

Salvation – What does it really mean?

So, everyone here is at least somewhat familiar with the doctrine of man. God created man and woman and while living in the Garden of Eden they chose to sin against God and as a result every man and woman born after that point is born with a sin nature. Many people love to debate the idea of predestination, but I say the only thing man is predestined for is that of a sin-filled life. To be mindful of our time together this evening, I'm not going to spend a great deal of time addressing sin because I want to get straight to our topic, which is **Salvation – What does it really mean?**

Since we all know that Romans 3:23 says, *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”* and that man is cursed to live chasing our true birth nature instead of God's original nature, we can conclude that sin is universal. In other words, as long as we are on this side of heaven, we will sin. But what does sin do to us? Sin does several things.

Isaiah 59:1-2 reads, *“Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”* Sin separates us from God.

Several places such as Ezekiel 18:4 and Romans 6:23 explain that our just punishment for sin is death. Because God is perfect and sin is not, then this means our sin must carry with it some form of retribution. He is a just God and His justice demands a full payment for our sin. What this means is that we cannot stand before a perfect God unless our sin has been removed, or replaced, or covered. Aren't you glad that God loves us enough that He made a way in which our sin no longer matters?

What was it God created us for in the first place? Remember, God created us for His glory and for fellowship with Him. And if we choose to remain in our sin-filled state, then we cannot experience true fellowship with Him, nor can we truly give Him the glory He deserves.

With all that said, we need to look at salvation and what it really means for the person who chooses God over self. Our salvation has more to do with Him than it does with who we are. Yes, we are special and the greatest of His creation, but our salvation demonstrates the mercy and grace of a loving God who we know from 2 Peter 3:9 says, *“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”* It is the mercy of God which prevents Him from bringing down the hammer on us and it is because of His grace that He offers us salvation in the first place.

Now, we learned this morning about how it is we can be saved. I love 1 John 2:2 that says Jesus *“is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the*

whole world.” When Jesus died on the cross, He took our place and paid the penalty for our sins. That's why the cross is central to our understanding of salvation. Hebrews 9:22 says that without the shedding of blood our sins cannot be forgiven. On the cross Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, shed His blood to atone for our sins. As Baptists we believe that it was necessary for Jesus to shed His blood on the cross, otherwise the just demands of a holy God could not have been met and we would have no hope of salvation.

Jesus says this same thing in Matthew 26:28 at the last supper table when He told His disciples, *"For this is My blood that establishes the covenant; it is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins."*

You guys will recognize the words of this old hymn, I'm sure. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow, that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Perhaps you've heard a preacher or two talk about giving your heart to Jesus, or being born again, and you've wondered what exactly they were talking about. When it comes to our response the Bible gives us some clear instruction.

First, we must repent. Stop sinning and turn away from sin. Repentance is not popular these days. Many people want to get to heaven without having to change who they are. They want to add Jesus to the many other things in their lives. But Jesus tells us that we cannot come to Him that way. We must take up our cross and follow Him. In repentance we turn away from sin, and in faith we turn to Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."* It is God's grace which makes salvation available, and it is absolutely something we must accept by faith. Faith is not simply knowing that Jesus died for your sins, it does not merely mean agreeing that Jesus died for your sins, many people have religious knowledge but do not have a personal relationship with Jesus. Faith means making a personal decision and commitment to surrender control of your life to the Lordship of Jesus and to trust Him and Him alone to save you. This is what we are talking about when we ask if someone wants to give their heart to Jesus, or to ask Him into their heart. That's what it means to exercise faith.

Once you repent, then you believe by faith, it is then that you are born again. The Biblical term for this is regeneration. To be born again means God places His Spirit inside you and the Bible assures us that He will never leave you nor forsake you. What a great promise!

Finally, salvation begins the process of sanctification. Thereby, each believer is being transformed into the person of Christ that God truly intends us to be. This growth process and spiritual development is something which never stops. How do I know this? Well, there are several proofs for this in the Bible, but I'm going to give you just one.

Philippians 1:6 says, *"I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*

So, there you have it, it's rather simple. We are sinners, our sin separates us from God and condemns us to eternity in hell. God loves us and sends His only Son Jesus to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Through His death, burial, and resurrection He defeated sin and death and made it possible for all who will place their trust in Him to have their sins washed away and receive eternal life. All you must do is believe; to place your trust in Him today.