



THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

6.1-6.5

6.1 *The Necessity of Salvation*

The word *Soteriology* means the doctrine of salvation. Whereas Christology covers the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ, Soteriology covers what Christ's death and resurrection accomplished for fallen mankind. Topics such as faith, repentance, justification, regeneration, and adoption are covered under the doctrine of salvation.

A. Adam's sin made salvation necessary.

1. Adam's sin brought death to the human race.

God said that if Adam ate of the forbidden fruit he would die, but did he? The answer is Yes! Adam died spiritually (he was separated from God) the instant he took of the fruit. He also *began* to die physically. As a result of sin, mankind is spiritually dead and will eventually be physically dead. But Christ's death on the cross provided the solution to both physical and spiritual death. Regeneration abolishes spiritual death, while the Resurrection abolishes physical death.

2. Adam's sin affected the entire universe.

Adam's sin corrupted the entire universe. As a result, the Lord will eventually destroy the heavens (atmosphere and universe) and earth in order to purge them from sin; He will then create a new heaven and a new earth for all eternity.

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world [system] . . ."
2 Pet. 2:20

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."
Rev. 21:1

3. Adam's sin necessitated redemption.

Scarcely had Adam sinned than God revealed His plan of redemption:

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. 3:15

6.1

God promised that He would send a Redeemer who would die (Satan would bruise His heel on Calvary) but would conquer sin and death (by crushing Satan's head).

Salvation in the Old Testament

How were Old Testament saints saved? They were saved the same way anyone is saved—by faith. **By faith** they trusted that God would someday send a Redeemer.

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Rom. 4:3

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my [Jesus'] day: and he saw it, and was glad." John 8:56

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."
1 Pet. 1:10–11

"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith,

preached before the gospel unto Abraham." Gal. 3:8

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [the children of Israel]." Heb. 4:2

"We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth." John 1:45

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

God gave the Old Testament saint salvation "on credit." Today one can buy a brand new car on credit. Although he promises to pay in the future he enjoys all of that car's features today. That car is his. He parks it in his garage; he enjoys driving it anywhere he wants to go. So God allowed the Old Testament saint to enjoy salvation before Calvary. God promised He would pay for salvation through Christ and the Old Testament saint enjoyed that promise by faith.

B. God provided a plan of salvation.

The plan of God was to provide a Redeemer for mankind. God Himself was that Redeemer. By simple faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son, an individual is able to become a child of God (John 1:12). That message has been taken around the world and has transformed the lives of millions of people. The gospel tract has been especially used to present briefly and clearly God's plan of salvation. One such tract has been Ford Porter's "God's Simple Plan of Salvation."

C. The word for Biblical salvation is full of meaning.

The word *salvation* has a rich range of meaning. In its simplest form it means "health." It is occasionally used to mean "rescue from danger" as in *saved* from drowning or *saved* physically from a dangerous fire. Its use in the Bible is quite divergent. As used in our spiritual relationship to God, its scope is past, present, and future.

1. In the **past we are saved from the penalty of sin.**

Christ took all of our sins upon Himself when He died on Calvary. As a result, Christians stand today without condemnation.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1

"But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." 2 Tim. 1:10

2. In the **present we are being saved from the power of sin.**

The Bible also uses the word *salvation* to describe a process which begins the moment we receive Christ as Savior and ends when Christ returns or we meet Him in death. As Christians we must continuously yield our lives to Christ so that sin will not reign in our mortal bodies. This important concept will help us understand verses that occasionally seem confusing.

"For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:19

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Phil. 2:12

"By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." 1 Cor. 15:2

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 3:15

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:6

3. In the future we will be saved from the presence of sin.

Someday in the future the Christian will experience final, complete salvation. This final step is necessary because our flesh did not get "saved" when we accepted Christ as Savior. We gained a new nature but did not lose our old nature. However, someday our flesh will be "saved," and we shall lose our old natures forever.

