

# This We Believe

## “Salvation”



### Statement 6

Statement of faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America

**“We believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only grounds for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit, and thus become children of God.”**



# His Place

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Booklet 6 of 12 in the series, “This we believe” on the Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America and His Place Church in Post Falls, Idaho.

Parts of this publication are taken from the sermon entitled, “Salvation” by Senior Pastor Doug Wieber of His Place Church July 27, 2003 at His Place Church in Post Falls, Idaho.

Tapes and/or CD’s of the sermon, “Salvation” are available at His Place Church by calling 208-777-9654 or toll free at 800-574-1855.

Unless otherwise noted all scripture quotes are from the *New International Version* of the Holy Bible.

We have covered some very significant topics in our series, “This we believe.” First we talked about the Bible being God’s Word, which is obviously very important because God’s Word is where we find out what we need to know about God and ourselves.

Then we looked at who God is, including who Jesus is and who the Holy Spirit is.

In our last chapter we looked at who we are. We commonly make two mistakes when we think about ourselves. One is to minimize or think too lowly of whom we were created to be. We were created in the image of God and designed to reflect the very glory of God. That gives us value and purpose.

The second mistake is to think too highly of who we are. The Bible tells us that as a result of sin we have become totally bankrupt spiritually. We are lost (**Luke 19:10**), condemned (**John 3:18**), under God’s wrath (**John 3:36**), dead in trespasses and sin (**Ephesians 2:1**), unrighteous (**Romans 1:19-32**), having no hope and without God (**Ephesians 2:12**), and enemies of God. That is a bad diagnosis. If we went to a physical doctor and received that kind of diagnosis, we would be making funeral plans!

In the end, it is His diagnosis that matters since it is God who holds the keys to eternity, it is indeed His opinion that matters. The good news is that He is honest about that opinion. It is simply up to us to decide if we will accept His opinion or not.

There is a song entitled, *A Broken Spirit and a Contrite Heart*. Some of the words are: “A broken spirit and a contrite heart, you will not despise. You desire truth in the inmost parts.” That really is where we must come. We have to be “honest to God”.

Until we are able to be honest in our souls about who we are, we will never come to the place where we are broken over our sin, and desperate for a savior, and we won’t be ready to hear the good news.

This brings us to our subject for this booklet—  
Salvation. Article 6 of our Statement Of Faith says,

*“We believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only grounds for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit, and thus become children of God.”*

There are a number of terms used to describe this marvelous transaction that takes place between God and man which provides the means for relationship between a holy God and sinful man to be restored. One of those terms is “salvation”. In some ways salvation is very simple to understand. It is God saving us from our sin. But in some ways this “thing” we call salvation is the most astonishing and mind stretching concept we can consider.

When we think of salvation it is very important to understand that we are indeed saved from something, but we are also saved to something. This thing we call salvation is not just “fire insurance” that you acquire but hope you never have to use. It is a radical life-giving transformation. To one extent or another, the entire Bible is the story of, or explanation of, this great work of God on man’s behalf; so understanding this concept we call salvation is really understanding the entire Bible.

Our task here is to try and summarize some of the various facets of this “salvation” without limiting its magnitude.

## PURPOSE OF SALVATION

One of the major dilemmas is that our usual approach to the Gospel is almost entirely man-centered. To be sure the Bible speaks over and over of God’s amazing love for mankind, but what God does he always does for His glory.

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## QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think it is so difficult for us to admit that we are sinful and need a savior?
2. Why is Jesus the perfect provision for our sin?
3. Is there anything that we can add to what Christ has done for us?
4. Have you personally come to the place of putting your faith in God's gift of Jesus and accepted Him as your personal savior?

God is the creator of the universe and we are the created. He is the King, and we are the subjects. We exist to bring Him glory and to serve Him, not the other way around. The very nature of sin is the insane idea that we somehow get to subjugate God to our desires and He exists to serve us. Even in the often quoted phrase, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life" there can be subtlest twist of the truth to understand it as "God's goal is to make you happy."

God's goal is to bring glory to Himself. He told Moses in **Leviticus 10:3**, *"Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored."* God's utmost purpose for His people, the nation of Israel, was that they would spread His fame to the surrounding nations. In Isaiah we are told that God was calling out a people to the praise of His glory. (**Isaiah 43:7, 21**)

In **Ephesians 1** we read that we too are called out to the praise of His Glory.

