

Salvation Explained

Salvation: understanding what have I done. Can I have assurance of my salvation?

1. Counseling priority, foundational.
2. Crisis of faith? (Taking God at His Word)
 - Many of us come to Jesus in a variety of ways, different things motivate or compel us, different manners of presentation that will lead us to the conclusion that we need Jesus as our savior.
 - While there is great diversity in how we come to that conclusion there is a basic process that takes place in the life of a sinner that leads to a “born again” experience, the process of regeneration.

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Romans 12:2 “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

1. The phrase “Gospel” literally means “good news” or “glad tidings”. So what is that good news? Kind of like that old saying... “well, I’ve got good news, and I’ve got bad news...”
2. To understand what the good news is, to comprehend it properly, and to appreciate it for what it is we have to understand and comprehend what the bad news is, we can really only understand one in light of the other.
3. “born again”; a phrase that is often times used without an understanding of its definition. Jesus entered into a discussion with a man by the name of Nicodemus, a religious leader during that time, and a man who was sincerely seeking after God. Jesus told Nicodemus, “*verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.*” (John 3:3) In other words unless a person is “born again” they can’t see or enter into the kingdom of God.

John 3:6 “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.”

- There is a distinction between life in the flesh, bodily; and life in the Spirit – it is spiritual.
4. To put it more plainly, unless a person is born again, unless they have had a spiritual re-birth, they cannot enter into Heaven. Given that there are only two destinations after we depart from this life, this means that unless a person is born again they will go to eternal damnation, which is hell. It is important to understand that Nicodemus was a good man, a religious man, yet there was something lacking in his life, and he knew it which why he sought out Jesus.

5. To fully understand what “born again” means we need to go back to the beginning, to the Garden of Eden. In the Garden of Eden (Genesis Ch.’s 1-3) we read that God created man in His own image.

Genesis 1:26 “And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness:”

6. The book of Genesis describes that God created man in His own image, not speaking of physical attributes, but of deeper things, spiritual things because God is a Spirit (John 4:24). Man is made in the image or the similitude of God. God is a tri-une being, the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and these three are One.
7. The Bible does not use the term “Trinity” – it is a concept that is found or revealed in scripture: Genesis 1:1, 26, Isaiah 48:16, Numbers 6:24-26, Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14, 1 Timothy 3:16, 1 Peter 1:2, 3:18, 2 Peter 1:2-3, Hebrews 9:14, Revelation 1:4-5.
8. Man was created and given life as a tri-une being as well, an inferior trinity. Man is body, soul, and spirit. God is a superior Trinity, man is an inferior trinity. We have a body, we’re born into this world with the ability to do things physically, we can move, work, and express ourselves through our physical body.
9. We also have a soul; that is the ability to think, to reason, and to learn, in other words we have a consciousness.
10. Initially in the garden of Eden we see that God breathed life into man (Genesis 2:7) and man became a living soul. This was the Spirit of God living in man – man was now complete; body, soul, and spirit – living in harmony and communion with his creator.
11. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Man is body, soul, and Spirit – it is in the common area of the Spirit that God and man have fellowship, this is where and how we connect with God.
12. As an inferior trinity, being made in the likeness of God we have some of the attributes of God; one of them is that God is sovereign and self determinate, basically God can do whatever He wants. While we’re not completely sovereign, God has given us a degree of self-determination. This means that God has given us the ability to choose, to make choices. Not only did God give man the ability to make decisions but He gave man options, choices to make which would validate his choice.
13. God placed man in the garden and gave him direction and purpose, he was to work and tend to the garden. God also gave man a commandment:

Genesis 2:16-17 “¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

14. When God gave man this commandment He at that same time brought the man to a place of decision, one of his first choices. Man's choices were either to obey God, or to disobey God. God graciously stacked things in favor of the right decision, it wasn't just a matter of either this tree or that tree, a 50-50 shot. Along with the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil there were many other trees to choose from. Out of the many trees that had fruit on them that was good to eat, there was only one that was forbidden.
15. I'm sure that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was desirable and good looking, if it had been detestable and undesirable that would have eliminated or invalidated the choice.
16. The next event we see in the garden is the creation of woman, created as a help meet for man, intended to compliment man and be a helper to him. We don't know how long Adam & Eve lived in the garden in communion and fellowship with God, being obedient to His commandment – but we're coming up to the "bad news".
17. Satan, in the form of a serpent approached the woman. We are told that he was more subtle, or cunning, or more crafty – all in a bad sense. We'll see this bourn out in what he says. Satan asks the woman:

