

## Faith Community Bible church

### Position Paper: Salvation

Salvation is God's unearned or unmerited gift (John 10:28; Rom. 6:23), and therefore, it is something that can be delighted in forever but never can we boast as one who has added any feature to it. Even the faith by which it is received is itself a gift from God (Eph. 2:8-10).

The term salvation is an "umbrella" term and is used in three general ways in the Bible. It is spoken of as *a past event* (Luke 19:9-10; Rom. 8:24; Eph. 1:13; 2:5, 8; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5), *an ongoing work* (1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15; Phil. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:8-9; 4:18; Heb. 5:9), *and a final future consummation at the return of Jesus Christ* (Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13; Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:5; Rev. 12:10).

1. **Faith** (and repentance): These two concepts are not optional. They are indispensable to salvation. They are both viewed biblically as (1) the *gracious gift of God* (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25), and (2) the *responsibility or duty of man* (Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19). Repentance describes the "change of mind" that leads to a "change of direction" in heart and life as demanded by God as a prerequisite for a right relationship with Himself (Luke 15:17; 24:47; Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). It is to turn away from sin and to turn to Christ. Abraham's faith included both the negative renunciation of his own ability and his positive reliance upon God. The act of repentance is self-renouncing and self-denying and the act of faith is Christ-entrusting and Christ-embracing. Faith is further qualified biblically in at least four ways:
  - A. It is active. This means that true biblical faith is not passive (cf. Hebrews 11). It is an active response to what God has initiated and provided in the atoning work of Christ. Faith is the active means of *receiving* justification, sanctification, and glorification (cf. Rom. 5:1-2).
  - B. It obeys. It is a willingness to obey or a desire to obey what God says in His word (cf. John 14:15). But is more than that, it actually obeys what God says in His word (cf. Matt. 7:21-23).
  - C. It works. These are not fleshly efforts to earn God's favor. These works are in no sense meritorious. They are the flowering of true biblical faith (cf. James 2:14-26). These works are empowered by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:12-14) and are rightly called the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; cf. John 15:4-5).
  - D. It endures. This is to remain loyal or to abide (cf. John 15:6). It is to persist in belief (Matt. 24:13; cf. John 20:31). It is to remain faithful to Christ even unto death (Rev. 14:12).
2. **Justification** (and Imputation): *Imputation* moves in two directions. First, our sins are counted or reckoned to Christ's account as if He committed those sins (2 Cor. 5:21). Therefore, our sins are not counted against us but against Christ. Secondly, Christ and His righteousness is counted or reckoned to us as if we were found to be innocent before

God (Rom. 4:1-9). The result of this two-directional imputation is *justification* (cf. Rom. 4:25); this is to be declared not guilty before the Divine bar of justice in advance of the final judgment. Presently, the result is a right standing or a right relationship (i.e. positional righteousness) before God (cf. Rom. 5:1).

3. **Glorification** (and Sanctification): Glorification is the culminating work of God in Salvation. But it begins with initial sanctification, moves to progressive sanctification, and then finally to ultimate sanctification.
  - A. **Initial** Sanctification is to be set apart from sin unto God at the point of conversion (i.e. faith and repentance; cf. 1 Cor. 6:11).
  - B. **Progressive** Sanctification describes the ongoing work of God in setting us apart from sin and unto to Himself (John 17:17; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 2:11; 10:14; etc.). It is to become in *practice* what God has declared us to be in *position*.
  - C. **Ultimate** Sanctification (i.e. Glorification) is when the believer will finally and fully be set apart from sin unto God (cf. 1 Thess. 3:11-13; 5:23; Phil. 1:6). The *private personal experience* of the act of God in declaring the believer “not guilty” will be proclaimed *publicly and openly* before all of creation (final judgment; cf. Matt. 16:27; Acts 10:42; Rom. 2:16; 14:10, 12; 2 Cor. 5:10). The adornment of resurrection bodies will complete the work of salvation in the believer.
  
4. **Eternal Security and Assurance of Salvation** (i.e. Perseverance): The tension between security and assurance is expressed in Scripture (cf. 2 Tim. 2:19). Even though salvation is secure, God calls us to live by His standards. It must be understood that security and assurance while related, are different issues.
  - A. Eternal Security is objective. From God’s point of view the issue is black and white. Genuine believers are eternally secure (John 10:27-28).
  - B. Assurance is subjective. From man’s point of view the issue may be somewhat gray. Assurance has a subjective dimension in reference to *personal human evaluation* (2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 1:5-12; 1 John 5:13). Even though salvation is secure for those who are in Christ, the presence of sin in our lives will undermine our assurance of that salvation (Ps. 51:12). Patterns of unrepentant sin destroy confidence (1 Jn. 2:28-29; 3:18-24; 4:16-17).
  - C. Things to remember:
    1. Eternal security is a very important basis for assurance, but arrogance and presumption are uncharacteristic of persevering saints.
    2. Lifestyle “yardsticks” assist in the evaluation of assurance (cf. 1 John).
    3. The witness of the Spirit is vital to assurance (cf. Rom. 8:16-17).
    4. Warning passages in the epistles were written to professing Christians to drive them to their only source of enablement, which is the persevering grace of God in Christ (cf. Hebrews).

## Questions:

### 1. ***What must I do to be saved?***

When confronted with God's gracious gospel, the one who desires to be rescued from his sin and its consequences along with the impending wrath to come *must respond* in repentance (turning from sin) and in faith (turning to God in reliance and active trust) in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 10:8-10; Acts 2:38; 4:12). Faith is the channel or avenue of *salvation by grace* (Eph. 2:8, 9).

### 2. ***Do I need to do anything to stay saved?***

Since God is the author of salvation, from beginning to end, He is the one who keeps us saved. Of course, we must *respond to Him* in this salvation relationship accordingly (see questions 4 & 5 below).

### 3. ***Can I lose my salvation?***

Genuine salvation cannot be forfeited under any circumstances (Rom 8:31-39). Salvation is a work of God in the heart and life of a sinner. It is initiated and sustained by God. If a genuine believer can lose their salvation, then God would have to change his mind and that is impossible (cf. Mal. 3:6; Num. 23:19). God has promised to be faithful to us (1 Thess. 5:23-24) and to complete the salvation, which He initiated (Phil. 1:6). In other words, it cannot be forfeited in genuine believers just as the unregenerate heart of an unbeliever cannot initiate it.

### 4. ***What role do "works" play in salvation?***

Works or deeds do not merit salvation but they are a product of saving faith (cf. James 2:17-20). However, there are two types of works in view: (1) works that attempt to merit salvation, and (2) works that "grow out" of faith as energized by the Holy Spirit. Works that attempt to merit salvation are apart from faith and are thus "fleshly" (cf. Rom. 8:13). Works that are a manifestation of faith ("work of faith" 1 Thes. 1:3; "obedience of faith" Rom. 1:5) are evidence to the believer that their faith is genuine. These types of works are the works that God has prepared for us beforehand that we might walk in them (Eph. 2:10). They are to be put on display so that God might be glorified (Matt. 5:16). If you truly love Jesus Christ you will strive to obey Him (John 14:15). And in the final judgment, these works will be shown to all of creation as proof of God's justifying work as well as testimony to the glory of God in Christ (cf. Rev. 19:8; "fine linen").

### 5. ***What is my part in the works that God calls me to do?***

The process of ongoing sanctification is cooperation between the believer and the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-25). It is in this context that believers are called to "abide in Christ" (John 15:1-11). All believers in Christ should live a life of reliance on the Spirit for sanctification (2 Thess. 2:13).