

Salvation

Introduction

We believe Scripture declares that every person needs to surrender their life to God through Jesus Christ. Nicodemus was a man who faithfully attended church, prayed, memorized scriptures, tithed, fasted, believed in God and acknowledged Jesus as someone sent from God, yet Jesus told him, "You must be born again"! In other words, being a good and religious person doesn't meet the requirements for having a relationship with a holy and righteous God, which is what salvation is all about.

Not every encounter with God is a salvation encounter. Some have had a seed conceived in them, and they have called that salvation. When they responded to God's prompting, a seed was planted; but later in their life, an encounter with God resulted in a response where some might say they "totally sold out," "gave up" or "rededicated" their life. That is when a change in their thinking and behavior occurred. Jesus spoke of repentance as involving a change in behavior, and He associated that change with salvation.

We believe that new birth in Christ produces a change. Scripture is clear that we are not saved by what we do because salvation has been provided by Jesus Christ as a free gift which we receive by faith. However, when we receive Christ, it is evidenced by the fruit of change in our thinking and behavior in response to confessing our sin, acknowledging our need for a Savior and accepting Jesus Christ as God's provision for our lost condition. The answer for those who want to know if they've been born again is found in their response to a simple question, "When you received Christ, was there a change evidenced in your life?" In other words, "When did you stop going your way and start going God's way?" The answer may point to a specific date or to a specific event or to a general point in life where a change was noticed in response to a decision to surrender to God and to accept His provision of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Christ. It is God's stated desire that no one should spend eternity apart from Him but rather that all should obtain salvation. Scripture is also clear that nothing can separate us from His love.

It is our conviction that when a person has been truly born again to new life in Christ, that person's relationship with God is eternally secure and His love for us is without question. As a loving Father, He disciplines disobedience and brings correction through a variety of means, but He never leaves us, rejects us or withdraws His promise of eternity with Him.

Issues of Concern and Practice

1. Once a person has received Christ, evidenced by fruit of changed behavior in their life, they maintain intimacy of relationship with God through obedience, pursuit and service to God. When intimacy is lost through sin or neglect, it does not require a person to be "saved" again, although it does involve repentance for restored intimacy with God.
2. Because salvation is afforded through Christ's work on the cross, water baptism isn't necessary for a person to be saved. However, water baptism is an association with Christ's death, burial and resurrection. It symbolizes the death of the old man and the resurrection of the new man in Christ. Baptism is a command for believers modeled by Jesus through His own baptism and is a necessary step of obedience for continued growth in Christ. It is not necessary for church membership, but we encourage all believers to be water baptized after salvation.
3. Every person is born with a sin nature and cannot produce the righteousness required by God no matter how diligent their efforts. This reality forms the basis of our need for Christ. As such, we do not believe in the inherent goodness of man but instead acknowledge with Scripture our needy condition before God. It is this belief that compels us to share the "good news" of the gospel of Christ with everyone. The essence of the good news is revealed in the truth that it is not God's desire that any should perish but that all should come to eternal life through Jesus Christ.
4. We acknowledge that every person has been created by God with a free will. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the testimony of those redeemed by Him and enlightenment of scriptural truth, a person is presented with the opportunity to accept the gifts that God has provided through Christ. This begins with salvation and extends through every provision afforded by Christ's atoning work and every revelation of His great love for mankind. All His work and gifts are appropriated by faith and the exercise of our free will in response to Him.
5. We believe that children can be saved. A response to God through Jesus Christ requires an awareness of His promises and our sinful condition. Because maturation and thinking processes develop individually, we do not limit the salvation experience to a specific age, but rather believe it is a response based on understanding the truth of Scripture and God's claim on our lives regardless of the age of the individual.

Scriptural References

The following scriptures refer specifically to the experience of salvation and are the basis from which we draw our position stated herein.

Romans 3:23

Romans 10:10

John 3:16-17

Ephesians 2:8–9
Titus 3:5
2 Corinthians 13:5
Matthew 7:13–23
Hebrews 6:1–8
John 15:8

How Do You Receive Jesus Christ?

You receive Jesus Christ by believing in your heart that He is the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind and by confessing with your mouth your love and commitment to Him. These two responses constitute the act of receiving faith (Romans 10:10).

What Can You Expect to Happen?

There will be a peace that settles over your mind and heart. It may involve an emotional response, but that isn't necessary for salvation to result. Salvation is not an emotional event; it is a response of acceptance to the truthful promises of God. Often the awareness of what God has provided becomes emotional to the individual, but if it doesn't, the process is not negated. Jesus stated that it was to our advantage that He went away because then He could send the Holy Spirit to us (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit's presence and work leads us to a deeper intimacy with God and a fulfillment of His will in our life.

Can I Lose My Salvation?

No believer can presume on God's grace or His goodness by choosing to live after himself or his own desires. After all Christ did for us, we are encouraged and admonished to passionately pursue Him and to bear much fruit (John 15:8). For those who have received Christ and who evidence the Holy Spirit's fruit in their life, we affirm that their salvation is eternally secure.

Conclusion

All men are born with a sin nature and need the redemption available through Jesus Christ. By responding to God from their heart with words similar to those below, one can be saved.

"Oh, God, I acknowledge that I am a sinner and I have fallen short of what You expect. I ask You to forgive me of my sins. I receive Jesus Christ, Your Son, as my Savior and Lord. Thank You, God for saving me from eternity without You. Amen."

Romans 10:10 tells us that by believing in our heart and confessing with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, we are saved. We encourage every believer to give open testimony of their love for God and their faith in Jesus Christ, His Son.