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PUBLIC SERVANT ENDORSEMENT

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Understanding All the Biblical Descriptors of Salvation



The primary purpose of the New Testament (NT) book of Romans is to communicate the specifics regarding salvation. These surrounding truths and words Paul uses to describe these specifics—including justification, propitiation, atonement, and reconciliation—are important to grasp and understand. Once digested, they are also profoundly illuminating! The writer of Hebrews put it this way: *so great a salvation!* (2:3). You will see what I have in mind in this study.

Herein are the explicit details related to your assurance that you are at peace with Him. The book of Romans provides a precise, progressive outline of God’s plumb line relative as to how a person is saved.

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★ PUBLIC SERVANT ENDORSEMENT

Doug Lamborn

*U.S. Representative, Colorado
5th Congressional District*



“When I came to understand firsthand the Gospel of John, I became a believer. I was 18 years old. I had gone to college to be independent and do things that you do not have the freedom to do in your parents’ home. I wanted to do whatever I wanted and was actually starting to go down that road. Fortunately, I didn’t have the opportunity to go too far, but left to my own devices, I am sure I would have.

“Ever since that time, and that has been more than 40 years ago, I’ve done my best to be a sincere follower of Christ and a servant of God. I’ve been growing closer and studying the Word of God, and seeking to serve Him

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Lastly, this study is nothing less than a lesson in theology; most people today in our dumbed-down society are not reading or studying theology. I challenge you to gain an inquisitive appetite for such systematic study.

Read on, my friend.

Ralph Drollinger

I. INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the best way to gain the most profound insight into all that Scripture conveys regarding salvation is to use a metaphor. Imagine throughout this study that you are a lawmaker who has been convicted of breaking the very traffic laws that you had authored, and these enacted laws were, so to speak, “written in your heart” (Jeremiah 31:33). This perspective, relative to man’s perilous condition before God, exemplifies what Paul states at the beginning of his epistle to the Romans. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle writes the following in 1:19–20:

That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them...so that they are without excuse.

God’s laws are written in every person’s heart—so in one sense, it’s not as if any of us can plead ignorance to what follows. Difficult as it is for any citizen to convince a traffic officer of his innocence via the use of naivete, imagine

especially if the officer knew as you converse through your rolled-down window, that *you* wrote the law—the very one that you are now attempting to deny! Acting dumb in such a setting is very difficult! In the much broader sense of denying knowledge of God’s revelation, God can always answer back through the window of your mind: *that which is known about God is evident within them.* This illustration is a good picture (embryonic, we will see to what follows) to hold in your mind as we study all the following biblical descriptors of salvation. But before unpacking each of these crucial words, we need to first set the stage.

II. MAN’S DESPERATE CONDITION

Because of man’s sinful nature inherited through Adam at the Fall (see Genesis chapter 3), Paul concludes in Romans 3:23, *all have sinned* (present perfect tense) *and fall short* (present tense) *of the glory of God.* Romans 5:12 elaborates further on man’s inherited *sin* nature:



♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

Romans 10:9–10

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.



A repentant heart that gladly desires a new Lord is characteristic of true, real conversion of the soul. Amen!



Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men...

The Old Testament (OT) books of 1 Kings and Ecclesiastes reinforce the idea of the desperate, endemic *sin* nature of man: “for there is no man who does not sin,” and indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins (8:46 and 7:20). In fact, man’s sinful nature is so infective and spiritually debilitating that Paul exclaims in Romans 3:11b that the following is what results:

“THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD.”

Man’s condition is so desperately wicked that he cannot reason his way out of sinfulness and find God. Scripture teaches that God actually reaches down, i.e., He does the finding and saves man! In John 15:16 Jesus precisely and unmistakably communicates this truth:

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain....”

Echoes Ephesians 1:4–5:

Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him...as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will...

Scripture is perspicuous regarding this truth, not only in what it says in the previous passages, but also by the many illustrations of man’s depraved nature.

