

# SOTERIOLOGY

## The Doctrine of Salvation

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## **The Doctrine of Salvation**

Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, must be the grandest theme in the Scriptures. It relates in one way or another to all of mankind, without exception.

It is the theme of both the Old and New Testaments. It is Personal, Spiritual, and Eternal. And it centers on the greatest Person of all, our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to the broadest meaning as used in Scripture, the term salvation encompasses the total work of God by which He seeks to rescue man from the Power and Penalty of sin, and bestows upon him the Riches of His Grace, which encompasses the provision for Abundant Life now, and Eternal Life latter.

**(Ephesians 1:3-8 & 2:4-10) (1 Peter 1:3-5) (John 3:16. 36 & 10:10)**

### **The word: Salvation**

Salvation is the translation from the Greek word “Soteria” which is derived from the word “Soter” meaning “savior.”

The word “salvation” communicates the thought of deliverance, safety, preservation, soundness, restoration, and healing.

In Theology, however, its major use is to denote a work of God on behalf of men, and as such it is a major doctrine of the Bible which includes redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, conviction, repentance, faith, regeneration, forgiveness, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification.

On the one hand, salvation is described as the work of God rescuing man from his lost estate. On the other hand, salvation describes the estate of a man who has been saved and who is vitally renewed and made a partaker of the inheritance of the saints.

### **The Motivations for Salvation**

When we look at the stubbornness and rebellion of man, we ask the question, “Why should God want to save sinners?”

Especially, why would He want to give His beloved Son to agonize and die bearing God’s Holy judgment for our sin on the cross?

Scripture’s answer is that salvation redounds to the glory of His grace. Salvation brings glory to God and it does so because it manifests the nature and character of His person.

**(Ephesians 1:6) (Philippians 2:11)**

## Salvation reveals a number of things about God.

1. It reveals His **Love**. That God would reach out to sinful man by sending His only begotten Son is the greatest manifestation of His love. It declares God provided salvation because He is a loving God. (John 3:16) (1 John 4:7-10 & 16)
2. Salvation through the person and work of Christ is also a manifestation of God's **Grace**, the non-meritorious favor of God. (Ephesians 2:7-9)  
Only Christianity offers a salvation based on grace rather than works. All the other religions of the world have man working to acquire salvation.
3. The salvation of the Bible also manifests the **Holiness** of God. God provided salvation through the person and work of His Son because He is a Holy God. In His love and grace God desired fellowship with man, but man's rebellion and sin created a barrier between God and man that hindered any fellowship with man whatsoever because of God's infinite Holiness. Both God's holiness and His love are satisfied, however, by the person and work of God's Son.
4. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God that they might give a visible display of God's character as they walked in fellowship with the invisible God. But when the human race fell through Adam's sin, the image was not only marred, but man lost the capacity for **Fellowship** with God. Through salvation, the capacity for fellowship is restored and also is man's ability to manifest, though imperfectly, the goodness of God.

## The Three (Tenses) of Salvation

Salvation in Christ, which begins in eternity past according to the predetermined plan of God and extends into the eternal future, has three observable phases in the Bible. Understanding this truth can relieve a lot of tension from the standpoint of security and enable the believer to relax in the Lord and His grace while simultaneously moving forward in spiritual growth.

1. This is the past tense of salvation - saved from sin's penalty. Several passages of Scripture speak of salvation as wholly past, or as accomplished and completed for the one who has believed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This aspect views the believer as delivered once and for all from sin's penalty and spiritual death.

**(Ephesians 2:5 & 8) (Titus 3:5) (Hebrews 10:7-23)  
(1 Corinthians 1:18) 12 Corinthians 5:17) (2 Timothy 1:9)**

So complete and perfect is this work of God in Christ that the believer is declared permanently saved and safe forever.

**(John 5:24 & 10:28 -29) (Romans 8:1 & 37-39) (1 Peter 1:3-5)**

2. This is the present tense of salvation - and has to do with present deliverance over the reigning power of sin or the carnal nature's power in the lives of believers.

**(Romans 6:1-23 & 8:2) (2 Corinthians 3:18) (Galatians 2:19-20 & 5:1-26)  
(Philippians 1:19 & 2:12-13) (2 Thessalonians 2:13)**

This phase of salvation in Christ is accomplished through the ministry of the indwelling Spirit, but it is based on the work of Christ and the believer's union and co-identification with Christ in that work.

