

## Salvation

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
(Romans 6:23 NIV)

Theologians have developed complex explanations about the doctrine of “soteriology”, or salvation. We believe the Bible’s teaching is clear and simple (it must be!). This week’s approach will be to learn through focussing on key definitions and appreciating their context.

Some words seem old-fashioned and obscure; some are expressed differently in recent versions of the Bible; this has had the (partial) effect of taking away some of the richness of their meaning.

### 1. Search for Salvation

From the beginning of time, people in every culture have been looking for salvation. Religion means many things to many people, but behind most religious expressions is a search for God, or to please God or gods, and ultimate meaning in this life, as well as assurance for eternity.

The doctrine of “soteriology” has to do with how we can be saved, by being restored to right relationship with God our Creator, through whom we are alienated by sin, and have confidence moving on into eternity.

### 2. Key Words

Term	Definition and Context
<p><b>Atonement</b></p> <p>English: <i>at-one-ment</i>, ie bringing together people who have been enemies, into a relationship of peace.</p>	<p><i>“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” (Romans 5:11. NIV translates “reconciliation”)</i></p> <p><i>Meaning in the Old Testament</i></p> <p>From Hebrew <i>kaphar</i>, or “to cover”, especially in Leviticus and Number. Typified by the covering God provided for Adam and Eve when they sinned (Genesis 3:21), and the “covering” in the ark (pitch, to keep water out, Genesis 6:14). The sacrificial blood of animals covered sinners and stood between them and God.</p> <p>The Jews celebrated on the Day of Atonement (known today as Yom Kippur, which coincides with the Western Easter). Leviticus describes “scapegoats”; one died for sins; the other (as a type) carried them away (cf Psalm 103:12, Micah 7:19; Isaiah 38:17b). The problem was that these sacrifices only had a temporary effect and had to be repeated over and over again.</p> <p>They also focussed on sins, not the underlying issue of sinfulness.</p> <p>The Mercy Seat on the ark of the covenant came from the same root word.</p>

	<p><i>Meaning in the New Testament</i></p> <p>There is only one NT reference, Romans 5:11 (translated “reconciliation”: in some versions.</p> <p>Like the scapegoat, Jesus took our sins on Himself (being “made sin for us”, 2 Corinthians 5:21), then carried them away forever. He was the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).</p> <p>The “atoning” death of Christ is the meeting place of God’s justice and love.</p>
<p><b>Reconciliation</b></p> <p>Implies a change in relationship between two parties (in this case between God and humanity), based on our changed status (reconciled to God through the work of Christ.</p>	<p><i>“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)</i></p> <p>Jesus Christ reconciled sinners to God through His death (Romans 5:6-11).</p> <p>A new basis of fellowship, or friendship, with parties in a state of enmity, or separation, is established. Not only forgiveness and the removal of sin, but entry into a new level of friendship based on man’s new legal condition before God, in Christ’s righteousness. That is why sinners cannot make themselves “good enough”. Reconciliation is <i>always</i> the work of God, initiated by Him, as He reaches out to us.</p> <p>Practical implications: reconciliation with others. We are given a new role of ministers of reconciliation (Ambassador analogy).</p>
<p><b>Propitiation</b></p> <p>Greek: <i>hilasterion</i> - from Hebrew word meaning “Mercy Seat”, the place of mercy.</p> <p>Latin: provision for pity, mercy.</p>	<p><i>“In this is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins.” (1 John 4:10, Amplified Bible)</i></p> <p>In OT, blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. “This is what sin costs; no waivers.”</p> <p>Our account with God is “settled” by the blood of Christ (1 John 2:2). God is both just and justifier (the judge pays the penalty).</p>
<p><b>Substitution</b></p>	<p>Jesus Christ died in our place. His death was “substitutionary” (Isaiah 53; John 11:50; Romans 5:6, 8, 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, 21),</p>
<p><b>Redemption</b></p> <p>Hebrew <i>paraq</i> = to tear loose</p>	<p><i>“It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” (1 Corinthians 1:30 NIV)</i></p>

