

The subject of the salvation of man couldn't be more central to what we believe, so please push yourself to grasp it more completely. This subject is like an "iceberg" whose tip sticks above the water level and yet has massive content below the surface. Above the water we see, "Repent of your sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and below the surface is all the glorious theology of what God has accomplished through the work of His Son for the guilty sinner now made saint. Rest in the simple message of the cross, and wrestle with the deep work of heaven on your behalf.

Leroy Community Chapel Statement of Faith – Article V

“We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins (Ephesians 2:8-10; John 1:2; Ephesians 1:18; 1 Peter 1:18-19). Through Christ the sinner is justified before God whereby He declares the guilty sinner not guilty (Romans 8:33). Through the substitution of Christ, man’s sin is imputed to Christ and Christ’s righteousness is imputed to man (2 Corinthians 5:21). God’s wrath is satisfied as His grace is lavished through forgiving sin. Every believer is sanctified unto God through justification and declared holy unto Him instantly (Acts 20:32; Hebrews 2:11). All the redeemed are eternally kept by God and secure in Christ forever (John 5:24, 6:37-40; Romans 5:9-10, 8:1).”

Historic Church Documents

- Augusburg Confession (1530)

“Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.” [Article IV]

- The Smalcald Articles (Martin Luther - 1537)

“The first and chief article is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification, Rom. 4, 25. And He alone is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, John 1, 29; and God has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all, Is. 53, 6. Likewise: All have sinned and are justified without merit [freely, and without their own works or merits] by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood, Rom. 3, 23 f. Now, since it is necessary to believe this, and it cannot be otherwise acquired or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us as St. Paul says, Rom. 3, 28: For we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law. Likewise v. 26: That He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Christ. Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered [nor can anything be granted or permitted contrary to the same], even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin. For there is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved, says Peter, Acts 4, 12. And with His stripes we are healed, Is. 53, 5. And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practice in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the [whole] world. Therefore, we must be sure concerning this doctrine, and not doubt; for otherwise all is lost, and the Pope and devil and all things gain the victory and suit over us.” [Article I]

- Canons of Dordt (1618)

“The Preaching of the Gospel. In order that people may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends proclaimers of this very joyful message to the people he wishes and at the time he wishes. By this ministry people are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without

someone preaching? And how shall they preach unless they have been sent? (Rom. 10:14-15)." [Article 3]

"Teaching Election Properly. Just as, by God's wise plan, this teaching concerning divine election has been proclaimed through the prophets, Christ himself, and the apostles, in Old and New Testament times, and has subsequently been committed to writing in the Holy Scriptures, so also today in God's church, for which it was specifically intended, this teaching must be set forth--with a spirit of discretion, in a godly and holy manner, at the appropriate time and place, without inquisitive searching into the ways of the Most High. This must be done for the glory of God's most holy name, and for the lively comfort of his people." [Article 14]

- Belgic Confession (1618)

"We believe that this true faith, produced in man by the hearing of God's Word and by the work of the Holy Spirit, regenerates him and makes him a "new man," causing him to live the "new life" and freeing him from the slavery of sin. Therefore, far from making people cold toward living in a pious and holy way, this justifying faith, quite to the contrary, so works within them that apart from it they will never do a thing out of love for God but only out of love for themselves and fear of being condemned. So then, it is impossible for this holy faith to be unfruitful in a human being, seeing that we do not speak of an empty faith but of what Scripture calls "faith working through love," which leads a man to do by himself the works that God has commanded in his Word. These works, proceeding from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable to God, since they are all sanctified by his grace. Yet they do not count toward our justification-- for by faith in Christ we are justified, even before we do good works. Otherwise they could not be good, any more than the fruit of a tree could be good if the tree is not good in the first place." [Article 23]

- Westminster Confession (1646)

"All those that are justified, God vouchsafes, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him as by a Father: yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation." [Chapter XII]

- The Baptist Confession (1689)

"Those whom God has accepted in the beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved, seeing the gifts and callings of God are without repentance, from which source he still begets and nourishes in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit unto immortality; and though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock which by faith they are fastened upon; notwithstanding, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sensible sight of the light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them, yet he is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto salvation, where they shall enjoy their purchased possession, they being engraved upon the palm of his hands, and their names having been written in the book of life from all eternity." [Chapter 17, Paragraph 1]

Key Terms & Definitions

Grace Can I just say, I love saying the word "grace." I can't say it without a restful calm in my heart, because grace is everything I don't deserve and everything I need. The word means to receive something I don't deserve. We often use the terms grace and mercy to describe the work of God toward sinners, and these are two sides of the same coin.

