

## FOUNDATIONS: What Christians Should Believe

21 September 2011

*SALVATION: How God Makes Rebels His Children*

Introduction

### **Bible Reading:** Psalm 130

**Context:** After a brief, 3-year hiatus, we resume tonight our series studying through our church's confession of faith.<sup>1</sup> Thus far in this series we have considered what we believe about the Bible, God, the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, Satan, creation, and the fall of man into sin.<sup>2</sup> Tonight we will begin our discussion of the doctrine of salvation,<sup>3</sup> considering why this is an important doctrine and what it means that we are saved.

*Salvation: We believe that the salvation of sinners is divinely initiated and wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who, by appointment of the Father, voluntarily took upon Himself our nature, yet without sin, and honored the divine law by His obedience, thus qualifying Himself to be our Savior; that by the shedding of His blood in His death He fully satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God regarding sin; that His sacrifice consisted not in setting us an example by his death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead He is now enthroned in Heaven; He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate and all-sufficient Savior. We believe that faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith.*

### **Discussion:**

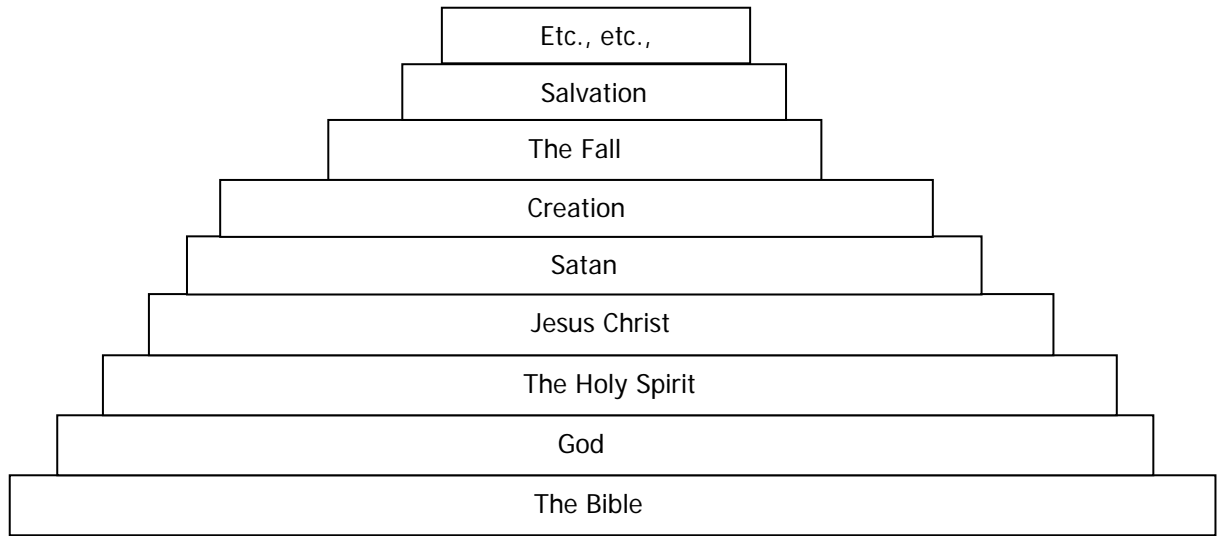
- I. Just as a reminder, why is doctrine important? Is doctrine simply philosophical speculation that is not worth discussing and/or disagreeing about? Why or why not? How is doctrine practical?
- II. How important is the doctrine of salvation? Compared, for example, to end times teaching, how important is salvation?
- III. Oftentimes Christians ask people the question, "Have you been saved?" From what are we saved? Why do we need to be saved?
- IV. Before we jump into the doctrine of salvation, let us put this doctrine in context of our statement of faith. Take a look at the following diagram:

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete copy of our church's confession of faith, visit our website ([www.trinitybaptistmuncie.org](http://www.trinitybaptistmuncie.org)) and look under the "We Believe" category.

<sup>2</sup> We will attempt to put all the previous notes from this series on the church website in the not too distant future.

<sup>3</sup> If you would like to go deeper in the study of the doctrine of salvation, we recommend the following resources: For an introductory study, see *What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010); for a more intermediate consideration, consider *The Truth of the Cross* by RC Sproul (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2007); for a challenging yet rewarding study, check out *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* by John Murray (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955).



- A. Why is it important to discuss what we believe about the Bible before we discuss other doctrines such as God, the Holy Spirit, etc.?
- B. Someone summarize the Bible's teaching on creation? Why do we study the Fall after Creation?
- C. Why do we study the Fall before we study the doctrine of salvation?
- D. What is the ultimate goal of doctrinal instruction (Colossians 1:9, 10; 1 Timothy 1:3-5)?

**Study:**

I. Some Preliminary Thoughts:

- A. The doctrine of salvation is the most crucial doctrine, from a human perspective, in the entire Bible. A person may be correct regarding the Bible's teaching concerning the inspiration of Scripture, the Trinity, the work of the Holy Spirit, the purpose of the church, and the end of the world and still be eternally lost if they misunderstand what the Bible teaches about salvation.<sup>4</sup> Consider the following verses and note the importance they place on the concept of salvation:
  1. John 6:66-69 – After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."<sup>5</sup>
  2. Romans 9:3 – For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.
  3. Galatians 1:8-9 – Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.
  4. 1 Thessalonians 2:16 – ...by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!

