

Foundations of Faith: Salvation

Summary: *all church members should understand and agree with the following*

What Jesus Did: Jesus was crucified on a cross, buried in a tomb, and then bodily raised from the dead, appearing to many before ascending into Heaven.

What Jesus Accomplished: Jesus' death paid the penalty for sin, so that everyone who believes in this deliverance can be saved from eternal death, and have new life and be reconciled with God.

Freedom: Through Jesus' sacrifice, God offers to free us from bondage to sin, death, evil, and the Law.

Justification: Through Jesus' sacrifice, God sees us as righteous even though we remain flawed and sinful, because God accounts to us the righteousness of Christ.

Forgiveness: Through Jesus' sacrifice, God forgives us for our sins and we no longer face punishment for them.

Adoption and Positional Sanctification: Through Jesus' sacrifice, God welcomes us into his family as adopted children and separates us out from the world for his purposes.

Regeneration: When we accept deliverance through Jesus' sacrifice, the Holy Spirit regenerates us to new spiritual life.

Our Need: All people are sinful and need the salvation Jesus offers. There is no other way to new eternal life or reconciliation with God.

Our Faith: We accept the salvation Jesus offers by believing in his gospel, which essentially means to believe in God's promise of deliverance through Jesus, by believing in who Jesus is [both God and man] and in what he did on the cross.

Our Perseverance: Once we are truly saved, we can never lose that salvation.

Our Assurance: There are evidences God provides to assure us we have salvation, including a growing desire to obey, to walk with God instead of the world, to love other believers, and to discern, believe in, and confess the true gospel.

Detail:¹ *all teachers and leaders should understand and agree with the following*

Jesus' death

Even in the terrible moment of God's wrath over the first sin, God provided hope [Genesis 3.15]. God made a veiled promise of deliverance from the effects of sin, promising that the seed of the woman [which would someday be Jesus] would bruise the evil one on the head [destroy him], though the evil one might strike him on the heel like a serpent [kill him]. This would be played out thousands of years later, as we shall discuss momentarily.

- † Genesis 3.15 [NIV]: *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*

Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins. In his death on the cross, Jesus took the curse [or penalty] for our sins [Galatians 3.13]. Another way of looking at it is that he paid with his blood the price of freeing us from our bondage to sin [Revelation 5.9], which is called “redemption.” It is a mystery why God chose this method [foreshadowing of which can be found in the Old Testament], but we see in it both his mercy and his justness: the awfulness of our sin could not be ignored, yet he would pay the penalty himself.

- † Galatians 3.13a [NET]: *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...”*

Jesus had to be both God and man for this sacrifice. The primary purpose for Jesus coming in the flesh was to save people from their sins [Matthew 1.21]. The penalty for sin is death, so Jesus had to be a man so he could die. However, if he had been only a man, he would have been sinful and thus could have died only for his own sins. Jesus had to be God, so that he could remain sinless in his human life and thus could give his life for our sins [Mark 10:45].

- † Mark 10.45 [NASB]: *“[Jesus speaking] For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”*

Jesus' resurrection

Jesus rose from the grave. After his death on Friday, Jesus was buried in a tomb. On the following Sunday, Jesus was resurrected by God the Father [Matthew 28.5-7], and Jesus then appeared in his resurrected body to over 500 people during at least eight different occasions in the following weeks [1 Corinthians 15.3-7].

- † 1 Corinthians 15.3-7 [NASB]: *“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles...”*

Note: “on the third day” includes the day he was buried (Friday) and the day he arose (Sunday), using the common method of accounting for time in Israel back then.

Jesus' resurrection gives us evidence that his sacrifice was acceptable to God the Father, that he conquered death, and that we can trust his claim to be the Son of God.

¹ A good source of basic theology is Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* [Chicago: Moody Press; 1999].

Jesus' ascension and promise to return

Jesus ascended to Heaven [Acts 1.9-11; Luke 24.51]. This ascension was foretold in the Old Testament [Psalms 68.18; 110.1].

- † Acts 1.9-11 [NASB]: *“And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing [angels] stood beside them. They also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’”*

Jesus inaugurated a new covenant for the “Church Age” [Luke 22.20; 2 Corinthians 3.6] This covenant replaced the one God made with Moses and the nation of Israel, which is why we say we are not “under the Law” [Galatians 5.18; Romans 7.4]. This concept was expanded upon in several New Testament letters, which show that we are enjoying many of the blessings of this covenant now, though it will not come into complete fulfillment until Christ returns.

- † Galatians 5.18 [NASB]: *“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.”*

This new covenant is only partially fulfilled by God, based on what was foreseen by the prophets. We know this is the covenant the prophets foresaw, because the New Testament writers quoted from those prophecies numerous times in their discussion of this current age. However, the content of those same prophecies includes promises, including some specific to the nation Israel, which have not happened yet. Jesus promised to return [Matthew 24.1-35], and it is at that time that he will fulfill the remaining prophecies about himself. For now, we get to enjoy many of the blessings in the New Covenant.