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Rom. 8:22-23

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Rom. 13:11

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Heb. 9:28

D. The folly of putting off salvation is great.

1. The sinner mocks the earnest Scriptural appeals to be saved now.

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Isa. 55:6

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6:2

"To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. 4:7

2. The sinner misses out on the life he could have had.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10

3. The sinner encourages God's judgment.

"I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, . . . prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Amos 4:11-12

4. The sinner treasures up God's wrath.

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Rom. 2:5

5. The sinner increases the gulf between God and himself.

"For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." John 3:20

6. The sinner has no assurance of tomorrow.

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." James 4:14

7. The sinner has no guarantee of another opportunity.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Luke 12:20

"Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Acts 24:25

8. The sinner builds up resistance against other possible salvation opportunities.

"He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Prov. 29:1

9. The sinner increases his potential punishment.

The Bible clearly teaches that there will be degrees of punishment in the Lake of Fire. The indication seems to be that the more opportunities a person has to be saved the more he will be held responsible for his continued rejection of Christ's offer of salvation.

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Luke 12:48

"Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city." Matt. 10:15

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." Matt. 11:21-22

"Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works." Rev. 18:6

"Therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation." Matt. 23:14

These verses reveal a very somber thought. The degree of punishment is often related to the *opportunities* one has to be saved. Wouldn't it be tragic if some of those who will suffer the most in the Lake of Fire were those who went to a good church or a good Christian school but constantly rejected the many opportunities of salvation? A person would be a fool to put off salvation.

6.2 Faith for Salvation

Definition of faith

Faith is basically a trust or confidence in someone or something. Scripturally, faith is a childlike trust in God which accepts the record God has given to us of His Son.

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." 1 John 5:10–11

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11:1

A. Faith has a **sound basis**.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Rom. 10:17

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11:1

The faith of the Christian is not a foolish nor a blind faith. Our faith is based on **substance**, on the **evidence**, on the eternal Word of God. The Christian trusts his eternal destiny to One he has never seen. That is faith.

B. Faith is **determined by its object**.

Often a new Christian is concerned that perhaps his faith was not strong enough to obtain genuine salvation. He may doubt his salvation because of an improper understanding of saving faith. It is *not* the **quality** of the believer's faith that is important; it is the quality of the

object of his faith. Faith in a dead leader is weak faith. Faith in an idol's power is weak faith. The Lord says that faith as a grain of mustard seed can move mountains. Our faith is great because the object of our faith is great, the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Faith results in works.

Although faith does *not include* works, it should *result* in good works. A person who is genuinely saved should live differently than he did before salvation. This is the stress of James 2:21–26. On the surface, this passage seems to conflict with Romans 4:1–4. Paul says Abraham was justified by faith, while James says Abraham was justified by works. In reality, there is no contradiction. Paul and James are discussing two different aspects of faith. Paul is viewing faith from God's perspective; James is viewing faith from man's perspective. James uses phrases such as “seest **thou**” (James 2:22) and “**ye** see” (James 2:24) to indicate that true faith will be seen by others only when it results in good works.

A Christian is sitting in a restaurant preparing to eat his evening meal. Before eating, he bows his head and thanks the Lord for his meal. Does the Lord conclude that this man is a Christian because of his action? Of course not. The Lord knows this man's heart and that as a child this man accepted **by faith** God's offer of salvation.

But what about the other people in the restaurant who see this man pray? They cannot see his heart. They do not know that as a child this man accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. They can see only the outward expression of his inward faith. As they see him pray, they might conclude that his “works” signify his Christianity. Faith before God should result in works before men.

6.2

D. Faith for salvation must be **exclusive of works**.

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Rom. 3:28

“For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Rom. 4:2–3

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph. 2:8–9

Works cannot be a part of salvation or else they would nullify grace. Every false religion and cult in the world teaches that man must *do* something in order to inherit eternal life. The Hindu will lie on a bed of nails hoping it will aid his chances of heaven. In Mexico City, a sincere indi-

vidual will crawl three miles on his knees, pushing a vase of inexpensive flowers before him, hoping to better his chances of eternal bliss. Before Martin Luther was saved, he believed that crawling up a set of steps in Rome would earn him heaven. But the Bible teaches that salvation is by grace (a free gift); and this gift (grace) is obtainable only by faith.

