



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

BIBLE FOUNDATIONS

What Is Salvation?

A Beginner's Guide to God's Rescue, New Life, and Lasting Hope

The short answer

Salvation is God's gracious work of rescuing sinners from sin, guilt, judgment, corruption, slavery, and death through the life, death, resurrection, and reign of Jesus Christ. Salvation is received through repentance and faith rather than earned through good works. Everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ is forgiven, declared righteous, reconciled to God, given new spiritual life by the Holy Spirit, welcomed into God's family, and promised everlasting life with Him. Salvation begins with God, is accomplished by Jesus, is applied by the Holy Spirit, and is received through faith.

Memory anchor

Salvation is not the reward for becoming good enough. Salvation is God's gift to sinners who trust in Jesus Christ.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 6:23

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Purpose Of This Study

Salvation is one of the most important themes in the Bible. Scripture uses the word to describe God's rescue of people from sin and everything sin has damaged.

Salvation is more than receiving forgiveness or going to heaven after death. It includes being reconciled to God, declared righteous, given new spiritual life, welcomed into God's family, transformed by the Holy Spirit, preserved through faith, raised from the dead, and brought into God's renewed creation.

The purpose of this study is to explain:

- Why salvation is necessary
- Why people cannot save themselves
- Why Jesus is the only Savior
- What Jesus accomplished through His life, death, resurrection, and reign
- How the Holy Spirit applies salvation
- How salvation is received
- What happens when a person is saved
- How salvation changes everyday life
- How assurance and perseverance should be understood
- What Scripture means when it describes salvation as past, present, and future
- What the final completion of salvation will include

The main sections are written for beginners. The "Want to Go Deeper?" section examines several related truths at an intermediate level.

This guide is thorough and may be completed in sections. A seven-day reading plan and a modular study plan are provided near the end.

Salvation At A Glance

God created humanity for life with Him.

Humanity rebelled against God.

Sin brought guilt, corruption, separation, slavery, suffering, and death.

People cannot rescue themselves.

God promised and provided a Savior.

Jesus Christ lived without sin.

Jesus died in the place of sinners.

Jesus rose bodily from the dead.

Jesus ascended and reigns as Lord.

The Holy Spirit gives new spiritual life.

God calls people to repent and trust in Jesus.

Those who trust Christ are forgiven and declared righteous.

Believers are reconciled to God and adopted into His family.

The Holy Spirit begins transforming them into Christ's likeness.

God preserves His people as they continue in faith.

Jesus will return.

The dead will be raised.

Believers will be completely freed from sin and death.

God will dwell with His people in renewed creation forever.

The Journey Of Salvation

Creation

Humanity was created in God's image for life with Him.

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Rebellion

Sin entered the world and damaged every part of human life.

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Separation

Humanity became guilty, corrupted, enslaved, and subject to death.

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Promise

God promised that a Savior would defeat evil and bring restoration.

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Jesus Christ

The eternal Son became truly human without ceasing to be God.

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The Cross

Jesus bore sin's judgment and gave His life as the perfect sacrifice.

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The Resurrection

Jesus defeated death, rose bodily, and was vindicated as Lord.

↓

Grace

God offers salvation as an undeserved gift.

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Repentance And Faith

A sinner turns from sin and self-rule and trusts in Jesus Christ.

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Justification

God forgives and declares the believer righteous because of Christ.

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New Birth

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual life.

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Adoption

God welcomes the believer into His family.

↓

Sanctification

The Holy Spirit increasingly transforms the believer into Christ's likeness.

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Perseverance

God preserves His people and calls them to continue in faith.

↓

Glorification

Believers will be raised, completely freed from sin, and brought into everlasting life with God.

Part One

Why Is Salvation Necessary?

God Created Humanity For Life With Him

The Bible's story begins with God creating a good world.

God created the heavens and the earth. He formed light, land, seas, plants, animals, and every part of the created order. He declared His creation good.

Human beings were created in God's image. This gives every person dignity and value. Human worth does not depend upon intelligence, health, ability, wealth, age, ethnicity, social position, usefulness, or achievement.

Humanity was created to:

- Know God
- Worship God
- Reflect God's character
- Love God and other people
- Care for creation
- Live under God's wise authority
- Enjoy fellowship with Him
- Carry out meaningful work

Human life was designed to flow from dependence upon the Creator. God alone is the source of life, goodness, truth, love, justice, and holiness.

The first chapters of Genesis describe a world without guilt, shame, violence, corruption, disease, or death. Humanity lived in fellowship with God and experienced harmony within creation.

This was the world as God designed it.

Read:

- Genesis 1:1–31
- Genesis 2:7–25
- Psalm 8
- Psalm 100:3
- Acts 17:24–28

Memory Anchor

Human beings were not created for separation from God.

They were created to know Him, reflect Him, and live under His loving rule.

Sin Brought Separation And Death

Genesis 3 records humanity's rebellion against God.

The serpent questioned God's Word, distorted God's character, and promised that independence from God would bring freedom. Adam and Eve distrusted God, rejected His authority, and disobeyed His command.

Their rebellion brought:

- Guilt before God
- Shame and fear
- Broken trust
- Conflict within relationships
- Corruption of human desires
- Pain and suffering
- Disorder within creation
- Exile from God's presence

- Physical death
- Spiritual death

Sin did not remain limited to the first human beings. Romans 5 explains that sin and death entered the human story through Adam.

Every person now enters a world affected by sin and also personally participates in rebellion against God.

Scripture does not teach that people are born morally neutral and become sinners only because of poor examples. Surroundings, experiences, family patterns, trauma, culture, and education strongly influence behavior, but the problem also exists within the human heart.

Jesus taught that evil thoughts, pride, greed, sexual immorality, deceit, envy, slander, and other sins arise from within.

Humanity does not merely need better information. Humanity needs rescue and new life.

Read:

- Genesis 3:1–24
- Psalm 51:5
- Isaiah 53:6
- Mark 7:20–23
- Romans 3:9–23
- Romans 5:12–21
- Ephesians 2:1–3

What Is Sin?

Sin is any thought, desire, attitude, word, or action that rejects God's character, commands, or rightful authority.

Sin includes doing what God forbids and failing to do what God requires.

Scripture describes sin as:

Lawlessness

Sin rejects God's commands and treats personal desire as the highest authority.

Rebellion

Sin resists God's rule and refuses His rightful place as Creator and King.

Unbelief

Sin distrusts God's character, wisdom, promises, and Word.

Idolatry

Sin gives something created the devotion, trust, love, or obedience that belongs to God.

Falling Short

Sin fails to reflect God's holiness, love, truth, and glory.

Spiritual Slavery

Sin gains influence over desires, habits, choices, and relationships.

Spiritual Death

Sin separates people from the life and fellowship found in God.

Sin includes obvious acts such as murder, abuse, adultery, theft, fraud, oppression, and violence. It also includes pride, greed, envy, hatred, hypocrisy, lust, unforgiveness, selfishness, dishonesty, idolatry, and refusal to love God.

Sin is more serious than making a mistake. A mistake may result from limited knowledge or human weakness. Sin involves moral guilt before God.

Read:

- Isaiah 59:1–2
- Matthew 5:21–30
- Romans 1:18–32
- Romans 3:10–23
- James 4:17
- 1 John 3:4

What Does Sin Do?

Sin affects every part of human life.

Sin Brings Guilt

God's law has been broken. Guilt is not merely an uncomfortable feeling. It describes an objective condition before God.

A person may feel innocent while remaining guilty. Another person may feel deeply ashamed after receiving forgiveness. Feelings can be powerful, but God's judgment is based upon truth.

Sin Corrupts

Sin affects thoughts, desires, decisions, relationships, cultures, communities, and institutions. It bends the human heart away from God.

This does not mean every person is as evil as possible. It means no part of human life remains untouched by sin.

Sin Enslaves

People may recognize that a pattern is destructive while repeatedly returning to it.

Sin promises freedom but produces bondage. It may begin as a choice and grow into a controlling habit.

Sin Separates

Sin disrupts fellowship with God, the source of spiritual life. Humanity cannot repair this separation through personal effort.

Sin Brings Suffering

Not every individual hardship is caused by a specific personal sin. Jesus rejected the assumption that every sufferer must have committed a particular offense.

However, all suffering exists within a world damaged by sin. Disease, injustice, conflict, grief, decay, and death were not part of humanity's original fellowship with God.

Sin Brings Death

Physical death is part of sin's curse. Scripture also warns of spiritual death and final judgment.

Sin Affects Creation

Romans 8 describes creation as subjected to frustration and groaning as it awaits liberation.

Humanity therefore needs more than education, encouragement, moral improvement, political reform, financial stability, or a second chance.

Humanity needs divine rescue.

Read:

- Genesis 3:14–24
- Isaiah 59:1–2
- John 8:34–36
- Romans 6:16–23
- Romans 8:18–25
- Ephesians 2:1–3
- Hebrews 9:27
- Revelation 20:11–15

Are Some People Better Than Others?

People do not commit identical sins or cause equal amounts of earthly harm.

Scripture recognizes meaningful differences between:

- Wisdom and foolishness
- Kindness and cruelty
- Justice and oppression
- Faithfulness and betrayal
- Truthfulness and deceit
- Self-control and destructive behavior

A generous person may produce more earthly good than a violent person. An honest leader may serve a community better than a corrupt one. These differences matter.

However, no person meets God's perfect standard.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Romans 3:23

Comparing one person with another does not remove guilt before God.

A person may appear moral, generous, respectable, or religious while still resisting God, trusting personal goodness, or withholding worship from Him.

The gospel does not begin by dividing humanity into "good people" and "bad people." It reveals that every person needs God's mercy.

There are not some people who need a little help and others who need full rescue. Every sinner needs a Savior.

Why Can People Not Save Themselves?

Human beings can perform acts of kindness, show courage, pursue justice, repair certain wrongs, learn new habits, and make meaningful changes.

These actions matter. They may bless other people and improve earthly life.

They cannot remove guilt before a holy God or produce a righteous standing with Him.

A person who has broken God's law cannot become innocent by performing unrelated good deeds afterward.

A judge does not dismiss serious guilt because the guilty person has also been generous, hardworking, or polite. Justice must address the offense.

Religious activity cannot purchase salvation either.

The following practices can be valuable when they flow from genuine faith:

- Prayer
- Church attendance
- Baptism
- Bible reading
- Giving
- Serving
- Fasting
- Moral discipline
- Helping people in need

None can erase sin or place God in a person's debt.

The law reveals God's standards and exposes sin, but it cannot transform the heart or provide forgiveness.

Scripture teaches:

- No one is righteous by personal merit
- Everyone has sinned
- The law reveals sin but cannot cure it
- Salvation cannot be earned
- Boasting is excluded

- God must take the initiative

Ephesians 2:8–10 gives the proper order.

Salvation is received by grace through faith, not earned by works. Believers are then created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Good works are the fruit of salvation, not the price of salvation.

Read:

- Psalm 49:7–9
- Isaiah 64:6
- Romans 3:19–28
- Galatians 2:15–21
- Ephesians 2:8–10
- Philippians 3:4–9
- Titus 3:3–7

Key Takeaway

Good works matter, but they cannot save.

God does not save people because their works are good.

God saves people so that, by His grace, their lives may begin producing good works.

Part Two

God Is The Author Of Salvation

Salvation Begins With God

The Bible does not present God as reluctantly persuaded to show mercy.

Salvation flows from God's character, purpose, and love.

