

# What the Bible Says About Salvation – Part 1

Randy Thompson  
Valley Bible Church

## Series Introduction

In this series (eight or so Sundays throughout the summer), we will examine what the Bible says about salvation. This is a deep dive into the theology of salvation and will include topics such as the atonement, election, substitution, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, conviction, repentance, faith, regeneration, forgiveness, justification, sanctification, preservation, glorification, etc.

This is a study in theology. Theology comes from the Greek words *theos* meaning “God,” and *logos* meaning “word”. Therefore, it is a word or discussion about God or simply the study of God. Theology can be understood to be the study of Christian doctrine. It is the discovery, organization, and presentation of the truths about God and the truth He has revealed.

“Discovery” is an important reality when studying theology. This discovery is from the Scriptures, the word of God, the Bible. We strive to derive theology from the Scriptures; we do not read our theology into the Scriptures. We aren’t trying to use the Scriptures to prove a theological system; we are trying to derive our theological belief from the Scriptures.

Sometimes this discovery will contradict one’s logic. It may show one’s logical progression of thought to be in error. In those cases, we will adjust our progression of thought and not attempt to make the Scriptures fit our logic.

“Systematic Theology” is the study of theology by examining the totality of Scripture and presenting doctrines by coalescing the whole. This systematization of Bible doctrine is not found categorized in defined topics in the Bible but rather has developed over the centuries. In systematic theology, all major doctrines are generally grouped into approximately ten subcategories:

1. Bibliology – the Doctrine of the Bible
2. Theology Proper – the Doctrine of God including the Trinity and God the Father
3. Christology – the Doctrine of Christ
4. Pneumatology – the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
5. Angelology – the Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Fallen Angels
6. Anthropology – the Doctrine of Man
7. Hamartiology – the Doctrine of Sin
- 8. Soteriology – the Doctrine of Salvation**
9. Ecclesiology – the Doctrine of the Church
10. Eschatology – the Doctrine of Last Things

The study of salvation connects to other systematic theology categories. For example, there is no need for salvation if we do not understand the state of all people which connects the study of salvation to the study of sin. God the Father in sovereignty has decreed all that will come to pass which connects salvation to theology proper. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment and is involved in the blessings of salvation which connect to the study of the Holy Spirit. The culmination of salvation is glorification which connects to the study of end times.

There is an interesting pattern in Paul's letters. He often starts with theological concepts then connects those to practice with a "therefore" (Rom 12:1; Eph 4:1; Col 3:1). Understanding doctrine impacts the believer's walk with Christ (John 17:17). Maturity stands in contrast to children who are "tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:13-14) and that paying attention to doctrines of demons stands in contrast to being "nourished on the words of faith and of sound doctrine" (1 Tim 4:1-6). Advocating different doctrines shows that one is conceited and understands nothing (1 Tim 6:3, 4). And Paul exhorted Titus to show himself to be an example of good deeds with purity in doctrine (Titus 2:7). What someone understands about spiritual reality impacts how one lives.

Understanding theology not only will help us to mature as Christians, but it also helps us to serve others. By studying theology, we are able to teach ourselves and others what God says, thus fulfilling the second part of the Great Commission, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt 28:19-20; Col 1:28-29)

There are several presuppositions that are required if we are to skillfully study theology.

1. Absolute truth exists and the only source of spiritual truth is the Bible (John 17:17).

The Bible is the inspired, plenary, verbal, infallible, inerrant in the original manuscripts word of God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21; Acts 1:16; 1 Cor 2:13). It is authoritative (Matt 4:4, 7, 10) and fully sufficient for all matters of faith and conduct. It is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks (2 Pet 1:3; Matt 4:4; Heb 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 1 Pet 2:2; Psa 19:7-13; 119:9, 11, 24).

2. Since the student of theology is attempting to understand what the Bible teaches, it is necessary that the student be a Spirit-filled believer (1 Cor 2:10-16).
3. The Bible must be approached with a normal or plain, literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic. This method takes the plain literal sense while understanding the historical, immediate, and wider contexts; type of literature; and the uses of figures of speech.
4. Since God progressively revealed more truth about Himself and His plan through the ages, it is important to understand that the New Testament takes priority over the Old Testament as the source of doctrine (e.g., Psa 51:11 with Eph 1:13-14; Rom 7:6; etc.).

### ❖ Do you agree with these four presuppositions?

Our ultimate goal as we are diligent to present ourselves approved to God handling accurately His Word (2 Tim 2:15) is that we would "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col 1:10) while guarding ourselves against arrogance (1 Cor 8:1).

## Salvation Defined

In its broadest sense, salvation is the work of God whereby He saves individuals through Christ from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. It is completely God's work and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Eph 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Pet 1:18-19).

