

## 6.1 What does it mean to be saved? What is the Gospel?

If we say someone has been saved, what do we mean? What is salvation? We could use a variety of terms to describe this experience. These terms might have slight variation in emphasis, but they all really mean the same thing. It perhaps requires many words to describe such an amazing reality. Some terms will be more easily understood by one person, while other terms might be understood by another. God wants to make sure we all understand, so He has repeated it Himself in a variety of language even within the Bible.

For example, we might say that a person:

- Has repented of his sins
- Has turned to Jesus
- Has put his trust in Jesus
- Has believed in Jesus as Savior
- Has received Jesus as Savior and Lord
- Has welcomed Jesus
- Has invited Jesus into his heart and life
- Has decided for Jesus
- Has entered into fellowship with Jesus
- Has come to Jesus
- Has been born again
- Has been born of the Spirit
- Has become a believer
- Has become a Christian
- Has chosen Jesus
- Has started on the Jesus road
- Has been saved
- Has been justified by faith
- Has been converted to Christ

And there are probably many other ways to say it, too. It's all talking about the same experience—an experience that is so great and so life-changing that it's hard to find words to describe it adequately.

**Those who have not yet received Jesus need to understand two things:**

### 1. **THEY NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHY THEY NEED JESUS SO MUCH---**

- A. We are all sinners, in heart and in practice. Romans 3:10-12, 3:23
- B. We are in deep trouble with God because of our sin. We are actually guilty and condemned before Him, lost and hopeless without Him. Romans 6:23a, Isaiah 64:6
- C. No matter how hard we try, there is nothing good we can do ourselves to get out of our lost condition, to wash away our guilt before God. Even though we may be religious, say prayers, or try to worship God, none of this can save us. Proverbs 22:27, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8-9

### 2. **THEY NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY CAN BE SAVED---**

- A. God loves us very much, so He gave Jesus His Son to take the punishment of our sins upon Himself. Jesus died in our place—for our sins, and He didn't stay dead, but rose from the dead on the third day. Romans 5:8, 6:9, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.
- B. In order to be saved it is necessary to stop trusting in anyone or anything else for salvation, and place our complete trust in Jesus Christ alone. Those who place all their trust in Jesus are promised salvation. Proverbs 3:5, 14:12, 16:31, Romans 5:1,9.

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- C. If someone truly is saved, Jesus will change his heart. Little by little, his life will change. He may still fall into occasional sin, but if he does, it will no longer give him joy and pleasure as it once did. Those who are being changed by Jesus have become believers or Christians. They are brand new people, but they may still be weak, for they are only little babies in God's kingdom. 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:1

**SO THEN, WHERE DOES BAPTISM COME IN?**

Baptism is a sign that shows that one has become a Christian. It is not baptism itself that gives anyone life; rather, it is the heart decision for Jesus that gives life. However baptism is very important as the first sign that shows others one has chosen to follow Jesus. Every believer should obey God quickly in this matter of baptism. Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:41, 8:36-38

**SO THEN, WHAT IS SALVATION?**

Very briefly, we can say that salvation is the what happens to a person when he realizes that he is not in right standing before God, and there is nothing he can do to improve his situation, so he reaches out to Jesus, believing that Jesus died for his sins and rose again. He stops trusting in anything or anyone else and starts trusting in Jesus alone. At this time God works a miracle in his heart and life. God gives him new life, changing him from the inside out, changing even his heart's desires. Often the decision to trust Jesus is sealed with a prayer of repentance, inviting Jesus to come into his life.

Salvation is not the same as baptism, and does not come through baptism, even though the two are often spoken of together, since baptism is often the first act of one whose heart has truly been converted to Christ.

**CAN A CHRISTIAN SIN?**

Can a real Christian still sin? Even those who are true believers can still fall into occasional sin. The Bible says, "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Therefore, teachers should be careful never to tell children things like, "If you tell lies (or do any other evil thing), you are not a Christian" or "you will no longer be a Christian." This is not true. It is better to say something like this: "If you are a Christian, God wants you to stop lying" (or doing any other evil deed). Sometimes pastors and teachers have told me that they know it's not really true that if a child lies he cannot be a Christian, but they tell them this to motivate them to stop lying. We cannot use false doctrine to motivate children. We must teach the truth and trust God for the motivation.

**WHAT IF A CHRISTIAN KEEPS ON SINNING ALL THE TIME?**

If someone has received Jesus, their life must change, it is true. If their life does not begin to leave off evil and take on godliness, it is certainly open to serious question whether they in fact ever were really saved. However, many times Jesus changes us little by little. Even though you may see a Christian doing many things he should not be doing, it could be that Jesus has already been working in his life, and that other areas have already changed a lot. For example, You may see that someone is lying, so you think he cannot possibly be a real believer. However, he also had been practicing sorcery and abusing God's name. Already Jesus has brought those practices to a halt. In place of sorcery he is praying every day, and in place of abusing God's name, he is honoring and praising God. Remember that every person who receives Jesus begins as a little child in the Kingdom of God. How many months and years do we care for our children before they grow to maturity? They grow up little by little. Even so, a little child in God's kingdom needs time to grow. We have to have patience, pray much for him, and help him with good, solid teaching! We must not be too quick to judge or condemn.

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**WHAT DOES THIS TEACHING HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES?**

If we want to encourage unsaved children from our villages and communities to come to Sunday school or other children’s ministries, we must understand clearly who we are teaching. When we invite them to faith in Christ, we must be very clear ourselves about what we are inviting them to. We must understand what teaching we can include in the invitation, and what we can teach those who respond to the invitation. We are not inviting them to become church members or to get baptized, although we hope they will do so after trusting Christ. We are inviting them first and foremost to trust Christ and Christ alone for salvation.

**LET’S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE**

Out of all the words that explain salvation, write three phrases that you would like to use in your teaching to explain salvation to your class.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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Listen carefully every time you hear anyone else give an invitation or explain salvation. Listen to what the choirs are singing about salvation. Is all of the teaching you hear true according to the Bible? What good points and what problems do you see?

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**LET’S REVIEW**

What verse says that a Christian has become a new person?

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What verse says that it is possible for a Christian to fall into sin?

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Children who have not yet received Jesus need to know what two things?

- 1.
- 2.

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Can God accept people if they work very hard at trying to be good? What verse backs up what you say?

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Is it appropriate to tell children who have just been baptized, “Today you have become children of God”? Why or why not?

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Here are some teachings I have heard. Some are true, but others are not consistent with Bible doctrine. Put a circle around Yes if it is Biblical and true, or No if it is not Biblical.

Jesus will save you today if you will put your trust in Him.	Yes	No
Only those who are baptized can say they are truly saved.	Yes	No
Stop doing bad things, then Jesus will receive you.	Yes	No
If you steal, you are not a Christian.	Yes	No
Christians do not sin.	Yes	No
God does not want us to sin.	Yes	No
The life of a Christian must change.	Yes	No

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