*"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."***Ephesians 1:4-6**

*"... in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory."***Ephesians 1:12**

*"... Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."***Ephesians 1:14**

As we begin this great discussion, it is imperative that we begin by understanding God's ultimate purpose in reaching out to save us is to bring glory to His great name. Understanding His purpose then, let's look at His plan.

## PLAN OF SALVATION

It is important to note that mankind's sin did not catch God off guard. In desiring intimacy, God gave mankind free will or choice, understanding that we would choose sin. Knowing that, God has had an eternal plan. It is revealed in the Bible in the pages which have to do with the earliest times of creation. In **Genesis 3:15**, immediately after Adam and Eve's sin we find the first prophecy of the coming savior. Continuing throughout the Old Testament we see the sacrificial system which points ahead to the coming promised Messiah, the perfect lamb. (**Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18, 6:7; 19:22; Numbers 15:25-28**)

Interestingly enough we find that God never intended those sacrifices to remove sin. They were a temporary covering and a continual forecast of the permanent provision to come. (**Leviticus 6:30, 8:15; 2 Chronicles 29:24; 1 Samuel 29:4; Ezekiel 45:15; Hebrews 9-10**)

In the New Testament, Jesus consistently declared and demonstrated that His death was no accident. It was in fact the reason that He came to earth. It was the culmination of God's eternal plan.

Other New Testament writers understood that Christ's sacrificial death was pre-planned as well. (**Acts 2:23, 4:28; 1 Peter 1:20**)

The Bible clearly teaches that before the beginning of time God had a plan for the redemption of sinful men and women. In that plan God made a provision for the problem of sin. (**Matthew 20:28, 26:28; Mark 10:45; John 1:29, 3:16; Romans 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 2:14; 1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 10:4; 1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:18-19, 2:24; 3:18**)

might not realize that. They would lack assurance even though they were totally secure.

It is also important to understand that it is possible to have a sense of assurance without having real security. In other words, it is possible to have a false sense of assurance, primarily because we are basing our salvation on the wrong things. In **Matthew 7:21-23**, Jesus makes it clear that it is very easy for us to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are right with God, when we are not. In **2 Corinthians 13:5** the Apostle Paul encourages his readers to test themselves and see if they really are believers. As we began this chapter, I said that salvation is both simple and incredibly complex. That is true. To understand all the details of what God has done on our behalf and comprehend the depth of its results will take a lifetime of experience and years of poring over his Word.

At the same time, the truth is also very simple—simple enough that a small child can easily comprehend it. Donald Grey Barnhouse has given a great summary to this incredible doctrine of salvation in three short sentences, *“I deserved hell.” “Jesus took my hell.” “There is nothing left for me but heaven.”*<sup>2</sup>

When God saves, he saves completely, absolutely, and eternally. The real issue is, have we individually and by faith appropriated and accepted His salvation.

One of the great results of that power is our security as believers.

## SECURITY

(John 8:1-39; Philippians 1:6; Romans 8:28-30; Hebrews 6:4-6)

Again, let me say that within the EV Free church today there is probably some debate on this issue. However, I believe that since our salvation is based entirely on Christ's finished work our future is guaranteed.

We saw in our study of the Holy Spirit that He is a deposit guaranteeing our future redemption. In **John 10** Jesus describes himself as "the good shepherd who will not lose any of His sheep. In fact, there is double protection from His Father and Him. (**John 8:28-29**)

In essence for our status with God to change, the promises of God and the works of Christ would have to be undone.

## ASSURANCE

Assurance is related but clearly distinct from the doctrine of security. Assurance is the personal experience of one's security. **John** says in his first letter in **chapter 5:13** that his purpose for writing is that we might know that we have eternal life. Understanding our absolute security gives us the assurance that God will indeed never leave us or forsake us. That security is very much like the security of children who know that their parents are committed to each other and to them. It is freeing.

But it is possible for someone to be absolutely secure in their salvation and never relax in the overwhelming love and acceptance they received when they responded to Christ.

Anyone who has accepted the free gift of salvation by faith is secure in what Christ has accomplished, but they

## PROVISION OF SALVATION

God warned Adam and Eve that choosing to disobey would result in death. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23**). In booklet 5 we discussed that both spiritual and physical death are included in that pronouncement. The Bible also tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. (**Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22**)

Because of God's justice, He cannot just wink at the problem of sin. He cannot overlook it and pretend that it doesn't exist. Even we understand that a judge is not just, nor is he good if he overlooks an offense and allows guilty criminals to go free. God's justice and holiness demand that the price of sin be paid.