Other groups may try to add works to salvation *after* faith. The church at Galatia had this problem. After Paul left, some began teaching that faith was only the first step in the salvation process. Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians to correct this error.

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." Gal. 1:6

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Gal. 2:21

"O foolish Galatians, . . . Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Gal. 3:1-3

The problem of the church at Galatia is commonly called **legalism**. Legalism is adding anything (baptism, church membership, communion, church attendance) to faith as a means of obtaining grace. Legalism "frustrates," or nullifies, faith. Neither "works-salvation" nor "faith-plus-works salvation" is Scriptural. Salvation is by grace and grace alone.

E. Faith and repentance

1. Definition of repentance

Repentance: to feel such contrition or dissatisfaction over some past action or intention as to change one's ways; to be penitent; to change one's mind for better, to heartily amend with abhorrence one's past actions. Biblically, repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of direction because of regret over some past action or intention. To repent from disobedience is to become obedient. To repent from lying is to become truthful. In salvation, to repent from unbelief is to believe the gospel (John 3:18, Acts 20:21).

2. How the mind changes or repents

a. Intellectually, repentance is a change of view toward sin.

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent." Acts 2:37-38

- b. Emotionally**, repentance is a genuine sorrow for sin and a desire for pardon.

"Have mercy upon me, O God. . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psa. 51:1–17

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance. . . For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." 2 Cor. 7:9–10

- c. Volitionally**, repentance is a change of will.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Luke 15:21

"Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them [his sins] shall have mercy."

Prov. 28:13

"Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."

1 Thess. 1:9

3. What repentance is not

- a.** Repentance is not synonymous with knowing that you are a sinner.

The Scripture is full of examples of men who said, "I have sinned" but did not genuinely repent of their sins: Balaam (Num. 22:34); Pharaoh (Exo. 10:16); Saul (1 Sam. 15:30); and Judas (Matt. 27:4).

6.2

- b.** Repentance is not simply confession.

An individual may often feel sorry for something he has done without repenting. Perhaps he is sorry he was caught. Given the chance, he will do the same thing again. Some find it soothes their conscience if they confess to another human being on a weekly basis. This is not repentance. They find it easy to return to the same sin week after week.

- c.** Repentance and salvation are not the same.

"Repent ye, and believe the gospel," *Mark 1:15* shows that *believe* and *repent* are not one and the same.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out," *Acts 3:19* shows that *repent* and *conversion* are not the same. Repentance and faith are not two sides of the same coin.

“That they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance,” *Acts 26:20* shows that *repent* and *turn to God* are not the same.

Judas’s repentance did not lead him to salvation. “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.” *Matt. 27:3*

d. Repentance does not apply only to salvation. Repentance is used several ways in Scripture.

(1) Regarding human relationships:

“If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.” *Luke 17:3*

(2) Regarding believers:

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” *Rev. 3:19*

“... and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.” *2 Cor. 12:21*

(3) Regarding evangelists:

John the Baptist, Jesus, and the early disciples preached **repentance** to prepare people to believe in the Christ. It brought the people to the realization that they had sinned against a holy God and needed God’s forgiveness. Preaching on repentance helps break down the pride, the arrogancy, the willfulness, and hardness of the heart. When the sinner realizes his need of a Savior, he is then in a condition to accept Christ as Savior.

Some whose hearts are not hardened by sin (particularly children) easily realize their need of a Savior, and therefore when they hear about Christ’s death for them, they readily receive Christ as Savior. Many of the great servants of God were saved in childhood. Charles Spurgeon, on hearing a deacon preach “Look unto me, and be ye saved,” (*Isa. 45:22*) simply looked on Christ by faith and was saved.