Mercy is not getting what we do deserve (judgment), and grace is getting what we don't deserve (forgiveness). Mercy is God, the judge, saying to the condemned sinner "you may go free," while grace is God, the substitute, standing in the condemned sinners place saying to the judge, "take me instead." This is what Paul speaks of when he writes, God is the "just and justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ" (Romans 3:26). WOW! Grace, grace God's grace, grace that is greater than all our sin!

Redemption There are many terms that describe the work of salvation and they are not

all synonyms of one another, they each carry a distinction in describing the glorious work of salvation. It's fun to see all these and understand the multi-faceted work of salvation. This term describes the work of God in "buying back" the slave from bondage. The sinner, enslaved to sin and death, has one who comes to redeem him from his chains and set him free by the work of the Gospel. This is what we are speaking of when we speak of redemption. *See Galatians 3:13.*

Reconciliation This term describes the separation that our sin created between God and man that has been removed by the cross. We were estranged and enemies of God, but through the work of Jesus we have been brought near and restored to our Creator-Father. *See 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.*

Election Unfortunately many people see this word as a negative and it is anything but negative. It has everything to do with the perfect love of God in calling out those who will be His very own. The idea is all through the Bible (Old and New Testament) as God always sets apart a people for Himself. This word carries with it the idea that God is the one who loved first without any foundation in the goodness of man, but purely on the sovereign love of God. This word is never to be used to discriminate, eliminate, or make it impossible for some to come to Christ, but to make loud and clear that God is the worker of salvation, and He will save! Friends, we have already seen many a mystery in our theological study (e.g.: one God in three persons; Christ – fully God and fully man), here is yet another where we must not press complimentary Bible truths into opposition against one another. God chooses (election/predestination), and man responds (conversion/repentance). *See Romans 9.*

Regeneration The nuance of this beautiful term in the scope of salvation language is to speak of "new birth." What once was dead is now made alive. What once was decaying has been made new. This theological term is where we get the practical concept of being "born again." God's work of salvation doesn't merely reform us or remodel the existing, it regenerates, making one a new creation. *See Titus 3:5 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.*

Conversion This term points to the willing response of man to turn from sin and embrace the work of Christ through faith. Conversion is a responding to the Gospel that has been heard and delighted in. The word "convert" is used in describing the one who has turned away from sin, self, and Satan, and turned to following Jesus Christ. *See 1 Timothy 3:6.*

Repentance When one "converts" they are turning away from something ... that is the concept behind the word repentance. To repent is to turn away from one thing and turn toward another. In salvation terms, repentance is turning from sin, leaving the old life behind, forsaking false gods, and turning to the one, true, living God. In many places when one asks if you are a Christian, they might simply ask, "Have you repented?" This word makes clear the singular nature of following Christ. You cannot just add Jesus to your belief system, you turn from what you were believing to place all your trust in Him ... He becomes your belief system! *See Romans 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9.*

Justification Big important term alert! This word speaks of the legal declaration made

by God for sinners. This is the concept that the guilty sinner is now, through Christ, declared “NOT GUILTY!” It speaks of a very real, tangible (and instantaneous) transaction whereby sin and guilt is removed and forgiveness is applied. God now sees the sinner as forgiven and righteous in His sight. *See Romans 5:16-18.*

Sanctification This term really has a couple meanings and I want you to get it. First, we do describe the justified, redeemed, regenerated, repentant convert as sanctified – and what we mean by that is God has made him holy (done, complete, past tense). In this sense it is right to describe every follower of Christ as holy, sanctified, and set apart – a saint! The other use of this term, is to describe the process by which the Christian becomes more and more mature. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in convicting of sin, instructing, comforting, encouraging, so that the man of God may become more and more conformed to the image of the Son. We are becoming sanctified. The two uses of this term must not be confused. At justification, the sinner is declared righteous and holy completely and forever (we call this positional sanctification – our position before God). At justification, the Holy Spirit has “begun a good work that will be carried on to completion” when Christ returns – Philippians 1:6 (we call this progressive sanctification – our progressing in maturity in the Gospel). *Positional – See 1 Corinthians 1:30, and Progressive – See Romans 6:19.*

