

“God’s Gracious Salvation”**Rom. 1:1-17****Purpose:**

Your students will come to understand God’s work of salvation that they might become more effective witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost who need that salvation.

In a Nutshell:

The Bible doctrine of salvation is both the incomprehensible work of the infinite God and the truth desperately needed by every sinful man. The Philippian jailer expresses well both the incomprehension and the desperation of every sinner with his simple question, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

The word *soteriology*, the theological term meaning *the doctrine of salvation*, never appears in the Scripture. We do not read anywhere in the Old or New Testaments of the “study of salvation” per se. The book that best approximates a formal study of the doctrine of salvation is Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. Yet here the technical term that adequately summarizes Paul’s subject matter is not *the study of salvation*, but *gospel*. He uses the word four times in the 17 verses of the prologue to this Epistle (1:1, 1:9, 1:15, 1:16). The difference between *soteriology* and *gospel* is that the former focuses on studying salvation truth, whereas the latter emphasizes the proclamation of salvation truth. Rather than merely studying salvation, New Testament believers are everywhere proclaiming it. Their concern is that unbelievers learn the Bible doctrine of salvation so that they can be saved (Acts 17:11).

Clearly, Paul was the Holy Spirit’s choice to write Romans in part because he had made a careful study of the doctrine of salvation. But as he wrote, Paul never lost sight of the fact that this truth is gospel truth. The greatest soteriological theologian the Church has ever known also happens to be the greatest missionary/evangelist the Church has ever known. In the person of Paul, we have an example of what an accurate understanding of the Bible doctrine of salvation produces, and we find here a man with a deep passion for lost souls. We read of his great sorrow and unceasing grief (Rom. 9:2), of his heart’s desire and prayer to God (10:1); and lest we conclude that these were mere hyperbolic effusions or academic contemplations, we also read of his lifelong aspiration and faithful execution, preaching the gospel where Christ had not been named (15:20).

Three topics will occupy our study of God’s work of salvation: (1) its accomplishment in the atoning work of Jesus Christ; (2) its acceptance through faith, not works; and (3) its application – all the benefits in Christ bestowed on those whom God has saved.

To the Testimony!**Salvation is accomplished by the atoning work of Jesus Christ.**

Phil. 2:5-8 1. *Atonement* refers to the work of dealing with a breach between two parties.
Gal. 4:4-5 We might say that the work of “at-one-ment” makes the two to be “at one” again. Jesus Christ became a bond-slave to do this work. What one word does

Paul use in Philippians 2 to summarize the work that Jesus did as a slave to atone for our sins?

Answer: The word *obedience* summarizes Jesus's work of atonement. Jesus became obedient as a bond-slave in order to atone for our sins (Phil. 2:8). Isaiah's great prophesy of the cross-work of the Messiah was a prophesy about the bond-slave of Yahweh. Other passages speak of Christ's work of atonement in terms of obedience (Rom. 5:19, Heb. 5:8). In accomplishing the work of atonement, God's Son was doing the will of His Father (Luke 22:42, Heb. 10:7-10). Two demands of God's law for mankind had to be obeyed in order for Jesus Christ to provide sinners, who had violated that law and who were condemned by it, salvation.

First, Jesus had to live without sin under God's law (Gal. 4:4-5). Theologians refer to this aspect of Jesus's work of atonement as his *active obedience*. In every thought, word, motive, and act, Jesus loved God with all His soul, mind, heart, and strength, and His neighbor as Himself. One minor failure in this regard would have disqualified Him to be a blameless sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 7:26-28, 9:11-15).

Second, Jesus had to suffer the penalty of the law in behalf of the sinner (Phil. 2:8). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Jesus died the death the sinner earned, the Just for the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18). Theologians refer to this aspect of Jesus's work of atonement as his *passive obedience*, which highlights the component of suffering this work involved [*passive* here is not the opposite of *active*, but from the Latin root *pati*, meaning *to suffer*, and so we speak of the *passion* of Christ as His *suffering* on the cross; Christ was not passive in His cross-work, for He offered up Himself in obedience to the Father's will (Heb. 7:27, 9:14)].