6.3 Justification, Sanctification, and Adoption

A. Justification

Justification is the judicial act of God whereby He declares the guilty sinner to be righteous and free from guilt and punishment.

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. 4:5

1. Principles of justification

- a. The One who has been wronged dictates the terms of justification.

Justification is a judicial term. In a trial, it is the judge who determines what the method of reconciliation will be. The criminal has no right to decide what his punishment will be or what he needs to do to make restitution.

In the same sense, it is God who determines what a person must do in order to make restitution. The sinner has no right to decide his own "plan of salvation." It is God who has been sinned against; therefore, it is God's right to prescribe the method of justification. Isn't it ironic that for centuries man has tried to determine how he can get to heaven when he dies? He is convinced God's method is too easy. But it really doesn't matter how "good" man's ideas are or how "poor" God's plan appears. Man has sinned against a holy God Who has determined that a man can be justified only when he accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

6.3

- b. Man's justification is based on the merits of Another.

Man in his natural condition cannot stand in God's presence nor enter heaven. Apart from Jesus Christ, the sinner is without hope. Jesus Christ is his advocate (lawyer) as well as his substitute. When we are arrayed in the robe of Christ's righteousness, we can stand before a holy God.

"And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Isa. 61:10

2. Illustrations of justification

a. Philemon and Onesimus

A fascinating story serves as the background to Paul's epistle to Philemon. The story and resulting epistle is an illustration of justification. It seems that Onesimus was a slave who ran away from his master Philemon. He evidently was guilty of stealing from his master. Both his flight and his robbery were punishable by death. In this condition Onesimus met Paul, perhaps while they were both in prison.

"I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds." Philem. 10

As a result of their meeting, Onesimus accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Paul wrote back to Onesimus's master, Philemon, and related the events of Onesimus's conversion. Paul encouraged Philemon to accept the slave as a brother in Christ. Paul then made a statement that pictures justification (being declared innocent although guilty) as well as imputation (having one's goodness or guilt placed on another's account).

"For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." Philem. 15–18

b. Bride's clothing

In Bible times it was often the custom for the bridegroom to prepare the wedding garment for his bride. She would concentrate on her dowry of jewelry and leave the selection of her bridal gown to her husband. On the day of the wedding, the groom would first wear the outer cloak that he would eventually place over the garments of his bride. This signified that he was receiving her into his care and keeping. What his bride had been wearing earlier would be insignificant. Because of the beautiful garment prepared by the groom and now worn by the bride, it would not be seen.

Jesus Christ has done that for each individual that accepts him as Savior. Our righteousnesses are not sufficient to be justified in His sight.

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Isa. 64:6

But Jesus Christ, our bridegroom, has prepared for us, His bride, a robe of righteousness. This robe was "woven" at Calvary for those who believe. We stand in God's presence, not in our own righteousness, but in the righteousness of the pure Son of God.

B. Sanctification

Sanctification means "being set apart from the world and unto God's service." Sanctification is simply the process of setting something apart. God "sanctified" people, places, and things throughout the Old Testament.

1. Negatively—Separation *from* the world

Sanctification has two phases, negative and positive. The Bible clearly teaches the negative aspect of sanctification. The Christian's sanctification requires his continual rejection of the world's temptations.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" 2 Cor. 6:14

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:16–17

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Pet. 2:9

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15

6.3

2. Positively—Separation unto God's service

"And for their sakes I [Jesus] sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth . . . that the world may believe."

John 17:19–21

Sanctification *from* the world is not an end in itself; it is the *means* to an end. Christ sanctified Himself so others will follow. We are to be sanctified from the world in order to serve Christ more effectively and to draw men to the Savior. The purpose of being pure is to show others that Jesus is real and that Christianity is worth living.

The entire Bible can be summarized in one verse:

1 Peter 1:16—“Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” We, like Christ, should be holy to show others how they also can be holy in God’s sight.