3. This is the future tense of salvation - which refers to the future deliverance all believers in Christ will experience through a glorified resurrected body. It contemplates that, though once and for all saved from the penalty of sin and while now being delivered from the power of sin, the believer in Christ will yet be saved into full conformity to Jesus Christ.

**(Romans 8:29 & 13:11) (1 Peter 1:5) (1 John 3:2)**

This recognizes and shows that the Christian in his experience never becomes perfect in this life.

**(Philippians 3:12-14)**

Full conformity to the character of Christ, experientially speaking, awaits ultimate glorification. However, the fact that some aspects of salvation for the one who believes are yet to be accomplished, in no way implies that there is ground for doubt as to the outcome of eternal salvation, because all three phases are dependent upon the merit and the work of God in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **The Nature of Salvation As the Work of God**

1. Salvation is the free gift of God to man by grace through faith, completely aside from human works. Works in the life of a believer are tremendously important, but they are to be the result of receiving and appropriating God's grace in the salvation they receive. As the prophet declares, "Salvation is of the Lord".

**(Jonah 2:9)**

Therefore, in every aspect it is a work of God in behalf of man and is in no sense a work of man in behalf of God."

2. Salvation as the saving work of God so completely provides for the believer that believers are declared "complete in Christ" and "blessed with every spiritual blessing".

**(Colossians 2:10) (Ephesians 1:3)**

A fathomless source of blessings become the possession of all believers when they trust in Christ as their Savior. The Apostle Paul refers to these blessings as "the unfathomable riches of Christ" in **(Ephesians 3:8)**. "Unfathomable" is the Greek - "Anexichniastos" which means "past finding out, unsearchable, not to be tracked out." The idea is that our blessings in Christ are "too deep to be measured."

This saving work of God encompasses various aspects which together accomplish salvation: these include redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation, justification, imputation, regeneration, propitiation, expiation, sanctification, and even glorification. It is all of this and much more which provide salvation, and makes the believers qualified for heaven and to become the children of God.

**(John 1:12) (Colossians 1:12) (Ephesians 1:6)**

## **The Finished Work of God**

The last words uttered by the Savior just before He died on the cross were;  
**“It is finished”**

He was not referring to the end of His life or ministry, but of His substitutionary sufferings on the cross which He would complete by His death which occurred immediately following His shout, **“It is finished.”**

He was declaring He had finished the special work of salvation which the Father had given Him to accomplish. We speak of **“the finished work of Christ”** because there is nothing left to be done to provide man’s salvation.

God has done it all in the person and work of His Son and He raised Him from the dead as the proof of that very fact. The work of God in Christ is a once-and-for-all work of God accomplished in total by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Christ’s death was distinctly a work accomplished for the entire world.

**(John 3:16) (Hebrews 2:9)**

### **Provisionally speaking it provided:**

Redemption! (1 Timothy 2:6) Reconciliation! (2 Corinthians 5:19) Propitiation!

The appeasement or satisfaction of God’s Holiness for every person in the world.  
**(1 John 2:2)**

Salvation is a done proposition. Man’s responsibility is to accept this by faith, faith alone in Christ alone. The finished work of Christ includes not only deliverance from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin. Faith in Christ for salvation means coming to Him as the source of salvation from every aspect of sin through trusting in the accomplished work of Christ. When Christ cried out, **“It is finished”** (Greek- Telesthai) the perfect tense of teleo, “to complete, finish” expressing completed action with continuing results! He was affirming the fact of the finished nature of what He had accomplished on the cross for the world.

The fact that Christ died does not in itself save men, but it provides the one and only sufficient ground upon which God in full harmony with His perfect Holiness is free to save even the chief

of sinners. This is the good news which the Christian is appointed to proclaim to all the world. In all the other religions of the world, salvation is a work that man does for God. This is what makes biblical Christianity distinct from all the religions of the world because in the Bible, salvation is of the Lord; it is the work of God for man and Christ's final shout of victory affirmed this truth.

Since Christ's work is finished, it should be clear that salvation is not a work of man but of God. When a person comes to Christ, he is acknowledging that he cannot save himself, but has now recognized the work of salvation God has wrought. For thus, man is forever delivered from any legalistic approach that would elevate human works as a ground for salvation.

## **The Necessity of Salvation**

Paul speaks of the barrier of separation which exists between God and man. As long as this barrier exists, there is no possibility of fellowship between God and man.

