

Class Three

SALVATION

WHAT IS “SALVATION”?

Salvation is a broad term that expresses God’s provision for the predicament of his people. In the Old Testament this word is used to describe God’s deliverance of his people from their enemies so that they might experience his blessings. This temporal salvation proves to be a

We believe in the resurrection of the dead, and in the final judgment of all people. “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

visual aid for the spiritual and eternal salvation God’s people are truly in need of. Our biggest need is to be reconciled to God because our sin makes us worthy only to receive his wrath (**Romans 6:23**). God’s deliverance of Israel out of slavery at the Exodus foreshadows the Second Exodus by which Jesus would defeat the Enemy of our souls and lead his people out of slavery to sin and death and into the inheritance of eternal life with God. The gospel, or “good news,” is that God has finally accomplished salvation for his people through the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

JESUS IS THE FOCAL POINT OF SALVATION HISTORY

The truth of salvation is revealed progressively throughout the Bible. God created us to be in relationship with him, but from very early on that relationship was broken by sin. God punished Adam and Eve for their sin by sending them out of the Garden of Eden to toil in labor, but he did not punish them eternally as they deserved. Rather, he promised that a seed of the woman would render a deathblow to Satan and therefore to sin and death, though not before receiving mortal wounds (**Genesis 3:15**). Furthermore, God clothed them with the skin of a slain animal, which foreshadowed the sacrifice for sin that would be made on their account. The seed of the woman is, of course, Jesus Christ. God’s forgiveness of Adam and Eve, and of every Old Testament believer after that, signed the death warrant of Christ. The only way God could forgive sin yet remain true to his holy character was to send Jesus to pay the punishment that all his people from the beginning to the end of time deserve for their sin (**Romans 3:25-26**). The redemptive work of Christ, then, is the center of history. God’s people of all time (both OT and NT) have their salvation secured in the same way, by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Old Testament believers looked ahead through shadows to that sacrifice while we look back on it with clarity.

HOW IS SALVATION APPLIED TO THE BELIEVER?

The Bible speaks of our salvation as something that is past, present and future: we have been saved (Romans 8:24; Ephesians 2:5, 8); we are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15; Philippians 2:12–13); we will be saved (Romans 5:10; 13:11; 1 Peter 1:13; Hebrews 1:14). It is helpful to think of salvation as encompassing regeneration and justification (past and present), sanctification (present) and glorification (future). The salvation of our souls includes each of these works of God and more. We must not think of “salvation” simply as the moment that we profess faith in Christ.

Regeneration

Salvation is dependent upon the work of God who must give us new life before we can repent from our sin and exercise faith in Christ. Jesus told Nicodemus, “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:5–6). Jesus describes the kind of change that must happen to a person in order for him or her to enter the kingdom of God, a change that is effected by the Holy Spirit. Because we are in bondage to sin and Satan, we can no more will to be saved than a dead person can will to rise to life or a blind person can will to see (Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:5–6; 6:44; Romans 3:10–12; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1–3). We need the work of the Spirit to restore our hearts from the pollution of sin and to give us new inclinations towards God. We then respond to the Spirit’s working in our hearts by exercising faith in Christ. In this way, we receive salvation by God’s grace through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:6–14; Ephesians 2:4–10).

Justification

When we are given new hearts and freely respond to the truth of the gospel in faith, God justifies us. Justification is a judicial act by which God pronounces the sinner righteous, putting him or her in a permanently right relationship with himself (Romans 3:23–24). God declares us “not guilty” by crediting the perfect obedience of Christ to our account (Romans 4:5), so that when we identify with Christ the law is fulfilled perfectly in us (Romans 8:3–4). With justification

an exchange takes place: whereas Jesus took our sin and its punishment upon himself at the cross, we are clothed with his righteousness. We believe that Jesus will return one day to bring final judgment and that God will judge those who have believed in him on the merits of Christ rather than on their own merits. Those who are judged on the merits of Christ will enter into everlasting life, while those who are judged on their own merits will enter into everlasting hell.

We believe that we are saved “by grace through faith” in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that good works are the certain fruit of such faith. We therefore offer ourselves for Christian service as a means of expressing our gratitude to Him, and to extend His cause.