Application: Isaiah 52:13-53:12 prophesies of this atoning work of the servant of Yahweh. Perhaps with that passage and the many other Old Testament prophecies of the death of Christ in mind (Gen. 3:15, Num. 21:8-9, Psalm 22, Ps. 118:22, Dan. 9:26, Zech. 12:10), Peter spoke of the atoning obedience of Christ as "whatsoever thy [God the Father's] hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:28). God the Father sent the Son to do this work, and God's Spirit anointed Him to the office of Prophet (Deut. 18:15, Acts 3:22), Priest, and King (Ps. 110:1-4, Heb. 1:8, 3:1) to accomplish it. What this means is that the atonement of Jesus Christ is the Trinity's one and only plan for the salvation of the sinner. There are not many roads to God, only one—Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12, John 14:6). We must let sinners know that He is the only way because only He has accomplished the obedience of atonement.

In addition, that obedience is the scriptural term for the work of Christ has important implications for how we understand our work as Christians (see Phil. 2: 1-5). We must obey.

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Phil. 2:9-11
Isa. 53:10, 12

2. There is a sense in which the obedience of Christ's sinless life and perfect sacrifice is only half of the saving gospel message. What is the other half according to the following passages: 1 Cor. 15:1-8, Rom. 4:23-25, and Acts 4:10-12?

Answer: The resurrection and exaltation (ascension) of Jesus Christ is the other important half of the gospel message. The author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, because He ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). We must believe in the miraculous (Phil. 3:10), historical (Matt. 27:57-28:7), and bodily (John 20:27) resurrection of Christ in order to be saved (1 Cor. 15:13-17). It is through the resurrection of Christ that we are justified (Rom. 4:25). It is through the resurrection of Christ that we are born again to a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3). It is the guarantee of our own resurrection (2 Cor. 4:14). The resurrection is confirmation from the Father that the sacrifice of Christ was the sacrifice of the Holy One and so acceptable to Him (Ps. 16:10, Acts 2:27, 13:35).

Application: To give someone the saving gospel message, we must not only explain to them that Christ died for their sins according to the Scripture (1 Cor. 15:3), but also that Christ arose from the dead. This can often be the truth that arouses the rebellion of unbelief in the heart of sinful man (Acts 17:18, 32). Unbelievers are comfortable speaking of the death of a man in conformity with their naturalistic presuppositions. But the death of this Man was unlike the natural death of any other man, for it was a miraculous atonement. The confirmation of that difference is the resurrection. To deny the resurrection is to deny the miraculous atoning nature of Jesus's death and consequently to be hopelessly lost.

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Interesting Insight!

The most notorious atheist of the 20th century, Antony Flew, changed his mind and wrote a book in 2007 called *There Is A God*. He invited the theologian N. T. Wright to author an appendix in the book about the historical evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here is some of what Wright wrote as an historian about the resurrection of Christ (pp. 209-213):

"We have to ask: How do we explain this extraordinary phenomenon, the fact of early Christianity arising in the first place, taking its very specific shape, and telling the very specific stories that it did? I discover, as I look for historical explanations, that two particular things must have happened: (1) there must have been an empty tomb that was known to be the correct tomb; it couldn't have been a mistake; (2) there must have been appearances of the risen Jesus. Both of these must have occurred.

"Why? Because if there had been an empty tomb and no appearances, everybody in the ancient world would have drawn the obvious conclusion (obvious to them even if not to us): body snatchers. Tombs were regularly robbed. . . So they would have said what Mary said: 'They've taken away the body. I don't know what's happened to it.' . . .