That man is depraved, and from his dead spiritual state, cannot find or reason his way to God is replete throughout the Word of God. That’s how dead he is; he is fallen. The Bible teaches repeatedly and clearly that:

From the moment of conception (Psalm 51:5), man is spiritually dead in his sin (Ephesians 2:1–3) and as a result, he is alienated not only from God (Luke 15:18) but also from others (1 Corinthians 8:12) and even from himself (Habakkuk 2:10).

Man is spiritually dead and fractured in his *sin* and needs salvation from God to be made whole. It follows that it is no surprise that the various New Testament Greek words for *sin* mean “falling short of the mark.” *Sin* is any personal lack of conformity to the moral character and desire of God. In other words, sin is rebellion—either passively or actively—regarding what we know from our heart to be right. Most concisely, *sin*, at its root, is a “deification of self and a dethronement of God.”¹ We *sin* because our very nature is an imputed *sin* nature, for which the consequences are stated in Romans 6:23: **For the wages of sin is death....** All the foregoing is profoundly important to the biblical doctrine of salvation and basic to the Christian worldview. Man is spiritually desperate! Only God can save him!

III. THE GOOD NEWS

Even though we all are sinners, Romans 5:8–10 unfolds the tremendous grace and mercy of God to save us sinners



Continued from page 2

ever since. Whatever mission He gives me, I want to carry out. I know I will stand before Him after my life is over. I want nothing more than for Him to say my life was pleasing to Him.

“On the surface it may sound appealing to do whatever you want and to think that leads to freedom, but actually that leads to bondage. A person doesn’t find true freedom until he commits his life to God.”

— REP. DOUG LAMBORN

from our spiritual death and separation via the work of Jesus Christ, Who paid the penalty for man’s *sin*:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

The magnificent, good news of the gospel is that *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!* This act of salvation is described by many specific words in Scripture. These profound components of the believer’s biblical doctrine of salvation are formally known as the doctrine of *soteriology*. *Soterios* is the Greek verb that means “to save.” Trust me, the following study of these related words will bless you in a special way as you learn about all that God has done on the believer’s behalf.

Scripture provides mankind with many strong and vivid words that further describe so great a salvation.

What now follows are these definitions and the biblical descriptors of each of one.

IV. SUBSTITUTION

In both Matthew 20:28b and Mark 10:45b the gospel writers state the following:

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

These passages indicate in classic biblical Greek that the life of Christ was in essence a **substitution**, or, as stated in the NASB text, *a ransom (lutron)* meaning, “instead of” or “in the place of.” In other words, Christ gave His life in place of ours to pay the penalty for our *sin*. Herein is the idea of a **substitution**, and as we will see next, for the purpose of atoning for us.

But before we unfold the salvific idea of **atonement**, in our illustration of the traffic officer and the lawmaker, the idea of **substitution** is akin to the lawmaker’s later standing before the judge, and after the lawbreaker’s been sentenced with a penalty, he removes his robe, steps down from the bench, and pays the bailiff the amount required. Jesus Christ Himself was God’s **substitutionary** payment—the *ransom* if you will—Who stood in our place for our *sin*.

V. ATONEMENT

In Colossians 1:19–20 the Apostle Paul speaks about the way in which the holy God of the universe took the initiative to make peace with sinful man:

For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him... having made peace through the blood of His cross....

The God of the Bible has provided and ordained **blood**, which is the actual essence and depiction of life as the means of **atonement** for sin. Jesus’ life, depicted by the blood, the essence of life itself, is what atoned for man’s sin. **Atonement** means, “to cover; to wash away.” Accordingly, Christ, the second person of the Trinity, i.e., *the Father’s fullness dwelling in Him*, is both the



sacrificial **substitutionary** victim (per the previous descriptor), and the sacrifice-offering **atonement** *Himself!* Christ has expiated (“to extinguish the guilt incurred by”) our **sin!** He took His own loving initiative to appease His own righteous anger relative to man’s rebellious, sinful nature!

As it relates to our illustration, God, the courtroom Judge, has personally covered the cost and washed away all the penalties associated with the lawmaker’s legal infractions. Christ paid it all on our behalf! The loving Judge Himself covers over the findings of His own courtroom! Think of the scenario in this way: the Judge has torn up His own writ! Paul says He did this in Colossians 1:22b, which says:

in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach....

