

Doctrine of Salvation

Salvation is the work of God that delivers us from sin and its penalty, restores us to a right relationship with him, and imparts to us eternal life. Since the time of Adam's fall, because of man's sinfulness and total depravity, he is separated from God and condemned by his sin (Rom.1-2). But God promised and provided a means for salvation to man through the seed of a woman (Gen.3:15), whom the New Testament authors proclaim to be Jesus Christ (John 1:12; Acts 4:12), through whom, by faith, men may enter the kingdom of God (John 3). Salvation involves the redemption of man, and is offered to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Rom.10:9), who by his own blood, obtained eternal redemption for the believer (John 8:36; 2Cor.5:21). The Bible is clear that all have sinned and deserve death (Rom.3:23, 6:23) but God desires that none should perish (2Pet.3:9). Because of God's divine love he sent His Son to be man's atoning sacrifice (John 3:16). As a result, God predestines and elects persons to salvation (Matt. 11:25-26; John10) which in no way violates their free will, moral responsibility, or personhood. This election is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness and is purely a result of His mercy (Eph.2:4) and grace (John 1:14; Rom.3:24-25). There is no salvation apart from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

Salvation is portrayed in scripture as the uniting of Christ with the believer and the believer with Christ (John 15:5; 2Cor. 5:17; Eph.2:19-22; 5:23-32). The believer is described as being elected in Christ (Eph.1:4), crucified with Christ (Col.3:3-4), buried with Christ (Rom. 6:2-4), raised with Christ (Rom. 6:5-8), and called to live in perfect obedience as Christ (Eph. 1:4). Salvation in its broadest sense includes a divine calling,

conversion, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. The glorious process of salvation begins with God's call to repentance and salvation (Isa. 65:12; Matt.9:13; 1Cor.1:9) whereby God invites men to accept by faith the salvation provided by Christ. Through the preaching of the gospel and convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-10), conversion is accomplished. Conversion is a turning away from man and turning to God in response to God's steadfast love (Luke1:16-17; Acts 3:19). The Bible teaches that both repentance (Matt. 3:2, 4:17) and faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom.4; Heb.11) are necessary for true conversion, at which time believers are instantaneously regenerated, spiritually born again (John 3), given a new nature (2Peter 1:4), receive the spiritual circumcision of the heart (Jer.24:7), become a new creation (Gal 6:15; 2Cor.5:17) and enjoy new purity (1Cor.6:11; Titus 3:5). They are justified through faith (Rom.4), redeemed from slavery to sin (John 8:36), reconciled to God (1John 2:2), adopted into the family of God (Rom.8), enjoy peace with God (Rom.8:6), and receive the promise of eternal life (John 3:16).

Sanctification is God's work of consecrating believers. A believer is positionally sanctified at conversion when God separates him from sin and sets him apart to Himself (Eph.1:1; Rom.15:16). Sanctification is also an ongoing process of purification and transformation whereby God, through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, enables His children to progress in moral and spiritual maturity (1Thess.4:3-4, 7; 1Cor.2:14-3:3) pressing after a life of purity in obedience to Christ's commands. Sanctification, the objective reality that Christ lives in us, ensures that the experience or process of salvation will continue until it is complete (Phil.1:6). Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of Grace, but shall persevere

to the end (Matt.10:22; Heb.10:23, 36). A Christian may fail totally but not finally; he will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (Rom.8:31). Salvation is permanent and eternal. Believers can rest assuredly that God will always preserve and secure their salvation (Rom.8; Heb.6; 7:19-20), none will be lost (John 6:39-40), and no one will be able to snatch the elect from His grip (John 10:28-29).

Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the blessed and abiding state of the redeemed. Today, Christians are to strive to live upright, and godly lives as they anxiously wait for the blessed hope, the return of our Lord Jesus (Titus 2:12-13). As aliens in a foreign land, we groan inwardly awaiting our return home to be with the Lord (2 Cor.5:2) and finalize our adoption as sons (Rom.8:23) through the redemption of our bodies (Phil3:20-21). Until that day arrives, God continues to strengthen us so that we will be found blameless and holy before the Lord (1Cor. 1:8; 1Thess. 3:13). Therefore, when we stand before Christ at the judgment seat (Heb.9:27) we will receive our due praise (1Cor.4:5; 2Cor.5:10) and the promised crown of life (Rev.2:10).

Salvation is not only personal but also has cosmic significance (Eph.1:20-23; Col.1:15-17). According to the Bible, Adam's fall affected creation by subjecting it to the curse of sin, but it also promises creation's restoration at the return of Christ (Rom.8:18-22) and describes the heavens and the earth as eagerly anticipating final deliverance and restoration (2Pet.3:13; Rev.21).