Imputed Righteousness We are not righteous on our own. We can’t achieve righteousness (right standing) before God by our own performing. The achievement of Christ Jesus on the cross is the only thing that is acceptable before a holy God. When we are given new life through the cross, we have our inherited sin and guilt removed, and are clothed in the robes of Christ’s righteousness. God sees not our unrighteousness, but the righteousness of Christ so graciously given to us by nothing we have done. Because of the cross, men can become righteous. This blows my mind ... not only do we get the negative removed (our sin and guilt), but also we get the positive imputed to us (righteousness) all by the work of Jesus. *See 2 Corinthians 5:21.*

Propitiation Funny term, fantastic meaning. It means that a sacrifice has been made that satisfies the wrath of God toward sin and turns His wrath toward us into favor toward us. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was a perfect propitiation for our sin. *See Romans 3:25 and 1 John 4:10.*

Substitutionary Atonement That propitiatory sacrifice was made as a substitute for us. We describe what Jesus did on the cross also as an atoning work, which means he accomplished salvation for us through the cross. On the cross he paid for sin (atoned) in our place (substitution) and made God’s rescue of mankind a reality. Through the atonement of Jesus we are redeemed, and reconciled. The wrath of God is turned into favor, and we are no longer under condemnation.

Universalism Salvation is exclusive – there is only one way, the man Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Salvation is inclusive – God loves men from all corners of the world regardless of ethnicity (John 3:16). Not all men will be saved, only those who turn to God through His Son’s sacrifice and believe on Him. Universalism is a dangerous error that disregards the urgent claims of the Gospel to believe in Christ today, rather teaching that in the end

everyone will be saved. The Bible clearly teaches the contrary.

Foundational Biblical Data

John 3:16-18 “For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son”

This seems like as good a place as any to start looking at Bible texts since it's the verse everyone quotes and holds up at football games. Let's just identify some core Gospel teachings here:

God loved – Yup, He is a God of love. He is motivated by love because He is love, and mankind is the object of His love, don't ever forget this is your gospel sharing.

The world – There is no discriminating or racism with God. He is most glorified in people from every tongue, tribe, and nation coming to the saving knowledge of His Son.

He gave – Heaven was the first “sending agency” when God sent His Son as the first cross-cultural “missionary”. God condescended to mankind making a way to be rescued.

Whoever believes – That's right, whoever believes will have life. The Gospel call is universal, there is no one we don't preach to, no one who God won't and can't save.

Faith (believing) comes by hearing, so we must go and preach!

Not to condemn the world – The Son wasn't sent to condemn, but to rescue. Sin already condemns mankind to hell; that was started by Adam and Eve. The Son comes to remedy that through the cross.

That the world might be saved through Him – The only hope for the world is Jesus Christ! And belief in Him is the only remedy for the fallen sinner. To turn away from the only sufficient sacrifice for sin, Jesus, is to turn away from salvation and remain in the state of condemnation.

John 6:35-40 “All the Father gives me will come to me”

The Son was sent to do the will of the Father, and the will of the Father was to redeem a group of people for His own glory. This will be accomplished! Those the Father has set apart to be holy, will be saved. They will be saved because Jesus' work will save them. They will believe because the Father's perfect plan can't be thwarted. They will be preserved and raised up on the last day because nothing can override or interrupt the glorious plan of redemption God has prepared for His people. The call of vs.40 is “Everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life.” These always go together, don't get all agro (that's my term for hyper) about free will on one side or God's choosing on the other. God will accomplish His plan that has been set from the foundation of the world and is not dependant on man's whims or fancies ... and everyone who believes on the Son will have life.

Ephesians 2:1-10 “But God being rich in mercy ... made us alive”

I love this text! It is one of the richest in the Bible ... dwell on it, study it, worship God because of it! Here, Paul describes the work of God in taking the initiative to save sinners. He describes “dead men walking” in the course of the world (v.1) following after the works of the devil (v.2) and carrying out in their own flesh the sinfulness that is in their hearts (v.3). BUT (some call this the biggest “but” in the Bible) GOD! Because

of the love of God (v.4) while we walked in sinful indulgence (v.5a) He made us alive completely by His grace (v.5b) and made heaven our home and Christ our brother (v.6). He didn't do this because He saw how good we were, or because of the potential we had, or because we might later decide to choose Him, but because of His kindness (v.7) and grace (v.8) apart from works (v.9) to live a life to His glory (v.10). Amen and thank you Lord! *Check out Ephesians 1:3-6 where Paul goes nuts again in this letter talking about God's glorious work of salvation!*

Romans 8:30-35 “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

This is one of the most solid, logical Pauline arguments in Scripture. He first establishes that what God starts He finishes (vs. 29-30), then if God gave us Christ He has given the greatest gift (vs. 31-32), so there is nothing that can break the work of God in our lives (vs. 33-39).