Summarily to this point in our outline, God has sent His Son as a **substitutionary atonement** for our **sin**.

VI. PROPITIATION

In his classic book, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, Leon Morris states the following regarding **propitiation**, “It is the combination of God’s deep love for the sinner with His uncompromising reaction against **sin** which brings about what the Bible calls **propitiation**.”²² **Propitiation** (*hilasmos*) is the “averting of wrath by means of an appropriate transaction or sacrifice.”²³ It is the satisfaction of violated justice. Stott adds additional insight:

“It is God Himself Who in Holy wrath needs to be propitiated, God Himself Who in holy love understood

to do the propitiating, and God Himself Who in the Person of His Son dies for the propitiation of our sins.”²⁴

“God took his own loving initiative to appease his own righteous anger...”²⁵ **Propitiation** is God’s responding in mercy when we are due His wrath. Note 1 John 4:10 in this regard:

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The courtroom judge has every right to punish the lawmaker for his wrongdoing, but instead his response is one of mercy, personally satisfying the demand of his own court. It is as if the judge himself is calling off the officer who justifiably is handcuffing the lawmaker. First John 2:2 puts it this way:

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

VII. REDEMPTION

Not only is man born into and manifesting **sin**, the Scriptures teach that he is in bondage to **sin**—and in desperate need of being bought out of his bondage! The Greek term used in this verse for **redemption** (*agorazo*) means “to buy in the marketplace; to purchase.” **Redemption**, then, is a beautiful picture of Christ’s buying my freedom from my bondage to **sin**. *Agorazo* is God’s act “to set free by the payment of a price.” Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul chose an analogous word to communicate vividly and powerfully in and from a decadent Roman slave-market world. Additionally, and

John Quincy Adams



“The hope of a Christian is inseparable from his faith. Whoever believes in the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures must hope that the religion of Jesus shall prevail throughout the earth. Never since the foundation of the world have the prospects of mankind been more encouraging to that hope than they appear to be at the present time. And may the associated distribution of the Bible proceed and prosper till the Lord shall have made ‘bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God’ [Isaiah 52:10]. In the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior. The Declaration of Independence laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity.”

— John Quincy Adams, sixth president of the United States, diplomat, secretary of state, U.S. senator, U.S. representative, “Old Man Eloquent,” “Hell-Hound of Abolition.”

John Quincy Adams, *An Oration Delivered Before the Inhabitants of the Town of Newburyport at Their Request on the Sixty-First Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1837 (Newburyport: Charles Whipple, 1837), 5–6.



John Jay



“By conveying the Bible to people ... we certainly do them a most interesting act of kindness. We thereby enable them to learn that man was originally created and placed in a state of happiness, but, becoming disobedient, was subjected to the degradation and evils which he and his posterity have since experienced. The Bible will also inform them that our gracious Creator has provided for us a Redeemer in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed – that this Redeemer has made atonement ‘for the sins of the whole world,’ and thereby reconciling the Divine justice with the Divine mercy, has opened a way for our

Continued next page

particularly important in terms of application implied using this word, as well as throughout the book of Romans, chapter six, is this idea:

Divine ownership resulted when God purchased me out of the salve market of sin.

Yes, the believer is bought with a price and set free from *sin*, but as denoted by Paul’s choice of words, he becomes simultaneously a *slave* to his new owner and master! Morris’s statement is so very apropos:

Believers are not bought by Christ into a liberty of selfish ease. Rather since they have been bought by God at a terrible cost, they have become God’s slaves, to do His will.⁶

This *profound, profound, profound* insight and understanding of my salvation must motivate me to the highest level of obedience and intensity relative to every assignment my Master gives me! It’s all about pleasing my Master—the One Who paid a huge price to **redeem** me from an otherwise horrible existence of bondage to *sin*!