<p>Greek <i>lytron</i> = a ransom</p>	<p>Analogy from a marketplace, eg to buy a slave for freedom (Galatians 3:13; 4:15). Release on payment of a ransom (Titus 2:14; Romans 3:24). The Greek also implies deliverance (Hebrews 9:12). (The word is still used in English.)</p> <p>We are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18, 19). We have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). He paid the ransom (Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6). He redeemed us from the curse of the Old Testament Law; he was made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Revelation 5:9). We are delivered from bondage to sin and Satan; free to serve God with a new life (Romans 6:4)</p> <p>Redemption therefore has two sides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>from</i> - the Law, its penalties, sin, Satan and all evil</li> <li>- <i>to</i> - freedom, new relationship with God; new life in Christ.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pardon</b></p>	<p>“For the sake of your name, LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great” (<i>Psalms 25;11</i>)</p> <p>OT concept (used 20 times). Implies that a record is kept. A pardon has to be accepted to be effective.</p> <p>In the NT, “justification” has greater effect.</p>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Greek <i>daikyo</i> = to absolve, vindicate, set right.</p>	<p>“Therefore, since we have been <b>justified</b> through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. .... Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (<i>Romans 5:1, 2, 9-11</i>)</p> <p>Justification is the legal act by which we are freed from the guilt and penalty of sin and identified with the life and complete work of Christ.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Declarative</i> act - declared to be free from the guilt of sin and its consequences (Romans 4:6-8; 5:18, 19; 8:33, 34; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21).</li> <li>- <i>Judicial</i> act - Christ fulfilled the law on our behalf (Romans 8:3, 26; Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18; Matthew 10:41; 1 Timothy 1:9). Satan has no legal basis to condemn. We are made righteous (Romans 3:25, 26).</li> <li>- <i>Remissive</i> act - God forgives/remits our sins (Romans 4:5; 6:7). We ought not to dwell on what God has “remitted”.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Restorative</i> act - sinners are restored to favour with God through Christ's righteousness (Romans 5:11; Galatians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30). Not a question about our "worthiness"; Christ has done it all for us. We have a new legal standing before God - an exchange - while Christ stood in our place we stand in His place (Galatians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 4:5).</li> </ul> <p>Justification is God's work. Based on our faith in Christ (Romans 3:28; 5:1).</p>
<p><b>Conviction</b></p> <p>Greek <i>elegcho</i> = to convince, prove guilty</p>	<p>"When he comes, he will <b>prove</b> the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned." (John 16:8-11)</p> <p>Conviction is the first stage of repentance, when we realise we have sinned, eg Psalm 51.</p> <p>True conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11).</p>
<p><b>Repentance</b></p> <p>Greek <i>metanoia</i> = change (of mind, heart)</p> <p><i>Metamelonia</i> = change of soul</p>	<p><i>"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret"</i> (2 Corinthians 7:10)</p> <p>Repentance is often depicted as regret. In fact it means much more.</p> <p>Change of mind/heart, in relation to sin (Acts 2:38; Romans 2:4). Accompanied by sorrow for sin; evidenced by turning away from sin.</p> <p>God is the author of repentance - He gives the capacity to do so (Acts 4:31). We so cannot save ourselves that even the heartfelt desire to change comes from Him. More than a resolution ("my willpower").</p> <p>Produced by the Holy Spirit, in cooperation with men and women (sinners) responding in faith. Left alone, our natural inclination is toward sin.</p> <p>Repentance is necessary for salvation (Matthew 3:2, 8; 4:17; Acts 20:31; 2 Peter 3:9).</p> <p>Two elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the act of repenting</li> <li>- a state of repentance in our lives ("Produce fruit in keeping with your repentance" - Matthew 3:8)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Regeneration/Rebirth</b></p> <p>Greek = to be born again.</p>	<p><i>“he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5)</i></p> <p>Only used twice in the New Testament (Matthew 19:28; Titus 3:5); however other passages refer to it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- born again (John 3:3, 5, 7)</li> <li>- born of God (John 1:13; 1 John 3:9)</li> <li>- quickened/made alive (Ephesians 2:1, 5)</li> <li>- renewed Romans 12:2; Titus 3:5)</li> <li>- a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)</li> </ul> <p>Describes the spiritual change in the heart by an act of God, in which the sinful nature is changed and enabled to respond to God in faith. Involves a changed heart, will, disposition, and nature (partaking of the divine nature - 2 Peter 1:4). By the agency of the Holy Spirit (Colossians 2:13). Divine life is planted in the heart. Cleansing from sin takes place (Titus 3:5).</p>
<p><b>Conversion</b></p> <p>Greek <i>epistrophe</i> = turn. Return, turn back, ie a change in direction; only occurs once in the Bible</p>	<p><i>“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)</i></p> <p>Conversion involves choosing to turn from sin towards God; change in direction in the life of the sinner. Involves choice and obedience, not coercion. God calls sinners to turn (Ezekiel 33:11; Matthew 18:3).</p> <p>Conversion is associated with repentance (Acts 3:19; 26:20) and faith (Acts 11:21). Empowered by God (Acts 3:26).</p> <p>Conversion is the change that Jesus Christ makes in our lives. Not as a result of human agency or effort, but a supernatural event.</p> <p>(The word “conversion” is common in current English.)</p>
<p><b>Grace</b></p> <p>Greek <i>charis</i> (we get our word charity from the same root).</p> <p>God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense</p>	<p><i>“For the law was given through Moses; <b>grace</b> and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17)</i></p> <p><i>“For the <b>grace</b> of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” (Titus 2:11)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- God’s goodwill, lovingkindness, mercy, given to those who do not deserve it and cannot ever earn it by their own works or personal merit (Ephesians 2:4, 5)</li> <li>- God’s favour, freely given for the sake of Jesus Christ.</li> </ul> <p>Three theological uses of the word “grace” explained:</p> <p>“Prevenient” grace (an old-fashioned term, literally “preceding” conversion) = God’s influence “drawing” us to salvation (cf John 6:44).</p>