God is:

Holy

God is completely pure and separate from evil.

Righteous

God always does what is right.

Just

God judges evil truthfully and fairly.

Loving

God shows faithful, self-giving goodness.

Merciful

God shows compassion toward those in misery and need.

Gracious

God gives kindness that cannot be earned.

Patient

God gives time and calls sinners to repentance.

Faithful

God keeps every promise.

Sovereign

God rules over creation and accomplishes His purposes.

Powerful

God is able to save completely.

Salvation begins with God's initiative.

The Father planned and sent.

The Son accomplished redemption.

The Holy Spirit gives new life and applies Christ's saving work.

Salvation is the unified work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Read:

- John 3:16–17
- Romans 5:6–11
- 2 Corinthians 5:18–19
- Ephesians 1:3–14
- Titus 3:4–7
- 1 Peter 1:1–5

Memory Anchor

God did not wait for sinners to find a way back to Him.

God came to rescue sinners who could not rescue themselves.

Do God'S Love And Justice Conflict?

No.

God's love does not require Him to ignore evil, and His justice does not prevent Him from showing mercy.

A God who never judged cruelty, oppression, abuse, deceit, exploitation, and violence would not be truly good.

Victims of injustice need the assurance that evil matters and that God sees every wrong.

At the same time, if God judged every sinner immediately and without mercy, no one could stand before Him.

At the cross, God's justice and mercy meet.

Jesus bore sin's judgment so that God could remain just while declaring believers righteous.

Salvation does not pretend that sin is unimportant. The cross reveals both the seriousness of sin and the greatness of God's love.

The Father did not stop being loving in order to judge sin. The Son was not an unwilling victim. The Father sent the Son in love, and the Son willingly gave Himself.

The cross was the united saving work of the triune God.

Read:

- Exodus 34:6–7
- Psalm 85:10
- Isaiah 53:4–6
- John 3:16
- Romans 3:21–26
- Romans 5:8
- 1 John 4:9–10

Salvation Was God'S Plan

The cross was not an emergency response to an unexpected failure.

Before the foundation of the world, God purposed to bring salvation through Christ.

Scripture gradually revealed this plan through:

- Promises
- Covenants

- Sacrifices
- Priests
- Kings
- Prophets
- Acts of rescue
- The temple
- The Passover
- The suffering servant
- The promised new covenant

After humanity's first rebellion, God promised that the offspring of the woman would defeat the serpent.

God later promised Abraham that blessing would reach the nations through his offspring.

The exodus demonstrated God's power to rescue people from slavery.

The Passover sacrifice showed that deliverance required a God-provided substitute.

The sacrificial system taught that sin brings death and that atonement requires sacrifice.

The prophets promised a righteous King, a suffering Servant, a new covenant, forgiveness, transformed hearts, the Holy Spirit, resurrection, and restored creation.

These promises and patterns reached their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

This does not make human sin morally innocent. Those who rejected and crucified Jesus acted wickedly and remained responsible.

At the same time, God accomplished His redemptive purpose through those events.

Read:

- Genesis 3:15
- Genesis 12:1–3
- Exodus 12:1–32
- Isaiah 52:13–53:12
- Jeremiah 31:31–34
- Ezekiel 36:25–27
- Acts 2:22–24
- Acts 4:27–28
- Ephesians 1:3–10
- 1 Peter 1:18–21

God'S Rescue Plan Through Scripture

Creation

God created humanity for life with Him.

Fall

Humanity rebelled, bringing sin and death.

Promise

God promised a Deliverer.

Covenant

God formed a people and revealed His saving promises.

Exodus

God rescued Israel from slavery.

Law

God revealed His holiness and humanity's sin.

Sacrifice

God taught that atonement required a substitute.

Kingdom

God promised a righteous King from David's line.

Prophets

God promised forgiveness, new hearts, the Spirit, and restoration.

Jesus

The eternal Son became human and fulfilled God's promises.

Cross

Jesus bore sin's judgment.

Resurrection

Jesus defeated death.

Ascension

Jesus was enthroned as Lord.

Spirit

The Holy Spirit gives new life and forms God's people.

Church

The gospel is proclaimed to the nations.

Return

Jesus will judge evil and rescue His people completely.

New Creation

God will dwell with His people forever.

Part Three

Jesus Christ Accomplished Salvation

Why Is Jesus The Only Savior?

Jesus is uniquely qualified to save because He is fully God and fully human.

Jesus is not merely:

- A moral teacher
- A prophet
- A spiritual example
- A religious founder
- A political reformer
- One savior among many

Jesus is:

- The eternal Word
- The Son of God
- The promised Messiah
- The descendant of David
- The rightful King
- The image of the invisible God
- The Creator and Sustainer of all things
- The Savior of the world
- The Lord before whom every knee will bow

The title Christ is not Jesus' last name. It means "Anointed One" and corresponds to the Hebrew title Messiah.

As truly human, Jesus could represent humanity, obey where humanity failed, suffer, and die.

As truly God, His saving work has complete and everlasting worth. He reveals the Father perfectly and possesses authority over sin, death, judgment, and eternal life.

Jesus is the one mediator between God and humanity.

This truth should produce gratitude, humility, worship, and loving witness rather than arrogance.

Read:

- Matthew 1:20–23
- John 1:1–18
- John 8:58
- John 14:6
- Acts 4:12
- Philippians 2:5–11
- Colossians 1:15–20
- 1 Timothy 2:5–6
- Hebrews 2:14–18

What Is The Incarnation?

The incarnation is the truth that the eternal Son of God took on a true human nature without ceasing to be God.

Jesus did not merely appear human. He became truly human.

He experienced:

- Hunger
- Thirst
- Weariness
- Grief
- Pain
- Temptation
- Rejection
- Suffering
- Death

Yet Jesus remained without sin.

Jesus became human in order to:

- Reveal God
- Fulfill God's promises
- Represent humanity
- Live in perfect obedience
- Bear the judgment sinners deserve
- Defeat sin, death, and the devil
- Become a merciful and faithful High Priest
- Bring people into God's family
- Restore what humanity's rebellion damaged

Because Jesus is truly human, He can represent human beings.

Because Jesus is truly God, His saving work has complete and everlasting value.

Read:

- John 1:1–18
- Romans 8:3
- Philippians 2:5–8
- Hebrews 2:14–18
- Hebrews 4:14–16

Jesus Lived The Life Humanity Failed To Live

Jesus lived in perfect obedience to the Father.

He:

- Resisted temptation
- Loved God completely
- Loved others faithfully
- Spoke truth
- Showed mercy
- Defended the vulnerable
- Honored Scripture
- Submitted to the Father's will
- Fulfilled righteousness
- Remained without sin

Jesus did not need salvation from personal sin.

His sinlessness matters because He:

- Did not deserve judgment for personal guilt
- Was qualified to offer Himself for sinners
- Fulfilled the righteousness humanity lacked
- Became the perfect example of faithful human life
- Obeyed where Adam and Israel had failed
- Served as the righteous representative of His people

Salvation involves more than the removal of guilt. Believers also need a righteous standing before God.

Jesus is the righteous representative of those who trust in Him.

Read:

- Matthew 3:13–17
- Matthew 4:1–11
- John 8:29
- Romans 5:18–19
- 2 Corinthians 5:21
- Hebrews 4:14–16
- 1 Peter 2:21–24

Jesus Died For Sinners

Jesus' crucifixion was not an accident or the failure of His mission.

It was central to God's saving plan.

Jesus said that He came to give His life as a ransom for many.

At the Last Supper, He explained that His blood would be poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

The apostles proclaimed:

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

1 Corinthians 15:3

Jesus willingly gave His life.

Human authorities acted wickedly in condemning Him, yet God used their actions to accomplish His redemptive purpose.

Jesus did not die because He lacked power to escape. He gave His life willingly in obedience to the Father and love for sinners.

Read:

- Isaiah 52:13–53:12
- Mark 10:32–45
- Matthew 26:26–29

- John 10:11–18
- Acts 2:22–24
- Romans 3:21–26
- Romans 5:6–11
- 1 Corinthians 15:1–4
- 1 Peter 3:18

What Did Jesus Accomplish On The Cross?

The Bible uses several pictures to explain the saving work of Jesus.

No single picture exhausts the meaning of the cross. These truths belong together.

Substitution

Jesus suffered in the place of sinners.

“He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.”

Isaiah 53:5

Jesus bore the judgment that sinners deserve.

Sacrifice

The Old Testament sacrificial system taught that sin brings death and that atonement requires a God-provided sacrifice.

Those sacrifices pointed forward to Jesus, the perfect and final sacrifice.

Propitiation

God’s righteous judgment against sin was satisfied through Christ’s sacrifice.

The cross did not persuade an unloving Father to become merciful. The Father sent the Son in love, and the Son willingly offered Himself.

Redemption

Redemption describes freedom secured through the payment of a price.

Through His blood, Jesus frees people from slavery to sin and brings them under His gracious rule.

Reconciliation

Sin created hostility and separation between humanity and God.

Through Christ, former enemies are brought into peace and relationship with God.

Justification

To justify means to declare righteous.

God forgives the believer’s sins and grants a right standing because of Christ.

Victory

At the cross and resurrection, Jesus defeated sin, death, the devil, and hostile spiritual powers.

Covenant

Jesus established the promised new covenant.

Through Him:

- Sins are forgiven
- God’s law is written upon transformed hearts
- The Holy Spirit dwells within God’s people
- People from every nation are gathered into one family

Example

Jesus demonstrated self-giving love, humility, faithfulness, and obedience.

His followers are called to walk in His steps. However, His death was more than an example. It was a saving sacrifice that sinners could never provide for themselves.

Sufficiency

Jesus' sacrifice does not need to be repeated, supplemented, or completed by human merit.

His saving work is sufficient.

Read:

- Romans 3:23–26
- Romans 5:6–11
- Galatians 3:13
- Ephesians 1:7
- Ephesians 2:13–18
- Colossians 2:13–15
- Hebrews 9:11–15
- Hebrews 10:10–14
- 1 John 2:1–2

Key Takeaway

Jesus did not merely make salvation possible for people who could finish the work.

Jesus accomplished the saving work that sinners could never accomplish.

Did The Father Stop Loving The Son At The Cross?

No.

The cross was the united saving work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Father loved the world and sent the Son.

The Son willingly laid down His life.

Hebrews 9:14 says that Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit.

Jesus truly bore judgment and experienced the horror of sin's curse.

His cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" points to Psalm 22, a psalm that begins in suffering and ends in vindication and worldwide worship.

The cross should not be described as a conflict within God.

It displays the unified love, justice, wisdom, mercy, and holiness of the triune God.

Jesus Rose From The Dead

God raised Jesus bodily from the dead on the third day.

The resurrection was not:

- The survival of Jesus' influence
- A symbolic expression of hope
- A private spiritual experience
- A legend that developed centuries later
- A return to ordinary mortal life

The tomb was empty, and the risen Jesus appeared to His followers in a real, transformed body.

He could be seen and touched.

He spoke.

He ate.

He invited His disciples to examine His wounds.

His resurrection body was physical but no longer subject to decay and death.

Read:

- Matthew 28:1–10

- Luke 24:1–49
- John 20:19–31
- Acts 1:1–11
- 1 Corinthians 15:1–8

Why Does The Resurrection Matter?