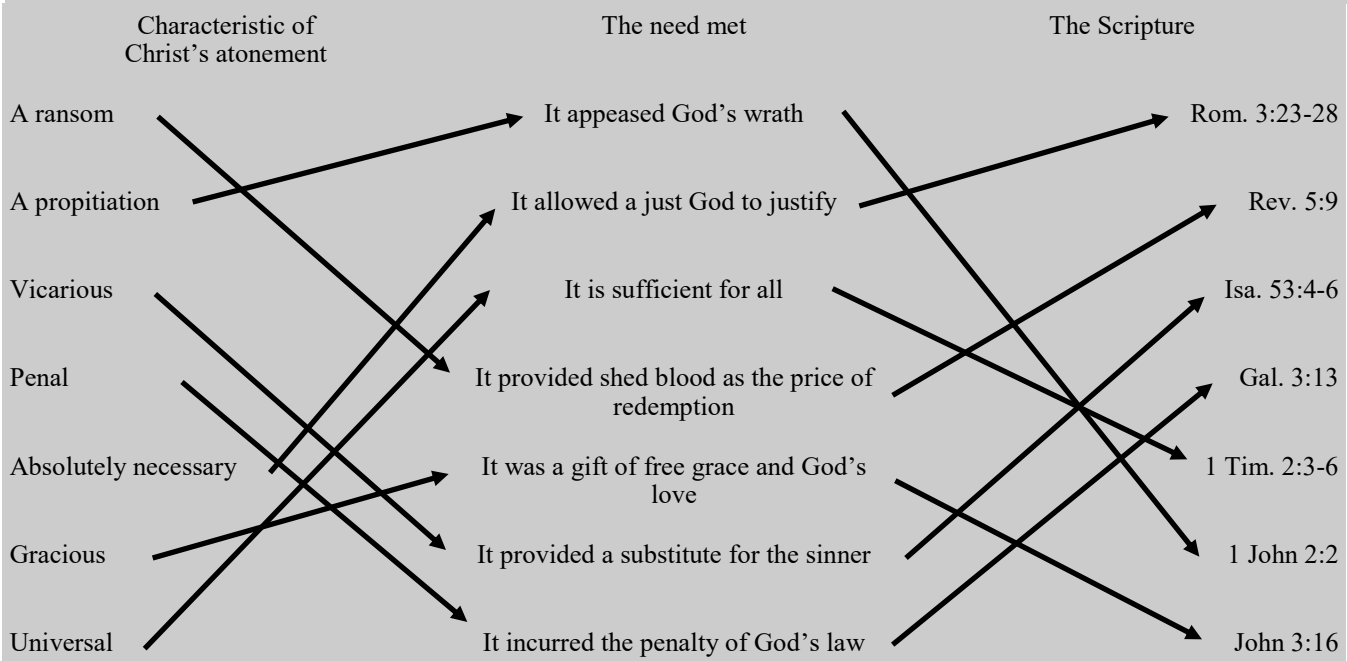
"Equally, you cannot explain the historical data we have looked at simply by saying that the disciples must have had some sort of experience they took to be a meeting with Jesus. . . . In other words, if they'd had an experience, however vivid it seemed, of being with Jesus, but if the tomb had not been empty, they would have said, 'My goodness, this was very powerful, and quite consoling in a way; but he hadn't been raised from the dead, of course, because dead people don't get raised . . . And anyway, there is his body in the tomb.' . . .

"The point is this. If the body of Jesus had still been in the tomb, the disciples could easily have found out. Then they would have said, 'However strong these hallucinations are that we've been having, he hasn't been raised from the dead.' So we as historians have to say that there really must have been an empty tomb and there really must have been sightings or, if you like, meetings with somebody discovered to be Jesus. . . .

"The resurrection of Jesus does in fact provide a sufficient explanation for the empty tomb and the meetings with Jesus. Having examined all the other possible hypotheses I've read about anywhere in the literature, I think it's also a necessary explanation."

Notes: While we may recognize the value of N.T. Wright's work here as a historian's honest approach to the historicity of the resurrection of Christ, a disclaimer should be offered students regarding other areas of Wright's theology. Quoting him here is not an endorsement of his other work. His error called, "The new perspective on Paul" is especially problematic.

3. The Scripture abounds with important characteristics of the atoning death of Jesus Christ as it describes how that sacrifice meets the needs of sinners. In the chart below, draw a line that connects the characteristic with its definition, and then draw a line that connects the definition with its Scripture.



Answer: See the arrows above, which are not included in the student booklet.

Application: Perhaps the best application of all comes from answering the question the author of Hebrews asks, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3). The simple answer is that we will not escape. The death of Christ for us is the rationale for the believer to live a holy life for Him and not neglect Him (1 Pet. 1:14-25).