**(Ephesians 2:14-16)**

The barrier, or literally the dividing wall mentioned by Paul referred historically to the dividing wall in the temple in Jerusalem. This wall separated the court of the Gentiles from the rest of the temple and excluded the Gentiles from the inner sanctuaries. But this wall was a picture of the spiritual barrier that stands between God and man which precludes man's access into God's presence.

The Jews could go beyond the dividing wall, but this was only because they had access through their God-given sacrificial system which pointed to the person and work of Christ, the Messiah, the One who would make peace and remove the barrier. The study of the Bible reveals there are several spiritual factors which go together to make up this barrier of separation between God and man. Though sin is the root problem, it is not the only issue. A combination of factors, make up this wall of separation.

## **The barrier between God and Man**

### I. The First Barrier Is: "The Holiness of God"

We often think of God as a God of love—which He is—but more is said in the Bible of God's Holiness than of God's love. In fact, the prophet Isaiah declared that "His Name is Holy."

**(Isaiah 57:15)**

**The Seraphim** continuously proclaimed the holiness of God.

**(Isaiah 6:1-3)**

**The Four Beasts** that stand before the Throne of God proclaim His Holiness continually.

**(Revelation 4:8)**

**Habakkah** spoke of the Holiness of God, “Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, and thou canst not look on wickedness with favor”.

**(Habakkah 1:12-13)**

**Moses** spoke of God’s Holy character: “The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He”.

**(Deuteronomy 32:4)**

These and many other passages point to the perfect Holiness of God and stress the fact that God cannot and will not act contrary to His Holy character.

If He is without injustice and completely righteous in all that He is and does, how can He have fellowship with sinful man or anything less than His perfect Holiness?

The Holiness of God has two branches:

Perfect righteousness and perfect justice. God is absolute righteousness and perfection. It is impossible for God to do anything wrong or to have fellowship with anything less than His perfect righteousness. Since God is also perfect justice, which acts in accord with His perfect righteousness, He cannot be partial or unfair to any creature and He must deal with the creature in perfect justice. This means all that is unrighteous or sinful must be judged and separated from Him.

**(Psalm 119:137-138 & 145:17) (Romans 2:5-6 & 1:18 & 14:11-12) (1 Peter 4:5)**

2. The Second Barrier is: “The Sinfulness of Man”

**(Romans 3:23)** Declares that all have sinned and fall short (miss the mark) of the glory of God (His Holy character).

**(Isaiah 59:1-2)** Proclaims, “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not so short that it cannot save; Neither is His ear so 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.”

Isaiah was reminding Israel that though God has the ability and desire to deliver men, He cannot act contrary to nor bypass His perfect Holiness.

Sin creates a barrier between God and man which hinders access to God.

This is true for the unbeliever who can only come to God through Christ who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

**(John 14:6) (Acts 4:12)**

It is also true for the believer in Christ. Even though they are saved and have access to God

in Christ, fellowship with God as His children is broken by known sin which must first be confessed so that fellowship can be restored and God can answer prayer.

**(Psalm 66:18)**

The barrier of sin is one of the reasons why God, in His sovereign love, gave His Son to die on the cross for man's sin.

There are three aspects which go to make up the barrier of sin.

**Imputed Sin: (Romans 5:12-18)** Teaches us the fact of imputed sin. Adam is the representative head of the human race and because of our natural relationship to him, his sin is imputed, reckoned, to the entire human race. God views the human race as though we all sinned in Adam or with Adam.

But in this we also see God's grace as Paul explains, just as Adam's sin was imputed to every human being as a descendent of Adam because of Adam's one act of sin, so Christ's righteousness is imputed to all who become children of God by faith in Christ because of His one act of righteousness.

**Inherited Sin:** The Bible teaches the fact that, as the posterity of Adam, every child is born with a sinful nature inherited from his parents. According to **(Ephesians 2:1-3)** "All are dead in sin and are "by nature the children of wrath."

When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

**(Genesis 5:3)**

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

**(Psalm 51:5)**

The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.

**(Psalm 58:3)**

The vital principle is that men do not sin and become sinners, rather they sin because they are sinners.

**Personal Sin:** This refers to the products of the sinful nature of inherited sin, the actual deeds or acts of sin which all men do because they are sinful.

**(Romans 3:18-23)**

3. The Third Barrier is: "The Penalty of Sin"

Because God is Holy and man is sinful, God's perfect justice must act against man to charge him as guilty and under the penalty of sin with a debt to pay. Thus, the Law of the Old Testament functions as a bill of indictment. It shows man guilty and under the penalty of sin. This is clear



from the following passages:

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

**(Romans 3:19-20)**

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.

**(Galatians 3:19)**

But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

**(Galatians 3:22)**

Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us (the Old Testament law) and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

**(Colossians 2:14)**

**The “certificate of debt consisting of decrees”** This refers to the Law and its indictment that man is under the penalty of sin which is death. Man has a debt to pay. But the debt cannot be paid by religion, or good deeds, or morality. The very best that a man can come up with falls far short of the glory of God. Man is dead, and incapacitated in his sinful condition.

**(Romans 3:9-23) (Ephesians 2:1-3)**

Paul’s argument in **(Romans 1:18-3:23)** is that all men are in the same boat whether immoral or religious. All miss the mark of God’s Holiness and are under the penalty of sin which is death **(Romans 3:9-20, 23 & 6:23)**.

Man’s only hope is in the righteousness of God which He supplies through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

**(Romans 3:21-5:21)**

#### 4. The Fourth Barrier is: “Spiritual Death”

Paul teaches us that “in Adam all die”!

**(I Corinthians 15:22)**

Man’s position in Adam brings spiritual death, eventually physical death, and ultimately eternal death—eternal separation from God.

**(Romans 6:23)** Tells us “the wages of sin is death!”

**(Romans 5:12)** We read “therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and

death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

### **Death is the awesome consequence of sin!**

**(Genesis 2:17) (I Corinthians 15:21 &56) (Ephesians 2:1 &5) (Colossians2:13)**

The point of these verses is that death, whether physical or spiritual, is a product of man’s position in Adam and his own personal sin.

This means that man in himself is without spiritual life and spiritual capacity. The result of this is spiritual failure. No matter how hard he tries he fails and falls short of God’s Holy character. Men simply cannot save themselves no matter how hard they try or no matter how sincere they are. This is why the Savior told Nicodemus, a very religious man, “you must be born again”!  
**(John 3:1-6)**

This was Christ’s way of teaching this religious man that he needed spiritual capacity, a new spiritual birth, a spiritual birth from above accomplished by the Spirit of God in order to see, understand, and be a part of the kingdom of God.

So man is not only separated from God by sin, by God’s Holy character, and by the penalty of sin, but he is faced with the problem of spiritual death and the need of spiritual life.

Being spiritually dead, man needs spiritual life and eternal life which can only come through the new birth and a new position in Christ as the source of life.

### **5. The Fifth Barrier is: “Unrighteousness”**

The Prophet Isaiah wrote, “For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away”!  
**(Isaiah 64:6)**

Quoting **(Psalm 14:1-3)** The Apostle Paul exclaims, “As it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one’ In order for people to have fellowship with God they must have a standing, a righteousness equal with God. Because of their condition, dead in sin, they can never establish a righteousness sufficient to pass the righteous judgment of God.

This is the error of the typical religious person who, by his morality and religious deeds, attempts to establish his own standing before God.

The error is twofold:

**First**, he does not recognize the absolute awesome Holiness of God’s character. For many, if not most, God is simply an elevated man, the man upstairs.

**Second**, such a person does not see the effect of sin on their own character and ability.

The Apostle speaks to this very thing in **(Romans 10:1-4)** when he writes of his religious brethren:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes”.

Therefore, all of man’s human good or religious works are just dead works and worthless from the standpoint of acceptance with God.

**(Romans 4:1-4) (Hebrews 6:1 & 9:14)**

What then is the solution to this dilemma of mankind, this five-fold barrier?

The solution is God’s work of grace in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This work of grace is called reconciliation.

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

**(2 Corinthians 5:18-19)**

## **The Work of Salvation: The Removal of the Barrier**

Reconciliation is one of the key words of Scripture because it means the sinner, separated and alienated from God by the barrier, can be restored to fellowship with a holy God.

**How?** Through that which God has done for man in His Son, Jesus Christ. This work of God in Christ results in the reconciliation of the believing sinner to God. Precisely and biblically just what does the doctrine of reconciliation include? What does reconciliation itself mean? Who is reconciled, how, when, and where? These are some of the questions that will be answered in this study.

## **Definition of Reconcile**

1. The English word “reconcile” means to cause to be friendly again; to bring back to harmony, make peace.

2. The Greek words for reconciliation and their definition: “Katallasso”, the verb, and “katallage”, the noun form.

This word comes from kata which means “down,” and allaso which means “to change” or “exchange.” Thus, katallasso means “to change from enmity or disharmony to friendship and harmony,” or “to reconcile”!