It is not enough to be separated *from* the world. If the priestly garments, the lamb, the tithe, and the items in the tabernacle were never used in God’s service, their being “set apart” would be pointless. Each item had a special purpose. It is not enough for the Christian to be separated from the world unless his sanctification results in greater service for God. Sanctification involves a ministry.

3. Particularly—Sanctification is past, present, and future

Sanctification is described in the Bible in three stages.

- a. In the past: Sanctification occurs instantly at the moment of salvation. (Heb. 10:10)
- b. In the present: Sanctification continues as we daily cleanse our lives of sin. (Heb. 12:14; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:1, 10; 2 Pet. 3:18)
- c. In the future: Final sanctification occurs as we are saved from the presence of sin. (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30)

We will finally be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29). This is also called **glorification**.

Our **present** sanctification should be the concern of every Christian. But how can we “work” at being sanctified?

- (1) The study of the Word of God brings sanctification. (John 17:17; Eph. 5:26)
- (2) Surrender to the Lord’s Will brings sanctification. (Rom. 12:1, 2)

As we study God’s Word the Lord reveals our sin, shows us Christ’s example, and motivates us to follow Him in holiness. Our obligation, then, is to yield ourselves totally to His Will.

“Sanctification is brought about in the life of the believer by his separating himself deliberately from all that is unclean and unholy, and by presenting, continually and constantly, the members of his body as holy instruments unto God for the accomplishment of His holy purposes. Thus by these single acts of surrender unto holiness, sanctification soon becomes the habit of the life.” —William Evans

C. Adoption (Gal. 4:1–5; Eph. 1:5–6; Rom. 8:15–23)

Adoption in the Bible is the act of God whereby He places His own child in the position of an adult son. Of all the terms used to describe salvation, this one seems to cause the most confusion. This confusion has resulted from the difference between Biblical adoption and our contemporary idea of adoption. The average person would not understand a child's being both born and adopted into the same family. But that is what was done in Bible times.

The Jews considered a child to be an adult when he reached the age of twelve or thirteen. At that point the father would declare publicly that he was “adopting” his own natural-born son. He was declaring to the world that his son was now responsible for his own actions.

The Romans seem to have had a similar custom. At the age of fourteen, a Roman son was placed on a public platform by his father. His father would make a statement to the effect that his son now had all the privileges and responsibilities of an adult. This appears to be the Biblical idea of adoption.

The Christian is both a natural-born child and an “adopted” child. Our “adoption” by our heavenly Father allows us all the privileges of an adult son. The privilege of adoption carries with it tremendous responsibility. It should motivate us to act worthy of our “family name.” We are children of the king, and we should act like it. Our final adoption will take place when we are totally “conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29).

6.4

The Greek word for *adoption* means the “placing of a son,” not the “making of a son.” It is not the taking of a child from another family. It is God's taking one who is already His son and placing him as an adult son with all its privileges and responsibilities.

6.4 The Blessings of Salvation

Most Christians are unaware of all the wonderful blessings that they possess the moment they accept God's plan of salvation. It takes a few seconds to say, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” but in that time many wonderful relationships between God and man begin. Those blessings begin at salvation and continue for all eternity. Some blessings are in the future, but many begin immediately.

A. Heaven is a blessing of salvation.

When an individual considers the blessings of salvation, this wonderful truth is most likely foremost in his thinking. This, of course, is not the only blessing, but it is very special. When a child is shown the “Wordless Book,” he is first shown the last page, the “end of the story.” The page is gold in color and represents the street of gold in heaven. He is told about the wonderful things that will be there and the heartaches that will not be there. By the time that page is explained, the child’s spiritual appetite is whetted for information on how he can get there. That is an excellent introduction to the account of sin and God’s provision of His only Son.

“For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

Phil. 3:20–21

B. Being a child of God is a blessing of salvation.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” John 1:12

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Rom. 8:16–17

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” 1 John 3:1

The Bible never teaches the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man (i.e., that all human beings are automatically sons of God, and therefore, brothers). However, the Bible does teach that the moment a person accepts Christ as Savior he becomes a child of God. We are born again into the family of God, and all other Christians become brothers and sisters in Christ.