God the Father did not send the Son into the world to meet your felt needs, give you your "best life now", make you healthy and wealthy, fix your broken emotional state, fix your self-image or esteem, fix a certain problem you have (e.g., addiction, relationship difficulty, etc.) or bring societal reform. Jesus came to save sinners from the penalty, power, and presence of sin.

<sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man has come to **seek and to save that which was lost.**" (Luke 19:10)

<sup>15</sup>It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**, among whom I am foremost *of all*. (1 Tim 1:15)

### ❖ **In your mind, what is the most prominent reason for salvation?**

Since salvation is salvation from sin, we will first look at what the Scriptures teach about sin. As we begin a study of salvation, it should be clear that a correct understanding of a person's condition is important. A defective understanding of a disease will lead to a defective understanding of the cure.

## The Need for Salvation

As we look across the planet, what is the state of those who have not yet surrendered their life to Christ? The Scriptures clearly speak of the condition of all people as being in a fallen – sinful state.

"Sin" means missing the mark or falling short of a standard. Sin is as anything contrary to the character of God (Rom 3:23), either by commission or omission transgressing God's word (Rom 5:15), lawlessness or rebellion against God and His moral will (1 John 3:4), missing the mark of perfect righteousness (Matt 5:48), or any departure from God's perfect standard in thought, word, or deed (Matt 5:48).

<sup>23</sup>for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom 3:23)

<sup>15</sup>But the free gift is not like the transgression. For **if by the transgression of the one the many died**, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. (Rom 5:15)

<sup>4</sup>Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and **sin is lawlessness**. (1 John 3:4)

<sup>48</sup>"Therefore **you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect**. (Matt 5:48)

Sin can also be described as a disposition of the heart (Jer 17:9; Ecc 9:3; Mark 7:20-23) that 1) thinks evil (Gen 6:5); 2) speaks evil (James 3:6); 3) acts evil (Rom 1:28-32); and 4) omits good (Ecc 7:20).

For humans, sin began in the Garden of Eden. At the moment of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve died spiritually and would ultimately die physically.

<sup>15</sup>Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. <sup>16</sup>The Lord God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; <sup>17</sup>but **from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.**” (Gen 2:15-17)

<sup>6</sup>When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, **she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.** <sup>7</sup>Then **the eyes of both of them were opened**, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (Gen 3:6-7)

<sup>22</sup>Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— <sup>23</sup>therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen 3:22-24)

Because our ultimate grandfather sinned and died and became by nature a child of wrath (Eph 2:3), that sin nature was passed onto his progeny through the ages. Each person has inherited the sin nature from Adam (Rom 5:12). This is called “original sin” or “inherited sin” or the “sin nature”. It is the sinful state that all people are born in.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned— (Rom 5:12)

The sin nature is the corruption of our whole nature and is that which inclines us to sin. This corruption of sin extends to every aspect of our being (Rom 1:18-3:20) including intellect (2 Cor 4:4), conscience (1 Tim 4:2), will (Rom 1:28), and heart (Eph 4:18). The idea is not that people display as much evil as they possibly can, nor that they cannot do any good, or even feign a love for God, but that their entire nature is corrupted by sin.

Imputed sin is that sin which is charged to every person’s account and resulted from each person being “in” Adam and participating in Adam’s sin (Rom 5:12; Heb 7:9-10). Therefore, all humanity is guilty, and the punishment of death has been given to each of us.

<sup>9</sup>And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, <sup>10</sup>for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. (Heb 7:9-10)

Let’s look at the Scripture’s declaration regarding sin.

1. The Scriptures declare that all are sinful...

<sup>5</sup>Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. (Psa 51:5)

<sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom 3:23)

<sup>20</sup>Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who *continually* does good and who never sins. (Ecc 7:20)

<sup>10</sup>as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup>There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; <sup>12</sup>All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.” <sup>13</sup>“Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving,” “The poison of asps is under their lips”; <sup>14</sup>“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”; <sup>15</sup>“Their feet are swift to shed blood, <sup>16</sup>Destruction and misery are in their paths, <sup>17</sup>And the path of peace they have not known.” <sup>18</sup>“There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Rom 3:10-18)

2. The person who has not yet repented and surrendered their life to Christ, the unregenerate person, is dead in their sins...

<sup>1</sup>And **you were dead in your trespasses and sins**, <sup>2</sup>in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. <sup>3</sup>Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Eph 2:1-3)

All people are “dead in their trespasses and sins”. They are spiritually dead. They are devoid of the power to bring about their own spiritual life.

Trespasses means to stumble, deviate, or go the wrong direction. Sins means missing or falling short of a goal, standard, or purpose which is God’s perfect standard of holiness. Paul isn’t referring to unique types of sin but emphasizing the totality of sinfulness resulting from spiritual death.

Their spiritual deadness is consistent with their life in the world system. They “walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air”. They live according to Satan’s world system because they have no life in themselves.

