

# Salvation: God's Love Forever

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, March 10, 2013

## 'Coming to Terms' with the Terms

In our last two studies, we considered the "why" of salvation. We saw that God had two great motivations in His work of saving us. First, it was in order that He might forever be praised for the glory of His grace to us. And second, it was because He deeply and eternally loves us. There really can't be two greater motivations than these!

And now, we're ready to begin considering the "what" of salvation. In this lesson, we'll start off with a basic "glossary" of the general terms used in the biblical doctrine of salvation. Understanding the different words that the Bible uses to describe God's work of saving us--or the words that are suggested by the Bible's teaching--will help us understand and appreciate the greatness of God's grace to us.

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**ADOPTION:** This is the gracious act of God by which He places someone into His family--with all the rights and privileges of a full adult family member. It's a 'positional' matter that's distinguished from "regeneration". Regeneration has the idea of being "born-again" as new babes with the need to grow. An adopted child, on the other hand, is already grown; and is given the full privileges of the legal position of sonship (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:1-7 Ephesians 1:5).

**ATONEMENT:** This word does not appear in the New Testament. It's Old Testament meaning is "to cover". But in dealing with our sins, Jesus didn't merely 'cover them up'. In the Old Testament sense, sins were temporarily "covered" by sacrifices so that God could "pass over" sins that had been previously committed in anticipation of the 'justifying' work of Jesus (Romans 3:25-26). In the work of expressing our theology of salvation, "atonement" is a word that is often used to express the entire New Testament work of Jesus for us on the cross to completely remove the guilt of our sin.

**CALLING:** This word describes the gracious act of God whereby He invites all sinners to accept the salvation that is offered in Jesus (John 7:37). With respect to those who come, the call is said to be "effectual"--that is, it is a call from the sovereign God that results in the 'called' ones actual coming in faith and being saved (Romans 8:30).

**CONVERSION:** This word describes a "turning" from something to something else. In the doctrine of salvation, it involves our response to the grace of God in which we willingly turn away from and repent of an old manner of life, and turn instead to a new life of faith and obedience (Matthew 18:3; Acts 3:19; 26:20).

**ELECTION:** This describes the completely unmerited initiative of God toward sinners--one in which, in accordance with the good pleasure of His own will, He eternally purposes to choose and completely save some members of fallen humanity in and by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:2).

**FOREKNOWLEDGE:** This means much more than simply 'knowing about something beforehand'. It describes God's divine commitment to someone in advance--based on what He has determined in His eternal will for them--by which He regards them with favor before they could ever be worthy, and makes them the

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object of His love before they could ever make themselves lovely (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

**GLORIFICATION:** This describes the future perfection of our humanity into conformity with the image of the resurrected Lord Jesus in His post-resurrection state, so that we will forever behold His glory and share together with Him in it (John 17:24; Romans 4:2; 8:28-30; 1 John 3:3).

**GRACE:** This speaks of God's unmerited love and favor--as a gift--toward those who do not deserve it (Ephesians 2:8-9). It's a word that often describes the 'whole package' of all that God gives us in Christ through our salvation (Romans 5:2).

**JUSTIFICATION:** This refers to a 'legal declaration' from God--one in which He declares the believing sinner to be 100% righteous in His sight on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ credited to his or her account through faith alone (Romans 3:26; 4:25; 8:30). It's the same thing as saying that there is now "no condemnation" for those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1).

**MERCY:** This describes the compassion God has toward those who are in misery or distress because of the consequence of their sin. It isn't in contradiction to or in opposition to God's attribute of justice (because Jesus' death makes it possible for Him to be merciful and still be just). Rather, it's best seen as the 'flip-side' of the same coin as "grace". In grace, God gives us what we don't deserve--that is, His rich favor. But in mercy, He doesn't give us what we do deserve--that is, His judgment. In mercy, He pours His compassion on us instead of His wrath (Ephesians 2:1-5; esp. v. 4; 1 Timothy 1:13).

**PERSEVERANCE:** This describes the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit toward us as we walk and live on this earth--a ministry by which the grace that was begun in us is maintained and completed until our glorification is fully accomplished. It shows itself in that, when someone believes on Jesus--even though they may have occasional 'ups' and 'downs' along the way--they generally persist in that faith all the way to the very end (Matthew 24:13; Philippians 1:6; Jude 24; Revelation 3:10).

**PREDESTINATION:** This speaks of the decree of God as it relates to His sovereign purpose for the final outcome of His moral creatures. He 'destinates' those He elects in advance to justification and glorification (Ephesians 1:4-5; Romans 8:30; 9:19-24).

**PROPIITIATION:** To 'propitiate' means to appease someone who is offended and to satisfy their anger. Jesus is our "propitiation" in that He, by His death on the cross, appeases His Father with regard to our sins and satisfies His just anger for our sins on our behalf (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:10).

**RECONCILIATION:** This describes a change in relationship from one of hostility and enmity to one of harmony and peace. It involves the work of Jesus to remove that which stands between us and the Father; so that there is no longer anything that prevents the Father from forgiving us, accepting us, entering into a full relationship with us, and showering His favor upon us richly (Isaiah 59:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:20).

**REGENERATION:** This is the act of God by which the principle of new life is implanted in someone that God has chosen for Himself; making that person a 'new creation' from the inside-out, enabling them to place a conscious faith in the gospel, of Jesus Christ, and changing the governing disposition of their soul so that they grow in faithfulness and holiness (John 3:3-7; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:3, 23).

**SANCTIFICATION:** This is the gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which, throughout the lifetime of redeemed men and women, He purifies them from the pollution of sin, renews their whole nature in the image of God, and enables them to perform good works (John 15:1-3; 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version; copyright 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc.