

Dr. Aaron E. Lavender – September 16, 2025

2025 CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING
Living Word Fellowship Church

TOPIC: The True Meaning of Salvation – Its Doctrine and Practice

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:13-25

Introduction:

The apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesian Church to put on the helmet of salvation as part of their armor against Satan (Eph. 6:11-20). Since these individuals were already saved the helmet seems to represent an essential knowledge of salvation and its delivering power in daily living.

Because of our familiarity with salvation, it is easy for us to treat this subject lightly. However, it is urgent that we learn all that God has revealed about it for our personal victory in daily living. In this session we will study the subject of salvation from two perspectives: Its Doctrine and Its Practice. To accomplish this, we will ask and answer four simple questions: What does it mean? Why is it needed? How do we acquire it? How do we practice it?

The Meaning of Salvation – THE DOCTRINAL SIDE

For our purposes “**Doctrine**” means a set of guidelines, principles, and teachings given to us by God in His Word and held and promoted by His people. So, when we talk about a subject such as salvation we ask, “***What does God’s Word (not man’s ideologies and thoughts) teach about it?***” In answer to that question, we will note what it is not and what it is.

○ What Is Biblical Salvation?

Note first what Biblical Salvation is not:

- **Biblical Salvation is not** something that can be earned through virtuous deeds or personal efforts. It is a gift of God’s grace that is received through faith in Jesus Christ (**Eph. 2:8-9; also, John 3:16**). **Grace** is an essential component of Christian salvation.
- **Biblical Salvation is not** merely about securing a place in heaven after death. Salvation also has practical implications for the life of a believer on earth (RIGHT NOW!!!). Through salvation, Christians are reconciled with/to God and given a new life in Christ that transforms their living.

- **Finally, Biblical Salvation is not limited** to a particular race, gender, or social status. It is available to all who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The Bible says, ***“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”*** (Galatians 3:28).

Note what Biblical Salvation is:

Salvation (Greek, *sōtēria*), means ***“deliverance from danger or suffering.”*** To save is to deliver or protect (Philippians 1:19, ***“For I know that this will turn out to my deliverance --salvation, freedom, being set free”***). For Christians, the term **salvation** refers specifically to our **eternal spiritual deliverance**. When Paul told the Philippian jailer what he must do to be saved, he was referring to the jailer’s **eternal spiritual deliverance** (Acts 16:30-31). What are we saved ***from***? In the **Christian doctrine of salvation**, we are saved from ***“wrath,”*** that is, from God’s judgment of sin (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9). Our sin has separated us from God, and the consequence of sin is death – **physical**, **spiritual**, and **eternal** (Gen. 2:17; Eph. 2:1, ***“dead in trespasses and sin”***; Romans 6:23, ***“wages of sin is death”***).

Biblical salvation refers to our deliverance from the consequence of sin through faith in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). We are saved (delivered, set free) from both the power and penalty of sin and will one day be saved from the very presence of sin.

○ Why Is Biblical Salvation Needed?

Biblical salvation is usually discussed in the context of **human sinfulness**. Breaking down this concept reveals the depth of human sinfulness and its inability to help itself before God. Most evangelical Bible scholars embrace the following reasons why salvation is needed:¹

- **Biblical Salvation is needed because we are totally lost in sin.** The Bible teaches the total depravity of humanity; that is, **every aspect of our being** has been corrupted by sin (Romans 3:10–12 – **none**

¹ Floyd H. Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology* (Kregel Publications, 1981), 329; Wayne Gruden, *Bible Doctrine* (Zondervan, 1999), 273; Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Eerdmans Publishing, 1949), 199.

righteous).

- **Biblical Salvation is needed because we are under God's wrath.** We are "*by nature deserving of wrath*" (Ephesians 2:3), and "*already condemned*" (John 3:18).
- **Biblical Salvation is needed because we are spiritually dead.** Before salvation, we are "*dead in [our] sins*" (Colossians 2:13).
- **Biblical Salvation is needed because we are enslaved to sin and Satan.** In our natural state, we are held in Satan's snare and bound by his will (2 Timothy 2:26).
- **Biblical Salvation is needed because in our natural state we are at enmity with God.** "*Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God*" (Romans 8:7–8).

○ How is Biblical Salvation Acquired? (Romans 10:9-10, "*that 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*").

How does a person get salvation? Is salvation something we earn? Is salvation something granted to every human being? Many people are looking for "steps to salvation" (e.g., *various denominations/religious groups add various steps such as baptism, public confession, speaking in tongues, tithing, etc., as the way to salvation*). God's Word presents one step to salvation. When asked, "*What must I do to be saved?*" Paul and Silas responded, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, and your house*" (Acts 16:30–31). The obvious question to ask is, "What does God's Word teach on this subject?"

→ Faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is the only "step" to salvation. The message of the Bible is that we have all sinned against God (Romans 3:23) and need a Savior. Because of our sin, we deserve to be eternally separated from God (Romans 6:23). But, because of His love for us (John 3:16), God took on human form and died in our place. Jesus took the punishment that we deserve (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He then rose from the dead (Matthew 28:5). God promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24). To receive Jesus by faith is to

turn from sin and embrace His death and resurrection as sufficient to make us right with God.²

The Effect of Salvation – THE PRACTICAL SIDE

Some view salvation as solely related to the afterlife (*our living in Heaven*) rather than how it impacts our current life (*our living on the earth*). In **1 Peter 1:13-21**, the apostle Peter writes in the **IMPERATIVE MOOD** (Commands). Peter shifts his teaching from explaining salvation (**vv.1-12**) to outlining the Christian's obligation after being saved. What is the practical side of our salvation? What effect does salvation have on our current lives? The practical side of salvation can be summed up in one word – **HOLINESS**:

