

SALVATION

ARTICLE 4—PART 2

ASPECTS OF SALVATION

A. “Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.” (BF&M 2000)

Our statement of faith correctly defines regeneration as “a change of heart wrought [created] by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin.”

Also note that regeneration precedes [comes before] the sinner's repentance and faith. In fact, our statement of faith rightly states that regeneration is something "to which the sinner responds."

This of vast importance, for the Bible's teaching on regeneration, or the new birth, nullifies any credit that humans may take in salvation.

The fact is that if God does not regenerate the heart first, then the sinner will not repent and believe.

It is clear from the Bible, and so it is described in the Baptist Faith and Message, that regeneration is the cause of repentance and faith, and not the other way around.

Salvation is completely by grace as God chooses to express His grace, and on whom He chooses to express it.

“According to His mercy He saved us,
through the washing of regeneration
and renewing of the Holy Spirit”
(Titus 3:5).

“Having been born again...through
the word of God which lives and
abides forever” (1Peter 1:23).

The sinner's response to
regeneration by the Holy Spirit
through the Word of God:

1. Repentance
2. Faith

“Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God.

Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.”

(BF&M 2000)

Repentance is the sinner's response to regeneration. It includes:

1. Hating the sin that the sinner once loved.
2. Sorrow in one's soul for rebelling against the loving God of grace.
3. It includes an earnest turning toward God for help to be pardoned from sin's penalty, and desperation to be delivered from sin's power.

“Before this God-granted repentance came into one’s life, that person’s heart was against God and for sin;

But now, after regeneration, the person’s heart is against sin and for God.”

(adapted from *Abstract of Systematic Theology* by J.P. Boyce)

Saving faith is more than mere positive opinion of Christ Jesus. It is also more than intellectual belief in historical facts.

Both of these kinds of faith are good, but not enough.

Saving faith, therefore, is “personal reliance upon Christ for salvation because of belief of God’s testimony as to our sinful and ruined condition, and as to what Christ has assuredly done to save us.”

–J.P. Boyce

Saving faith “involves an act of the will whereby one trusts in Christ and commits oneself to him, to his will and way.”

–Herschel Hobbs

Characteristics of Saving Faith:

1. Continuing to trust and serve Christ throughout one's life.
2. A desire to be useful in the work of Christ.
3. Love of prayer and of the word of God, and of the meetings with His people for worship.

4. Progress in loving holiness and hating sin, with increased humility concerning one's sinfulness.
5. A devoted love to the children of God.

(adapted from J.P. Boyce)

B. “Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ.

Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.”

(BF&M 2000)

Justification is “God’s gracious and full acquittal” of sinners. (BF&M 2000).

Remember: God “justifies the ungodly” (Romans 4:5). But He cannot justify the ungodly just because He wants to do so. He must have just and righteous grounds for justifying the guilty. The grounds or basis of justification is the Cross of Christ!

C. “Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.”

(BF&M 2000)

“Beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”

(2 Peter 3:17-18).

The Lord is the cause of growth in our lives, but He uses means/tools:

1. Public preaching of the Word of God
2. Personal Bible study
3. Group Bible study
4. Prayer
5. Fasting
6. Fellowship over biblical truth
7. Public worship with your church

D. “Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.”

(BF&M 2000)

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50–58!

Finally, all this is by **GRACE!**

Salvation, from beginning to end, is all of grace. It is by God's grace alone.

Grace is God's unmerited favor.

“Divine grace is the sovereign and saving favor of God exercised in the bestowment of blessings upon those who have no merit in them and for which no compensation is demanded *from* them.” –Arthur Pink

Some religious groups will say that they agree that we are saved by “grace,” but by grace they mean merits and credits earned or received from the Church or the saints.

The Bible does not teach that at all!

Instead, the Bible teaches that we are saved by God's gracious, kind disposition alone.

We do not deserve God's grace. Instead, we have merited/earned hell. God's grace is wholly undeserved, and is expressed toward those He saves.

“Grace is a provision for men who are so fallen that they cannot lift the ax of justice, so corrupt that they cannot change their own natures, so averse to God that they cannot turn to Him, so blind that they cannot see Him, so deaf that they cannot hear Him, and so dead that He Himself must open their graves and lift them to resurrection.”

—G.S. Bishop

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.*

(Words by John Newton, 1725-1807,
slave-trader and wretched sinner, whose
heart was arrested by the grace of God.)