**(Romans 5:10) (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)**

The Greek word: “Apokatallaso”. This is a triple compound word (adds the preposition apo, “from,”). It does not occur in earlier Greek and seems to be used by Paul to express the idea of the completeness of reconciliation **(Ephesians 2:16) (Colossians 1:20-21)** We can properly translate it “to reconcile completely.”

3. The concept of reconciliation is, of course, not limited to the word “reconcile.” When Scripture speaks of “peace with God” **(Romans 5:1)** of Christ as “our peace” **(Ephesians 2:14)**, and of His work of “establishing peace” **(Ephesians 2:15-17)** this is reconciliation, the work of God in Christ to remove the enmity and alienation that separate God and man. **(Romans 5:1-11)**

4. Doctrinal Definition: In short, reconciliation is the whole work of God in Christ by which man is brought from the place of enmity to harmony or peace with God. **(Romans 5:1)**

There are other terms used in Scripture of God’s gracious work in Christ like redemption, justification, regeneration, and propitiation, but reconciliation seems to be the over-all term of Scripture which encompasses all the other terms as a part of what God has done through the Lord Jesus to completely remove the enmity or alienation, the whole of the barrier (sin, God’s holiness, death, unrighteousness, etc.). It is this work that sets God free to justify the believing sinner by faith in Christ so there is peace with God, the change of relationship from hostility to harmony.

### The Source of Reconciliation

The source of reconciliation is God and not man as **(2 Corinthians 5:18)** and the Greek words mentioned above make perfectly clear. Reconciliation is a work which has its source in the love, holiness, goodness, and grace of God. It is all by His doing that we come to be in Christ Jesus, the place of peace with God.

**(1 Corinthians 1:30-31)**

### The Agent of Reconciliation

The agent of reconciliation is the Lord Jesus alone. It is He who personally died for all the world and bore our sin, the cause of alienation, in His body on the tree.

**(Romans 5:10-11) (2 Corinthians 5:18) (Colossians 1:20-21) (1 Peter 2:24)**

### The Object of Reconciliation

Scripture teaches that the object of reconciliation is mankind. God is propitiated and mankind is reconciled.

Man is the one at enmity with God and who must be brought back into relationship with God.

**(2 Corinthians 5:19)** Seems clear: God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself. The world of mankind is clearly the object of reconciliation.

**(Romans 5:10)** Agrees by stating that we were reconciled to God. God is the one who is active in reconciliation.

**(2 Corinthians 5:18-19)** Men are said to be reconciled.

**(Romans 5:10) (2 Corinthians 5:20)** They are acted upon by God. Thus believers are said to receive reconciliation. They are recipients of a relationship of peace and harmony brought about by God.

### The Instrument of Reconciliation

The instrument and cause of reconciliation is the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. "God made Him to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him".

**(2 Corinthians 5:21)**

It is the death of Jesus Christ that changes man from enmity to harmony with God.

**(Romans 5:10) (Ephesians 2:10) (Colossians 1:20)**

### The Results of Reconciliation

1. Removal of the barrier, those things which separate man from God as sin, God's holiness, penalty of sin, spiritual death, unrighteousness.

**(Ephesians 2:14-18)**

2. Positional sanctification and a perfect standing before God.

**(Romans 5:1) (1 Corinthians 1:2) (2 Corinthians 5:17) (Colossians 2:10)**

3. Justification (declared righteous before God) through Christ's righteousness imputed to us.

**(2 Corinthians 5:18-21)**

### The Ministers of Reconciliation

The ministers of reconciliation are all believers in Christ. Every believer is an ambassador of Christ and a minister of reconciliation. Since Christ died for us, we are each obligated to live not for ourselves, but for the Lord and to be His representatives in a world that is alienated from God. **(2 Corinthians 5:15-21)**

### The Goal of Reconciliation

The goal of reconciliation or the ultimate purpose is imputed righteousness or justification so each believing sinner may have fellowship with God.

**(2 Corinthians 5:21)**

### The Work Accomplished by Reconciliation

**Propitiation:** is that part of the work of reconciliation which deals with the barrier of God's holiness, the obstacle erected or caused by man's sin. Thus, the holiness of God becomes a key part in removing the alienation or enmity against God.

**Definition of Propitiation:** Propitiation is the truth that the person and death of Jesus Christ appeased, turned away, God's wrath, satisfied His Holiness, and so met God's righteous demands that the sinner can be reconciled into God's Holy presence.