

Introduction to the Doctrine of Salvation

Introduction:

While the Lord Jesus Christ is the theme of the Bible, the work of Christ in securing our Salvation is the great co-theme.

The doctrine of salvation may be likened to a magnificently cut diamond — it is multi-faceted. It may be viewed from various angles — man-ward or God-ward — each view giving a different perspective of what it means to be saved.



Failure to understand this “diamond” can lead to extreme or one-sided views of the doctrine of salvation. A notable example is the age-old supposed conflict between Romans and James in the New Testament — GRACE and WORKS.

“But to him that **worketh not**, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”
Romans 4:5



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“Even so faith, if it hath not **works**, is dead, being alone.”
James 2:17



“...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you...”
Philippians 2:12-13

As can be seen, in the Book of Romans the Apostle Paul was speaking of the work of God’s grace **in** us— the root; James was looking at another facet of the jewel and was speaking of the work of God **through** us (which is the evidence of the first work!) — the fruit. The passage in Philippians ties the two thoughts together. See also: II Peter 1:3-9, especially verse 5.

Another example is the on-going debate known as the “Calvinist-Arminian controversy.” This is an issue which has been maintained by people rigidly viewing only one side of the jewel of God’s salvation. For this reason, each ‘side’ can always find Scripture to support their contention.

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I. What is "Salvation?"

Theologically, "Salvation denotes the whole process by which man is delivered from all which would prevent his attaining the highest good that God has prepared for him."

In reality, Salvation is the actual enjoyment of that good. In this sense, our salvation is three-fold:

Past — we have enjoyed the forgiveness of sin.

Present — we now enjoy fellowship with God.

Prospect — we shall enjoy forever with God.

Men may be wrong on many matters of Scripture and still get to heaven — but if they are wrong about the way of salvation, certain doom awaits them.

II. False Concepts of Salvation

Salvation has always been a cause of conflict — Matthew 10:34-36.

Unscriptural ideas concerning how to be saved have existed since the New Testament times, beginning with the Judaistic legalizers — Acts 15:1.

An examination of all the false religions, cults, and much of today's so-called Christian thinking shows man's basic concept of salvation as:

"Do!"

In contrast, the Bible says:

"Done!"

This is the basic conflict.

Sinful human nature naturally seeks to earn salvation through its own merit — just as Adam and Eve attempted to cover their shame with the works of their own hands. (Consider the questions asked by sinners in Mark 10:17 and Acts 16:30.)

The doctrine of "works-for-salvation" comes under many headings, but with one single underlying aim — to please God enough to be accepted by Him.

In contemporary Christendom, some false views are:

A. Universalism

Universalism declares that "all men will be saved eventually." It is further expressed in statements such as, "God is too loving to send anyone to hell," or "all men are traveling along different roads, but are heading to the same place."

This viewpoint is utterly false. Many Scriptures allow only one way to Salvation.

John 3:3-5; 14:6; Acts 4:12

B. Baptismal Regeneration.

This is sophisticated "salvation by works" doctrine which keeps literally millions of sinners from ever coming to a knowledge of the truth.

Baptismal regeneration teaches Baptism to be the means of salvation, or to be a part of salvation. It is the doctrine of Roman Catholicism and the Anglican/Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Reformed denominations — in fact all infant-sprinkling organizations — as well as the Church of Christ group.

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III. The Supreme Importance of Salvation.

“Many of us are not deeply convicted about the supreme importance of being saved. Our careless living and our callous indifference are the results of our placing too little significance to the salvation of sinners. To the question, ‘Does salvation really matter?’ Many seem to answer, ‘Not very much.’ Does anyone demand proof? Then go back to your church and put on an evangelistic campaign. Advertise, hold conferences, talk it up, have prayer meetings, give out lists of evangelistic possibilities, urge personal work, and see how many of your members will make any consistent effort to win any soul to Christ. Right in the middle of your revival some of your best members will attend the theater in your town more times during your revival than they will attend your services. Furthermore, many of your people will not attend one service, and such a small percent will do anything at all for the salvation of the lost that you will come away from your congregation convinced that the great majority of our people think very little of the importance of salvation.”

-Dr. James Overton

Our Salvation is supremely important because:

- A. It is the Only Deliverance From Eternal Death.
Salvation is not some decision a person makes to align with a particular group, nor the subscribing to a creed. One does not become a Christian by joining a church, by natural birth, by baptism, or by the performance of good deeds — but by the personal act of “fleeing from the wrath to come” and “calling upon the Name of the Lord.”
John 3:36 “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

The word “salvation” implies we are saved FROM something.

- B. It is the Only Guarantee of Entrance into Blessedness.
The Bible teaches that salvation means we are saved FOR something. This is the positive aspect.
Titus 2:13-14 “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”
- C. It is the Only Preparation for Service.
Saved people are the only ones who can serve the Lord from the heart. God is never pleased with any other kind of service.
Proverbs 15:8 “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.”