	<p>“Actual” grace - the grace of God at work in our day-to-day lives, enabling us to live rightly, resist temptation, do our duty</p> <p>“Habitual” grace - the practical effects of the Holy Spirit living in us as individuals, moulding our characters, resulting in fruit (Galatians 5:22, 23)</p>
<p><b>Faith</b></p> <p>Greek <i>pistis</i> = belief, trust, leaning, assurance</p> <p>Forsaking All I Trust Him</p>	<p><i>“Now <b>faith</b> is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see ... And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”</i> (Hebrews 11:1, 6)</p> <p>Implies total “trust” of the human personality in Jesus Christ, in absolute dependence on His wisdom, power, goodness, saving ability.</p> <p>Trust so deep that, if the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins is not enough, we would be lost for eternity.</p> <p>Trust that declares “God is not a man, that He should lie” (Numbers 23:19)</p> <p>We are saved BY grace, THROUGH faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9).</p> <p>Faith “appropriates” all of Christ’s work, making it effective for us (Romans 3:22, 4:11, 9:30; Hebrews 11:7; Philippians 3:9).</p>
<p><b>Adoption</b></p> <p>Lit. being placed in relation to a father as a son. Drawn from Roman law.</p>	<p><i>“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For [the Spirit which] you have now received [is] not a spirit of slavery to put you once more in bondage to fear, but you have received the Spirit of <b>adoption</b> [the Spirit producing sonship] in [the bliss of] which we cry, Abba (Father)! Father! The Spirit Himself [thus] testifies together with our own spirit, [assuring us] that we are children of God. And if we are [His] children, then we are [His] heirs also: heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ [sharing His inheritance with Him]; only we must share His suffering if we are to share His glory.”</i> (Romans 8:14-17, Amplified Bible)</p> <p>Adoption is the act in which God receives us as “sons”, on the legal basis of our receiving Christ, giving us the rights and benefits of sonship (Romans 8:14-19, 9:8; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 3:26, 4:6, 7, 28; Ephesians 1:5; Hebrews 2:10, 12:5-8; 1 John 3:10, 5:2).</p> <p>Implies a total change in our legal position before God.</p>
<p><b>Sanctification</b></p> <p>Greek <i>hagiasmos</i> = separation, setting apart.</p>	<p>“But you were washed, you were <b>sanctified</b>, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)</p>