*“How can I say thanks
For the things You have done for me
Things so undeserved
Yet You gave to prove Your love for me.
The voices of a million angels
Could not express my gratitude.
All that I am and ever hope to be,
I owe it all to Thee!”*

is the most appropriate response as depicted by the late Andrae Edward Crouch.⁷

Paul states and admonishes believers with this same weighty sense of understanding, identity, being and purpose when he succinctly writes in 1 Corinthians 6:20:

For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

As the lawmaker begins to follow the judge out of the courtroom and senses the reality of his liberation from his bondage to *sin*, he suddenly sobers, realizing his deep sense of gratitude and ensuing obligation. What a debt he owes the loving judge! Romans 6:18 underscores and crystalizes the unavoidable conclusion of all **redeemed** persons:

And having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Most American believers vastly overlook this huge theological insight. In thinking their salvation is a ticket to selfish fulfillments, they miss what *redemption* really means: becoming an indentured *slave* assigned with the task of helping to fulfill the Great Commission. Divine purchase and ownership must greatly impact and govern the direction of your life and mine in terms of what we do with our time, talent and treasure post-salvation.

VIII. RECONCILIATION

When someone is **redeemed** or bought out of the in bondage-to-sin marketplace, he is simultaneously being **reconciled** (*katallasso*), i.e., being brought back and realigned with God (as was mankind’s standing prior to the fall into *sin* per Genesis 3). Throughout Scripture the unsaved man is called an “enemy of God,” bespeaking of man’s latent hostility toward his Creator that



both perpetuated and resulted from the Fall. The classic sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, preached by one of the world's foremost Christian thinkers of all times, America's Jonathan Edwards, is an apt summary title of biblical pronouncement. The Bible is clear; enmity exists between God and man, and there is a need for the two to be **reconciled**.

It is interesting to note that in the same verse or near every major reference to **reconciliation** in the NT, God's wrath is mentioned. My point is, when you are **reconciled** to God, you are delivered from the wrath of God and into the peace of God; you pass from one place to the other! **Reconciliation** occurs when God takes the initiative to absolve the alienation—from enmity to amity via His **substitutionary, atoning, propitiatory, redeeming** purchase—Christ's **reconciling** payment on the cross!

This theological realignment is so profound that Paul states in Romans 5:11b and 5:10 (in reverse order to punctuate what I am emphasizing) that such will create an overwhelming response in the heart of the believer:

We also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

You get the idea. What wonderful, profound passages! In view of our ongoing, analogous illustration, the lawmaker, seeing all that the courtroom judge has done for him based on absolutely

no merit of his own, recognizes he has been set free from his infractions and resultant bondage. Instead of a justifiable punishment for his recorded infractions, to his sheer amazement he has been made a *friend* of the judge—all by the judge's endearing hand of grace!

The righteous judge is beckoning for the lawmaker to follow him as he once again instructs the peace officer holding the handcuffs to back off. The lawmaker's heartfelt gratitude cannot help but congeal into desires of responsive, appreciative dutifulness as he follows the gracious and merciful judge from the courtroom. Second Corinthians 5:19 encapsulates the **redeemed** and **reconciled** prisoner's spirit:

Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them....

IX. REGENERATION

In Titus 3:5–6 Paul uses this word when describing salvation:

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Regeneration is an act instantly done and completed by God upon the sinner's willful desire to turn from his *sin* and respond in faith to the gift of salvation offered by Christ. Herein God imparts life to the one who believes. New Testament terms such as **brought forth** (James 1:18); **made alive** (Ephesians 2:5), and a **new creature** (2 Corinthians 5:17) denote what happens

continued from previous page

redemption and salvation; and that these inestimable benefits are of the free gift and grace of God, not of our deserving, nor in our power to deserve. The Bible will also [encourage] them with many explicit and consoling assurances of the Divine mercy to our fallen race, and with repeated invitations to accept the offers of pardon and reconciliation.... They, therefore, who enlist in His service, have the highest encouragement to fulfill the duties assigned to their respective stations; for most certain it is, that those of His followers who [participate in] His conquests will also participate in the transcendent glories and blessings of His Triumph.”

— John Jay, president of Congress, diplomat, author of *The Federalist Papers*, original chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, governor of New York.

John Jay, *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, 1794–1826, Henry P. Johnston, editor (New York: Burt Franklin, 1890), Vol. IV, 494, 498, from his “Address at the Annual Meeting of the American Bible Society,” May 13, 1824.



