

How We are Saved

Introduction

Many people who come down the aisle in an altar call to accept Jesus Christ, say: “I am saved!”

- But – what does that really mean?
- Do they have eternal life? Does that decision, which is often based on emotion, assure a future with Jesus forever?

Many people think so, and feel secure as Christians. “All is well. I’m going to make it.” Paul did say:

“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31). Sounds simple. That is one of the Bible’s great promises.

- John, that special apostle, said: *“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”* (John 3:16).
- *“Very truly I tell you, **whoever hears my word and believes him** who sent me has eternal life”* (John 5:24a – NIV).
- *“And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and **believeth on him**, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. ... Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that believeth on me hath everlasting life**”* (John 6:40, 47 – NIV).

Seems so easy – but there is a danger that Christians make it **too simple**. Peter said:

- *“**Repent, and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [taking away] of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38).
- So we have three key words to deal with: **believe, repent and baptism**.

There is a fourth word that we must also know about – **faith!**

- *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”* (Ephesians 2:8).
- There are many Bible texts that we could add to this mix – but let’s look at these four words. They help us to understand true salvation and eternal life!

Baptism

Most people understand what this is. But many do not know what it means spiritually. Jesus gave us an example:

- “After Jesus was baptized, just as he was **coming up out of the water**, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on him” (Matthew 3:16 – NET).
- Jesus went to the Jordan River and went right into the water. Baptism is by totally immersing the body. Why?
- It mimics Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.
 - Baptized into His death (Romans 6:3) – die to old way of living
 - Buried with Him in baptism (Colossians 2:12) – let that “old person” be covered
 - Raised as He was to newness of life (Romans 6:4) – come up out of the water committed to a new life.

So a major step in that journey is baptism. And – there is that promise given by Peter that the gift of the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit relates to this special event. If we do this we will repent and turn away from sin to begin a new life.

Repentance

We already heard Peter say that repentance is tied to baptism.

Jesus said: “*the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye, and believe the gospel*” (Mark 1:15).

Jesus later said: “*except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3).

Repentance means “Sorrow for sinning because it was wrong. We deeply regret sinning, not because of any consequences” but because Jesus died for our sins! Repentance means “turning away from” from sin!

- Few Christians defend the word “sin” – yet they fail to find out what it really means. Here it is!
- “*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*” (I John 3:4).
- Paul even said that he didn’t know what sin was except from the law (Romans 7:7).

If we really are seeking to please God, we will want to know what displeases Him. We will want to study the things that the Bible urges us to avoid/reject – then turn away from them.

- The place to begin is the Ten Commandments.
- The first four tell us how we honor God.
- The next six tell us how we honor and respect other people.

There are many places where God describes things He despises and that will keep us out of heaven (e.g., II Timothy 3:1-5). **This is so serious that James said:**

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10).

“Even one wrong trait of character, one sinful desire, persistently cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel. Every sinful indulgence strengthens the soul's aversion to God. The man who manifests an infidel hardihood, or a stolid indifference to divine truth, is but reaping the harvest of that which he has himself sown. In all the Bible there is not a more fearful warning against trifling with evil than the words of the wise man that the sinner ‘shall be holden with the cords of his sins.’ Proverbs 5:22.”¹

- A great prayer: **“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”** (Psalm 139:23-24).
- When we see Jesus, we recognize our need (we understand His wishes from the Bible and His great standard – the Decalogue) → Repent Confess } Turn away from sin → We're baptized
 Holy Spirit comes upon us

To repent means we recognize that there is such a thing as sin.

- *“He that committeth sin is of the devil”* (I John 3:8a).
- *“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin”* (I John 3:9a).
- *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13).

How do we get rid of sin so it is not charged against us?

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9).

¹ White, Ellen G.; *Steps to Christ*, p. 34.

Let's now look at that word "faith."

Faith

The Greek word for faith is *pistis*. A measure of faith is given to every person (Hebrews 12:3, Romans 12:2).

- God's grace, His unmerited favor, His love, saves us.
- But – it is **activated** when we have "*faith*" – when we use that faith.

What is faith?

1. Being attracted to Jesus, falling in love with Him and everything He represents.
2. Trusting in His plan for me personally.
3. Believing that everything works together for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28). Everything means the good and the bad that happens.

Paul wrote a very **definitive description of faith** in his book of Hebrews.

- *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1).
- Faith trusts in things related to God that we cannot see – like:
 1. He created everything.
 2. He gave to us Jesus – a God partner – to become a human being to die in our place.
 3. He is coming again.
 4. We can live eternally if we comply with the conditions we are sharing today.

There are two things that are very interesting about this thing called faith!

1. *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who **does the will** of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"* (Matthew 7:21-23 – NIV).
- Those are religiously gifted Christians, but they will be lost.
 - Many will come to the end thinking that they will be saved but will be lost.
 - Many will be active church members, even involved with charities and community services and yet be lost.
 - *"Faith without works [obedience] is dead"* (James 2:20).

