

Chapter 2

OUR GREAT SALVATION

So what is Christian salvation?

This is the process by which God brings us into a 'sanctified' (i.e., set apart for holiness) relationship with Himself to provide us eternal life.

MEANS OF SALVATION

Christ accomplished our glorious salvation by His death and resurrection within God's overall plan for the ages to bring both heaven and earth in subjection to His Son (Ephesians 1:10-11). Scripture describes two key components of Christ's actions bringing us eternal life:

1 DEATH ON THE CROSS

His agonizing and unjust death on the cross provided the sacrifice to bring about forgiveness of our sins. God, being righteous, demanded punishment for sins committed (Romans 3:24-25). However, God, being loving, provided His Son as a perfect and sufficient payment that scripture describes in four ways:

PROPITIATION

Christ's sacrifice was a full and sufficient payment for our sins to God (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2).

RECONCILIATION

Christ's sacrifice ended the enmity between God and man because our sins, being forgiven, changed our status before God, allowing peace between parties (Romans 5:10-11; Colossians 1:20-21; Ephesians 2:16-19).

REDEMPTION

Christ's death purchased us from sin for which we owed a payment of death (Romans 3:23-26; Ephesians 1:7).

SUBSTITUTION

Christ died in our place, the death we deserved, that we could obtain eternal life (Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 3:18).

2 CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

By His glorious resurrection, Christ made us alive so we might gain eternal life (Romans 6:2-9). Despite forgiveness, without the resurrection we would still be dead in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17; Romans 10:9).

PROCESS OF SALVATION

Christ's gracious salvation for us is a process that began before all time and ends at His second coming with continued effects into eternity. Thanks be to God!

Here is the process the Bible describes (see Figure):

- God chose us before all time (Ephesians 1:4,5,11; Romans 8:29-30).
- Convicted us by his Spirit (John 16:8).
- God dragged us to Himself to believe (John 6:44).
- Our faith (belief) made Christ's sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection efficacious for our salvation. Further, at the time of our belief, we were sealed by the Holy Spirit:
 - The Spirit regenerated us into a new person (Romans 6:2-9; Colossians 2:12-13; Ephesians 2:4-7).
 - God sealed us to the day of our salvation by the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5).
 - The Spirit placed us into the church universal (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- God causes us to persevere until Christ returns (Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).
- Christ returns a second time and will gather believers to Himself, His righteous Kingdom, and ultimately to the new Jerusalem and eternity (Revelation 19-22).



Figure 2.1. Timeline of Salvation

HOW DOES THE UNBELIEVER ACCESS SALVATION?

BY FAITH ALONE!

No work is required, either before or after salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 3:23-26).

God did all the work to bring us salvation, and no credit is given to us.

It is a gift with all glory and praise to God.

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE GOSPEL MESSAGE?

The Bible indicates (Romans 10:14-15) that someone must actually hear the words of the gospel to understand salvation. Further, the apostle Paul (1 Thessalonians 2:9-10) noted that although he worked day and night to live a blameless life in front of the Thessalonians, he still verbally spoke the gospel to them. In other words, non-verbal efforts, although important, will not bring somebody to belief. A non-Christian needs to hear the specific Gospel message.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

The plan of salvation should contain generally the following information (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:23-26; Romans 10:9):

- 1 Each of us has sinned and deserves God's righteous punishment.
- 2 God, however, being loving, sent his Son, Jesus to die on the cross and take our punishment.
- 3 When by faith alone we receive forgiveness by acknowledging His death for us personally, and believe that He rose again for us, we receive eternal life.



Here it is again packaged and ready to say!
Salvation is a free gift of God! You can have confidence you are saved!

HELPING A NEW BELIEVER

What else should you do after the new Christian acknowledges they believe?

Rejoice, of course!