Note: It has been difficult for theologians to understand the sense in which the atoning sacrifice of Christ was both a vicarious, propitiating, absolutely necessary, and penal ransom for the sin of the sinner, and a gracious gift offered freely to sinners universally. The combination of these characteristics together creates a difficulty for our understanding because the Bible also teaches that most sinners will be ultimately damned rather than saved (Matt. 7:13-14, 2 Pet. 2:1-9, Rev. 20:11-15).

John Owen framed the issue this way: "God imposed his wrath due unto, and Christ under-

went the pains of hell for, either all the sins of all men, or all the sins of some men, or some sins of all men” [The Death of Death in the Death of Christ (1647; reprint, The Banner of Truth, 1967), 61]. Although some Arminian interpreters have tried to avoid the force of Owen’s logic by denying that Christ suffered the wrath and hell due the sinner on the cross, what is sometimes called the governmental theory of the atonement, the passages we have examined demonstrate that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were the accomplishment of God’s plan of salvation as the judicial basis of the sinner’s forgiveness, not merely an illustration of how costly God’s forgiveness is for Him to provide to any who repent and believe on Christ as Lord and Savior. The gospel is that Christ died *for our sins* and arose again.

So Owen’s three choices must be faced. We have already seen that if the first of these is true, that Christ died for all the sins of all men, then all men will be saved, which the Bible clearly says is not true. That leaves the second two options from which to choose, either (1) Christ died for all the sins of some men, or (2) Christ died for some of the sins of all men.

The Calvinist Owen concludes that the first of these must be true. This is called the doctrine of limited atonement. It teaches that although the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary was eternal in its reach and infinite in its value, meaning that we must preach its gospel to all men everywhere, it actually accomplished judicial forgiveness for only the sins of those who were elected for salvation before the foundation of the world. In the words of Owen, as the judicial basis for justification and forgiveness, “Christ died for all the sins of only some men.”

Atypically for the doctrines of orthodoxy, however, the doctrine of a limited atonement often requires that the plain reading of many Scripture passages be reinterpreted to conform to the requirements of this conclusion. [See, for instance, Robert Reymond’s section, “Exposition of the Allegedly Universalistic Passages” in his *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 683-702. Dr. Reymond deals with nearly twenty passages that on the surface teach a universal atonement. Numerous others could also be cited. His systematic theology does this with no other doctrine it teaches.] Two other issues have prevented the author of this Lesson from agreement with Owen’s choice.

First, it is not clear how, if “Christ died for all the sins of only some men,” Paul could preach the gospel in places like Corinth, by which he told them, “Christ died for *our* sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3). What is the good news an individual sinner needs if it is not that God’s Son died and rose to save him? If He did so only for an elect few, the gospel itself as expressed by Paul in that standard passage is a falsehood when preached to most people.

Second, the Calvinist also has trouble affirming the universal sufficiency of the atonement while limiting its efficiency. On the one hand, he will insist that God intended only that the death of Christ accomplish atonement for the elect; but on the other, he will admit that the infinite value of the death of Christ was sufficient for the sin of all. Yet because the atonement we are speaking of was an actual sacrifice for sins, its efficiency necessarily comes from its sufficiency, and its sufficiency necessarily results in its efficiency. If a bomb is dropped on a village to take out the home of a terrorist, and it is sufficient to take out all the other homes in the village too, no home will survive. The efficiency of the bomb comes from its sufficiency, and its sufficiency results in its efficiency, because there was a real explosion. While these aspects of the bomb can be contemplated separately as a thought process, when the bomb goes off they are inseparably linked in reality. If the death of Christ was sufficient to blow up the

sin problem of all mankind, whether or not it was intended to be efficient only for some, it blew up the entire sin problem because it was a real explosion, a sacrifice for sin in reality.