The resurrection demonstrates that:

- Jesus is the Son of God and promised Messiah
- His sacrifice was accepted
- Death has been defeated
- Jesus is alive
- Jesus reigns as Lord
- Believers are justified
- Believers receive new spiritual life
- The Holy Spirit has been poured out
- Future bodily resurrection is certain
- God's new creation has begun
- Jesus will return to judge and restore the world

Without the resurrection, the Christian message collapses.

Paul wrote that if Christ had not been raised, Christian faith would be futile and believers would remain in their sins.

Salvation depends upon both the cross and the resurrection.

Jesus was delivered over because of sins and raised for the believer's justification.

Read:

- Acts 2:22–36
- Romans 1:1–4
- Romans 4:23–25
- Romans 6:4–11
- 1 Corinthians 15:12–28
- 1 Peter 1:3–5

A Beginner'S Summary Of The Historical Evidence

The resurrection cannot be tested in a laboratory because it is a claim about a unique event in history.

It can be investigated through historical evidence.

Jesus Was Crucified And Died

Jesus' death by Roman crucifixion is reported in all four Gospels. Crucifixion was designed to produce suffering, humiliation, and death.

The Tomb Was Found Empty

All four Gospels report the empty tomb.

Women were presented as the first witnesses. In that culture, inventing women as the primary discoverers would have been an unlikely choice if the story had been created merely to sound persuasive.

The empty-tomb message was proclaimed in the same region where Jesus had been buried.

Many People Believed They Encountered The Risen Jesus

The Gospels and New Testament letters report appearances to individuals and groups, including:

- Mary Magdalene
- Peter
- The Twelve
- James
- More than five hundred people at one time
- Paul

The Resurrection Message Began Very Early

First Corinthians 15:3–7 preserves a summary of the gospel that Paul had previously received.

It declares that Christ died, was buried, was raised, and appeared to witnesses.

This message did not arise centuries after Jesus. It appeared at the beginning of the Christian movement.

The Disciples Were Transformed

The disciples moved from fear and confusion to publicly proclaiming that Jesus had risen.

Willingness to suffer does not by itself prove that a belief is true. It does strongly suggest that the disciples sincerely believed they had encountered the risen Jesus.

Former Skeptics Became Witnesses

James, a brother of Jesus, did not believe in Him during Jesus' public ministry but later became a leader in the Jerusalem church.

Paul persecuted Christians before becoming one of the resurrection's most influential witnesses.

Historical evidence does not force faith or remove every possible question.

It does show that belief in the resurrection was not a legend that slowly developed long after the events.

The Christian conclusion is that God truly raised Jesus from the dead.

Jesus Ascended And Reigns

After appearing to His disciples, Jesus ascended to the Father and was enthroned as Lord.

The risen Jesus now:

- Reigns over creation
- Intercedes for believers
- Gives the Holy Spirit
- Builds His church
- Directs the mission of His people
- Rules over spiritual powers
- Saves completely those who come to God through Him
- Prepares for His return

Salvation is not merely based on something Jesus did in the past.

It also rests upon the present ministry of the living, reigning Lord.

Read:

- Acts 1:1–11
- Acts 2:32–36
- Romans 8:31–34
- Ephesians 1:19–23
- Hebrews 7:23–28

Will Jesus Return?

Yes.

At His return:

- Evil will be judged
- The dead will be raised
- God's people will be fully transformed
- Creation will be renewed
- Every wrong will be addressed
- Death will be defeated completely
- God will dwell with His people forever

Christian hope is not wishful thinking.

It rests upon the promise of the risen King who will return.

Read:

- Acts 1:9–11
- Acts 17:30–31
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18
- Titus 2:11–14
- Revelation 21:1–5

Part Four

The Holy Spirit Applies Salvation

Who Is The Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, energy, influence, or symbol.

He is fully God and personally active in:

- Creation
- Revelation
- Conviction
- New birth
- Sanctification
- Prayer
- Worship
- Spiritual gifts
- Mission
- Resurrection

The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus and applies Christ's saving work to believers.

The Father planned salvation.

The Son accomplished salvation.

The Holy Spirit applies salvation.

These are not three separate plans. Salvation is the unified work of the one true God.

Read:

- John 14:15–26
- John 15:26
- John 16:7–15
- Acts 5:3–4
- 1 Corinthians 2:10–16
- 2 Corinthians 3:17–18

What Is Conviction?

The Holy Spirit exposes the truth about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Conviction is more than:

- Feeling embarrassed
- Being caught
- Fearing consequences
- Regretting a damaged reputation
- Feeling temporarily emotional

Conviction brings truthful awareness of guilt and need before God.

Healthy conviction points toward:

- Repentance
- Christ
- Forgiveness
- Restoration
- Obedience

Condemnation without hope may drive a person to hide, despair, or believe that mercy is impossible. The Holy Spirit's conviction reveals sin honestly while directing the sinner toward the Savior.

Read:

- John 16:7–11
- Acts 2:36–41
- 2 Corinthians 7:8–11

What Does It Mean To Be Born Again?

Jesus taught that a person must be born again, or born from above, to enter God's kingdom.

Nicodemus was religious, educated, respected, and morally serious. Jesus still told him that he needed new birth.

Religious knowledge and outward behavior could not produce the spiritual life he lacked.

Physical birth brings physical life.

Spiritual birth is the Holy Spirit's work of giving life to someone who was spiritually dead.

This new birth is also called regeneration.

Regeneration includes:

- New spiritual life
- A changed relationship with God
- New desires
- A growing ability to understand spiritual truth
- A new direction of life
- The beginning of transformation
- Entrance into God's kingdom

Being born again does not mean becoming instantly mature or sinless.

It means that God has begun a genuinely new work within the person.

Read:

- Ezekiel 36:25–27
- John 3:1–8
- Ephesians 2:1–5
- Titus 3:4–7
- 1 Peter 1:22–25

Memory Anchor

Christianity is not merely an improved old life.

The Holy Spirit gives new life.

The Holy Spirit Dwells Within Believers

Every person who belongs to Christ receives the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit:

- Unites believers to Christ
- Assures them of adoption
- Helps them understand Scripture
- Produces spiritual fruit
- Gives strength against sin
- Guides through God's truth
- Helps in prayer
- Gives gifts for serving others
- Empowers witness
- Builds unity within the church
- Guarantees the promised inheritance
- Will participate in the resurrection of believers

The presence of the Spirit does not guarantee a life without struggle, temptation, grief, weakness, questions, or suffering.

It guarantees that believers are not left alone and that God will continue His transforming work.

Read:

- Romans 8:9–17
- Romans 8:26–27
- 1 Corinthians 6:19–20
- 1 Corinthians 12:4–13
- Galatians 5:16–25
- Ephesians 1:13–14

Part Five

How Is Salvation Received?

Salvation Is By Grace

Grace is God's undeserved favor and saving kindness.

Salvation begins with grace, continues by grace, and will be completed by grace.

Grace means:

- Salvation cannot be earned
- Forgiveness cannot be purchased
- No person can boast
- God receives repentant sinners
- Past failure does not exceed Christ's sufficiency
- Religious achievement does not create a higher standing
- Obedience follows salvation rather than causing it
- God's gift depends upon His goodness rather than human worthiness

Grace is free to the recipient, but it was costly.

Jesus gave His life to accomplish salvation.

Grace does not mean that sin is unimportant. Grace reveals how serious sin is because the cross was necessary.

Grace also trains believers to reject ungodliness and live in a way that honors God.

Read:

- Romans 3:23–24
- Romans 5:15–21
- Romans 11:6
- Ephesians 2:4–10
- 2 Timothy 1:8–10
- Titus 2:11–14

Salvation Is Received Through Faith

Faith is trusting Jesus Christ and relying upon His saving work.

Saving faith includes:

Knowledge

A person hears and begins to understand the message about Jesus.

Faith is not trust in an undefined spiritual feeling. It has content.

The gospel explains who Jesus is, what He accomplished, and why salvation is needed.

Agreement

A person recognizes that the message is true.

Agreement alone is not the full meaning of saving faith. A person may know Christian teaching without personally relying on Christ.

Trust

A person relies upon Jesus rather than:

- Personal goodness
- Religious performance
- Family background
- Church membership
- Baptism
- Intelligence
- Sincerity
- Moral improvement
- Another spiritual path
- A past emotional experience

Faith is not valuable because it is emotionally strong.

Its value rests in its object: Jesus Christ.

A trembling faith in a sufficient Savior is more secure than strong confidence in an inadequate foundation.

Read:

- John 1:12–13
- John 3:14–18
- Acts 16:30–31
- Romans 4:1–8
- Romans 10:9–13
- Galatians 2:16
- Ephesians 2:8–9

What Is Repentance?

Repentance is a Spirit-enabled change of mind and direction concerning God, sin, and Jesus Christ.

Repentance includes:

- Recognizing sin truthfully
- Grieving sin as rebellion against God
- Abandoning excuses
- Turning from self-rule
- Turning toward God
- Seeking mercy
- Desiring to follow Jesus
- Beginning a changed course of life

Repentance is not:

- Becoming sinless before coming to Christ
- Paying God back
- Punishing oneself
- Earning forgiveness through sorrow
- Feeling bad without changing direction
- Repairing life completely before receiving grace

Repentance means abandoning the defense of sin and turning toward God for mercy.

Faith and repentance belong together.

Faith turns toward Christ in trust.

Repentance turns away from sin and self-rule.

Neither earns salvation. Both describe the proper response to God's grace.

Read:

- Mark 1:14–15
- Luke 24:46–47
- Acts 2:37–41
- Acts 20:20–21
- 2 Corinthians 7:9–11
- 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10

Is Repentance A Work That Earns Salvation?

No.

Repentance does not purchase forgiveness.

A repentant person comes empty-handed, acknowledging the inability to self-rescue.

Scripture describes repentance as something God grants.

This does not remove human responsibility. God genuinely calls people to repent.

It means that even the ability to turn toward God is evidence of grace.

What Does It Mean To Confess Jesus As Lord?

Confessing Jesus as Lord means acknowledging His:

- True identity
- Divine authority
- Resurrection
- Kingship
- Rightful claim over life

This confession is more than speaking a phrase.

It expresses faith in the risen King and a willingness to follow Him.

No person obeys Jesus perfectly after conversion.

Genuine faith does, however, begin a new direction of allegiance to Christ.

Jesus is not received merely as protection from judgment while personal control remains untouched.

He is Savior and Lord.

How Does Someone Respond To The Gospel?

A genuine response includes:

- Acknowledging God as Creator and rightful King
- Admitting personal sin and guilt
- Recognizing the inability to earn salvation
- Believing that Jesus is the Son of God
- Believing that Jesus died for sinners
- Believing that God raised Jesus from the dead
- Trusting Christ's completed saving work
- Turning from sin and self-rule
- Confessing Jesus as Lord
- Beginning a life of following Him

Salvation does not require advanced theological knowledge.

A person may still have many questions.

The essential issue is whether trust is placed in the biblical Jesus and His saving work.

Does A Prayer Save?

No particular prayer, formula, aisle, date, altar call, emotional experience, or arrangement of words saves a person.

Jesus saves.

Prayer can express genuine faith and repentance.

A sincere prayer may include:

- Confession of sin
- A request for mercy
- Trust in Jesus' death and resurrection
- Surrender to Jesus as Lord
- Gratitude for grace
- A request for strength to follow Him

The words are not a spiritual transaction.

The essential response is genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

A Sample Prayer Of Response

Holy God,

Sin has brought guilt and separation, and no amount of personal effort can remove that guilt.