First, this unbreakable chain (foreknew-predestined-called-justified-glorified) will come to pass. All of these terms are stated in the past tense, having already been accomplished in the mind and plan of God. Even though we are not yet glorified, it is as good as done. We have nothing to fear when we have turned to Christ for salvation!

Second, Paul argues from greater to lesser. If He gave us Jesus, the rest is gravy. If God the Father didn't hold back His own Son, but put Him to death for us, why would we think He wouldn't provide for our basic needs? A good God has given the greatest gift, and He won't ever stop giving gifts to His kids. We have nothing to fear when the going gets tough because God hasn't held back anything heaven has to offer!

Lastly, when faced with the trials of life and the troubles of the soul, God will not abandon you. Nothing can separate us from God. That means your salvation is secure, the work of Christ is unchanging, and the love of God is without end. That means your physical circumstances are bearable, God will never forsake you, and death is not final. We have nothing to fear from within or without when we have God as our Savior!

Romans 10:9-13 “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”

AMEN to that! Oh, but that's too simple you say ... and unfortunately that is what keeps many from turning to Christ. They can't humble themselves enough to have the faith of a child. They can't turn from their own achieving to embrace the achievement of Jesus for them. They can't accept a gift without trying to make it a business transaction. But here, Paul makes it clear that one must confess with your mouth (external turning from the old life, to a complete giving of oneself to the new) that Jesus is who He said He is. You must believe in your heart (internal delighting in God and all His promises) that God accomplished salvation through His Son for you. Can you call on the name of the Lord? Then do it. That is God's grace to you today!

2 Corinthians 5:21 “He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

This is one of the most glorious verses in the Bible ... have I said that about all these

passages yet? But seriously this text is simple, clear, and makes me weep. Part One: God made His Son, Jesus, who was perfect and without sin to take on the weight of my sin and be punished on my behalf so that I am rescued from hell and extended forgiveness and freedom. Part Two: Not only that, but I get the righteousness that is His so that when God looks at me He sees Christ my brother's righteousness as my very own. Part Three: Revel in those two truths for the rest of my life!

In theological terms this is often referred to as double imputation. Our sin imputed to Christ, His righteousness imputed to us. It's often referenced as the Great Exchange! Whatever you call it, you and I would be lost without it.

James 2:14-19 "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"

Let me start with a good clear quote from J.I. Packer, *The truth is that, though we were justified by faith alone, the faith that justifies is never alone (it always produces fruit, "good works," a transformed life)*. It is a mistake to only read James' words without the rest of the Bible, as it is necessary to read James' words with the apostle Paul's. Faith is all that is required for one to be justified. This truth was fought for during the Reformation period and will always have to be contended for. But James' text is teaching us that true saving faith is always something more than mere intellectual assent to a set of facts – "even the demons believe and shudder" (v. 19). Faith will never be something that no one else knows about or makes no difference in the world, but God-given faith will be obvious to others and change-making in the world. What we gain in building our understanding of salvation from this passage is essential, namely that the one who says he has faith but has no fruit in his life might be deluded and actually outside the Gospel altogether. If you have to point back to some random point in time when you walked an aisle or signed a card to assure yourself that you have salvation ... you've got a problem. The greatest assurance of one's salvation is a life of progress and joy, humility and grace. It is never about one's perfection or complete overcoming of sin, but the fight against sin and the courage to walk in a manner worthy of the Gospel. If you are relying on anything less for your salvation, it's not that faith alone doesn't save; it just may be that you don't have faith at all.