Perhaps there is a way to avoid the careful reinterpretation of passage after passage, the ethical charge against gospel preaching, and the thought experiment that the separation of sufficiency and efficiency requires if we choose instead the third option Owen's logic offers us. Perhaps it is best to say that in His work of atonement, Jesus Christ died for some of the sins of all men. In other words, perhaps we can say biblically that Jesus died for all the sins of all mankind, except one sin. Spurgeon seemed to refer to such a sin as the one for which Christ did not die in his sermon titled, "The Sin of Unbelief." He said in part:

"And now to close this point – for I have been already too long – let me remark that you will observe the heinous nature of unbelief in this – that it is the damning sin. There is one sin for which Christ never died; it is the sin against the Holy Ghost. There is one other sin for which Christ never made atonement. Mention every crime in the calendar of evil, and I will show you persons who have found forgiveness for it. But ask me whether the man who died in unbelief can be saved, and I reply there is no atonement for that man. There is an atonement made for the unbelief of a Christian, because it is temporary; but the final unbelief – the unbelief with which men die – never was atoned for. You may turn over this whole Book, and you will find that there is no atonement for the man who died in unbelief; there is no mercy for him. Had he been guilty of every other sin, if he had but believed, he would have been pardoned; but this is the damning exception – he had no faith" [(<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0003.htm>, accessed 1/6/2009)].

John Bunyan expressed a similar doctrine: "For what will sting like this? – 'I have, through my own foolish, narrow, unworthy, undervaluing thoughts, of the love and ability of Christ to save me, brought myself to everlasting ruin. It is true, I was a horrible sinner; not one in a hundred did live so vile a life as I. But this should not have kept me from closing with Jesus Christ. I see now that there are abundance in glory that once were as bad as I have been; but they were saved by faith, and I am damned by unbelief. Wretched man that I am! Why did I not humbly cast my soul at his blessed footstool for mercy?" *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved* (1691; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth, 2005), 60-61.

Jesus spoke of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit as an unforgivable sin (Matt. 12:31-32). Perhaps what makes that sin unforgivable is that it is the one for which the obedience of Christ never atoned. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts the heart of its need for repentance and faith in Christ to be saved. Rejecting that work is what Spurgeon calls the sin of unbelief and what Jesus calls blaspheming the Holy Spirit. In the active obedience of Christ, Jesus never called on the name of the Lord to be saved in our behalf, for He needed no such call and no such salvation. In the passive obedience of Christ, He paid the penalty for every breaking of the law of God a sinner every committed, but if that sinner is not found written in the Lamb's book of life, that circumstance alone will condemn him forever (Rev. 20:15). Perhaps this is the sin, rejection of atonement itself, that causes a sinner to be blotted out of the book of life (Exod. 32:32-33).

Understood this way, the passages that speak of the death of Christ as a work of atonement for all men need not be reinterpreted to fit a limited atonement conclusion. The work of Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole

world in the exact same sense (1 John 2:2). We can preach the gospel ethically, sharing with our neighbors indiscriminately, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He is risen according to the Scriptures. And we can comfortably affirm that what God has ordained to be sufficient is efficient. The atonement of Christ was never sufficient nor efficient, as designed by the plan of God, to save those who die in final unbelief.

One additional issue related to the atonement begins to become more clear as well if we say that Owen's third choice is the correct one. That issue relates to how the atonement affects the sin of the intellectually incapable. Children who die prior to an age of accountability, as well as those born with mental defects that make impossible the exercise of faith or of unbelief, are atoned for by the work of Christ if we can say that He died for the sins of all men with the exception of one sin, final unbelief. These never commit the one sin for which Christ did not die.

The same is true for all who come unto God by Christ. By the power of His Spirit, they repent of their sins and believe the gospel for salvation. That saving faith is then secured, finished by the One who powerfully authored it (Phil 1:6). Those who believe never commit the sin of final unbelief, the sin for which the obedience of Christ never atoned.

Salvation must be accepted—what must we do to be saved?

1 Cor. 2:9-16 4. We learned in Lesson 8 that one of the effects of the fall of Adam is that man needs saving. He is totally depraved in his sin, unable to save himself. What are some of the debilitating effects of total depravity that preclude a man from saving himself?
Eph. 2:1-10

Answer: One debilitating effect of total depravity is on the natural man's ability to understand the things of the Spirit of God. He sees them as foolishness, and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned, or known only through the revelation and illumination of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:9-16). Satan and Satan's world play a role in this proclivity for the natural man to be deceived and blind about spiritual things (Eph. 2:2-3; 2 Cor. 4:3-4).