Thank You for sending Jesus Christ, who lived without sin, died for sinners, and rose from the dead.

Mercy and forgiveness are needed.

Trust is placed in Jesus alone as Savior and Lord.

Please give new life, cleanse from sin, and lead this life in obedience to You.

Amen.

This prayer is not a formula.

Jesus saves everyone who genuinely comes to Him in repentance and faith.

Is Baptism How Salvation Is Received?

Baptism is commanded by Jesus and closely connected with conversion throughout the New Testament.

It publicly identifies a believer with:

- Jesus Christ
- His death and resurrection
- His people
- The new life of discipleship

Baptism pictures:

- Cleansing
- Burial with Christ
- Death to the old life
- Resurrection to new life
- Entrance into the visible Christian community

Christians agree that baptism is important.

Faithful traditions differ concerning:

- Its timing
- Its method
- Its recipients
- Its precise relationship to grace
- Its relationship to conversion
- Its connection with church membership
- Its relationship to covenant promises

Baptism should never be treated casually.

Neither should the outward act be trusted apart from personal faith in Christ.

The saving foundation is Jesus Christ.

Baptism is a God-given expression of identification with Him and should be received within the teaching and practice of a faithful Christian community.

A fuller examination belongs in the separate study on baptism.

Can Someone Be Saved Without Understanding Every Doctrine?

Yes.

A person does not need to understand every theological term before trusting Christ.

The criminal crucified beside Jesus had very limited time and knowledge. He recognized Jesus' innocence and kingship, turned toward Him, and received a promise of life with Christ.

However, saving faith must be directed toward the true Jesus.

A different Jesus, a denial of the resurrection, or trust in personal merit changes the message.

Growth in understanding should continue after conversion.

Faith begins with real trust and grows through Scripture, prayer, Christian fellowship, teaching, and obedience.

Part Six

What Happens When A Person Is Saved?

Salvation Includes Many Blessings

The Bible uses several words to describe what God does when He saves.

These words are not competing explanations.

Together they reveal the richness of salvation.

Salvation includes:

- Forgiveness
- Justification
- Reconciliation
- Redemption
- Regeneration
- Adoption
- Union with Christ
- The gift of the Holy Spirit
- Deliverance from sin's rule
- Citizenship in God's kingdom
- Sanctification
- Perseverance
- Glorification
- Life in renewed creation

Forgiveness

God forgives the believer's sins because Christ bore their judgment.

Forgiveness means guilt is no longer held against the believer.

It does not mean:

- Sin was harmless
- Justice was ignored
- Earthly consequences automatically disappear
- Repentance is unnecessary
- Harm never needs to be repaired

Forgiveness means Christ fully addressed the believer's guilt before God.

God's forgiveness provides the foundation for honest confession.

Believers do not need to hide their failures or pretend to be righteous on their own.

Read:

- Psalm 32:1–5
- Psalm 103:8–12

- Acts 10:43
- Ephesians 1:7
- Colossians 2:13–14
- 1 John 1:8–2:2

Justification

Justification is God's declaration that a believer has a righteous standing before Him because of Christ.

Justification includes:

- The forgiveness of sins
- Freedom from condemnation
- A right standing with God
- Christ's righteousness counted to the believer
- Peace with God

Justification is not a gradual process of becoming morally perfect.

It is a legal declaration based on Christ's work and received through faith.

A helpful distinction is:

Justification changes the believer's standing before God.

Sanctification changes the believer's character and conduct over time.

Justification is complete.

Sanctification is ongoing.

The believer's acceptance with God rests upon Christ rather than fluctuating spiritual performance.

Read:

- Romans 3:21–28
- Romans 4:1–8
- Romans 5:1–2
- Romans 8:1
- 1 Corinthians 1:30
- Galatians 2:15–21
- Philippians 3:8–9

Memory Anchor

Justification does not mean that God pretends sinners never sinned.

It means Christ bore their guilt, and God grants them a righteous standing because they belong to Him.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the restoration of peace and relationship between God and sinners.

Sin produces hostility and separation.

Through Christ, former enemies are brought near and welcomed into fellowship with God.

Reconciliation changes the believer's relationship with God.

It also begins reshaping relationships with other people.

Those who have received peace with God are called to pursue:

- Forgiveness
- Humility
- Truth
- Justice
- Repaired relationships
- Peace where possible
- Love across social and cultural divisions

Reconciliation with God does not mean every broken human relationship can be immediately restored.

Safety, wisdom, accountability, boundaries, and justice may still be necessary.

It does mean that God begins creating a new people whose relationships reflect His grace.

Read:

- Romans 5:6–11
- 2 Corinthians 5:17–21
- Ephesians 2:13–18
- Colossians 1:19–23

Redemption

Redemption describes freedom secured through the payment of a price.

Jesus gave His life to free people from:

- Guilt
- Slavery to sin
- The curse of the law
- Bondage to fear
- The dominion of darkness
- Final destruction

Believers are not redeemed to become independent from all authority.

They are freed from cruel masters so they may belong to Christ and live under His good rule.

Christian freedom is not permission to follow every desire.

It is freedom to know God, love others, resist sin, and live as humanity was created to live.

Read:

- Mark 10:45
- Romans 6:15–23
- Galatians 3:13
- Ephesians 1:7
- Colossians 1:13–14
- Titus 2:11–14
- 1 Peter 1:18–19

Regeneration

Regeneration is the Holy Spirit's act of giving new spiritual life.

This is also called being born again.

Regeneration does not merely add religious interest to an unchanged heart.

God gives:

- New life
- New desires
- A new relationship with Him
- A new ability to respond to truth
- A new direction
- A new identity

The believer does not become instantly mature.

However, something genuinely new has begun.

Read:

- John 3:1–8
- Ephesians 2:1–5
- Titus 3:4–7
- 1 Peter 1:22–25

Adoption

God does more than pardon believers.

He welcomes them into His family.

Adoption means believers:

- Become God's children
- Receive access to the Father
- Are loved as children
- Are disciplined as children
- Belong to God's household
- Receive the Holy Spirit of adoption
- Share an inheritance with Christ
- Become brothers and sisters within God's family

Adoption is not based upon:

- Natural ancestry
- Social position
- Personal merit
- Religious heritage
- Earthly family experience

It is received through relationship with Jesus, the eternal Son.

Some people have experienced painful or abusive earthly relationships. The fatherhood of God should not be measured by human failure.

God is the perfect Father:

- Holy
- Loving
- Faithful
- Patient
- Wise
- Protective
- Truthful
- Just

Read:

- John 1:12–13
- Romans 8:14–17
- Galatians 4:4–7
- Ephesians 1:3–6
- 1 John 3:1–3

Union With Christ

Union with Christ means the believer is spiritually joined to Jesus.

The New Testament describes believers as:

- In Christ
- Crucified with Christ
- Buried with Christ
- Raised with Christ
- Seated with Christ
- Hidden with Christ
- Heirs with Christ

Union with Christ connects the different blessings of salvation.

Forgiveness, righteousness, adoption, new life, sanctification, and resurrection are received because the believer belongs to Jesus.

Christianity is therefore not merely agreement with teachings about Christ.

It is life in relationship with the living Christ.

A branch receives life by remaining connected to the vine.

In the same way, spiritual life and fruit flow from relationship with Jesus.

Read:

- John 15:1–11
- Romans 6:1–11
- 1 Corinthians 1:30
- Galatians 2:20
- Ephesians 2:4–10
- Colossians 3:1–4

The Gift Of The Holy Spirit

Every believer receives the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit:

- Marks the believer as belonging to God
- Assures the believer of adoption
- Produces spiritual fruit
- Gives understanding
- Strengthens prayer
- Convicts of sin
- Gives gifts for service
- Empowers witness
- Builds unity
- Guarantees the promised inheritance

The Holy Spirit is not an optional addition for advanced Christians.

Everyone who belongs to Christ has the Spirit.

Read:

- Romans 8:9–17
- 1 Corinthians 12:4–13
- Galatians 5:16–25
- Ephesians 1:13–14

Deliverance From Sin'S Rule

Sin remains present in the believer's life, but it no longer possesses the same authority.

Through union with Christ:

- The old life has been judged
- Sin's dominion has been broken
- The believer can resist temptation
- The Holy Spirit gives new desires and strength
- Obedience becomes possible
- Ongoing repentance becomes part of life

Freedom from sin's rule is not the same as freedom from every temptation.

Spiritual warfare and growth continue.

Romans 6 does not teach that Christians can no longer sin.

It teaches that sin is no longer their rightful master.

Citizenship In God'S Kingdom

Salvation transfers a person from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son.

Believers receive:

- A new King

- A new allegiance
- A new identity
- A new community
- A new mission
- A new hope

Jesus becomes the rightful Lord over every part of life.

Citizenship in God's kingdom changes how believers view:

- Authority
- Money
- Relationships
- Work
- Suffering
- Justice
- Forgiveness
- Power
- Sexuality
- Time
- Hope
- Mission

Read:

- Colossians 1:12–14
- Philippians 3:20–21
- 1 Peter 2:9–12

Part Seven

Salvation Changes A Person'S Life

Are Believers Immediately Perfect?

No.

At conversion, a believer receives a new standing and new spiritual life.

Complete moral maturity does not appear instantly.

The Christian life includes ongoing growth called sanctification.

Sanctification is the work of God through which believers increasingly become like Jesus in:

- Character
- Desires
- Attitudes
- Relationships
- Words
- Decisions
- Conduct

Growth involves:

- The work of the Holy Spirit
- Attention to Scripture
- Prayer
- Fellowship with other believers
- Worship
- Confession
- Repentance
- Obedience
- Loving service
- Endurance through trials
- God's loving correction

Believers actively participate in this growth, but they do so in dependence upon God's grace and power.

Read:

- John 15:1–11
- Romans 12:1–2
- 2 Corinthians 3:18
- Philippians 2:12–13
- Colossians 3:1–17
- 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8

Justification And Sanctification

These truths are connected but should not be confused.

Justification

- Changes the believer's standing
- Is God's declaration
- Is based on Christ's righteousness
- Is received through faith
- Is complete
- Provides freedom from condemnation

Sanctification

- Changes the believer's character
- Is God's transforming work
- Involves the Holy Spirit and active obedience
- Continues throughout life
- Produces increasing holiness
- Remains incomplete until glorification

Justification is not earned through sanctification.

Sanctification grows from justification.

Believers pursue holiness because they have been accepted in Christ, not in order to force God to accept them.

Do Good Works Matter After Salvation?

Yes.

Good works cannot earn salvation, but they are an expected fruit of salvation.

God saves people for a new kind of life.

Genuine faith begins producing:

- Love
- Obedience
- Generosity
- Truthfulness
- Mercy
- Justice
- Humility
- Service
- Self-control
- Forgiveness
- Concern for people in need

Good works:

- Honor God
- Benefit other people
- Demonstrate living faith
- Provide evidence of spiritual growth

- Strengthen Christian witness
- Express gratitude for grace

Good works remain imperfect.

They do not become the foundation of acceptance with God.

Christ remains the believer's righteousness.

The biblical order is:

Grace produces salvation.

Salvation produces new life.

New life produces good works.

What Is The Fruit Of The Spirit?

Galatians 5:22–23 describes the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control

Fruit normally develops over time.

Growth may be uneven.

A believer may grow more quickly in one area than another. Trials may expose weaknesses that were previously hidden.

The Spirit steadily works to shape believers into the character of Christ.

Spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit are not the same.

A person may possess visible ability while remaining immature in character.

The New Testament consistently places great importance upon love, humility, truthfulness, holiness, and self-control.

What Happens When A Believer Sins?

Believers still sin and must continue practicing confession and repentance.

When a believer sins:

- The sin should be admitted honestly
- God's forgiveness should be trusted
- The sinful pattern should be abandoned
- Harm should be repaired where possible
- Accountability should be sought when needed
- Dependence upon the Holy Spirit should deepen
- Following Jesus should continue

Sin may damage:

- Fellowship
- Relationships
- Trust
- Witness
- Peace
- Usefulness
- Earthly circumstances

Sin does not make Christ's sacrifice insufficient.

Grace should never become an excuse to continue comfortably in deliberate sin.

The same grace that forgives also trains believers to reject ungodliness.

Read:

- Romans 6:1–14
- Hebrews 12:1–11
- 1 John 1:5–2:2

Common Misunderstanding

“Because salvation is secure in Christ, sin no longer matters.”

Biblical grace never treats sin as harmless.

Grace provides forgiveness, breaks sin’s rule, teaches believers to reject ungodliness, and leads toward obedience.

What Role Does The Church Have?

Every follower of Jesus needs the life of a faithful local church.

A healthy church ordinarily:

- Proclaims the biblical gospel
- Teaches Scripture faithfully
- Worships God
- Practices baptism and the Lord’s Supper
- Encourages prayer
- Develops accountable relationships
- Serves people in need
- Helps believers grow in holiness
- Corrects serious error and sin
- Sends believers into the world as witnesses

Christian traditions differ on:

- Church government
- Worship style
- Spiritual gifts
- Baptism
- The Lord’s Supper
- Other secondary matters

These differences deserve careful study.

Secondary disagreements should not be confused with the gospel itself.

A church should be evaluated primarily by whether:

- The Bible is treated as God’s authoritative Word
- Jesus is confessed as fully God and fully human
- Salvation is taught as God’s grace received through faith in Christ
- Christ’s death and bodily resurrection are clearly proclaimed
- Repentance is taken seriously
- The congregation is encouraged to love God and others
- Leaders are accountable and marked by biblical character

A Biblical Example

The Philippian Jailer

Acts 16 describes Paul and Silas being beaten and imprisoned in Philippi.

During the night, an earthquake opened the prison doors.

The jailer assumed the prisoners had escaped and prepared to take his own life.

Paul stopped him and assured him that the prisoners remained.

The frightened jailer asked:

“What must I do to be saved?”

Paul and Silas directed him to faith in the Lord Jesus.

They then explained God's Word to him and his household.

The jailer responded by:

- Listening to the message
- Believing in the Lord
- Caring for the wounds of Paul and Silas
- Receiving baptism with his household
- Showing hospitality
- Rejoicing in God

This story illustrates several truths.

Salvation Centers On Jesus

Paul did not give the jailer a list of achievements. He directed him to the Lord Jesus.

Faith Receives The Message

The jailer heard God's Word and responded in trust.

Salvation Begins Changing Behavior

The man who guarded beaten prisoners began washing their wounds and welcoming them into his home.

Baptism Publicly Accompanied The Response

The new believer identified with Christ and His people.

Salvation Produced Joy

The jailer rejoiced because God had brought rescue and new life into the household.

Read Acts 16:16–34.

Personal Reflection

- Is trust resting in Jesus or personal goodness?
- Is there a sin that needs to be confessed and abandoned?
- Has someone been harmed in a way that should be addressed?
- What evidence of God's grace is beginning to appear?
- How can gratitude for salvation shape the use of time, money, words, abilities, and relationships?
- Is Christian growth being attempted through self-reliance rather than dependence upon the Holy Spirit?

Part Eight

Salvation And Assurance

Can A Person Know That Salvation Is Real?

Yes.

Scripture was written in part so believers may know they have eternal life.

Assurance rests first upon:

- The character of God
- The completed work of Christ
- The promises of Scripture
- The continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit

Assurance is not based upon:

- Perfect performance
- Unchanging emotions
- Never experiencing doubt

- Remembering every detail of a conversion experience
- Comparing spiritual growth with someone else

Evidence that may strengthen assurance includes:

- Trust in the biblical Jesus
- Dependence upon grace rather than personal merit
- Repentance from sin
- Love for God
- Love for other believers
- A growing desire to obey
- The fruit of the Holy Spirit
- Perseverance in faith
- God's fatherly correction

These signs do not save.

They provide evidence that God's saving work is bearing fruit.

Read:

- John 5:24
- John 10:27–30
- Romans 8:1–39
- 2 Corinthians 13:5
- 1 John 5:11–13

Where Should Assurance Begin?

Assurance should begin with Christ, not endless examination of personal performance.

The strongest foundation is not:

"Spiritual growth has been impressive enough."

The strongest foundation is:

"Jesus is a sufficient Savior, God keeps His promises, and trust rests in Christ."

Self-examination has a place.

Scripture tells believers to examine themselves.

However, constant inward analysis can become unhealthy when attention is pulled away from Christ and placed upon changing emotions.

The proper order is:

- Look to Christ
- Believe God's promises
- Respond honestly to Scripture
- Confess known sin
- Notice evidence of grace
- Continue in faith

What Can Create False Assurance?

False assurance may rest upon:

- Growing up in a Christian family
- Knowing Christian vocabulary
- Church attendance
- Baptism without personal faith
- Repeating a prayer without repentance
- A past emotional experience
- Comparing behavior with others
- Performing religious work
- Believing facts without trusting Christ
- Assuming grace permits unrepentant rebellion

- Depending upon a church tradition rather than Jesus
- Treating salvation as fire insurance while rejecting Christ's lordship

The proper response is not constant panic or endless self-analysis.

The proper response is to ask:

- Is trust resting in Jesus Christ?
- Is grace being received rather than earned?
- Is sin being defended or confessed?
- Is there a real desire to follow Christ?
- Is the Holy Spirit producing evidence of new life?

Wise help from mature believers may be valuable when assurance remains uncertain.

What If Assurance Feels Weak?

Assurance may weaken because of:

- Ongoing sin
- Painful circumstances
- Emotional exhaustion
- Incomplete understanding of grace
- Excessive focus on personal performance
- Spiritual opposition
- Unanswered questions
- Fear caused by past experiences
- Physical or mental health struggles
- Isolation from Christian community
- Teaching that places confidence in feelings rather than Christ

A believer with weak assurance can:

- Look again to Christ's sufficient work
- Read God's promises in context
- Confess known sin
- Pray honestly
- Remain connected to a faithful church
- Speak with mature Christian leaders
- Remember previous evidence of God's work
- Distinguish feelings from the truth of Scripture
- Receive appropriate care for physical or mental health needs

Strong feelings do not create salvation.

Weak feelings do not automatically remove it.

What If Doubts Remain?

Questions and doubts do not automatically prove that faith is absent.

A person struggling with doubt can:

- Bring questions honestly to God
- Read the Gospels carefully
- Examine the evidence for Jesus' resurrection
- Ask mature Christians for help
- Remain connected to a faithful church
- Distinguish emotional uncertainty from deliberate unbelief
- Identify whether a doubt is intellectual, emotional, moral, or relational
- Remember that faith rests upon Christ's trustworthiness

Some doubts arise from sincere questions.

Others may arise from disappointment, suffering, fear, shame, or resistance to obedience.

Each should be addressed honestly.

Faith is not pretending certainty where questions remain.

Faith continues looking to Jesus while seeking truth.

What Is Perseverance?

Perseverance is continuing in faith through:

- Temptation
- Suffering
- Questions
- Correction
- Delay
- Spiritual opposition
- Seasons of weakness

The New Testament gives both strong promises and serious warnings.

God promises to:

- Complete the work He begins
- Keep His people
- Intercede for them through Christ
- Seal them with the Holy Spirit
- Provide strength in temptation
- Bring them to their promised inheritance

Scripture also calls believers to:

- Continue in faith
- Hold firmly to Christ
- Resist sin
- Remain watchful
- Encourage one another
- Endure suffering
- Avoid hardened unbelief

These truths should not be separated.

God preserves His people, and His preserving grace enables them to persevere.

Read:

- John 10:27–30
- Philippians 1:6
- Colossians 1:21–23
- Hebrews 3:12–14
- Hebrews 10:19–39
- 1 Peter 1:3–9
- Jude 20–25

Can Salvation Be Lost?

Faithful Christian traditions answer this question differently.

One view teaches that everyone who is genuinely regenerated will be preserved by God and will ultimately persevere in faith.

Another view teaches that genuine believers must continue in faith and may finally abandon salvation through deliberate, persistent unbelief.

Both views seek to take seriously the Bible's promises and warnings.

Passages emphasizing God's preserving power include:

- John 6:37–40
- John 10:27–30
- Romans 8:28–39
- Philippians 1:6
- 1 Peter 1:3–5
- Jude 24–25

Passages emphasizing the necessity of continuing in faith include:

- John 15:1–10
- Colossians 1:21–23
- Hebrews 3:12–14
- Hebrews 6:4–12
- Hebrews 10:26–39
- 2 Peter 2:20–22

This study does not attempt to settle every detail of the disagreement.

Several truths should guide every believer:

- Salvation rests upon God's grace and Christ's sufficient work
- God is faithful and powerful to keep His people
- Biblical warnings should be taken seriously
- Genuine faith is called to continue
- Deliberate sin should never be excused through claims of security
- Weak believers should be encouraged rather than driven to despair
- Assurance should rest in Christ and be strengthened through perseverance and spiritual fruit
- The proper response is continued trust, repentance, obedience, and dependence upon God

Part Nine

Salvation In The Past, Present, And Future

Salvation Has A Past Dimension

Scripture sometimes says believers have been saved.

This refers especially to completed realities such as:

- Forgiveness
- Justification
- Reconciliation
- Regeneration
- Adoption
- Transfer into Christ's kingdom
- Deliverance from condemnation

These blessings rest upon Christ's completed work.

Examples include:

"By grace you have been saved."

Ephesians 2:8

"He saved us."

Titus 3:5

The believer does not need to wonder whether Christ must be crucified again.

His saving sacrifice is complete.

Salvation Has A Present Dimension

Scripture also speaks about believers being saved.

God continues rescuing His people from sin's ruling power and shaping them into Christ's likeness.

This present work includes:

- Sanctification
- Growth in obedience
- Deliverance from destructive patterns
- Perseverance through trials
- Renewed thinking
- Deepening fellowship with God
- Participation in Christ's mission

- Restoration within relationships
- Increasing spiritual fruit

Present growth does not mean Christ's sacrifice was incomplete.

It means the completed work of Christ is being applied throughout the believer's life.

Salvation Has A Future Dimension

Scripture also says believers will be saved.

Future salvation includes:

- Rescue from final judgment
- Complete freedom from sin
- Bodily resurrection
- Transformation into Christ's likeness
- Life in God's renewed creation
- Everlasting fellowship with God
- Freedom from death, mourning, pain, and evil

Christian salvation is both secure in Christ and awaiting final completion.

Believers have been saved from sin's penalty.

Believers are being saved from sin's ruling power.

Believers will be saved from sin's presence.

Memory Anchor

Past

Saved from sin's penalty.

Present

Being delivered from sin's ruling power.

Future

Completely freed from sin's presence.

The "Already" And "Not Yet"

God's kingdom has already begun, but it has not yet reached its final completion.