Written shortly before the outbreak of the Neronian persecution (A.D. 64), **First Peter** was a circulating letter to first-century Christians scattered over the northern part of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Addressed to an audience of both Jewish and Gentile Christians, and written during a time of political, social, and personal persecution, **First Peter** emphasizes the reality of suffering in the lives of believers. The author is **SIMON**, a fisherman who was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew. His name was changed to **PETER** (**Rock, Stone – Matthew 16:16-20**), signifying his character that would dominate his personality. Peter became the natural leader and spokesperson for the disciples and emerged as the primary person in the early church after the day of Pentecost.³

The first twelve verses of Chapter One highlights the true nature of our suffering and reminds us that because of our salvation in Christ (*a living hope – vv.3-9*), we have not been abandoned. We must remain true to our calling as Christians because the God who loves us will use even our suffering for His glory and our ultimate good.

By beginning with the word “*therefore*” (**v.13**) Peter is relating this section to the previous one (**vv.1-12**). He is saying in effect, “*In light of the nature of our salvation . . .*,” there are **DEMANDS** and **DEMONSTRATIONS** of holiness.

² James White, *The God Who Justifies*. (Bethany House Publishers, 2007), Chapters 11-13.

³ Max Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary – I & II Peter, I, II, & III John* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 2.

○ The Demands of Holiness (1:13-16)

- **First**, we must **PREPARE OUR MINDS FOR ACTION** - “***gird up the loins of [their] minds***” (v.13a). This is a reference to the ancient practice of gathering up one’s loose flowing robe when needing to move in a hurry. Peter is telling us to prepare our minds, pull our thoughts together by putting away the loose ends of our thinking.
- **Second**, we must **BE SELF-CONTROLLED** - “***be sober***” (v.13b). Here the apostle is encouraging us to “stay on our toes spiritually” by being alert and ready in our spiritual and mental attitudes and not be **intoxicated by worldly thoughts**.
- **Third**, we must **KEEP HOPE ALIVE** – “***rest your hope fully on the grace to be given when Jesus Christ is revealed***” (v.13c). Peter urges us to put our hope (confidence) completely in the final demonstration of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. In other words, we are to “***keep looking forward toward our final salvation which we will fully experience when Christ returns***.”⁴
- **Fourth**, we must **OBEY OUR HEAVENLY FATHER** - “***obedient children***” (v.14). True belief in Jesus Christ will always produce obedience. Part of this obedience is our **NONCONFORMITY** to evil desires (“***conformed***” means to be fashioned into something – Romans 12:1-2). Peter is referring to conformity of thought and purpose which leads to conformity of life and actions.

○ The Demonstration of Holiness (1:16–25)

In verses **16–21** Peter gives **two reasons** why believers must be holy. (1) **One reason is because believers call upon the Father, who by nature is holy**. Both OT and NT speak more about God’s holiness than any other attribute. Because God takes character development seriously, Peter urges us to “***conduct ourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear***” (1 Pet. 1:17). Thus, the exhortation that Peter gives in verse **17** is a process that can be summarized as follows: ***fear (or reverence) of God leads to wisdom,***

⁴ Ibid. Anders, 2.

wisdom leads to keeping God's Word and obeying God's Word leads to personal holiness in our life and conduct.

(2) Another reason believers must embrace holiness is because Christ has redeemed us to be holy (1 Pet. 1:18–21). We were not redeemed with a corruptible thing like gold or silver, but with the precious blood of the spotless Lamb of God, the sinless Son of God. Considering God's grace and our new nature, holiness in conduct is an inevitable conclusion. **The cost of our salvation ought to motivate us to live holy lives.**

In verses **22–25** Peter reveals that **one of the primary demonstrations** of holiness is that believers ***"love one another fervently with a pure heart"*** (1 Pet. 1:22). In the words of Jesus, this is the second greatest commandment (cf. Matt. 22:39; Lev. 19:18), and as the apostle John wrote, ***"Whoever loves God must also love his brother"*** (1 John 4:21).

Peter underlines the importance of genuine, sincere love towards one another. When we are called to **love one another deeply**, it goes beyond superficial feelings or actions. It urges us to love from a pure heart, free from any hidden agendas, selfish motives, or insincere intentions. This kind of love is selfless, compassionate, and empathetic.⁵

In a sense, then, what Peter is saying is that if someone is in a right relationship with God, they cannot help but to love others. To make this point clear Peter reminds us that we were redeemed ***"through the word of God which lives and abides forever"*** (vv. 23–25). Of course, in quoting Isa. 40:6–8 Peter is reminding us that since the **word abides forever**, we have the **power to love one another** (Rom. 5:5, ***".....the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us"***).

TABLE TALK Q&A:

1. What does it mean to be holy? (**1 Pet. 1:15**, ***"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct"***).

⁵ Ibid. Anders, 2–4

2. How important is holiness to the Christian life (**Heb. 12:14**, “***Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the LORD***”)?
3. How can Christians keep their minds prepared for action? (**1 Peter 1:13**, “***Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, and be sober....***”).
4. What is the relationship between obedience and holiness? (**1 Peter 1:14**, “***As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance....***”)
5. What keeps us from loving others? (**1 Pet. 1:22**, “***love one another fervently with a pure heart***”; **John 13:35**, “***By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another***”: see also 1 John 3:16-23; 4:7-11).

RESOURCES:

- Max Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary – I & II Peter, I, II, & III John*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999.
- Floyd H. Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology* - Kregel Publications, 1981.
- Wayne Gruden, *Bible Doctrine* - Zondervan, 1999.
- Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* - Eerdmans Publishing, 1949.
- James White, *The God Who Justifies*. - Bethany House Publishers, 2007, Chapters 11-13.