Roger Sherman



in *regeneration*. Jesus told Nicodemus about this new birth in John 3:3b, which says, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” In a summary of synonyms, the idea of *regeneration* is referred to as the following throughout the NT:

Biblical Synonyms for Regeneration

BROUGHT FORTH

James 1:18

MADE ALIVE

Ephesians 2:5

NEW CREATURE

2 Corinthians 5:17

BEING BORN AGAIN

John 3:3

SPIRITUAL REVIVIFICATION

Ephesians 2:4–6

RE-CREATION

Ephesians 2:10

CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

Colossians 2:11

WASHING FROM FORMER SINS

Ephesians 5:26

NEW SPIRITUAL BIRTH

John 1:13

Regeneration is an all-encompassing “view from the blimp,” if you will, beneficial summation of salvation. This specifically spiritual, distinct work of God aimed at the inner man—the heart, his soul—transforms the heart. In terms of our analogy, the biblical meaning of regeneration can be equated to the judge’s providing the lawmaker with a right standing, as well as expunging

and forever sealing all misdemeanors and felonies from his record. Second Corinthians 5:17 summarizes this idea:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

X. ADOPTION

As if the previous terms were not enough of an illustration of *so great a salvation*, let’s now examine the meaning of the biblical word *adoption* (*huiiothesia*). In this Roman custom and legal ceremony, the *adopted* was given all the rights of a natural-born member of the family; the word literally means, “placing as a son.” It is the giving of place and condition of a son to someone to whom it did not belong. It is the judicial bestowal of a new status. Paul put it this way to the believers at the Church of Ephesus:

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will (Ephesians 1:5).

Not only does the gracious judge give the lawmaker a “hall pass” and remove the old things from his record, but he also decides to go a step further. Unbelievably, he *adopts* him, taking the lawmaker into his home—bestowing upon him all the rights and privileges reserved for natural-born members of his household! This bestowal is precisely what Jesus has done in a spiritual sense to all believers! States Paul to the Church at Rome regarding the *adopted*:

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” (Romans 8:15).

“God commands all men everywhere to repent. He also commands them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and has assured us that all who do repent and believe shall be saved... [G]od... has absolutely promised to bestow them on all these who are willing to accept them on the terms of the Gospel—that is, in a way of free grace through the atonement. ‘Ask and ye shall receive [John 16:24]. Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely [Revelation 22:17]. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out’ [John 6:37].”

— Roger Sherman, signer of the Declaration of Independence, signer of the U.S. Constitution, “Master Builder of the Constitution,” judge, framer of the Bill of Rights, U.S. senator.

Correspondence Between Roger Sherman and Samuel Hopkins (Worcester, MA: Charles Hamilton, 1889), 9, from Roger Sherman to Samuel Hopkins, June 28, 1790.



XI. JUSTIFICATION

Justification is the legal act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous based on the **substitutionary, atoning, propitiatory, redeeming, reconciling, regenerating, adoptive** work of Christ. It is that “act of God whereby He acquits the gospel believer of the divine verdict of condemnation and declares him to be righteous.”⁸ Importantly, justification is more than a pronouncement of innocence; it is a declaration of righteousness. The believer is now in good standing with God, and God treats him accordingly! States Paul in this regard to the Church at Corinth:

Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Relative to our illustration, this verse is best understood as the courtroom judge’s going to the public square and proclaiming the lawmaker as his close friend—bequeathing to him his righteousness, character and credibility! Paul put it this way to the Church at Rome:

Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (3:24).

XII. SUMMARY: MAN’S RESPONSE

All these biblical descriptors of salvation vividly illustrate the tremendous love, grace, and mercy that God bestows in converting the dead-as-a-doornail soul of an individual (cf. Ephesians 2:1–10). Indeed, it is a **great salvation** (Hebrews

2:3). These truths raise the question: *what need be our response to God’s offer?*

How do we enact God’s regeneration in our life? What follows are some passages from Scripture that inform us as to what God specifically expects in response.