- † Matthew 24.30 [NET]: *“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man arriving on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”*

What Christ offers us

Christ offers us redemption. Before accepting Christ as our Savior, we were *captive* to many claims on us, including sin [Romans 6.20], death [Romans 5.17], evil [2 Timothy 2.26], and the Law [Romans 7.4]. Christ paid the price with his blood for our *freedom* from these things [Ephesians 1.7; 1 Peter 1.17-19].

- † Ephesians 1.7 [NASB]: *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”*

Christ offers us justification. Before accepting Christ, we were *guilty* in sin, but now God has declared us to be in right standing before him [Romans 3.21-26]. He has accounted to us the *righteousness* of Christ.

- † Romans 3.21-24 [NET]: *“But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed—namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”*

Christ offers us propitiation. Before accepting Christ as our Savior, we were under God's righteous *judgment* [Romans 1.18], but now we are no longer an object of God's wrath but rather have received his *mercy* and forgiveness [Romans 3.25; Hebrews 2.17; 1 John 2.2; 4.10].

- † Romans 3.23-25 [NASB]: *“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His*

righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed...”

Christ offers us regeneration. Before accepting Christ as our Savior, we were *dead* in our sins [Ephesians 2.1-6]. When we accept Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit comes into us and regenerates us, and thus we are said to be new creatures, “*born again!*” [2 Corinthians 5.17; Ephesians 2.1-6], which Jesus said was necessary for us to see the Kingdom of God [John 3.3]. Where once we were dead in our sins, now we can have new life!

† 2 Corinthians 5.17 [NASB]: “*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*”

Christ offers us reconciliation. Before accepting Christ as our Savior, we were *enemies* of God [Romans 5.10]. At the cross, all God’s claims against us were settled [Colossians 2.13-14], as Jesus bore all our sins [1 Peter 2.24]. Thus, we can be *reconciled* with God. The only thing that prevents our close intimacy with God is any remaining rebelliousness in our hearts – our willingness to continue sinning – but we can agree to this full reconciliation through obedience.

† Romans 5.10 [NET]: “*For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life?*”

Christ offers us sanctification. Before accepting Christ as our Savior, we were *lost* and thus belonged to evil. When we accept Christ as our Savior, we place our faith in him and thus he takes us to be his own: we are separated out for Christ, or “*sanctified*” [Acts 20.32; 26.18; 1 Corinthians 1.2; 6.11]. Once we begin our Christian life, there is a sanctification process that continues as we are made ever more like Christ, more separated out for him.

† Acts 26.18 [NASB]: “*...to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.*”

Christ offers us adoption. Before accepting Christ as our Savior, we were *excluded* from the kingdom of Heaven, but now God has *adopted* us into his family [Galatians 4.6-7]. We are children of God, known as children of the light [Ephesians 5.8].

† Galatians 4.6-7 [NASB]: “*Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.*”

Accepting the gift

We need what Christ has to offer. As we discussed in another lesson, we are all born into an inherited sin nature and guilt from imputed sin, to which we all add our own personal sins. Sometimes people think they can solve these problems themselves, but the Bible makes clear that we cannot [Proverbs 14.12]. No matter how good we begin to act, no matter what wonderful things we do, we can never become pure and holy: there is no way to “obey” our way out of our sinful situation [Romans 3.20].

† Romans 3.20 [NLT]: “*For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.*”

Christ offers us salvation. Despite our woeful state of sin and helplessness, God loved us enough to send Christ to die for us [Romans 5.8]. The Good News [or Gospel] is summed up in Romans 6.23 [NASB]: “*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” If we

accept this gift of God, we experience “salvation” from sin and death, which includes all the previously discussed elements of what Christ offers us. This salvation includes eternal life with God.

We accept this gift in faith, meaning we put trust in God’s promise of deliverance. This faith has two aspects: first, understanding we did not merit this gift, that salvation is entirely a gift of grace through Christ’s work on the cross and in no part has anything to do with our efforts or worthiness [Ephesians 2.8-9]; and second, acknowledging the identity and work of Jesus, the promised Messiah [Romans 10.9-10; John 3.16], as the means of our salvation.

- † Ephesians 2.8-9 [NASB]: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*
- † John 3.16 [NET]: *“For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”*

Even our faith is a gift from God [Romans 9]. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts non-believers of their sin, their need for righteousness, and their pending judgment, and prepares their hearts to respond to the Gospel of Christ [John 16.8-11]. We must trust that the salvation process is entirely a gift.

- † John 16.8 [NASB]: *“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment...”*

When we become Christians, we begin to retrieve the image of the Lord. As we are transformed to be like Christ [which we will discuss in a lesson about sanctification], we are renewed in the image of God, which includes a future glorification of our body in addition to a present transformation of our character.