So God provided a way. He provided the perfect sacrifice in Jesus. Again we see this great truth pictured beforehand in the Old Testament. In **Genesis 22** when Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac, God provided the sacrifice. It was a picture of the sacrificial lamb which God would provide in the future. Jesus is that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Before Jesus was born Mary and Joseph were told to call him Jesus because he would save His people from their sins. When Jesus began His ministry, John the Baptist introduced him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is God's perfect provision for the insurmountable problem of mankind's sin.

Perhaps the most well known verse in all the Bible says it well, **John 3:16**, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes on him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

While God has made the perfect provision for sin, not everyone will be saved. How does a person appropriate or make use of what God has done? What is the process of salvation?

## BY GRACE (God's work)

The grace of God goes far beyond even His mercy. It is the totally unmerited favor of God. He in fact provides the exact opposite of what we deserve. He lavishes His grace on us. (Titus 3:4-7) Because salvation is a total process of God's grace, we can take absolutely no credit for it. At the risk of over analyzing salvation let's look at it as a process. Then we can take a closer look at the parts of that process by which God lavishes His grace on us.

### 1. Predestination/Election

(Proverbs 16:4; John 6:44, 13:18; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:30; Romans 9; Ephesians 1-2; Colossians 3:12; 2 Thesalonians 2:13; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 2:8; Galatians 1:15-16; 2 John 1:13; 1 John 4:19-21; Revelation 17:8)

The Evangelical Free Church does not make a statement about predestination or election, and there are a number of people in the EV Free churches who may or may not believe the doctrine of election. There is room for healthy and hearty discussion. I will attempt here to give you what I believe the Bible teaches about the overwhelming grace of God, and I believe it includes this doctrine of divine election.

Again we see what is clearly taught in the New Testament illustrated in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament God chose Abraham from which to make a nation. He chose Jacob over Esau. The Bible does not give the reasons for God's choices other than his sovereign right to choose, but it does make clear that His choosing eliminates any claim we have to deserve salvation. Romans 9:16 says, *"It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy."*

This doctrine of election does not eliminate our responsibility; rather it emphasizes God's total grace. In the past I have taught rather significantly on this doctrine of

and fully available, but they do no good unless we respond to the provision. We are part of the process.

## THROUGH FAITH (man's response)

While salvation is entirely a work of God, a response is required. Not everyone will be saved. The Bible talks about Christ's sacrifice being sufficient for the whole world. But not everyone will appropriate the gift. That appropriation happens "through faith".

Over 115 times in the New Testament our salvation is said to be appropriated by belief. Some 35 times it is said by faith. (John 1:12, 3:16; Acts 16:31)

The concept of New Testament faith is that of becoming convinced in our minds and stirred in our hearts, to the extent that our wills are moved to respond. Believing is the opposite of doing anything. We realize that there is absolutely nothing we can do, and we accept the free gift of God's son as the only and absolute provision for our personal sin.

There is one last aspect of this amazing salvation that we want to briefly summarize in this discussion.

## POWER OF SALVATION

(Romans 1:16; 6-8; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-26; 2 Corinthians 3:6-13; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:3-5; In Romans 1:16)

Paul says, *"I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for salvation"* (Romans 1:16), and it is not just the power of God to save us from the penalty of sin. It is also the power of God to save us from the current power of sin in our lives and to guarantee the eventual outcome of our salvation, our glorification.

the Old Testament as the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. It is where sinful mankind found mercy from a holy God. (Mark 3:29, 14:21; Romans 1:18, 3:25; Ephesians 5:6; 1 John 2:2; 4:10)

- [We also receive Sanctification](#)

Sanctification is the process of setting something apart for a special purpose. In a sense at the moment of salvation we are set apart as God's children and His people for the purpose of bringing glory to Him. This is what theologians call positional sanctification. (1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:10)

In addition there is what theologians would call experiential sanctification. This is the ongoing growth process by which we are consistently changed into the image of Christ. (Romans 8:28-29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:16; 2 Peter 1:8)

There is also a sense in which we will also ultimately be sanctified or set-apart when Christ takes us home. (Ephesians 5:26-27; 1 John 3:1-3; Jude 24-25) This final sanctification may be considered synonymous with the term glorification.

We will leave that discussion for the chapter on the future events. It is, however, very interesting to note that although these last two aspects are progressive and or even future, they are spoken of as equally accomplished in the life of the believer as the other aspects in the process of salvation are. Romans 8:29-30, *“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”* Since they too are dependant on the grace of God working in our lives, they are seen as equally as accomplished as those things which occurred at the moment of salvation.