A. REPENTANCE

In Luke 15:7 Jesus states:

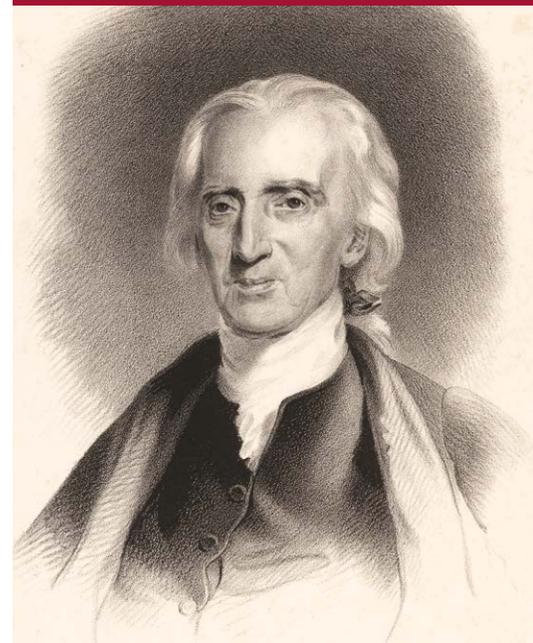
“I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine [seemingly] righteous persons who [mistakenly think they] need no repentance.”

Repentance means a person has a change of intellect, emotion and will. As in the parable of the lost son in Luke 15:21b, he must come to the end of the deification of self: *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy....”* **Repentance**, then, is an attitude fraught with humility and contrition that is impossible to obtain unless God gifts a person with it. Second Timothy 2:25b states this fact very clearly:

if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.

Repentance, then, is also a gift from God. When God does grant **repentance**, the benefits are unsurpassed in this life. In Peter’s sermon recorded in Acts 3, he states it this way: *“Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the*

Charles Carroll



“Grateful to Almighty God for the blessings which, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, He had conferred on my beloved country in her emancipation and on myself in permitting me, under circumstances of mercy, to live to the age of 89 years, and to survive the fiftieth year of independence, adopted by Congress on the 4th of July 1776, which I originally subscribed on the 2nd day of August of the same year and of which I am now the last surviving signer.”

— Charles Carroll, signer of the Declaration of Independence, delegate to the Constitutional Convention, framer of the Bill of Rights, U.S. senator.

Lewis A. Leonard, *Life of Charles Carroll of Carrollton* (New York: Moffit, Yard & Co, 1918), 256–257.



Robert Treat Paine



“I desire to bless and praise the name of God most high for appointing me my birth in a land of Gospel Light where the glorious tidings of a Savior and of pardon and salvation through Him have been continually sounding in mine ears.”

— Robert Treat Paine, military chaplain, signer of the Declaration of Independence, attorney general of Massachusetts, judge.

Robert Treat Paine, *The Papers of Robert Treat Paine*, Stephen T. Riley and Edward W. Hanson, editors (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1992), Vol. I, 48, Robert Treat Paine’s Confession of Faith, 1749.

presence of the Lord” (v. 19). Luke (13:3–5) states the same truth in the opposite way, that those who do not *repent* will not be saved:

“I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (v. 3).

B. FAITH

In Hebrews 11:6 the author states,

Without faith it is impossible to please Him....

“As *repentance* is the one side of the coin of conversion, turning from one’s sin, so *faith* is the other side, laying hold upon the promises and the work of Christ.” *Faith*, then, is the total commitment of oneself to Christ, the volitional acceptance of God’s gracious offer, the affirmation of the human heart to the work of God previously described herein. *Faith* is the means by which Christ and His work are appropriated.

Faith in and of itself does not save; rather it is the channel through which God’s enactment of His gift of grace saves me.

Follow what I mean by this statement. The above fact is why I do not care for the common label “The Faith Community.” In its politeness and political correctness, the label is too broad and misleading, tending to engender the idea that all people of *faith* are okay with God. Certainly, it is possible to have *faith* in a *wrong* understanding or *no* understanding at all concerning the biblical descriptors of true saving *faith* as illuminated in and by this study. This distinction of *God’s grace* being what saves me via my acceding faith is made clear by Paul in Ephesians 2:8:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

We are saved *by the grace of God*. This grace is enacted via the conduit of believing by *faith* alone in the Author of Scripture Who therein has revealed the cogent elements of salvation to us to believe in.