Already

- Jesus has come
- Sin has been atoned for
- Jesus has risen
- Satan has been decisively defeated
- The Spirit has been given
- Believers possess eternal life
- God's people are being transformed
- The gospel is going to the nations

Not Yet

- Sin still affects the world
- Believers still struggle
- Suffering and death continue
- Evil has not received final judgment
- The dead have not yet been raised
- Creation has not yet been fully renewed
- Christ's rule is not yet universally acknowledged

This explains why believers can experience genuine new life while still facing suffering, temptation, grief, weakness, and death.

Salvation has truly begun.

Its full completion awaits the return of Jesus.

Part Ten

The Final Hope Of Salvation

What Happens When A Believer Dies?

The New Testament teaches that believers who die are with Christ while awaiting bodily resurrection.

Paul described departing this life as being with Christ.

Jesus promised the repentant criminal that he would be with Him in paradise.

This intermediate state is blessed, but it is not the final destination of salvation.

The final Christian hope is not merely the continued existence of the soul.

The final hope is resurrection and life with God in renewed creation.

Read:

- Luke 23:39–43
- Philippians 1:20–24
- 2 Corinthians 5:1–10
- Revelation 6:9–11

What Is Bodily Resurrection?

When Jesus returns, the dead will be raised.

Believers will receive transformed bodies that are:

- Imperishable
- Glorious
- Powerful
- No longer subject to death
- Fully suited for life in God's renewed creation

Resurrection affirms the goodness of God's creation and the importance of embodied life.

Salvation does not end with disembodied souls escaping the physical world.

Jesus' bodily resurrection is the pattern and guarantee of the believer's resurrection.

The resurrected body will have continuity with the present body while being wonderfully transformed.

The resurrection will remove:

- Decay
- Disease
- Weakness
- Disability caused by corruption
- Pain
- Death

Read:

- John 5:24–29
- Romans 8:18–25
- 1 Corinthians 15:35–58
- Philippians 3:20–21
- 1 John 3:2

What Is Glorification?

Glorification is the completion of God's saving work in believers.

At glorification:

- Sin will be completely removed

- Believers will be fully conformed to Christ
- Bodies will be raised and transformed
- Suffering and death will end
- Fellowship with God will be unhindered
- God's people will reflect His glory without corruption

Glorification does not mean becoming divine.

Believers remain created human beings.

They will be completely restored and made fit for eternal fellowship with God.

What Is The Final Judgment?

Scripture teaches that Jesus will judge the living and the dead.

God's judgment will be:

- Perfectly truthful
- Completely just
- Free from corruption
- Based upon full knowledge
- Impossible to escape through status, wealth, power, or deception

For those who belong to Christ, condemnation has been removed because Jesus bore their judgment.

Believers will still give an account of their lives, and their works will reveal the reality and fruit of faith.

Those who reject God's mercy remain responsible for their sin.

Final judgment is sobering.

It is also good news for those who have suffered injustice.

No hidden evil will remain hidden forever.

God will address every wrong.

Read:

- Matthew 25:31–46
- John 5:24–29
- Acts 17:30–31
- Romans 8:1
- 2 Corinthians 5:10
- Revelation 20:11–15

What Is The New Creation?

The Bible ends with a renewed heaven and earth.

God will dwell with His people.

Death, mourning, crying, pain, curse, and evil will be removed.

The nations will be healed, and God's servants will worship and reign under His authority.

The final hope of salvation includes:

- Restored relationship with God
- Restored human community
- Restored creation
- Perfect justice
- Lasting peace
- Meaningful service
- Unbroken worship
- Everlasting joy in God's presence

The Bible's story moves from:

Creation.

To fall.

To redemption.

To new creation.

Salvation is not God abandoning His creation.

It is God defeating evil and making all things new.

Read:

- Isaiah 65:17–25
- Romans 8:18–25
- 2 Peter 3:10–13
- Revelation 21:1–22:5

Key Takeaway

The final Christian hope is not floating forever in an unfamiliar spiritual existence.

The final hope is resurrection, complete freedom from sin, renewed creation, and everlasting life with God.

Part Eleven

Common Questions And Misunderstandings

“Is Salvation Just About Going To Heaven?”

No.

Salvation includes everlasting life with God, but it also includes:

- Forgiveness
- Justification
- Reconciliation
- New birth
- Adoption
- Transformation
- Freedom from sin's rule
- Resurrection
- Renewed creation

The goal is not merely a change of destination.

It is restored relationship with God and life under the reign of Jesus.

“Can A Basically Good Person Be Saved Without Jesus?”

No person is saved by being better than someone else.

God's standard is not relative respectability but perfect holiness.

Every person needs forgiveness and the righteousness provided through Christ.

Jesus is not only helpful for especially bad people.

He is the only Savior for all people.

“Do All Religions Lead To God?”

Different religions make conflicting claims about:

- God
- Humanity
- Sin
- Jesus
- Salvation
- Death
- Eternity

Contradictory claims cannot all be true in the same sense.

Jesus identified Himself as the way to the Father.

The apostles proclaimed salvation in His name.

This truth should produce humility, gratitude, compassion, and loving witness rather than hostility or pride.

Christians are saved by grace, not because they are naturally wiser or morally superior.

“Does God Save People Because He Knows They Will Become Useful?”

No.

God saves by grace, not because a person has earned His attention or possesses unusual potential.

God does prepare good works for believers to do.

Those works are the result of salvation rather than its cause.

“Does Salvation Remove Every Earthly Consequence Of Sin?”

No.

God forgives completely, but earthly consequences may remain.

- Damaged trust may require time to rebuild
- Legal consequences may continue
- Financial damage may require repayment
- Harm may need to be addressed
- Physical effects may remain
- Relationships may require boundaries
- Leadership responsibilities may be lost

Forgiveness restores the believer's standing with God.

It does not make repentance, restitution, wisdom, safety, or accountability unnecessary.

“Does Salvation Guarantee Health, Wealth, Or Comfort?”

No.

Jesus saves people from sin and guarantees final restoration.

He does not promise every believer freedom from:

- Illness
- Financial difficulty
- Persecution
- Grief
- Disability
- Earthly loss
- Relational pain
- Death

God may provide material blessings, but they are not reliable measurements of faith.

The gospel offers something greater than temporary comfort:

- God's presence
- Forgiveness
- New life
- Resurrection
- Everlasting fellowship with Him

“Can Someone Be Saved At The Last Moment?”

Yes.

The criminal beside Jesus had no opportunity to complete a lifetime of service.

Jesus promised that he would be with Him.

Salvation rests upon grace rather than accumulated achievements.

This truth should not encourage delay.

No person controls the length of life or should presume upon future opportunities to repent.

“Can Someone Be Too Sinful To Be Saved?”

No sinner who genuinely comes to Christ is beyond His ability to save.

Paul persecuted Christians, yet Christ showed him mercy.

The Corinthian church included people rescued from many destructive patterns.

Jesus welcomed:

- Tax collectors
- Sexual sinners
- Religious hypocrites who repented
- Criminals
- Social outsiders
- People considered unclean
- People burdened by shame

Christ's grace is greater than the repentant sinner's past.

The danger is not that certain sins exceed Christ's power.

The danger is refusing His mercy, defending sin, or hardening the heart against Him.

“What About Someone Who Has Never Heard About Jesus?”

Scripture clearly teaches:

- God is perfectly just
- God judges truthfully
- Creation reveals His power and divine nature
- Human beings are responsible for suppressing truth
- Salvation is provided through Jesus Christ
- The church is commanded to take the gospel to all nations

Christians differ on some questions concerning how God may deal with those who have received very limited knowledge.

Scripture does not give permission to assume that people are saved apart from Christ.

Neither does it allow anyone to accuse God of injustice.

The proper response is:

- Trust God's perfect character
- Proclaim the gospel
- Pray for the nations
- Support faithful mission
- Treat every person with dignity and love

“Are Children Or People With Limited Understanding Saved?”

Scripture does not answer every question with the detail many people desire.

Christians hold different views concerning young children and people whose cognitive limitations prevent ordinary understanding and response.

Every faithful answer should affirm:

- God is perfectly just
- God is compassionate
- God knows each person completely
- Salvation depends upon Christ
- No one will be judged unfairly
- God can be trusted where Scripture does not provide full explanation

Speculation should be approached with humility.

“Do Christians Agree On Every Detail Of Salvation?”

No.

Historic Christian traditions agree on essential truths such as:

- Humanity needs salvation
- Salvation comes through Jesus Christ
- Jesus is fully God and fully human
- Jesus truly died
- Jesus bodily rose
- Salvation depends upon God's grace
- Faith and repentance are necessary
- The Holy Spirit gives new life
- God transforms believers
- Jesus will return
- The dead will be raised
- God will judge evil
- God will complete His saving purpose

Faithful traditions differ on questions such as:

- The relationship between divine election and human response
- The precise order of salvation's elements
- Whether genuine salvation can finally be abandoned
- The relationship of baptism to conversion and grace
- The way Christ's righteousness is received or described
- The terminology used for justification, sanctification, and participation in Christ

These differences deserve careful study.

They should be handled honestly, humbly, and with close attention to Scripture.

Secondary disagreements should not obscure the central truth:

Salvation belongs to God and is accomplished through Jesus Christ.

Part Twelve

Responding To Salvation

For Someone Considering Christ

A person considering Christ can:

- Read one of the four Gospels
- Ask who Jesus claimed to be
- Examine His death and resurrection
- Admit personal sin honestly
- Ask God for understanding
- Speak with mature Christians
- Visit a faithful local church
- Repent and trust in Jesus

Questions do not need to be hidden.

The evidence and claims of Christianity can be examined honestly.

For A New Believer

A new believer should begin to:

- Read Scripture regularly
- Pray honestly
- Join a faithful local church
- Receive baptism
- Learn the gospel deeply
- Build relationships with mature believers
- Confess and turn from sin
- Participate in worship

- Participate in the Lord's Supper according to the church's teaching
- Serve others
- Share the good news
- Depend upon the Holy Spirit
- Trust God during setbacks

Growth should not become an attempt to repay God.

Salvation is a gift.

Christian obedience is the grateful response to grace.

For A Believer Struggling With Failure

Failure should lead back to Christ rather than away from Him.

The appropriate response is to:

- Confess the sin
- Trust Christ's sufficiency
- Receive correction
- Turn from the sinful pattern
- Seek help where needed
- Repair harm where possible
- Establish wise boundaries or accountability
- Continue walking in faith

The gospel does not minimize sin.

It provides the only secure place where sin can be faced truthfully and forgiven fully.

For A Believer Who Feels Spiritually Stuck

Spiritual growth is often slower than expected.

A believer who feels stuck can:

- Return to the basic truths of the gospel
- Examine whether known sin is being protected
- Ask whether exhaustion or suffering is affecting spiritual life
- Establish a simple pattern of Scripture and prayer
- Seek fellowship rather than withdrawing
- Ask mature believers for help
- Serve someone else
- Practice gratitude
- Remember that growth is God's work and often develops gradually

Spiritual dryness does not always mean God is absent.

Faith continues trusting God even when feelings are weak.

Practice Activity 1

Explain Salvation

Complete these sentences:

Salvation is necessary because:

God accomplished salvation through:

Jesus saves by:

Salvation is received through:

A saved person receives:

Salvation changes everyday life by:

The final hope of salvation is:

Practice Activity 2

Identify The Category

Match each description with the appropriate term.