3. The unregenerate person’s heart is wicked...

<sup>5</sup>Then the LORD saw that **the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.** (Gen 6:5)

<sup>9</sup>“**The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick;** Who can understand it? (Jer 17:9)

<sup>3</sup>This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the **hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives.** Afterwards they *go* to the dead. (Ecc 9:3)

<sup>20</sup>And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.

<sup>21</sup>For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, <sup>22</sup>deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. <sup>23</sup>**All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.**” (Mark 7:20-23)

4. The unregenerate person is a slave to sin...

<sup>17</sup>But thanks be to God that **though you were slaves of sin**, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup>and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Rom 6:17-18)

<sup>33</sup>Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin**. (John 8:33)

Who commits sin? Everyone. So, everyone who has ever lived, Christ being the only exception since He was sinless, was at least at one point a slave to sin.

Again, the idea of being a slave to sin is not that people display as much evil as they possibly could, nor that they cannot do any good deed, but that their entire nature is tainted by the stench of sin. It means that even the good deeds and thoughts come from a sinful heart so that even those are "filthy rags" (Isa 64:6).

5. The unregenerate person is blinded and held captive by Satan through his worldwide system of deception and wickedness that leaves God out and is opposed to Him (1 John 2:15-16; 5:19; John 12:31; 16:11; 14:30; 17:15-16; ).

The current world system is run by Satan. Paul calls the Satan the "god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4). John calls Satan the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 16:11; 14:30).

<sup>19</sup>We know that we are of God, and that **the whole world lies in the power of the evil one**. (1 John 5:19)

<sup>4</sup>in whose case the **god of this world** has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor 4:4)

<sup>30</sup>I will not speak much more with you, for **the ruler of the world** is coming, and he has nothing in Me; (John 14:30 NAS; see also John 12:31 and 16:11)

The world system puts forwards lies (John 8:44), pandering to people's sin, to the evil of people's heart. Satan's aim is to make the values of this godless system seem attractive; appealing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life to entice people to live independent of their creator; to sin. Satan's world system blinds the minds of unbelievers.

<sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup>in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor 4:4)

And because they are steeped in a world system that is opposed to God they are held captive by Satan through his world system.

<sup>24</sup>The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, <sup>25</sup>with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup>and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, **having been held captive by him to do his will.** (2 Tim 2:24-26)

6. The unregenerate person loves the darkness and hates the light...

<sup>19</sup>This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (John 3:19-20)

7. The unregenerate person is alienated from God and hostile in mind...

<sup>21</sup>And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, (Col 1:21)

“Alienated” means to be estranged; to be unfriendly, hostile, or indifferent. All people are in a continual state of separation, alienated and estranged from God because of the sin nature inherited from Adam. The only other use of this word is by Paul in Ephesians.

<sup>17</sup>So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup>being darkened in their understanding, **excluded** (alienated in ESV) from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; <sup>19</sup>and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. (Eph 4:17-19 cf. Eph 2:13)

“Hostile” means hateful, hostile toward, at enmity with, or an adversary of someone.

<sup>6</sup>For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, <sup>7</sup>**because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God;** for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, <sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rom 8:6-8)

### **Let's Summarize**

The overwhelming teaching of Scripture declares the desperate state of all people. Fallen humanity is a primary theme in Scripture in order to show us our desperate need. The only time sin is not mentioned in some way in Scripture is Geneses 1-2 and Revelation 21-22 – before sin entered the world and after sin is permanently eradicated in the final state. The rest of Scripture mentions sin outright or the results of a fallen world.

In the final analysis, every person who has not yet surrendered their life to Christ is a wicked, dead, blind, captive, darkness-loving, alienated-from and hostile-to-God, sin-slave walking according to Satan's world system. They are under the power of their sin and the ruler of this present world system.

Sin has separated each one from God leaving them without hope in this life and destined for hell in the next.

All of these wicked, dead, blind, captive, darkness-loving, alienated-from and hostile-to-God, sin-slave walking according to Satan's world system people, the unregenerate, will not come to Christ of their own volition. Dead people cannot make themselves alive:

<sup>44</sup>No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:44)

<sup>65</sup>And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." (John 6:65)

Theologians call this helplessness and hopelessness due to the corruption of sin Total Depravity or Total Corruption or Radical Corruption or Pervasive Depravity or Total Inability. Every aspect a person is tainted by sin leaving them completely unable to move towards God on their own. God, in His grace, must intervene.

### **Conclusion**

To begin our study of salvation we have started looking at the need for salvation. All people are wicked, dead, blind, captive, darkness-loving, alienated-from and hostile-to-God, sin-slaves walking according to Satan's world system. Sin placed each person in a state of helplessness and hopelessness before an all-holy God. The solution for sin is salvation. Next time, we will begin to look at the specifics of salvation.