Genesis 3:1 "... *yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*"

18. When Satan asks this question, which is the first question recorded in the Bible, a couple of things happen.
19. "... *hath God said...*" Satan is questioning the word of God, and planting a seed of doubt into her consciousness. Satan is also casting doubt upon the word of God; a very subtle attack upon the word of God. Secondly the statement: "... *ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*"
20. Not only is Satan misquoting what God said, but he is making God's word sound unreasonable. God didn't say they couldn't eat from every tree, just the one; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In phrasing his question in this manner Satan isn't just casting doubt upon God's word, he is casting doubt upon God's character.
21. Next when Satan said: "... *ye shall not surely die:*" – Satan was directly contradicting God's word. Then the temptation: "*For God knows that your eyes will be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*"

This follows a familiar pattern:

1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

22. Man was created innocent which is different than being righteous. Righteousness is the ability to maintain innocence in the presence of temptation. Now they came face to face with temptation, a point of decision.
23. Man now has two sources of information; the first is God who created man, of which Adam has first hand knowledge, who gave the commandment not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; knowing that God is good and that He loves us. Because God loves man He also gave the warning: *“not to eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”*
24. The other source of information; Satan who is now contradicting God's word, casting doubt not only on God's word, but casting doubt upon His character – that He is somehow withholding something that is good for us.
25. The choice at this point is either to be obedient to God, believing His word to be true; or being disobedient, setting God's word aside in favor of the word or counsel of Satan.
26. Eve's actions affirmed her choice, she ate from the forbidden fruit, Adam followed suit – their choice and what they believed were made apparent by their actions.
27. Their incorrect perception; their sinful actions did not invalidate God's word, God's word was and is still true and they both died. God had said that they would surely die, but they didn't die right away physically because we know that they went on to have children and lived to ripe old ages.
28. Their soul didn't die because it is eternal. They didn't lose their ability to think, to learn, or to reason. They died spiritually, the spirit within them died, or left them.
29. Man was physically alive, able to move, express themselves, and re-produce. They were still alive consciously, in the soul, able to think and reason, etc., but dead spiritually.
30. As they continued in their earthly physical lives they produced children, and as much as they were able to pass on physical life, they were unable to pass on spiritual life, because they were spiritually dead and they didn't have it to give. The same cycle continued from Adam and Eve to each of us, being born into this world alive physically, born with the ability to think, reason, and learn, but born dead spiritually.

Romans 5:19 *“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”*

31. Again, God is the superior Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Man is an inferior and now a broken or incomplete trinity; body and soul, but dead spiritually. It is in the area of the Spirit where that we are able to have communion and fellowship with God. Unfortunately, fellowship and communion between God and man was now broken because of sin. Ultimately, because of our inherited sin nature, we each would eventually prove ourselves to be sinners.

Romans 3:10 “As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.”

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

32. The Apostle Paul teaches us that the wages, or earnings of sin is death it was true for Adam and Eve, and it is true for us as well.

33. The emptiness that is in us, that missing part of our “trinity” creates a longing for fulfillment often prompts us to seek that fulfillment in many other things in this world. Sometimes we sense fulfillment, but it is always temporary and eventually we see that it is to no avail and we go from one thing to the next. The pursuit of happiness and fulfillment is endless apart from finding it in Jesus.

1 Timothy 6:6 “But Godliness with contentment is great gain.”

34. As already mentioned; part of the bad news is that along with being born dead spiritually we also have Adam & Eve’s inherited sin nature. (Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10, 23, 7:18)

35. Just like Adam and Eve, at the end of our lives we will each face physical death just as the Bible tells us:

Hebrews 9:27 “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

36. Our bodies are finite; sin is a corruptive influence and eventually our physical bodies wear out and they are no longer capable of performing or expressing who we are. Our soul or consciousness, like the Spirit of God is eternal. When we die physically, our soul, our consciousness is set free from the limitations of the body.

37. Our body being dead no longer expresses who we are, and no longer being subject to our consciousness it simply decomposes, returning to it’s basic elements – just as the Bible says:

Ecclesiastes 12:7 “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

- **The physical body** decomposes back to its basic elements, which are the same as dirt.
- **The Spirit** returns to God who gave it; that is assuming that the person involved was born again for the Spirit to be there in the first place.
- **The soul**; this is the real question. The person who is born again of the Spirit, having the Holy Spirit residing in them (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19) when they die the Spirit and soul / consciousness are joined together and as Ecclesiastes 12 describes returns to the presence of God – Heaven.