Descriptions:

- God declares the believer righteous
- God welcomes the believer into His family
- Christ frees a person from slavery
- God restores peace with a former enemy
- The Holy Spirit gives new spiritual life
- God progressively makes a believer more like Jesus
- God completes salvation at the resurrection

Terms:

- Adoption
- Glorification
- Justification
- Reconciliation
- Redemption
- Regeneration
- Sanctification

Practice Activity 3

Trace Salvation Through Ephesians 2

Read Ephesians 2:1–10.

Identify:

- The condition of people apart from Christ
- God's character
- What God does
- The role of grace
- The role of faith
- The place of good works
- The new identity of believers

Practice Activity 4

Examine Assurance

Read:

- John 10:27–30
- Romans 8:31–39
- 1 John 5:11–13

Write down:

- What God promises
- What Christ has done
- What belongs to the believer
- What cannot separate believers from God's love
- Where confidence should rest

Practice Activity 5

Past, Present, And Future

Place each truth under the correct heading.

Truths:

- Justification

- Resurrection
- Sanctification
- Adoption
- Glorification
- Growth in obedience
- Forgiveness
- Complete freedom from sin
- Reconciliation
- Renewed creation

Headings:

- Salvation accomplished and received in the past
- Salvation being applied in the present
- Salvation awaiting completion in the future

Want to Go Deeper?

Intermediate Guide

The main sections of this study explain salvation at a beginner level.

The following sections explore several connected truths in greater depth.

Deeper study should produce:

- Greater worship
- Stronger trust in Jesus
- Humble dependence upon grace
- Careful handling of Scripture
- Increasing holiness
- Patient love toward Christians who differ on secondary questions

Intermediate Memory Anchor

Salvation is planned by the Father, accomplished by the Son, applied by the Holy Spirit, received through faith, demonstrated through transformed life, and completed at the resurrection.

1. The Order Of Salvation

Theological study sometimes uses the phrase order of salvation, or *ordo salutis*, to describe the logical relationships among the different parts of salvation.

Common terms include:

- Election
- Calling
- Regeneration
- Conversion
- Faith
- Repentance
- Justification
- Adoption
- Sanctification
- Perseverance
- Glorification

Not every tradition places these terms in exactly the same order.

The Bible sometimes presents several parts together rather than giving one complete numbered sequence.

Romans 8:29–30 connects foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification.

Ephesians 1 emphasizes the Father's choice, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's sealing.

Titus 3 connects God's mercy, washing, renewal by the Spirit, justification, and eternal hope.

The purpose of studying these relationships is not to turn salvation into a mechanical process.

It is to understand more clearly that salvation is God's gracious work from beginning to end.

2. Election And Human Response

Scripture teaches that God chooses, calls, and saves according to His grace.

Scripture also genuinely calls people to repent, believe, and receive Christ.

Christian traditions explain the relationship between divine election and human response in different ways.

Some emphasize that God's sovereign choice is the decisive cause of salvation and that His grace effectively brings the chosen person to faith.

Others emphasize that God graciously enables a real human response without making that response unavoidable.

Other traditions describe election primarily in relation to Christ and the covenant community.

Important biblical truths include:

- Salvation is never earned
- God takes the initiative
- Grace is necessary
- People are responsible to respond
- No believer may boast
- The gospel should be proclaimed to everyone
- God is perfectly just
- God's purposes will not fail

This subject should produce humility rather than pride or hostility.

Read:

- John 6:35–45
- Romans 8:28–30
- Romans 9–11
- Ephesians 1:3–14
- 1 Timothy 2:1–6
- 2 Peter 3:9

3. Effectual Calling And The Gospel Call

The gospel call is the outward proclamation that goes to everyone who hears the message.

It announces:

- God's holiness
- Human sin
- Christ's death and resurrection
- The call to repent and believe
- The promise of salvation

Some Christian traditions also use the term effectual calling to describe the inward work of God through which the Holy Spirit successfully brings a person to faith.

Other traditions use different language to describe the Spirit's enabling work.

All faithful traditions should affirm that:

- The gospel must be proclaimed
- The Holy Spirit must work
- Faith is a real response
- Salvation is entirely dependent upon grace

4. Imputed Righteousness

To impute means to credit or count something to another person.

The doctrine of imputed righteousness teaches that believers are accepted before God because the righteousness of Christ is counted to them through faith.

Christ bears the believer's guilt, and the believer receives a righteous standing in Him.

This does not mean believers instantly become morally perfect.

It concerns their standing before God.

Romans 4 describes righteousness being counted apart from works.

Second Corinthians 5:21 connects Christ bearing sin with believers becoming God's righteousness in Him.

Philippians 3 contrasts personal religious righteousness with the righteousness received through faith in Christ.

Some Christian traditions use different language to describe how believers participate in Christ's righteousness.

The central truth remains that no sinner produces the righteousness needed for acceptance with God. That righteousness is received through relationship with Christ.

5. Justification And Final Judgment According To Works

The New Testament teaches both:

- Justification is by grace through faith apart from works
- Final judgment will be according to works

These teachings do not mean salvation is earned through moral achievement.

Works reveal the reality, direction, and fruit of faith.

A living tree produces fruit because it is alive.

Fruit does not create life, but it demonstrates life.

In the same way:

- Good works do not purchase justification
- Genuine faith begins producing obedience
- Works reveal allegiance
- Persistent unrepentant rebellion may expose a false profession

Christ remains the only foundation of salvation.

Read:

- Matthew 7:15–23
- Romans 2:5–11
- Romans 3:21–28
- Ephesians 2:8–10
- James 2:14–26
- Revelation 20:11–15

6. Union With Christ As The Center Of Salvation

Union with Christ connects nearly every blessing of salvation.

Believers are justified in Christ.

They receive new life in Christ.

They are adopted through the Son.

They die and rise with Christ.

They are sanctified in Christ.

They will be raised because they belong to Christ.

This helps prevent salvation from being treated as a collection of disconnected gifts.

The greatest gift is Christ Himself.

All other blessings flow from relationship with Him.

7. The Three Tenses Of Salvation

Salvation is described in past, present, and future language.

Past

Believers have been justified, reconciled, adopted, and made alive.

Present

Believers are being sanctified, preserved, renewed, and delivered from sin's power.

Future

Believers will be raised, glorified, rescued from final judgment, and brought into renewed creation.

This framework protects against two errors.

The first error treats salvation only as a past decision without present transformation.

The second treats salvation only as an unfinished moral process without confidence in Christ's completed work.

Biblical salvation includes both completed security in Christ and ongoing growth toward final restoration.

8. The Atonement'S Many Dimensions

The Bible presents several dimensions of Christ's saving death.

Penal Substitution

Jesus bears the judgment sinners deserve.

Sacrifice

Jesus offers Himself as the perfect sacrifice.

Christus Victor

Jesus defeats sin, death, and hostile powers.

Redemption

Jesus pays the price that frees captives.

Reconciliation

Jesus restores peace between God and sinners.

Covenant

Jesus establishes the new covenant.

Example

Jesus demonstrates self-giving love and faithful obedience.

These dimensions should not be placed against one another.

The cross is rich enough to include all of them.

9. The Extent Of The Atonement

Christians agree that Jesus' death is completely sufficient to save and that everyone who genuinely trusts Him will be saved.

Christians differ on how to describe the intended extent of the atonement.

Some teach that Christ died with the specific intention of certainly redeeming God's chosen people.

Others teach that Christ died for every person, making salvation genuinely available to all, while its benefits are received only through faith.

Both views appeal to biblical passages.

Texts emphasizing the worldwide scope of Christ's saving work include:

- John 3:16
- 1 Timothy 2:1–6
- Hebrews 2:9
- 1 John 2:2

Texts emphasizing Christ's particular saving purpose for His people include:

- John 10:11–15
- Ephesians 5:25–27
- Acts 20:28
- Revelation 5:9–10

Whatever view is held, the gospel should be freely offered to every person.

No one who comes to Christ in faith will be rejected.

10. Baptism And Salvation

The New Testament closely connects baptism with conversion, forgiveness, union with Christ, reception into the church, and new life.

Christians differ on how these connections should be understood.

Some view baptism primarily as the believer's public sign and testimony of faith.

Some view baptism as a means through which God ordinarily gives or confirms covenant grace.

Some baptize professing believers only.

Others baptize believers and their children.

Faithful interpretation should take seriously:

- Jesus' command to baptize
- The close New Testament connection between faith and baptism
- The danger of trusting an outward act without living faith
- The importance of belonging to Christ's visible people
- The sufficiency of Christ's saving work

Baptism should not be ignored, treated as unimportant, or turned into a ground for pride.

11. The Warnings Of Hebrews

Hebrews contains some of the New Testament's strongest warnings.

The readers are warned against:

- Drifting
- Hardened unbelief
- Neglecting salvation
- Falling away
- Deliberate rejection
- Refusing the One who speaks

Christians interpret these warnings differently.

Some understand them as describing people who participate deeply in the covenant community without being inwardly regenerated.

Others understand them as warning genuine believers against the real danger of abandoning faith.

Others emphasize that the warnings are one means God uses to preserve believers.

Every interpretation should preserve the warnings' seriousness.

The correct response is not speculation about the minimum required for safety.

The correct response is to:

- Hold firmly to Christ
- Encourage one another
- Resist unbelief
- Continue in faith
- Receive God's promises with gratitude

12. Assurance And Self-Examination

Biblical assurance includes both objective and subjective elements.

Objective Foundation

- God's character
- Christ's completed work
- God's promises
- The gospel

Subjective Evidence

- Faith in Christ
- Repentance
- Love
- Obedience
- Spiritual fruit
- Perseverance
- The Spirit's witness

Objective truth without self-examination may produce careless presumption.

Self-examination without the objective gospel may produce anxiety and despair.

Healthy assurance looks outward to Christ and also recognizes the Spirit's work within the believer.

13. Salvation And The Kingdom Of God

Salvation is often described in individual terms:

- Personal forgiveness
- Personal faith
- Personal new birth
- Personal hope

These truths are essential, but salvation also includes entrance into God's kingdom and people.

Jesus saves individuals into a community under His reign.

Salvation therefore has:

- Personal dimensions
- Relational dimensions
- Church dimensions
- Mission dimensions
- Creation-wide dimensions

The gospel creates a people who live as witnesses to the coming kingdom.

14. Salvation And Israel

The Bible's story of salvation unfolds through God's covenant promises to Israel.

Jesus is Israel's Messiah.

He fulfills the promises to Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets.

Through Jesus, salvation extends to the nations.

Christians differ on how Old Testament promises concerning Israel relate to the church and future events.

Every view should affirm:

- God is faithful to His promises
- Salvation comes through Israel's Messiah
- Gentile believers are included by grace
- No ethnic group may boast
- Jewish and Gentile believers are reconciled in Christ
- God's saving purpose reaches the nations

Romans 9–11 should be approached with humility, gratitude, and careful attention.

15. Salvation And New Creation

Salvation is sometimes reduced to the rescue of individual souls from earth.

The Bible presents a larger hope.

God will:

- Raise the dead
- Judge evil

- Renew creation
- Restore human community
- Remove death
- Dwell with His people

This means Christian faith values:

- Bodies
- Creation
- Justice
- Work
- Relationships
- Care for the vulnerable
- Faithful stewardship

Present acts of love and justice do not create God's kingdom or save the world.

They can bear witness to the King and the restoration He will complete.

Summary Of The Study

God created humanity for life with Him.

