



Soteriology

The Nature of Salvation

Introduction:

We have discussed a variety of different elements regarding salvation. From the different views of the order of salvation to the atonement and its substitutionary nature, Soteriology covers a vast range of topics. But how does one acquire salvation? We know Christ's work is accomplished, but how is it imputed to my account? We will examine these things throughout our lesson today.

I. False Ways of Salvation

A. "I'm a good person; I do good works."

1. This is a common misconception. Many people today will claim that they are a "good" person and that because of their own goodness, they will go to heaven when they die. This seems to be somewhat logical, right?
 - **Proverbs 14:12** — *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof are the ways of death.*
2. In human reasoning, it would make sense that if the amount of good that we do outweighs the bad that we do, we should be rewarded with eternal life. The problem is that the standard isn't just more good than bad; God's standard is perfection.
 - **Matthew 5:48** — *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*
 - **James 2:10** — *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*
3. How often do people truly claim to be perfect? How many people can say that they have never broken God's law, at least in some way? Very rarely will you meet someone who claims complete perfection.
 - **Romans 3:10–12** — *10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*
 - **Romans 3:23** — *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*
4. "Well, I know I have sinned, but I do a lot of good!" How often do we hear those words?
 - **Isaiah 64:6** — *But we are all as an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; And we all do fade as a leaf; And our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*
 - **Romans 3:20** — *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*
5. "In comparison with God's holiness, the best human effort at being righteous is no better than an unclean thing, like garments or cloths stained with menstrual discharge."¹ When we compare our own goodness to the holiness of God, we blaspheme His nature. For us to think we can achieve His standard is wholly ridiculous and insulting to the Lord.

B. "I believe in Jesus."

¹ Thoralf Gilbrant, " in The Old Testament Hebrew-English Dictionary, The Complete Biblical Library "עֲדִים, (WORDsearch, 1998)

1. This sounds like a great answer to the question, “Why would God let you into heaven?” Isn’t Jesus the way to the Father? Why wouldn’t believing in Jesus take someone to heaven?
2. There is a level of faith in believing in Jesus, but belief alone isn’t sufficient to save. “[Intellectual faith] apprehends the truth intellectually as a result of education, tradition, rearing, etc. It is human and does not save.”²
3. What does James teach in the following passage?
 - **James 2:19–20** — *19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*
4. Those who only believe in Jesus, without ever submitting to Him, are not truly in Christ. Isn’t that what Jesus teaches in Matthew?
 - **Matthew 7:21** — *Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*
5. Saying you believe or calling Jesus “Lord” is not the same as surrendering to Him as Lord. This intellectual faith is what James calls a “dead” faith. It claims belief in Jesus, but it never produces anything.
 - **James 2:15–26** — *15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

C. “Doesn’t everyone go to heaven?”

1. Universalism is a common understanding of salvation today. Many will say, “If God is love, then He wouldn’t send anyone to hell. That would be unloving.” “Didn’t Jesus die for the sins of the world? Doesn’t that mean that I go to heaven?” Universalism teaches that because God is love, He would never condemn anyone — but this view misunderstands both God’s love and His holiness.
 - **1 John 4:8b** — *For God is love.*
2. God is love — but His love works in perfect harmony with His justice, truth, and holiness. To understand His love rightly, we must see the whole character of God. God’s love doesn’t eliminate His justice.
 - **Psalms 145:17** — *The LORD is righteous in all his ways, And holy in all his works.*

² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 377.

- **Exodus 34:7** — *Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*
- 3. God's justice isn't in opposition to His love; it's an expression of His love. How loving would it be to let unpunished sin into heaven?
- 4. Jesus clearly taught about judgment and hell.
 - **Matthew 25:46** — *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*
 - **Matthew 7:13–14** — *13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*
- 5. The truth is that God is love. God's love is clearly demonstrated at the cross of Christ.
 - **Romans 5:6–8** — *6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*
 - **John 3:16** — *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*
 - The cross perfectly pictures God's justice and His love. Sin needed to be atoned for, so Christ offered Himself as the sacrifice. Love made a way for salvation.

II. What is the True Nature of Salvation?

A. The Two Types of "Calling" in Scripture

1. The external call (a.k.a. the gospel call, the general call, etc.) is the call that the preacher makes when he preaches the gospel. We call all people to repentance. "This is God's general invitation to men to come to Him."³ "This refers to the verbal proclamation of the gospel by which all sinners are called to turn from their sin and trust in Christ for salvation."⁴
2. The internal call (a.k.a. the effective call) speaks of those who have been elected to salvation. This is God sovereignly summoning the sinner out of spiritual death and into spiritual life.⁵ "The internal call is given only to the elect and always brings the sinner to salvation."⁶

B. The External Call to Salvation.

1. "This refers to the verbal proclamation of the gospel by which all sinners are called to turn from their sin and trust in Christ for salvation."⁷
2. Let's examine Romans 10.
 - **Romans 10:13–17** — *13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a*

³ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 376.

⁴ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 571.

⁵ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 571.

⁶ Ibid., 571.

⁷ Ibid., 571.

preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

3. "This text clearly indicates that proclaiming the message of the gospel is absolutely imperative to people being saved... For salvation to come to anyone, the gospel message of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God, sent from heaven to save sinners by grace through faith apart from works, must be proclaimed to them."⁸
4. We are commanded to preach the gospel to all nations, and by doing so, we are carrying out the general call.