Since Christians are regenerated by the Holy Spirit at salvation (Titus 3:5; Romans 6:2-9) they are God's "workmanship" (Ephesians 2:10), not yours! God causes them to grow and stand (Romans 14:4; 1 Timothy 1:12). It is not our responsibility! If a person truly believes they have become a new person and will eventually show others their new faith by their actions, in obedient response to Jesus their Lord.

However, it is gracious to engage the new Christian in **Bible study** to teach them about their recently acquired faith or to direct them to a mature Christian who could instruct them. Also, help them to **find a church** or Christian college group for fellowship, teaching, and praise. **Assist them** in their **first prayers**, using Ephesians 1 and 3 as model prayers.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Indeed, sharing the Gospel is a privilege we have as Christians. Our society needs to hear it! The only way we will change our culture is to change hearts, and that is by the power of God's Spirit.

LORDSHIP SALVATION AND OTHER ADD-ONS

1 WORK GRACE COMBINATION

This scenario indicates that although grace is involved with salvation, some work is also required.

Several scenarios exist:

- *Catholic dogma* – Roman Catholic doctrine indicates that we receive grace by the sacraments and work towards our salvation, receiving more grace as we do so, helping us to do more good works, leading to more grace, etc. The end product, hopefully, is salvation.
- *Mormon Doctrine* – Mormons teach that a person receives grace for salvation after doing everything they could in terms of works (1).
- *Protestant works orientation* – Many church members find it hard to accept that salvation is purely by grace and believe they must work at some level either to gain salvation, keep it, or to be able to maintain their access to God in prayer (2).

2 MAKE JESUS LORD

In this scenario, salvation is by grace but we must make Jesus Lord of our life to maintain or prove salvation.

3 SCRIPTURE CLEARLY SAYS THAT A TRUE BELIEVER SHOULD SHOW SIGNS THAT CHRIST IS LORD.

This is the primary purpose of 1 John 2-4, giving tests that Christians can use to determine if someone is really a believer. Since we do not have access to the Book of Life in heaven, while on earth we can be confident of a fellow believer's salvation only by assessing the quality of their beliefs, obedience and love. Other scriptures also provide tests that we can use to assess others (Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Timothy 3:1-15).

4 HOWEVER, TO SAY THAT WE BELIEVE IN SALVATION BY GRACE, BUT WE MUST WORK TO MAKE JESUS LORD OF OUR LIFE TO PROVE AND/OR MAINTAIN SALVATION, CONTRADICTS SCRIPTURE ON SEVERAL LEVELS:

- *Grace alone* – Christ's one-time sacrifice was a full and sufficient payment for sin. There is nothing we can add to His complete sacrifice.
- *Lordship comes from regeneration* – A vital and underappreciated biblical point. When we believe in salvation, the Holy Spirit enters us. It regenerates us into a new person (Titus 3:5). The old person is dead and no longer functions to prove or disprove Jesus is Lord (Romans 6:2-9; Ephesians 2:4-7,10; Colossians 2:11-13).
- Therefore, we are a *new person* created by God who then, and only then, can be obedient and do His works.

SUMMARY

In summary, lordship can only be evidenced by the old person being saved by grace and regenerated into a new person, and is only then able to do the works of God by His grace (2 Timothy 2:1). The work of salvation, from God's gracious choosing us to the final step of taking us to heaven, is totally a work of God, to His deserved praise and glory, not our own.

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TARES

Christ promised in Matthew 13 that there would be tares in the time of the church. A tare is a plant that resembles wheat but cannot be correctly identified until harvest; so, Jesus' term means those who appear as a Christian, but really are not true believers. Christ indicated tares would be difficult to differentiate from true believers until the end times. Nonetheless, since the church includes unbelievers, we should try our best to discern their identity so we might help them come to faith (1 John 2-4).

REFERENCES:

1. <https://www.gotquestions.org/arminianism.html>
2. Ryrie, C. C. (1999). Basic theology: A popular systematic guide to understanding biblical truth. Moody Publishers.

GOT QUESTIONS?

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