2 Timothy 1:9-10 "who saved us ... because of His own purpose and grace"

I've probably already addressed previously the Bible truths about salvation that are contained in this passage, but yeah ... you guessed it ... I love this passage! Open your Bible and just read it. No really, go get your Bible and read it. In this text we see the plan of God before time began to save a people for His own glory. We even get this crazy cool phrase "he gave us Christ Jesus before the ages began" in 1:9. That's right, God the Father gave us Christ Jesus the Son before the Garden of Eden tragedy, ponder that one for awhile ... okay now stop, you'll start hurting things in your head. This is the aspect of salvation we've been talking about from God's perspective – election, predestination, calling, etc. Then we move to verse 10 and the "now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ" phrase where we get real time and space work of

salvation for mankind to receive. This is the aspect of salvation we've been talking about from man's perspective – atonement, regeneration, repentance, believe, etc. All of this work of salvation, by God in eternity past, and man's responding in history present, is revealed and called “the gospel” – the “good news” of salvation's plan now made clear for all the world to see.

Frequently Asked Questions

1- What is “saving faith”?

How about a chart? I don't think I've given you one of those yet in our study of the foundations of Christian Doctrine, and what sort of theology study would it be without a good chart. So, here's a nice little chart I put together to help you see that not all “faith” that is spoken of in the Bible is true, God-given, saving faith.

Daniel Fuller writes: *Genuine saving faith must go beyond the mere intellectual assent concerning biblical doctrines. People must let the implications of these doctrines radically affect their hearts so that they respond positively to God with the obedience and works of faith.* And Augustine famously wrote, *Jesus Christ is not valued at all until He is valued above all.*

Faith that saves is believing in one's *head* the truth claims about God and the work of His Son, it is embracing in one's *heart* that these truths are delightful, and it is living out with one's *will* that God's promises are worth staking everything on. Don't be duped into thinking “just believe” has no concrete object attached to that belief and no life-change connected to it. Trust me, there is plenty of faith out there taking people straight to hell.

2- Why do we use the term “born again”, what does that mean?

Born Again may feel like a “slang” term for being a Christian, or not so technical or theological, but the bottom line is, that's what Jesus called it. In John 3 when Nicodemus the Pharisee came to talk with Jesus in the secrecy of night about who he was, Jesus said “unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” A conversation ensued about how one goes about being born a second time. Of course Nicodemus was thinking physical birth and Jesus was speaking spiritual birth. We are all born in the flesh, but in order to enter the kingdom of God, you must be born of the Spirit. This spiritual birthing is what we call regeneration, being made new, or truly to be ‘born again.’ And the reality is that as hard as it would be to be physically born a second time, it is equally as hard to be born spiritually – with man this is impossible. Jesus is pointing to the spiritual truth that only God can make this happen. I like this quote from J.C. Ryle: *To be born again is, as it were, to enter upon a new existence, to have a new mind, a new heart, new views, new principles, new tastes, new affections, new likings, new dislikings, new fears, new joys, new sorrows, new love to things once hated, new hatred to things once loved, new thoughts of God, and ourselves, and the world, and the life to come, and salvation.*

3- Can someone really lose their salvation or have it taken away?

If salvation is a work of man, then sure ... man can lose it. But if, as the Bible teaches, salvation is a sovereign act of God's divine grace, then no way ... what God has done cannot be undone. Let me deal first with some of the commonly used terms to describe this doctrine. Some call it Eternal Security – not my favorite term, first because it's not in the bible and second because it seems to have the connotation that once I'm "in" I don't have to worry about how I live or what I love. I'm "in" so don't try to tell me how I'm supposed to live. Others call it Assurance of Salvation – a better term in my book as it speaks of the ongoing assuring work of the Spirit that our salvation is forever ours, kept by God. But my favorite would be Perseverance of the Saints. Why? Because 'perseverance' or 'endurance' is a word we find often in the Scripture related to the work of salvation. Listen: "The one who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22; Mark 13:13), and "If we endure we will also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12), and "For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised" (Hebrews 10:36), and "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints" (Revelation 14:12). Proof of genuine faith is faithfulness. It's not that one can't know he or she is saved and be assured of that all his life, but the call of the Gospel is always to endure to the end. How does one endure? God has accomplished His work in the heart and it will not be broken, AND man walks in the Gospel all his days. There really is no such thing as "fire insurance" salvation, the idea that you do something externally to "get in" and then you can live life with self as god and still get to heaven. It's just not to be found in the Bible. John Piper summarizes this well, *The assurance of the believer is not that God will save him even if he stops believing, but that God will keep him believing—God will sustain you in faith, he will make your hope firm and stable to the end. He will cause you to persevere.*

4- I've heard the term "lordship", what's the deal with that ... Isn't the call to become a Christian – "Just believe"?