C. The Internal Call of Salvation

1. "This is the call that only the elect respond to through faith and that results in their salvation (Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:2). This is God's work, though He uses the proclamation of the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). The call is unto fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9), light (1 Pet. 2:9), liberty (Gal. 5:13), holiness (1 Thess. 4:7), and His kingdom (2:12)."⁹
 - **Romans 8:30** — *Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*
2. If there is no difference between the external call and the internal call, then why isn't everyone who is called to repent saved? If all who are called are justified, then wouldn't that necessitate a difference between general and effectual calling?
3. "There is a distinction between the call of God (the internal call) and the call of the preacher (the external call)."¹⁰

D. Conversion

1. What is necessary for one to be saved? What conditions must there be for one to be converted? It's clearly not good works or mere belief, so what is it?
2. The Bible teaches us that repentance and faith are necessary for salvation. It cannot be one without the other, because they are perfectly compliment one another.
3. Grudem defines saving faith as follows: "Saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God."¹¹
4. He goes on to define repentance as: "Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ."¹²
5. "It should be apparent that repentance and faith are intimately related and even inseparable from one another. They are truly two sides of the same coin. In the first place, their connection follows a simple logic: it is impossible for someone to turn away from something without turning toward something else. Conversely, one cannot turn toward something without turning away from whatever was previously occupying his attention. Further, it is impossible to look in two different directions at the same time. But the inseparability of repentance and faith is also a theological necessity. It is inconceivable that one who finally

⁸ Ibid., 572.

⁹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 376.

¹⁰ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 571.

¹¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 862.

¹² Ibid., 865.

perceives sin and Christ as they actually are should pursue Christ without forsaking sin or should forsake sin without embracing Christ.”¹³

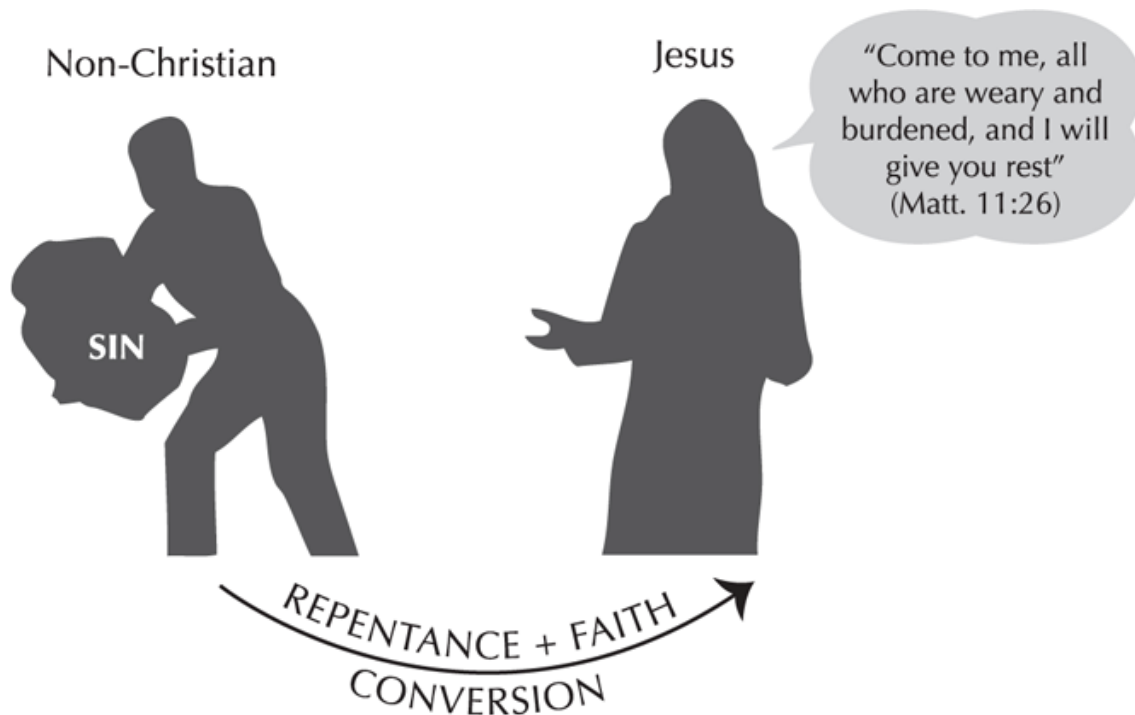
- **Mark 1:15** — *And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*
 - **Acts 20:21** — *Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - **Luke 13:3** — *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*
 - **Ephesians 2:8–9** — *8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*
6. As a sinner is convicted of their sin, they realize the fact that their sin has separated them from a holy God. The sinner then turns from their sin and turns in faith to Christ for salvation. This is what Lordship salvation is. The sinner is no longer lord of their life; they have submitted their life to the Lordship of Christ. Jesus is not only Savior but Lord, and salvation requires submitting to His Lordship, not merely believing in Him intellectually.
- **Acts 16:31** — *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*
 - **Romans 10:9–13 (ESV)** — *9 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. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*
 - **1 Corinthians 12:3** — *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*
 - **Luke 9:23** — *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*
 - **Luke 6:46–48** — *46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: 48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.*
 - **Isaiah 55:6–7** — *6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, Call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts: And let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*
7. “Scripture puts repentance and faith together as different aspects of the one act of coming to Christ for salvation. It is not that a person first turns from sin and later trusts in Christ or first trusts in Christ and later turns from sin; both occur at the same time. When we turn to Christ for salvation from our sins, we are simultaneously turning away from the sins that we are

¹³ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 590.

asking Christ to save us from. If that were not true, our turning to Christ for salvation from sin could hardly be a genuine turning to him or trusting in him.”¹⁴

Conclusion:

Salvation is not earned by good works, empty belief, or the hope that God’s love will overlook sin—it is received through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. True salvation involves both trusting in Christ’s finished work and surrendering to His authority over our lives. God’s love and justice meet perfectly at the cross, where sin is punished and sinners are offered mercy. Therefore, let us call others not merely to believe about Christ, but to bow before Him as Lord and follow Him in obedient faith.



¹⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 866.