A second debilitating effect of total depravity is on the natural man's ability to merit salvation through his works. Dead in trespasses and sins, our salvation must be "not of works, lest any man should boast." A new creation must take place before man can do good works (Eph. 2:1, 9-10). Until that point, all his righteousnesses are like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). When it comes to meriting salvation, "there is none that doeth good, no not one" (Rom. 3:10).

Application: God's answers to the debilitating effects of man's total depravity are the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, which corrects his inability to understand the things of the Spirit of God, and the gift of grace through faith to address his inability to merit salvation by his own good works.

Lydia provides a good example of that first work (Acts 16:14). God opened her heart to understand the things spoken by Paul, and only then was she able to believe. Jesus promised that this work of God's Spirit would intensify after Pentecost (John 16:7-11) in conjunction with the gift of New Testament revelation (John 16:12-15). This is why saving faith comes by

hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:14-17). Clearly, the witnesses of Christ have an important role in making this happen in the lives of blind sinners. That this work is at times rejected is both obvious from the experience of witnesses and scriptural (Heb. 6:4-10).

Paul offers Abraham and David as examples of that second provision, which addresses man's depraved inability to earn merit with God (Rom. 4:1-8). These men were saved by grace through faith, and not through the merit of their works, circumcision included (vv. 9-10). Paul mentions circumcision because it was a ceremony many in his day relied upon as a contribution for salvation. Reliance on works this way yields damnation, no matter how religious or righteous the work may be (Tit. 3:5).

Acts 16:30-31, 20:21
Mark 1:15

5. Paul's answer to the critical question of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:30 was "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The belief Paul speaks of in this answer, however, is unlike a belief some have that does not save (John 8:31, 33; James 2:19). What goes missing in faith that fails to save?

Answer: Faith that fails to save misses repentance. Biblically, repentance is a turning of the mind from sin. It is not the successful commitment to stop sinning, but rather a decision of the heart to seek forgiveness and cleansing from that sin (see Luke 17:4, and note that it can be done 7 times in a day over an issue).

Application: Two opposite errors have influenced the thinking of well-meaning believers as they try to answer the Philippian jailer's question correctly. The error of "easy-believe-ism" fails to mention repentance in answer to that question. If a sinner is asking the way the Philippian believer was asking, chances are you are dealing with someone already repentant over their sin, and that is why Paul simply says "believe." But often, we must begin the good news of the gospel with the bad news first. People need to understand why God is angry with them before they can see how God has loved them. They need to realize they are lost before they can be found. Believing on Christ is pointless if repentance from sin is not necessary.

The opposite error is "Lordship salvation." This is the idea that one must submit to Christ as Lord and Master in order to be saved, in addition to repenting of sin and believing on Him as Savior. To the degree that emphasis is placed on the sinner's need to successfully submit to and obey Christ as their Lord in order to be saved, this error locates the ground of salvation in the work of the sinner rather than in the work of Christ. In the parable of the publican and the Pharisee, it was not the committed one who went down to his house justified that day, but the one who humbly beat upon his breast crying out, "Lord, be merciful to me the sinner!" (Luke 18:10-14). Lot was not highly committed, but he too was justified (2 Pet. 2:7).

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5. List some other things that are true about true saving faith from the passages below.

<u>Passage:</u>	<u>Hint:</u>	<u>Answer:</u>
Mark 1:15	Object—faith in what?	The gospel—the person and work of Christ.
Luke 17:6	Its magnitude?	A grain of mustard seed.
Eph. 2:8-9	Its opposite?	Works.
Rom. 3:27	What it excludes.	Boasting.

Application: Hillary Clinton once explained that she did not like to wear “her faith on her sleeve.” When we begin to speak in terms of “my faith” and “your faith,” we have to be careful, because what is important is not whether the faith is yours or mine, but whether it is placed in the correct object. I might have strong faith in the ability of a placebo to cure my cancer, but no matter how strong that faith is and no matter that it is my own, I am still going to die of cancer. We must encourage people to have faith in the right object of salvation—the person and work of Jesus Christ.