From that time forward a Christian has all the privileges that come to any family member. We are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” As our heavenly Father, God gives us many wonderful promises.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” Matt. 7:11

C. Forgiveness of sin is a blessing of salvation.

Perhaps one of the greatest immediate blessings of salvation is the realization that all our sins are under the blood of Jesus Christ. In his *Pilgrim's Progress* John Bunyan pictures sin as a terrible burden. What joy floods the soul of each Christian when that burden is laid at the cross of Calvary. For the dedicated Christian it is hard to imagine anyone wanting to hang on to that burden. How ironic it is that sometimes those who have been saved **from** sin wish occasionally **to** return to sin. The Bible describes this foolishness in very graphic terms—"But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." How tragic that some Christians are guilty of living like the unsaved!

D. Peace with God is a blessing of salvation.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." John 14:27

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:7

This world is looking for peace, yet they will not find it until they accept the Prince of Peace as their Savior. People will try almost anything to fill the void in their lives which results when they reject God's salvation offer. But the things they hope will bring peace never do. People will never be able to understand what they are missing until they become Christians.

6.4

E. Being accepted by the Lord is a blessing of salvation.

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Eph. 1:6

Every young person wants to be accepted. Peer pressure is strong at any age, but it affects the teenager especially. Most teenagers fear a new situation because it presents a new challenge to being "accepted."

More important than being accepted by the crowd is being accepted by God. Popularity is fleeting. A president may be elected by an overwhelming "popular" vote and yet become one of the most unpopular presidents eighteen months later. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36) The Christian has the wonderful position of being "accepted in the beloved."

F. Access to God is a blessing of salvation.

One of the greatest blessings of the child of God is the blessing of **prayer**. In prayer we as Christians have the privilege of asking God to meet our every need. We should daily take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2).

“For through him [Jesus Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” Eph. 2:18

“In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.” Eph. 3:12

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Heb. 4:16

1. We may come boldly. (Heb. 4:16)

The Christian has the privilege of daily coming into God’s presence. The word “boldly” does not mean “brazenly” or “boastfully.” The same word was used of the apostles as they preached the gospel in the book of Acts. It means “without fear” and “straight to the point.” We may approach God without fear. We should speak in a normal conversational tone when we talk with God. We cannot impress God with an abnormal vocabulary. We simply ask Him to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

2. We may come as a child comes to his father. (Luke 11:11–13)

Just as an earthly father wants the best for his children, so our heavenly Father wants the best for us. If He withholds something from us, it is because He knows it is not in our best interest.

“And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.” Deut. 6:24

3. We may come as a friend. (Luke 11:5–11; Exod. 33:11)**4. We may come with earnestness.** (Job 23:4–7; Isa. 45:11)

“I [Job] would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.” Job 23:4

“Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.” Isa. 45:11

The words that are used in these passages (argument, command) indicate a “discourse designed to convince or to persuade.” They are the

reasons offered to God as proof of our need. We do not argue with or command God to do anything. The idea seems to be that as we come to God we need to have the reasons for our petitions ready. If it is not His will, He will take away the desire and give us peace about our unanswered prayer.

G. Victory over sin is a blessing of salvation. 1 John 5:4

One reason some people do not accept God's plan of salvation is they have convinced themselves that they cannot live the Christian life. And they are right. No one can live the Christian life until he is first saved. Not until Christ takes up residence in one's life can a person consistently be victorious over Satan.

"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." 1 John 4:4

H. Fellowship with God is a blessing of salvation.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." Rev. 21:3

The greatest joy of heaven will not be the streets of gold nor the reunion with loved ones, although these indeed will be wonderful. The greatest blessing is that we will be with God forever. The words "mansion" (John 14:1-3) and "abide" (John 15) come from the same root in the Greek language. We can have a taste of heaven now by learning to "abide" in Christ. But someday when we see Him "as He is," it will be the ultimate blessing of salvation.