	<p><i>Old Testament Meaning</i></p> <p>The idea of sanctification appears through the Old Testament. The Israelites were (variously) commanded to set apart animals, vessels of worship, places (eg the Tabernacle), days, even themselves and their children and possessions. In so doing they were declaring that everything belonged to God, that He was the Maker, keeper, sustainer, that He was sovereign. What He gave them was to be regarded as holy and used to glorify Him.</p> <p><i>New Testament Meaning</i></p> <p>Christ was “set apart” as the redeemer and sacrifice for our sins.</p> <p>Christians are “set aside” to the Lord. He has purchased us.</p> <p>The word “saint” comes from the same Greek word; in the NT Christians are called “saints” (eg 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1).</p> <p>Sanctification has two elements. The distinction is important.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Positional - who we are because of Jesus Christ. We have been taken “out of this world” and given God’s nature (2 Peter 1:4).</li> <li>(ii) Progressive, or experiential; being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ, being made holy. Possible only through ongoing surrender and consecration of ourselves to God. He is holy; we are called to be like Him. The Holy Spirit has come to make it possible in our lives now (see Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 3:1-4; 1 Corinthians 5:10).</li> </ul> <p>The Bible does not teaching “sinless perfection”. It does say that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us (present continuous tense in Greek) from sin; if we sin (not as a habit, but a temporary fall) we have an advocate, a representative, Jesus Christ. He continues the work of sanctification, to enable us to live like Him. The Word of God in us continues to renew us (John 15:3).</p>
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### 3. Related Issues

<p>Can the grace of God be resisted?</p>	<p><b>Calvinism:</b> No. The grace of God is irresistible.</p> <p><b>Arminianism:</b> Yes (cite John 5:40; 6:40; Acts 7:51, 13:46; Hebrews 2:3, 6:4-6, 10:26-30; 2 Peter 1:10, 2:21)</p> <p><b>Lutheranism:</b> Yes. We have to choose (see Deuteronomy 13:9).</p> <p>The Bible teaches a balance between the grace and will of God and the responsibility of mankind.</p>
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	<p>We need to hold onto Christ; if we do, nothing can ever separate us from His love.</p>
<p>Is salvation secure or conditional?</p>	<p><b>Calvinism:</b> Salvation is God’s initiative at work, in line with His prerogative of “election”. Man can do nothing about it. Some are predestined to be saved; others to be lost. Evangelism, altar calls, witnessing and missions are therefore irrelevant. The Christian elected by God can never be lost (cite John 10:28, 29; Romans 11:29; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:5; Romans 8:35; John 17:6).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Named after John Calvin, Reformer, Geneva, 1509-1564.</p> <p><b>Arminianism:</b> It is God’s will that all be saved, because Christ died for all (1 Timothy 2:4-6; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Titus 2:11, 12). So, “whosoever will” can be saved. Predestination does not take away a person’s responsibility to answer the Holy Spirit’s call.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Named after Jakob Harmenszoon (aka Arminius), Dutch professor, 1560-1609</p> <p><b>Lutheranism:</b> Falling away is possible, but God gives assurance of preservation.</p>
<p>Faith of works?</p>	<p><b>Legalism:</b> dependence on strict compliance with the Law as a precondition for salvation (Paul combats this, eg throughout Galatians). Early Gentile Christians found themselves up against believers who insisted they comply with the law of Moses (even become Jews in a formal sense) in order to be saved.</p> <p>Over recent centuries, legalism has centred on sacraments and/or the laws of the organised church. Standards are good, but the moment they become doctrine they are confused with revelation. It is also important to have sound doctrine, but obedience can end up in works.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* ....by observing the law no one will be justified” (Galatians 2:16)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">versus</p> <p><b>Antinomianism</b> (<i>ἀντί</i>, "against" + <i>νόμος</i>, "law"): grace and faith cover all, if we are Christians we can live as we like, as we are not bound to any law (James refutes this). Sometimes “sola fide/only faith”, or “sola gratia/only grace”, are taken to the extreme.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* ... someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.” (James 2:18)</p> <p>Grace and obedience need to go hand-in-hand.</p>