This faith, however, is not meritorious or powerful in and of itself. It is not great faith that saves us, but faith as small as a mustard seed [see Horatius Bonar, *The Everlasting Righteousness* (1872; reprint, *The Banner of Truth*, 1993), 79]. Horatius Bonar puts it this way, “where faith begins, there labour ends, —labour, I mean, for life and pardon. Faith is rest, not toil. It is the giving up all the former weary efforts to do or feel something good, in order to induce God to love and pardon; and the calm reception of the truth so long rejected, that God is not waiting for any such inducements, but loves and pardons of His own goodwill, and is showing that goodwill to any sinner who will come to Him on such a footing, casting away his own poor performances or goodneses, and relying implicitly upon the free love of Him who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son” (p. 116).

The opposite of faith is works. Works result in boasting in a way that faith excludes boasting. Some fear that a man will boast because he has exercised faith, and so they put regeneration prior to faith in order to exclude boasting by regeneration. The dichotomy Paul sees between salvation by works and salvation by faith seems to be enough for him to exclude boasting.

Perhaps the way saving faith is sufficient to exclude boasting can be illustrated with four possible ways someone drowning might be tempted to boast about being saved by a lifeguard.

- The Roman Catholic (Pelagian) view is analogous to the lifeguard shouting instructions from the shore to the drowning victim who is expected to follow those instructions and swim himself successfully to shore. Here the temptation to boast is clear.
- The Arminian view is analogous to the lifeguard swimming to the victim who is drowning, telling the victim to cling to his back and to hang on until the lifeguard can successfully swim them both to shore. Here again, some might say, “Good job hanging on!”
- The Calvinist view, with their doctrine of the priority of subconscious regeneration to saving faith [see Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, 3:54], may be illustrated by a lifeguard who swims to the drowning victim and knocks him unconscious so that he will go limp and allow the lifeguard to securely swim him to shore. Although boasting is excluded, the exclusion seems to have little to do with the exercise of faith.

- Now suppose that the lifeguard swims to the one who is drowning and tells him to go limp so that the lifeguard can secure him and bring him safely to shore. After the rescue the drowning victim who was saved cannot boast, because all he did was go limp. Such is the nature of saving faith. Faith excludes boasting; works do not (Rom. 3:7; Eph. 2:9).

Salvation is applied—blessings in heavenly things in Christ.

Eph. 1:1-14 7. Believers possess something wonderful that Paul calls being “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Read the passages cited, and list as many of these spiritual blessings as you can. Include others that come to mind from other passages.

Rom. 8:28-39

Answer: These are the key passages, along with 1 Pet. 1:2, that are normally used to construct what is called an *ordo salutis*, or order of grace. Here is the order of grace discernable in both passages:

Ephesians 1	Romans 8
Chosen before the foundation of the world (v. 4)	Whom He foreknew (v. 29)
Having predestinated us (v. 5)	These He also did predestinate (v. 29)
Unto the adoption of children (v. 5)	Whom He predestinated, He also called (v. 30)
We have redemption through His blood (v. 7)	Whom He called, He justified (v. 30)
We have obtained an inheritance (v. 11)	Whom He justified, He glorified (v. 30)

Application: Some observations about these amazing spiritual blessings in heavenly things follow.