6.5

6.5 Assurance of Salvation

A. The blessing of assurance of salvation

No greater peace comes to the Christian than when he **knows** he is saved. Because God wants every believer to be free from doubt, He inspired the first epistle of John. The theme of 1 John is assurance of salvation.

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." 1 John 5:13

The fact that men of the Bible knew they were saved gives us confidence that we can also know. God wants us to live a life of peace, not a life of turmoil. He gave us His Word in order that we could have confidence that our home in heaven is assured.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3

B. The condition of lack of assurance of salvation

1. Lack of assurance is a common problem.

It is not unusual for a Christian to have doubts about his salvation. The average Christian will have at least one time in his life when he doubts whether or not he is saved. For a young child this may occur every time he sins. He has the mistaken idea that Jesus leaves him every time he does something wrong. For others, doubts arise because of a confusion in terminology regarding the requirements for salvation. Are those with a strong sense of assurance more spiritual than those who consistently doubt? Of course not. Many great Christians of the past have had times when they seriously doubted their salvation.

It is never wrong to examine one's salvation.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Pet. 1:10

"And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." 1 John 3:19

A Christian should not be embarrassed about doubting his salvation. The issue is too important to try to conceal out of embarrassment.

2. Lack of assurance is a serious problem.

A lack of assurance should not be taken lightly. One should never minimize this problem, whether it is one's own or another's. One good rule-of-thumb is this: It is dangerous for a well-meaning counselor to give assurance based on his knowledge of the character of the doubter. "Why, of course, you're saved, you've been in church for years." "Now, I remember the day you came forward when you were five years old." That type of counsel has never helped anyone.

Dr. Bill Rice III tells of the time he came forward in one of his dad's services. His father met him at the altar and asked him if he

knew for sure he was saved. “My own father did not take my salvation for granted.” If an individual has doubts about salvation, we should not be guilty of giving him a false assurance.

Doubts occasionally arise as the result of comparing our experience with someone else’s. But no two experiences are necessarily the same. Some people cry when they receive Christ as Savior; others jump up and down; and still others show very little emotion. The same variety of reactions can be seen in the spectators of a basketball game. Although they are all watching the same game, they may react totally differently when their team wins. Some may shout; others may laugh; the coach might cry; and yet others may do absolutely nothing. God has made each person unique, and that fact needs to be accepted in one’s comparison of salvation experiences.

C. The cause of lack of assurance of salvation

1. Youth

The majority of Christians are saved when they are very young. Many have grown up in homes where they have been taught the Bible from the very first days of their lives. There are two ingredients that result in doubts later in life:

- Childlike faith brings many to salvation between the ages of four and seven.
- Most children remember very little about events in their lives before the age of five. Child psychologists have shown that children blinded before the age of six never report visual memories.

6.5

As a result, many teenagers who were saved when they were young cannot remember the events of their salvation. This seems to be a major cause of doubts. This problem is often increased by a well-meaning preacher who says: “Unless you can remember the exact time and place of your salvation, you are not saved.”

2. Tenderness

God gives to the Christian a tender heart toward the things of the Lord. Satan often is the master of using this spiritual asset to his own advantage. A Christian will often be moved by the preaching of God’s Word. That is the way it ought to be. But sometimes the Christian interprets that as conviction about his need for salvation. The Bible will continue to touch our hearts after salvation. Getting saved does not make one hardened to God’s truth and the moving of the

Holy Spirit. The cross of Calvary should always touch our hearts. A message on hell should move us every time we hear it. But that should not necessarily be interpreted as conviction about salvation.

Often doubts and a tender heart are the very indication that a person *is* saved. Often those who care enough to doubt are saved. Those who never care are the ones who need salvation.