- The person who is not “born again” and doesn’t have the Spirit residing in them, when they die there is no Spirit to return to God.
- The soul is alone, released from the flesh and transported to Hell, a place of torment and anguish awaiting the final judgment described in **Revelation**.

Revelation 20:11-15 “¹¹And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. ¹⁴And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

1. Those “souls” that apart from the Spirit are cast into hell awaiting final judgment are conscious of their circumstances. The soul like the spirit is eternal and lasts forever.
 2. Jesus described a situation in **Luke chapter 16:19-31** where a rich man lived a good life and fared sumptuously every day.
 3. There was a certain beggar named Lazarus who was laid at the rich mans gate every day, he was covered with sores and the dogs came and licked his sores. He ate the crumbs that fell from the rich mans table.
 4. Jesus describes that they both died; Lazarus was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom, paradise, being comforted by father Abraham.
 5. The rich man found himself in hell, greatly tormented.
 6. The rich man cried out to Abraham begging that he would send Lazarus with just one drop of water to comfort him. Abraham described that this was impossible because of the great gulf between them.
 7. The point is that both men were conscious of their circumstances, particularly the man in torment.
- It all comes down to two choices: The Psalmist describes heaven as being in the presence of God.

Psalm 16:11 “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

- The only other option described in the Bible is hell, which Jesus describes:

Mark 9:45-46 “⁴⁵... to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: ⁴⁶Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

- God doesn't condemn or send anyone to hell, we condemn and send ourselves in our rebellion against God.

Jesus tells us:

John 3:17-19 “¹⁷For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

1. God alone sets the criteria for who enters into heaven, He gives us the ability to choose, and He gives us the information we need to make a decision.
2. Then God allows us the sovereignty to choose, not forcing a particular choice upon us.
3. God also respects our choice. If we choose Him freely, in His eyes this is a true expression of love – then He receives us with open arms into a personal relationship with Him, in what ever state we're in.
4. If we choose to reject Him, He regretfully respects that choice as well. He will not force us to be “born again” even thou He desires that personal relationship with each of us.

2 Peter 3:9 “*The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*”

5. That is why as we read in **John 3:16** “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
6. God the Father sent His only begotten son to die on the cross for us. Because the wages, the earnings, or result of sin is death, judgment – the one who sins, falls short of the glory or perfection of God has to die in **payment** for sin.
7. Sent by the Father, Jesus steps in both individually and corporately – pays the price for all of our sins. He lays down His life sacrificially and substitutionally in our place.
8. Our sin is imputed to Him (He takes credit for it), His righteousness is imputed to us. God the Father then see's us through the righteousness of Jesus – which makes us acceptable in His sight.

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

- This is a good trade! It always comes down to an issue of faith.

Jesus was asked:

John 6:28-29 “²⁸... what shall we do, that we might work the works of God?
²⁹ Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.”

Status:

1. God created man to have fellowship with Himself.
2. Adam / man sinned and broke fellowship – we all became sinners deserving judgment.
3. Jesus came to take our judgment upon Himself.
4. We either believe and receive or disbelieve and reject.

Isaiah tells us:

Isaiah 1:18 “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; thou they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

- Placing our faith in Jesus isn't an act of “blind faith” because we can reason it through, to a point.
- God wants us to reason it through as much as we can and then to make an intelligent, knowing choice – but there is and there has to be an element of faith – simply believing because God says so.

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him...”

- There is that all important element of simply trusting God's word and believing in Him.
- Prior to making that decision there will never be enough “tangible proof” to absolutely know. After making the choice to place your trust in Jesus, when the Holy Spirit has come to live in us (once we're born again of the Spirit) it seems that we are suddenly overwhelmed with incredible proof.
- Another way of putting this: “God if you're real, then reveal yourself to me – and I'll believe.” God puts it back on us and says “believe in Me, and I'll reveal Myself to you.”

The “work” of God is to “believe”.

Galatians 3:6 “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Doctrine of Grace: God's un-merited, un-deserved favor.

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Romans 10:9-10, 13 “⁹That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou

shalt be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” – “¹³For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Eternal security:

2 Peter 1:10 “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:”

Abiding relationship:

John 15:5 “I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without Me ye can do nothing.”

John 8:31-32 “³¹If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; ³²and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Romans 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”