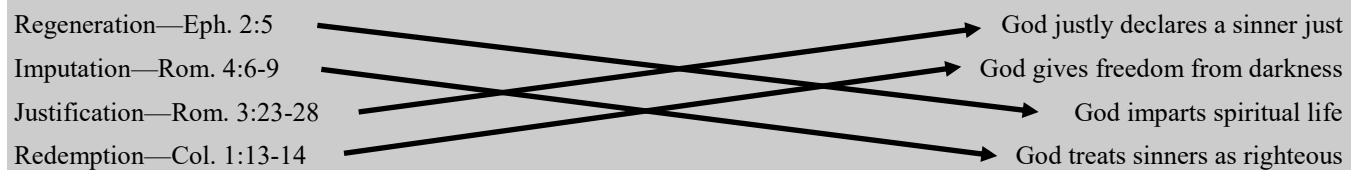
1. They are experienced *in Christ*. This is the great emphasis of the Ephesians passage throughout, and it is how the Romans passage concludes in verse 32. God freely gives us these things *with Him*, the Son whom He spared not but delivered up for us all. Typically, constructions of an *ordo salutis* have a difficult time maintaining this emphasis or even locating union with Christ in a consistent way in the order of salvation. Paul’s passages indicate that it must come first in that order. His *in Christ* emphasis indicates that the blessings enumerated this way all belong to the subject of the application of salvation. We should not view any of these as available outside of Christ, even though some of them reach into eternity past, before the foundation of the world. The prerequisite for experiencing each of them is to be in Christ. Some call this conclusion “a denial of pre-temporal election” (see McCune, 3:6), but they do so not realizing that the term *pre-temporal* is an oxymoron, because *pre-* is meant in a temporal sense. The text indicates that before one can be chosen before the foundation of the world in the sense meant by Paul, that one must first be in Christ.

2. The parallelism between Ephesians and Romans indicates that election and foreknowledge are in some sense related. 1 Pet. 1:2 describes believers as elect according to the foreknowledge of God. As those who are in Christ, we are foreknown and chosen like He is (Isa. 42:1, 1 Pet. 1:20). It is a term of eternal relationship. Once in Christ, the preference and intimacy we have with God has no beginning and it will know no end. No one in Christ is just hanging on by a thread in his relationship to God. No, he is chosen according to God’s foreknowledge of him before the foundation of the world.

3. The same parallelism also indicates that adoption (Eph. 1:5) and calling (Rom. 8:30) are in some sense related. Ordinarily, an *ordo salutis* construction will view the calling of Rom. 8:30 as effectual calling, that necessary work of the Spirit of God on the heart we have called illumination or conviction, which results in the sinner's response of faith. On the basis of this verse, Calvinists believe that effectual calling always results in the justification of the sinner—"whom He called, them He also justified." The comparison with Ephesians 1, however, indicates that Paul may have something else in mind. The calling of predestinated people in Christ may actually be the naming of them as sons or adoption (cp. Isa. 49:1). Whereas effectual calling is not a part of the immediate context in Romans, adoption certainly is (8:14-17). All of creation awaits the glorious liberty of the children of God (8:21), and so to be "the called according to His purpose" is to be those who love God as His adopted children (v. 28).

4. To be blessed in Christ is to be eternally secure. Clearly, once someone is in Christ, there is no possibility whatsoever for that person to somehow lose any of these spiritual blessings in heavenly things. Paul says in Romans, "whom He justified, them He glorified." And he says in Ephesians that we have obtained an inheritance (1:11), that we will be to the praise of His glory in eternity (1:12), and that all of this is sealed with an earnest, the Holy Spirit of promise (1:13-14). It is the nature of existence in Christ that it involves eternal life (1 John 5:11), and security that we shall never perish (John 10:28-30). The Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2) will complete the good work He began in us (Phil. 1:6).

8. Match these other important aspects of the application of salvation to the sinner to their definition.



Answer: See the arrows above, which are not included in the student booklet.

Application:

1. Regeneration—the impartation of spiritual life to the spiritually dead (Eph. 2:5); being born again (John 3:3); the sense in which we partake of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). It is the instantaneous beginning of the believer's eternal life upon faith in Christ (John 3:16), and it secures that saving faith eternally (1 John 5:1, "Whosoever is believing in Jesus has been born of God").

2. Imputation—God's willingness to treat sinners as righteous (Rom. 4:6-9). The righteousness imputed to us is the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). This must be distinguished from progressive sanctification, which is the gradual growth in Christlikeness we seek to experience through God's truth (John 17:17).

3. Justification—God deals with our legal problem as guilty sinners before His law by declaring us righteous in view of the obedience of Christ imputed to our account and in payment for our sins. This brings us peace with God (Rom. 5:1).

4. Redemption—God gives freedom from the power of darkness. We are no longer slaves to sin (Rom. 6:6-7). If we serve sin as believers, it is because we want to, not because we have to.

Other spiritual blessings in heavenly things include: forgiveness, remission, cleansing, sanctification, and reconciliation.