Humanity rebelled against God, bringing sin, guilt, corruption, suffering, separation, slavery, and death.

No person can earn salvation through morality, religion, effort, knowledge, or good works.

God planned salvation and took the initiative.

The Father sent the Son.

Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human.

Jesus lived without sin, died for sinners, rose bodily from the dead, ascended, and reigns as Lord.

At the cross, Jesus acted as substitute, sacrifice, redeemer, reconciler, covenant mediator, and victorious King.

The Holy Spirit convicts, gives new birth, indwells believers, produces spiritual fruit, and applies Christ's saving work.

Salvation is given by grace and received through repentance and faith.

Those who trust in Christ receive:

- Forgiveness
- Justification
- Reconciliation
- Redemption
- Regeneration
- Adoption
- Union with Christ
- The Holy Spirit
- Entrance into God's kingdom

Good works do not earn salvation.

They grow as the fruit of new life.

Believers continue growing through sanctification and are called to persevere in faith.

Assurance rests first upon God's character, Christ's completed work, Scripture's promises, and the Holy Spirit's ministry.

Salvation has past, present, and future dimensions.

Believers have been saved from sin's penalty.

Believers are being delivered from sin's ruling power.

Believers will be completely freed from sin's presence.

The final hope of salvation is bodily resurrection, complete transformation, everlasting fellowship with God, and life in renewed creation.

Jesus Christ is the source, center, and completion of salvation.

Final Memory Anchor

Salvation begins with God.

Salvation is accomplished by Jesus.

Salvation is applied by the Holy Spirit.

Salvation is received through repentance and faith.

Salvation produces a transformed life.

Salvation will be completed at the resurrection.

Seven-Day Reading Plan

Day 1

The Need For Salvation

Read:

- Genesis 3
- Romans 3:9–26

Consider:

- What did sin damage?
- Why can personal effort not solve the problem?
- What has God provided?

Day 2

Salvation Through Jesus

Read:

- Isaiah 52:13–53:12
- Mark 10:32–45
- Romans 5:6–11

Consider:

- Why did Jesus die?
- What did His death accomplish?
- How are God's justice and love displayed?

Day 3

Grace, Faith, And New Life

Read:

- John 3:1–21
- Ephesians 2:1–10

Consider:

- What does God do?
- What role does faith have?
- Where do good works belong?
- Why is new birth necessary?

Day 4

The Blessings Of Salvation

Read:

- Romans 5:1–11
- Romans 8:1–17

Consider:

- What changes in the believer's standing?
- What new relationship does the believer receive?
- What does the Holy Spirit do?

Day 5

Transformation

Read:

- Romans 6:1–14
- Galatians 5:13–26

Consider:

- What authority has been broken?
- How should believers respond to sin?
- What fruit does the Holy Spirit produce?

Day 6

Assurance And Perseverance

Read:

- John 10:22–30
- Hebrews 3:7–14
- 1 John 5:11–13

Consider:

- What promises provide confidence?
- What warnings encourage endurance?
- Where should assurance rest?

Day 7

Final Salvation

Read:

- 1 Corinthians 15:35–58
- Revelation 21:1–22:5

Consider:

- What will happen at the resurrection?
- What will God restore?
- What will be removed?
- How should future hope shape present life?

Suggested Modular Study Plan

Session 1

The Need And The Savior

Read Parts One through Three.

Focus:

- Creation
- Sin
- Human inability
- God's saving plan
- The person and work of Jesus

Session 2

The Holy Spirit And Receiving Salvation

Read Parts Four and Five.

Focus:

- Conviction
- New birth
- Grace
- Faith
- Repentance
- Confessing Jesus as Lord

Session 3

The Blessings Of Salvation

Read Part Six.

Focus:

- Forgiveness
- Justification
- Reconciliation
- Redemption
- Adoption
- Union with Christ
- The gift of the Holy Spirit

Session 4

Living As Someone God Has Saved

Read Parts Seven and Eight.

Focus:

- Sanctification
- Good works
- Spiritual fruit
- Responding to sin
- Assurance
- Perseverance

Session 5

The Completion Of Salvation

Read Parts Nine and Ten.

Focus:

- Past, present, and future salvation
- The already and not yet
- Resurrection
- Glorification
- New creation

Session 6

Questions And Response

Read Parts Eleven and Twelve.

Focus:

- Common misunderstandings

- Christian differences
- Practical response
- Next steps

Session 7

Intermediate Study

Select two or three sections from “Want to Go Deeper?”

Discuss:

- What does the passage clearly teach?
- Where do Christian traditions differ?
- Which truths are essential?
- How should the subject produce worship and humility?

Reflection Questions

1. Why is salvation necessary?
2. What was humanity created to experience with God?
3. What did sin damage?
4. Why can good works not earn salvation?
5. Why can religious activity not remove guilt?
6. How do God’s love and justice meet at the cross?
7. Why is Jesus uniquely qualified to save?
8. Why does Jesus’ sinless life matter?
9. What did Jesus accomplish through His death?
10. Why is the resurrection essential to salvation?
11. What does Jesus’ ascension mean?
12. What does the Holy Spirit do in salvation?
13. What does it mean to be born again?
14. How are grace, faith, and repentance related?
15. What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord?
16. Why does a prayer not save by itself?
17. What is the proper place of baptism?
18. What is the difference between forgiveness and justification?
19. What does reconciliation restore?
20. What does redemption accomplish?
21. What does adoption add to the understanding of salvation?
22. Why is union with Christ important?
23. What is the relationship between justification and sanctification?
24. What is the proper relationship between salvation and good works?
25. What should happen when a believer sins?
26. Where should assurance rest?
27. What can create false assurance?
28. What does perseverance involve?
29. How is salvation past, present, and future?
30. Why is bodily resurrection the final Christian hope?
31. What is glorification?
32. What will God renew in the new creation?
33. What response does the truth of salvation call for?

Key Terms

Adoption

God’s act of welcoming believers into His family as His children.

Assurance

Confidence grounded in Christ, God's promises, and the Spirit's work that a believer belongs to God.

Atonement

Christ's work of addressing sin and restoring sinners to God through His sacrificial death.

Calling

God's invitation through the gospel, and in some theological traditions, His effective work of bringing a person to faith.

Conversion

The turning to God that includes repentance and faith.

Election

God's gracious choice connected with His saving purpose.

Faith

Trusting Jesus Christ and relying upon His saving work.

Forgiveness

God's act of releasing a believer from the guilt and debt of sin because of Christ.

Glorification

The completion of salvation when believers are raised, transformed, and fully freed from sin.

Grace

God's undeserved favor and saving kindness.

Imputation

The act of counting or crediting something to another. In salvation, Christ's righteousness is counted to the believer.

Justification

God's declaration that a believer has a righteous standing because of Christ.

Perseverance

Continuing in faith through God's preserving grace.

Propitiation

Christ's satisfaction of God's righteous judgment against sin through His sacrifice.

Reconciliation

The restoration of peace and relationship between God and sinners.

Redemption

Freedom from slavery secured through the price Christ paid.

Regeneration

The Holy Spirit's act of giving new spiritual life.

Repentance

A change of mind and direction that turns from sin and self-rule toward God.

Resurrection

God's act of raising the dead. Jesus rose bodily, and believers will be bodily raised when He returns.

Salvation

God's gracious rescue of sinners from sin and its consequences through Jesus Christ.

Sanctification

God's ongoing work of making believers increasingly holy and Christlike.

Substitution

Christ's act of suffering in the place of sinners.

Union With Christ

The believer's spiritual relationship with Jesus through which salvation's blessings are received.

Related Scripture Passages

Genesis 1–3.

Genesis 12:1–3.

Exodus 12.

Psalm 32.

Psalm 49.

Psalm 103.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12.

Jeremiah 31:31–34.

Ezekiel 36:25–27.

Matthew 1:18–25.

Matthew 4:1–11.

Matthew 25:31–46.

Mark 1:14–15.

Mark 10:32–45.

Luke 15.

Luke 23:32–43.

Luke 24.

John 1:1–18.

John 3:1–21.

John 5:24–29.

John 10:1–30.

John 14:1–11.

John 15:1–17.

John 20.

Acts 2.

Acts 4:8–12.

Acts 16:16–34.

Romans 1–8.

Romans 10:9–13.

1 Corinthians 15.

2 Corinthians 5:14–21.

Galatians 2:15–21.

Galatians 5:13–26.

Ephesians 1–2.

Philippians 2:5–11.

Philippians 3:7–21.

Colossians 1:12–23.

Titus 2:11–14.

Titus 3:3–7.

Hebrews 2.

Hebrews 4.

Hebrews 7–10.

1 Peter 1.

1 John 1–5.

Revelation 20–22.

Related 3Nails Studies

Continue learning through related studies:

- What Is the Gospel?
- Who Is Jesus?
- Why Did Jesus Have to Die?
- Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?
- What Is Grace?
- What Is Faith?
- What Is Repentance?
- What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?
- What Is Justification?
- What Is Sanctification?
- Can Salvation Be Lost?
- How Can Someone Know They Are Saved?
- What Is Baptism?
- What Is the Holy Spirit's Role?
- What Happens After Death?
- What Is the Resurrection?
- What Is the New Creation?

Final Encouragement

Salvation is the work of God from beginning to end.

Human sin is real.

God's judgment is just.

Human effort cannot remove guilt.

Yet God has not left sinners without hope.

The Father sent the Son.

Jesus lived without sin.

He died in the place of sinners.

He rose bodily from the dead.

He reigns as Lord.

The Holy Spirit gives new life.

Everyone who repents and trusts in Jesus receives forgiveness, peace with God, a new identity, a place within God's family, and the promise of everlasting life.

Believers still face temptation, weakness, suffering, questions, and grief.

Salvation does not mean every struggle disappears immediately.

It means sin no longer has the final word.

Condemnation no longer has the final word.

Death no longer has the final word.

Jesus has the final word.

When failure comes, return to grace.

When assurance feels weak, look again to Christ.

When growth feels slow, remain connected to the true Vine.

When suffering comes, remember the promised resurrection.

When the world appears overwhelmed by evil, remember that the King will return.

The Savior who began the work is faithful.

The cross is sufficient.

The tomb is empty.

The Spirit is present.

The promises of God remain true.

The final future of everyone who belongs to Christ is not guilt, separation, corruption, suffering, or death.

The final future is resurrection, restoration, holiness, joy, and everlasting life with God.

Final Prayer

Holy and gracious God,

Thank You for creating humanity for life with You.

Thank You for not abandoning a world damaged by sin.

Thank You for sending Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, to live without sin, die for sinners, and rise from the dead.

Thank You that salvation is given by grace rather than earned through human effort.

Give clear understanding of the gospel.

Expose false confidence, hidden sin, and attempts at self-salvation.

Grant repentance and genuine faith.

Strengthen those who struggle with doubt.

Restore those who have failed.

Help believers rest in Christ's completed work while continuing to grow in holiness.

Produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control through the Holy Spirit.

Keep Your people faithful through temptation, suffering, and uncertainty.

Fix every heart upon the promised return of Jesus, the resurrection of the dead, and the renewal of all things.

May the truth of salvation produce humility, gratitude, worship, obedience, courage, and love.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the crucified, risen, reigning, and returning Lord.

Amen.

Final Memory Anchor

Jesus Christ is the source, center, and completion of salvation.

Salvation is by grace.

Salvation is received through faith.

Salvation produces new life.

Salvation will be completed when Jesus returns.