C. CONVERSION

In Acts 26:20b Paul is explaining salvation to King Agrippa, stating the following:

That they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

Conversion means “to turn toward, turn around; to change one’s mind and behavior.” In Acts 26:20, Paul is evidencing that true salvation is always characterized by a person’s turning around. A person who has no desire to turn around relative to *sinful* ways is not really saved. Scripture explains **conversion** both in terms of man’s responsibility to turn, or be **converted**, and God’s turning or **converting** of a man. Relative to the former, Isaiah writes in 55:6–7:

Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him...He will abundantly pardon.

And to the latter point of God’s responsibility to **convert**, Peter preached in Acts 3:26b:



“God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

Accordingly, **conversion** is both a work of God and an act of man that has tremendous implications:

Conversion leads to a fundamental change of the whole life. It receives a new outlook and objective...it involves a complete transformation of his existence under the influence of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

Conversion is a turning of the intellect, emotion and will toward God. Paul calls **conversion** “turning to God” in 1 Thessalonians 1:9b:

and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.

D. LORDSHIP

Paul states to the Church at Rome the need to understand in whom *specifically* you are placing your faith or to whom you are **converting**. Romans 10:9b states in this regard: ***if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.***

The Greek word translated **Lord** (*kurios*), which is used 747 times in the New Testament, means “master, king, or boss.”

When a person comes to Jesus for salvation, he or she must come to the Jesus described in Scripture in order to be saved. The Jesus of Scripture is the Lord.

A person is not saved unless he or she believes in the **Lord** Jesus Christ. **Repentance, faith and conversion** all carry with them the idea that we must relinquish control of our life to Christ’s **lordship**; it is the surrender of our will for that of another. Akin to the earlier understanding of **adoption** in this study, Jesus Christ becomes our new boss, and we gratefully become His **slave**! If we don’t sober to that reality as we contemplate salvation, then we might be settling for “easy believism,” i.e., receiving a Jesus of our own making or to our own liking. The result would be to delude ourselves into thinking we have accepted Jesus—and that we are saved—when in reality we are not. Instead, we have received a Jesus of our own definition versus the One defined in Scripture and history. Is it our authority that defines who Jesus is or is it Jesus’ authority Who defines Who He is? In 2 Corinthians 11:4, Paul was concerned for the Corinthian church relative to this very thing: that they had received another Jesus—one that he had not preached to them.

A repentant heart that gladly desires a new Lord is characteristic of a true, real conversion of the soul.

The truly converted will gladly want to make Christ’s agenda their agenda! Those who are believing in **another Jesus** are always characterized by a lack of obedience to Jesus’ commands; they cling to their own way of doing things. This disregard then is a telltale sign of true or false **conversion: Lordship**. Jesus stated in Mark 8:34b–35 this same heartfelt condition as to what connotes true saving faith:

“If anyone wishes to come after Me,

he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.”

E. COMING TO CHRIST

The Apostle John and the Apostle Paul were noticeably clear in their respective gospels (John 1:12) and epistle (Ephesians 1:13) regarding the need for a contrite heart to plead for God’s salvation:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Notice the caveat to being **sealed** in the Holy Spirit: it is **belief**, or receiving the **message of the truth, the gospel of your salvation**. Begging out to God can and should be done through prayer to Him, which is speaking to Him. Pray the following prayer today if it represents the desire of your heart:

“Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner in need of a new boss. I repent of being the god of my own life and plead with You to save me. I welcome You into my life as my Lord and Savior. I need the empowering of Your Holy Spirit to convert me into the person You want me to be. Thank You for hearing my prayer and coming into my life.”



Having studied these descriptors and the biblical response to the descriptors of salvation, my prayer is this: if you have not asked Jesus into your heart, that your contemplation will prove to be like King Agrippa's, after Paul reasoned with him in Acts 26:28:

Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."

I trust that God will use this study to speak to your heart in a profound way about salvation that is found in Jesus Christ alone. Amen!

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