Big question, I'll try to give a succinct answer. Salvation is by faith alone, through grace alone, by the work of Christ alone ... period. You don't earn any brownie-points for getting in early, no extra credit for longer prayers – everyone comes to Christ the same way ... as a free gift of grace from the Father. Now, when you embrace the Gospel, you embrace God Himself, which means you don't get to pick which titles you want for your God. "Oh, I like Savior, but not Master", or "Father sounds nice, but not Lord." No, the very act of coming to Christ is turning from self, which means you're no longer your own ... "you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19). That means, when you genuinely repent and believe, you are saying "I choose to follow you Jesus!" The term lordship has nothing to do with the act of God justifying the guilty sinner, but everything to do with the transforming work of the Gospel in the life of the sinner. "Just believe" always means "Just follow and obey." "Whoever does not take up his cross and *follow me* is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38). This is not burdensome, it is the most freeing thing you can do to lay down your own life and to take up the easy yoke of the faithful Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

5- Isn't salvation just about eternal life later, why should I follow Jesus now?

Oh friend, the life Jesus brings changes everything! Are you rescued from eternal punishment in hell? Absolutely! But it is so much more in the here and now. I love Jesus' words in John 17:3 – "And this is eternal life, that they know you the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." The Greek word for 'eternal' has two dimensions to it in the original. The first, and most obvious, has to do with *quantity* of life, that is how we normally think of everlasting life ... it last forever and ever and ever and ever and ... you get the picture. Secondly, it has to do with *quality* of life. That is to say *real* life or the *best possible* life is the life of knowing Jesus Christ who was sent by God. Following God is experiencing life as it was meant to be lived. We still groan for more, because the fallen world and these fallen bodies, but man reconciled to his Creator is real, glorious, eternal life indeed. Don't you want that? And want others to have it too?

What Do I Do With This?

In My Head

Think about the great ramifications of the Gospel for your life. Don't be content to just stare at the "tip of the iceberg", get on your scuba gear (and really thick wetsuit) and dive deep and "bask in the massive content" below the surface of the water. Take an aspect of the doctrine of salvation (did I mention yet that we call that soteriology?) each year that you will read about and grow in your knowledge of. Don't talk about salvation in a cheap and trite way as though all it provides is "fire insurance" from hell and then you can live however you want ... this just isn't the gospel of the Bible. Hold these terms we've covered with conviction, and share the grace of God with joy!

In My Heart

Where to start? Oh yeah, the broken record that I am ... WORSHIP! How can you not ponder these great and mighty acts of God and fall in love with Him all over again? How can you not want to know more and more so your intimacy with Him is sweeter and deeper? How can you not want to prayerfully and courageously take the message of the Gospel to your family, community, and world as their only hope and greatest joy? Let's commend the Gospel to everyone with a heart and life that cherishes it as our treasure!

For Further Study

Saved By Grace. Anthony A. Hoekema. Paternoster. 1994.

The Gospel According to Jesus. John MacArthur. Zondervan. 1989.

Saved Without A Doubt. John MacArthur. Chariot Victor. 1992

The Cross And Salvation. Bruce Demarest. Crossway. 2006.

Redemption Accomplished And Applied. John Murray. Eerdmans. 1984.

The Justification of God. John Piper. Baker. 1993.

For Family Discipleship

Questions for Discussion

- (1) What simple, true statements can you make about what salvation is?
- (2) What does mankind need to be saved from?
- (3) How does one receive salvation?

Memory Verse

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is a gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

– Ephesians 2:8-9

Song

The grace song of heaven sends a voice of hope to the world.
Here is God’s Son, given to us.
Who would have thought that He who made the stars in the sky
Would choose a cross for us?

[Chorus]

Thank you for the cross, Lord.
Forgiven we stand, for all the sins of man You have washed away.
Thank you for the cross, Lord.
Forgiven we stand and know You as our King.

The grace song of heaven this we could not find on our own.
Only through Him, we find our hope.
Who would have thought that God so loved the world,
That He gave that which we don’t deserve?

[Chorus]

A Catechism for Young Children

Q. What is a change of heart called?
A. Regeneration.

Q. Who can change a sinner’s heart?
A. The Holy Spirit alone.

Q. What is it to repent?
A. To be sorry for sin, and to hate and forsake it because it is displeasing to God.