Sanctification

Although we have been saved (justification) and already experience many of God’s blessings, we still struggle with sin and live in a world where Satan rules. In a sense, we have one foot in heaven and one on earth. Sanctification is the process by which we *are being saved* as the Holy Spirit works in us to progressively free us from sin and make us more like Christ. Thus,

our salvation not only includes Christ dying for us, but also Christ living in us. Christ lives in us through his Holy Spirit whom he sends to indwell every Christian (**Romans 8:3–14**). While obedience merits nothing towards our salvation, it is the necessary result of the Spirit's presence in the lives of believers (**Romans 6:1–7; James 2:24–26**). The miracle of the New Covenant promised by the OT prophets is not that God would one day lower his holy standards for our lives, but that at last his Spirit would write his law upon our hearts, rather than upon tablets of stone, so that we would love and obey him (**Jeremiah 31:33; cf. Deuteronomy 30:6–8; Ezekiel 36:26f.**). As we examine our lives to see the fruit of obedience (**Philippians 2:12–13; 1 Peter 1:2–11**) we must keep in mind two things. First, obedience is not something we muster up, but something the Spirit produces in us; second, the Christian is not someone who is better than everyone else, but someone who is better than he or she once was.

Glorification

We look forward to the time *we will be saved*. When Christ comes again our salvation will reach its culmination and we will be glorified with him. This hope is founded on the resurrection of Christ and the fact that the same Spirit who raised him from the dead now dwells in us. The presence of the Holy Spirit is our guarantee that we will follow Jesus, the first-born from the dead, in the resurrection of our own bodies to glory and immortality (**Romans 8:11–25; 1 Corinthians 15:40–44; 51–57**). In **Romans 8:28–30**, Paul describes the progressive parts of our salvation, ending by saying, “those whom he justified he also glorified” (v. 30). Glorification for those in Paul's day and for us is a future event, yet Paul uses the past tense. He does so to stress the surety of our hope, speaking as if it has already happened because it is guaranteed to come about according to God's sovereign plan and work in our lives. As Paul says elsewhere, “I am confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (**Philippians 1:6**).

Questions for

REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. Define “Salvation” in your own words. Why do we hold to the exclusivity of Christ (i.e., that Jesus is the only way of salvation)?
2. If someone were to ask you to explain the gospel, what would you say?
3. What evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work can you see in your life since you became a Christian?
4. In what ways can the past, present and future aspects of your salvation encourage you in your daily living?
5. For whose salvation are you currently praying? In what ways are you enabling others to hear about God’s salvation? Read the “Window Into Park Street: Missions” on the next page. Pray for God to guide you in your involvement in missions.

WINDOW INTO PARK STREET

Missions

World missions has been a notable characteristic of Park Street Church since it was founded in 1809. In the last sixty years alone, we have sent out over 300 full-time missionaries. Approximately 40% of our budget goes toward Missions. (Please note: donations to Missions must be so designated on your envelope; otherwise, they default to the Ministry and Operations budget.)

In 1997, we instituted a **Full Support Policy** for our **Career Missionaries**. Our desire is for our missionaries to be fully connected to the church, so that their furloughs can be spent building relationships with us and receiving the encouragement and rest they need for long-term service.

Our missionaries also include **Mid-Term Missionaries** (~5 years of service), **Global Professionals** (doing workplace ministry in different parts of the world), as well as folks who serve on **Short-Term Missions**.

Barnabas Groups are prayer and support teams for our career missionaries. They connect our missionaries to the congregation and help care for those we send.

MISSIONS QUIZ

- *How many full-support missionaries can you name?*
- *Can you name any of the children of the missionaries we support? (For answers, ask your teacher.)*
- *Consider “adopting” one PSC missionary and committing to get to know and pray for him/her.*

The **Woman’s Benevolent Society (WBS)** is the church’s longest running ministry. Primarily a missionary support fellowship, WBS has been helping the poor, supporting the church and raising funds for missions since 1809.

Missions also happens locally. The **Thursday Night Outreach** team brings food and Christ-centered hope and love to those who spend most of their time on the Boston Common.

Other church-based, local missions opportunities include friendship ministry to international students, outreach ministries to undergraduates, graduate students, medical students or professionals, and serving on a missions committee. The most important ministry, of course, is done through **PRAYER**. The **Philippian Prayer Ministry** meets monthly on Sundays to partner in prayer with our missionaries.