God’s grace was a gift, not something we can “unearn.”

If we could not earn salvation in the first place, we know we cannot “unearn” now. Our salvation was a gift from God, not something we earned. It remains a gift, not something we can “unearn.”

We continue to sin, which continues to have real effects, but we cannot lose our salvation. God effected our salvation by his grace [even our faith was a gift from him], and there is nothing we or anyone else can do to undermine God’s work [John 10.27-29].

- † John 10.27-29 [NASB]: *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”*

God purposed to glorify [bring to perfection] all those whom he justified [Romans 8.30]. This happens after we physically die, when we go to be with God.

- † Romans 8.30: *“and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”*

Jesus’ accomplished work at the cross assures us of our eternal security.

Jesus’ death paid the price for all sin [Titus 2.14; 1 John 1.5-7; 2.2]. God would not love us enough to save us when we were his enemies only to lose us when we are his adopted sons and daughters!

- Titus 2.14 [NASB]: *“...who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”*

Our righteous standing before God comes from Jesus, not from our obedience. We are impure because of sin, and we can never make ourselves perfectly pure again. So we know that whatever righteousness we

possess is imputed [accounted] to us by God from Christ [as explained earlier]. Therefore, our continued struggle with sin does not diminish this righteousness – for Christ remains righteous and pure! – and thus we continue in the salvation blessings of justification, reconciliation, and the rest.

Jesus is now in Heaven, advocating for us when we sin. 1 John 2.1-2 [NASB] says, “*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*” Propitiation means Jesus took us out of judgment for our sins. When we sin as a Christian, though we might stand accused of our sin and should be found guilty and deserving of punishment, Jesus advocates for us – propitiates for us – and so we receive mercy instead. Christ continues to apply his saving work on the cross to us on a daily basis!

The Holy Spirit’s accomplished work in us assures us of our eternal security.

The Holy Spirit regenerated us. When we believe in the Gospel, we are born again, regenerated, given a new life, which cannot be undone. “God regenerates (John 1.13) according to His will (James 1.18) through the Holy Spirit (John 3.5) when a person believes ([John] 1.12) the Gospel as revealed in the Word (1 Peter 1.23).”² It is this regeneration that brings us new life and entry into God’s kingdom.

- † John 1.12-13 [NASB]: “*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*”

At the time of regeneration, the Holy Spirit baptized us into the body of Christ. Baptism is a mark of identification, so we are now identified with Christ and the body of Christ [the church], and even identified with Christ’s death and resurrection to new life [Romans 6.3-4; 1 Corinthians 12.12-13].

- † Romans 6.3-4 [NASB]: “*Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*”

The Holy Spirit sealed us for the day of redemption [when Christ returns to judge], and is a mark of our belonging to Christ. Though our sin grieves the Holy Spirit, it does not undo the seal [Ephesians 1.13-14; 4.30].

- † Ephesians 4.30 [NASB]: “*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*”

The Holy Spirit indwells believers [Romans 8.9; 1 Corinthians 3.16; 6.19; 1 John 3.24; 4.13]. It is clear from the context of 1 Corinthians 5-6 that even grievously sinning believers do not lose this sign of salvation.

- † 1 Corinthians 6.19 [NET]: “*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*”

Personal Evidence of our Salvation

Our obedience is one evidence of our salvation [1 John 1.7; 2.3, 6, 29; 3.9-10; 5.2-3]. Though no believer will be perfect in obedience, we should see a growing willingness to submit to Christ, obey his commands in Scripture, and learn to live as he did, adopting his priorities, attitudes, and lifestyle for ourselves [1 John 2.6].

² Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press; 1999), 376.

† 1 John 2.3 [NET]: *“Now by this we know that we have come to know God: if we keep his commandments.”*

Our love for other people is one evidence of our salvation [1John 2.10-11; 3.14-18; 4.7-8, 16-21]. In most believers, a sense of love for others grows over time, but what is more important is the daily decision to show love even to the most unlovable, even when we don't feel love. Though no believer will be perfect in showing love for others, we should see a growing willingness to sacrifice our own well being to show love to others unconditionally.

† 1 John 3.14 [NET]: *“We know that we have crossed over from death to life because we love our fellow Christians. The one who does not love remains in death.”*

Our desire to walk with God instead of in step with the more wayward aspects of our culture is one evidence of our salvation [1 John 2.15-17; 5.1-4]. Though no believer will be perfect in resisting the pull of the culture in such areas as materialism, lust, and pride, we should see a growing sense of charity, purity of thought, and humility that drowns out those things.

† 1 John 2.15 [NIV]: *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.”*

Our ability to discern, believe in, and confess the true gospel from Scripture, and not the false teachings all around us, is one evidence of our salvation [1 John 2.21; 3.23-24; 4.1-3; 5.1, 12].

† 1 John 2.21-22 [NASB]: *“ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.”*