We must commit to doing what God wants – with no compromise.

- Paul said: “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves*” (II Corinthians 13:5).

E. G. White said: “**Desires** for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God [obey what you know to be right]. They do not now choose to be Christians.”²

The next amazing thing that is related to faith is:

2. Justification

- This is a big word that is in the Bible. It means that if you **really** have faith and trust Jesus, **God the Father will clear your account of all guilt and charges.**
- You are acquitted – justified – totally forgiven.
In fact, the very moment you put your full confidence in Him, having confessed and repented of your sins, everything is made right with God.

What does this really mean? That moment God sees you as perfect. You are saved.

- That means that we are right with God, which the Bible calls **righteousness.**
- God, looking at us that way, is sometimes called “imputed righteousness.” It is a legal word, meaning that God has made it that way in His record books.

What if I still sin? You begin the process over again! But – if you use that as an excuse and are not truly repentant, God knows that and “you are in trouble” (Romans 3:22).

“Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matthew 23:28).

Now we come to a word that is used over and over in the Bible but is totally misunderstood!

Believe

The Greek word for “*believe*” is *pisteou*. It is a verb. It is more than faith. It means that I am **actively pleasing God.**

- “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Hebrews 11:6).

² White, Ellen G.; *Steps to Christ*, p. 47-48.

- I am diligently studying how to please Him, and I am seeking new ways to make God happy!

That's why it says: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:3. "*The one who believes has eternal life*" (John 6:47).

- When you believe, are going all out to make God happy.
- You have actually partnered with Jesus.

That means I am obeying His Word.

Eternal Security – Once Saved Always Saved?

One of the very serious issues in the Christian world is "Can I lose my salvation?"

- Most evangelicals say that once they are brought into a saving relationship with God, they are guaranteed eternal security.
- Their logic:
 1. It is a sovereign act of God when they are washed, renewed and born by the Spirit (John 3:3, Titus 3:5).
 2. God gives the sinner a new heart and puts a right spirit within them (Ezekiel 36:26).
 3. The Spirit causes the saved person to walk in obedience to God's Word (Ezekiel 36:26-27, James 2:26).

There is one big problem with these conclusions: They all assume that God takes away the will or choice of man – man is *automatically* His forever.

- Even Paul, that great apostle who wrote much of the New Testament, said:

"... I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14 – KJV). *"... For what I want to do [spiritually] I do not do, but what I hate I do [I do what I know is wrong]"* (Romans 7:15 – NIV).
- He admits that he is sinning so much. But is he lost?

Yet he said: "*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:38-39).

What is going on? Does that mean that when I accept Jesus I can sin all I want?

Loss of Salvation through Deliberate Sin

“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left” (Hebrews 10:26 – NIV).

- Some say that this does not refer to a truly converted Christian.
- But the “we” includes Paul and the previous verse is talking about Christians.

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4-6).

- The issue is settled.
- Salvation can be lost.

Jesus said to His apostles: The Spirit “*dwelleth with you*” and in you (John 14:16). Yet, Judas fell.

We can lose our salvation – eternal life. Paul warned:

- *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (I Timothy 4:1).*
- *“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (II Peter 3:7).*

God’s Goodness and Severity

Speaking of the Jews: *“... because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith [speaking of Gentiles or non-Jews]. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again” (Romans 11:20-23).*

- Notice that believers can become unbelievers and be cut off.
- Notice that they can be grafted back in if they once again believe (that word *pisteou*).

Paul was so pointed when he said:

- *“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”* (1 Corinthians 9:27).
- *“Castaway”* means loss of eternal life. Paul was focusing on how even health habits might affect our eternal life.

Some evangelicals talk about “irresistible grace.” But that is not Biblical. That, once again, means that we have no will. We must follow Jesus by choice, moment by moment!

What about Predestination?

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 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” (Romans 8:29-30).

- If God did decide beforehand who would be saved, does that mean He is taking away the will or man’s free choice?
- The commands to “repent,” “forgive one another,” “love as I have loved you,” “confess” all show that God protects the will!

Does God’s ability to tell the future mean that he manipulates the will of individuals, so they decide for Him? Absolutely not! The freedom to choose is a byproduct of supreme liberty that God gives.

Conditions of Salvation

1. We remain loyal to God, honoring Him in our lives:
 - *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit”* (John 15:1-2, 4, 5).
2. We must keep in mind or *“hold fast”* to the gospel:
 - *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

The gospel is the story of God’s saving grace – we activate it by our faith!

3. Continue in the faith:
 - *“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation – **if** you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not*

move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant” (Colossians 1:21-23).

- *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Corinthians 10:12).*
- *“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness”
(II Peter 3:17).*

The following words are steps to Christ. Understanding and applying them guarantee salvation:

1. Be attracted to Jesus
2. Have faith and trust in Him
3. Confess our sins
4. Repent of our sins
5. Believe and follow Him
6. Obey His requirements

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