<sup>4</sup> For more on how we should evaluate and classify doctrines by level of importance, see the very helpful article by Dr. Albert R. Mohler, Jr., "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity," available at: <http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/>.

<sup>5</sup> Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

- B. The doctrine of salvation is built upon a number of other doctrines and only makes sense if you have an elementary understanding of other doctrines. For example, if you do not understand that God is righteous, salvation will seem pointless; if you do not understand that humans are sinful, salvation will not seem necessary; if you do not understand that the Bible is the Word of God, you will not know where to turn to find the message of salvation; etc.
- C. Because of its importance and because of the way the doctrine of salvation is built upon so many other truths, prayerfully studying the doctrine of salvation is essentially synonymous with knowing God. While God is certainly doing more in the universe than saving sinners, from a human perspective, salvation is the means by which we come to know God personally. Consider the following verses and notice the connection between salvation and knowing God:
  - 1. John 17:3 – This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.
  - 2. Galatians 4:8-9 – Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God...
  - 3. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 – ...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

Therefore, it stands to reason that if you desire to know God truly and personally, prayerfully studying the doctrine of salvation is a wise place to begin and to frequently return.

## II. From What Are We Saved?

- A. The terms “salvation” and “saved” imply there is something from which we are rescued. If, for example, a baseball pitcher “saves” the game, that means he preserved his team from losing. If a doctor “saves” a patient on the operating table, that means he prevented the person from dying. The concept of salvation demands an undesirable fate from which the person or thing is delivered.
- B. The Bible constantly speaks of salvation. The terms “salvation” or “saved” are used 169 times throughout Scripture.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the Bible uses a number of synonyms for salvation including “delivered”, “redeemed”, “ransomed”, “rescued,” and “freed.” While these terms have slightly different nuances, they refer to essentially the same concept. We will consider more what these different terms mean in future lessons.
- C. In the Bible, salvation is from a number of things, all of which, as we will later see, are very much related:
  - 1. We are saved from sin:
    - Revelation 1:5 – To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood...
  - 2. We are saved from a sin-cursed world:
    - Galatians 1:3-4 – Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age.
  - 3. We are saved from slavery to sin:
    - Romans 6:6-11 – We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For

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<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, not all of these usages refer to salvation in the eternal life sense. Occasionally the Bible speaks of people being saved from shipwreck, etc. However, as we will see, the predominate usage is in reference to an eternal salvation.

one who has died has been set free from sin...So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

4. We are saved from slavery to fear of death:

Hebrews 2:14-15 – ...he [Jesus] himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

5. We are saved from the tyranny of the Devil:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 – If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

1 John 5:19 – We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

1 John 3:8 – The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

6. We are saved from the Kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of God:

Colossians 1:13-14 – He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Acts 26:18 – ...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

7. We are saved from the curse of the Law:

Deuteronomy 28:15-19 – But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

Galatians 3:13 – Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree."

8. We are saved from the wrath of God:

Romans 5:9 – Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 – For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

9. We are saved from eternal punishment in hell:

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 – ...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

Matthew 25:31-41 – When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the

King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

10. We are saved from the coming Day of Wrath which will destroy the whole world:

Romans 2:5 – But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 – You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

2 Peter 3:10-13 – The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

- D. How do these different "salvations" relate? Are they referring to the same event or to different events? Could a person experience some of them without experiencing others? For example, could a person be saved from sin but not saved from hell?
- E. The Bible looks on these different "salvations" not as different events but *as different facets of one and the same salvation*. To use a human illustration, when the slaves were freed after the American Civil War, former slaves were not only immediately free persons but they also had the right to own private property, could work for wages, could marry whomever they pleased, could raise their children as they desired, etc. One declaration of freedom brought about numerous benefits. So also the one death and resurrection of Jesus accomplishes countless benefits for those who are saved.
- F. These "salvations" are different facets of the same salvation this way: Because of our sin and rebellion against God, we become slaves of sin (Romans 6:16ff.), slaves of Satan (Ephesians 2:1ff., 2 Corinthians 4:3-4), spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1ff.), sentenced to live in a sin-cursed world (Genesis 3:16-19), and destined for eternity in hell under the wrath of God (Revelation 20:15). Jesus' death and resurrection cancels the sin of those who are saved and will eventually counteract all the consequences of sin. Through Jesus' death we are forgiven of our sin (Ephesians 1:7), freed from its slavery (Romans 6:6-11), made spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:4-10), are transferred from Satan's kingdom into Jesus' kingdom (Colossians 1:13-14), are destined for heaven (John 14:1-4) and will eventually enjoy eternity in the New Heavens and the New Earth (2 Peter 3:11-13). All this and far more was accomplished for those who believe by Jesus' death and resurrection!

**Application:**

- I. In what ways has this lesson enabled you to appreciate your salvation more than you did before? Has it moved your heart to worship God for what He did to save you?
- II. Are you confident that God has saved you forever? Do you know when this happened in your life? Did you do anything that resulted in God saving you? Did you do anything to deserve salvation?
- III. If you are not sure that God has saved you fully and for all time, is there something you need to do before that can happen? What would persuade you that God has certainly saved you?
- IV. Based on what we considered tonight, is there any consequence of sin that the believer will not eventually be saved from? Explain your answer and support with Scripture.

- V. If we are saved from Satan's tyranny and kingdom, does that mean Satan cannot do anything to believers? Explain. Support your answer with Scripture, if possible (cf. 1 John 5:18 & 1 Peter 5:8).
- VI. What point from tonight's lesson most stood out to you and why?