3. Shocking Conversions

Another cause of doubt occurs when some “prominent Christian” announces that he was, in reality, never saved until “yesterday.” This often creates a contagious reaction: “If he was not saved, then I must not be saved!” But there is a problem here. The reason doubts arise is that we tend to compare his outward reputation to our inward knowledge of ourselves. We will always look worse in that kind of comparison. We know ourselves too well. The thinking goes like this: “If he (who is so good) was not really saved, then I (who am so bad) must also not be really saved.” But that is basing our salvation on works. We can be thankful that another individual now has the peace of God that he has not had up to that point. But that should in no way shake our assurance of salvation. Our salvation is based on our believing what Christ has commanded, not on another person’s need for salvation. Our salvation is not determined by people, but by a Person.

D. The cure for lack of assurance of salvation

1. Testimonies of God’s men

There is no agony so great as that of a spiritual Christian who is having serious battles concerning his salvation experience. God wants us to **know** that we are saved. Christ knows who belongs to Him, and He wants us to know that we are His.

“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.” John 10:14

a. John knew he was saved.

“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” 1 John 4:13

b. Simon Peter knew he was saved.

“Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.” 2 Pet. 1:14

- c. Paul knew he was saved.

"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12

2. Tests of God's Word

- a. Desire for obedience

One proof of salvation is a desire to obey God's Word. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in your life at salvation (1 John 4:13). The Christian can no longer enjoy a life of habitual sin. Do you want to do what is right? Do you want to obey? Does the prospect of one day being sinless in heaven thrill your soul? The sinner sins and enjoys it. The Christian cannot enjoy sin for long because he cannot continue in the same sin without knowing the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. . . . He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." 1 John 2:3-6

- b. Experiencing inner conflict

Often an inner concern about one's salvation is a **confirmation** of salvation in the life. A conflict requires two sides. The unsaved individual has only one nature; the Christian has two natures. A conflict like Paul experienced may be a good test of assurance.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Rom. 7:18

- c. Loving the right things

- (1) Love for God (Rom. 8:5-9)
- (2) Love for God's Word (John 8:47)
- (3) Love for God's people (1 John 3:14)

- d. Illumination of the Word of God (1 John 3:24; 4:13; 5:6)

Do you have some understanding of the Word of God? Although you will never understand it all, you have the Holy Spirit as your teacher. The unsaved person does not understand much, if any,

of God's Word. An understanding of God's Word is a good indication of salvation.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14

e. Your present belief (John 6:47; 1 John 5:4–13)

One of the best questions to ask the young person who cannot remember the time and place of his salvation is this: "What are you **today** believing in to get you to heaven?" The verb in 1 John 5:13 is in the present tense—"These things have I written unto you that believe (are now believing) on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life." What do you believe today? What are you trusting in today? If you are "now believing" in Christ, you are saved.

6.1

1. True/False—The plan of salvation in the Old Testament is identical to the New Testament plan of salvation.

true

2. True/False—The degrees of punishment are related to a person's opportunities to be saved.

true

6.2

1. True/False—Repentance is the knowledge that you are a sinner.

false

2. What is the philosophy which adds certain works to faith in order to obtain salvation?

legalism

3. True/False—Faith is determined by its object.

true

6.3

1. Who dictates the terms of justification?

the One Who has been wronged

2. What word means “being set apart from the world and unto God’s service”?

sanctification

3. Give the two phases, negative and positive, of sanctification.

separation from the world and unto God’s service

4. What word means “the act of God whereby He places His own child in the position of an adult son”?

adoption

6.4

1. What is a mansion in the biblical sense of the word?

an addition built onto the Father’s house

2. True/False—The Bible teaches that all human beings are technically the children of God.

false

3. What does the word *boldly* mean in the verse, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace”?

without fear/straight to the point

4. True/False—No one can be victorious over Satan until Christ lives in him.

true

6.5

1. True/False—Rarely do people doubt their salvation.

false

2. True/False—It is wrong to examine your salvation.

false

3. List some of the tests of God’s Word concerning the assurance of salvation.

See Section 6.5, pp. 197–198.

7.1