man saved?' I could only give the Calvinist answer, 'He is saved through the sovereign grace of God, and not at all of himself.'"
– Charles Spurgeon

Essential Theological Terms

Here are some important, foundational theological terms, that are defined by Wayne Grudem's in his book *Systematic Theology*. If you are ever looking for a comprehensive resource to understand what the whole Bible says about a particular topic, *Systematic Theology* by Grudem is your best investment of time and money!

“Order of Salvation: A theological term referring to a list of the events in which God applies salvation to us in the specific order in which they are believed to occur in our lives (sometimes referred to by the Latin phrase *ordu salutis*).”

- NOTE: the terms below are shared in alphabetical order. A simple way of seeing the order of salvation is offered here: <http://www.challies.com/visual-theology/visual-theology-the-order-of-salvation> and described simply as Election, Calling, Regeneration, Conversion, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, Perseverance, Glorification.

“Adoption: An act of God whereby he makes us members of His family.”

“Conversion: Our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of our sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.”

“Effective Calling: An Act of God the Father, speaking through the human proclamation of the Gospel, in which He summons people to Himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith.”

“Election: An Act of God before creation in which He chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of His sovereign good pleasure.”

“Free Will: (a) with respect to God: All things that God decided to will but had no necessity to will according to His nature. (b) with respect to man: The ability to make willing choices that have real effects (however, other people define this in other ways, including the ability to make choices that are not determined by God).”

“Foreknowledge: Relating to the doctrine of election, the personal, relational knowledge by which God thought of certain people in a saving relationship to Himself before creation. This is to be distinguished from mere knowledge of facts about a person.”

“Glorification: The final act in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like His own.”

“Grace: God's goodness towards those who deserve only punishment.”

“Inherited Corruption: The sinful nature, or tendency to sin, which all people inherit because of Adam’s sin (often referred to as ‘original pollution’). This idea entails that (1) in our natures we totally lack spiritual good before God; and (2) in our actions we are totally unable to do spiritual good before God.”

“Irresistible Grace: A term that refers to the fact that God effectively calls people and also gives them regeneration, both of which guarantee that we will respond in saving faith. This term is subject to misunderstanding since it *seems* to imply that people do not make a voluntary, willing choice in responding to the gospel.”

“Justification: An instantaneous legal act of God in which He (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in His sight.”

“Limited Grace or Particular Redemption: The Reformed view that Christ’s death actually paid for the sins of those whom he knew would ultimately be saved. A preferable term for this view is ‘particular redemption’ in that the power of the atonement is not limited, but rather it is fully effective for particular people.”

“Mercy: God’s goodness towards those in misery and distress.”

“Perseverance of the Saints: The doctrine that all those who are truly ‘born again’ will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly ‘born again.’”

“Penal Substitution: The view that Christ in his death bore the just penalty of God for our sins as a substitute for us.”

“Predestination: Another term for ‘election’; in Reformed theology generally, this is a broader term that includes not only election (for believers), but also reprobation (for nonbelievers).”

“Propitiation: A sacrifice that bears God’s wrath to the end and in so doing changes God’s wrath

“Reconciliation: The removal of enmity and the restoration of fellowship between two parties.”

“Redemption: Christ’s saving work viewed as an act of ‘buying back’ sinners out of their bondage to sin and to Satan through the payment of a ransom (though the analogy should not be pressed to specify anyone to whom a ransom was paid).”

“Regeneration: A secret act of God in which He imparts new spiritual life to us, sometimes called ‘being born again.’”

“Repentance: A heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.”

“Reprobation: The sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins and thereby to manifest His justice.” (read and study Romans 9 if you have not recently studied it)

“Sanctification: A progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives.”

“Saving Faith: Trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God.”

“Sin: Any failure to conform to the moral law of God in an act, attitude, or nature.”

“Sovereignty: God’s exercise of power over all of His creation.”

“Union with Christ: A phrase that summarizes several different relationships between believers and Christ, through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation. These relationships include the fact that we are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ, and we are with Christ.”

“Unpardonable Sin: The usually malicious, willful rejection and slander against the Holy Spirit’s work attesting to Christ, and attributing that work to Satan.”

Here are some of our TrustworthyWord resources on God’s Salvation!

- www.trustworthyword.com/salvation
- www.trustworthyword.com/gods-grace-and-call
- www.trustworthyword.com/gods-sovereignty
- www.trustworthyword.com/human-responsibility
- www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-sanctification
- www.trustworthyword.com/human-sin
- www.trustworthyword.com/saving-faith
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