But none of these things matter unless and until there is a response on our parts. They are great promises

election. However, I like what Michael Andrus, senior pastor of First Evangelical Free Church of Saint Louis County says. He calls this a skeletal doctrine; meaning that it is very important but not necessarily to be displayed. *“There are generally only two times a skeleton is exhibited—to scare people on Halloween and to teach the experts in medical school. That’s how I view doctrines like this. They’re very important, and the Christian faith would be in bad shape without them. But we shouldn’t show them off all the time; they scare people. Let the experts in seminary discuss them and analyze them; the rest of us can get along famously just knowing they’re there. I don’t want to be known so much as one who is committed to election and predestination and Calvinism; I want to be known as someone who is committed to Jesus Christ and the great truth that whoever believes in him will be saved.”*<sup>1</sup>

In the process of salvation, God's choosing of us is followed by His convicting us.

## 2. Convicting

We saw as we studied the Holy Spirit that one of the things He does is convict. (John 16:8-11) There is a general sense in which the Holy Spirit convicts everyone, but there is also a specific sense in which the Holy Spirit brings a deep sense of personal conviction which I refer to as His “calling” or “convincing”.

## 3. Convincing (calling)

(Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 6:44; Romans 1:1, 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 1:8-12; 2 Peter 1:3-11)

God calls us or woos us to Himself. It is the inner stirring of our spirits by His Spirit that results in us being convinced that what He says about us and about Himself is all true. That convincing results in us responding to His offer of salvation.

#### 4. Regenerating

(John 3; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

At the point that we do respond to God's call, there are a number of things that happen which can be summarized by the word "regeneration". It is also called "salvation" or "being born again". It is here that somehow many miss understanding how great our salvation is. As we said earlier salvation is not just being saved from our sin, but it is also being saved into the very nature and power of God. When we are regenerated, there are a number of things that occur. Over the years there has been great debate about the order in which these things occur. My opinion is that they occur simultaneously and are all part of the overall package we call salvation. They are all part of being born again or recreated spiritually.

#### 5. Reconciliation

(Romans 5:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21)

We are brought into new relationship. In fact the relationship which was broken when Adam and Eve sinned is repaired, and we are reconciled to God.

- [We become part of God's family](#)  
(John 1:12, 3:5-7; Romans 8, 15; Galatians 3:26; 4:5; Ephesians 2:1,19; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Titus 3:5)
- [As part of His family we are given an inheritance.](#)  
(Colossians 2:9-10; Ephesians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:4)
- [We are given citizenship in heaven](#)  
(Ephesians 2:19, 3:15; Philippians 3:20)
- [We become members of a royal priesthood](#)  
(1 Peter 2:5-9; Hebrews)
- [We receive total forgiveness](#)  
(Ephesians 1:7, 4:31-32; Colossians 1:14, 2:13, 3:13; 1 John 1:7-9)
- [We receive Justification](#)  
(Romans 3:24, 5:1,9, 16,17, 8:30-34; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:13; James 2:21)

Justification is a legal term. It is the process whereby we are declared "not guilty" before God. We are justified not because we in any way deserve or earn it. We are justified on the basis of Christ paying our debt. It is very much like our concept of "double jeopardy". We cannot be tried for a crime more than once. Since Christ has paid the penalty for our sin, we are judicially declared "not guilty".

- [We are said to be redeemed](#)  
(1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Galatians 3:13, 4:52; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12-15; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 2 Peter 2:1; Revelation 5:9)

In the New Testament there are really three aspects to the idea of redemption. First, we are said to be bought back or redeemed by the Christ's blood. The first word used in the New Testament means "to pay a price for" or "to be purchased" as in a market place. We find this word used in **Romans 6** and **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**.

The second word is the same root word as the first only a prefix is added that means "out of" or "from". We find this concept in **Galatians 3:13**. This word carries the additional idea of being taken off the market. In other words we have been purchased and are no longer for sale. We often hear the statement, "Everything is for sale for the right price." That is only true if the item is not considered priceless to the owner. We have been purchased by God and are now considered priceless.

One additional term is used that means to be set free. We find this word used in **Ephesians 1:7** and in **1 Peter 1:18-19**. We not only have been purchased by God, and are priceless to Him, but we also have been set free never to be returned to the slave market of sin.

Another thing accomplished in our redemption is propitiation. Propitiation is the satisfaction of God's righteous anger. God's holiness must be satisfied not compromised. As a holy and righteous judge, His judgment and anger at sin are right and must be appeased or propitiated not ignored. Again this New Testament concept is pictured in