

Exposition of salvific terms

Introduction

This will not be introducing anything new. It is an explanation of the words describing aspects of salvation in summary form in a helpful concise compendium.

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The locus of dogmatics

The doctrine of salvation is called Soteriology; this is a branch (locus) of systematic theology.

‘Salvation’ in NT Greek is *soteria*.

It deals with the work of Christ as the redeemer in salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in applying that work to the elect.

Aspects affecting God

Sovereignty

Save us, O God of our salvation. 1 Chron 16:35

Salvation belongs to the LORD. Ps 3:8

The salvation of God. Ps 50:23

In God is my salvation. Ps 62:7

God is my salvation. Isa 12:2

Salvation is of the LORD. Jonah 2:9

The Gospel of God is a Gospel of sovereign grace. God is sovereign in salvation; it originates in God and is fulfilled in God. Man has no control over this at all. In fact, God is salvation; salvation is in God.

God has decreed that salvation is given to the elect alone; those chosen in eternity past to receive grace. This was an act of mercy to rescue a portion of the human race instead of letting all fall under divine wrath and judgment, as was just.

God initiates salvation sovereignly by calling the elect in time through the preaching of the Gospel. The proclamation is indiscriminate to everyone (the external call) but the inward call, the efficacious call, contains irresistible grace that draws the elect to Christ.

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. Jn 6:44

Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father. Jn 6:65

Having called the elect, God regenerates them giving them faith and repentance, which constitutes conversion. This system is called monergism: regeneration is solely an act of God.

In church history this truth is denoted as Calvinism or Augustinianism or Reformed Theology.¹ All other theological systems deny this truth and are heretical. These include:

- Pelagianism: Man is able to do the will of God on his own (denial of total depravity).
- Semi-Pelagianism (e.g. Arminianism, Romanism): man initiates salvation by his free will choice. Some Arminians rely upon a mythical common grace to assist their free will;² Romanists rely upon the grace that exists in church ordinances. After this there is co-operation with God (synergism) in salvation.
- Universalism (e.g. Unitarianism): everyone is saved in the end.

¹ In history, this was manifested in certain church denominations that included: Presbyterianism (e.g. the Westminster Confession, the Three Forms of Unity), original Anglicanism (e.g. the Lambeth Articles), the Particular Baptists (e.g. the 1689 Baptist Confession), Congregationalists (e.g. the Savoy Declaration) and historic Augustinians. Dogmatic works would include Calvin's 'Institutes', Berkhof's 'Systematic Theology', Bavinck's 'Reformed Dogmatics' etc.

² James Arminius and John Wesley held similar ideas about total depravity and grace, which differed from the later, more extreme Continental Arminians. Thus some call Wesleyans 'Evangelical Arminians'. Wesleyanism teaches that common prevenient grace is not in itself salvific but leads to salvation (unlike the Continual Arminians). It helps a sinner turn to Christ and helps overcome the inability caused by total depravity. All have access to this common grace but it can be resisted.

Amyraldism is a watering down of Calvinism to accommodate Arminianism and Lutheranism. It teaches that God loves everyone and desires to save everyone (Universalism) but since all do not come to Christ for salvation God chooses the elect to be saved. It is a hypothetical universalism (BB Warfield). God desires all to be saved but in reality he only calls the elect.

Grace

And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
Jn 1:16-17

Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Rm 3:24

Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). Eph 2:5

The exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
Eph 2:7

The sovereign choice of God in salvation is worked out through grace. Grace is only given to the elect and it comes from the cross of Christ (Jn 1:17; Rm 1:5; 1 Cor 1:4). There is no common grace. The idea of a universal grace whereby God gives favour to sinners outside of Christ is blasphemous.³

Some people talk about ‘free grace’ but that is a tautological misnomer. All grace is free. It is unmerited kindness; undeserved favour.

The NT word for grace, *charis*, means: grace, loving-kindness, favour, a favourable attitude, that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness, goodwill. God’s power and enablement.

A theological definition would be: *‘the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of Christian virtues’* (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon).

Grace allows the benefits of Christ’s atonement to be given to the elect while they are yet sinners. Grace then supplies all that the elect need to get hold of the full benefits of salvation.

Clarity on forms of common grace

- TRUE REFORMED TEACHING ON GRACE: there is no such thing as common grace. All grace stems from the cross and is only directed towards the elect. It is the favour and blessing of God which secures salvation for the elect alone. This grace to the elect cannot be resisted. It is efficacious towards salvation.

³ Some Reformed theologians (e.g. John Murray) talk about common grace as being the restraining acts of God on human society, such as to restrain sin and divine wrath on sin, plus favour to mankind (such as rainfall) but which fall short of aiding salvation. There is no Scripture teaching this.

- **CONFUSED REFORMED COMMON GRACE:** see earlier definition (footnote). A general grace to make society tolerable. The gifts of God to mankind in general. Special grace alone is salvific.
- **CONTINENTAL ARMINIANISM** (post James Arminius): there is no difference between common grace and special grace. This universal sufficient grace is associated with the external call of the Gospel which can assist the sinner in faith and repentance, but which may also be resisted. Total Depravity is denied.
- **WESLEYAN COMMON GRACE:** there is a universal, prevenient grace of God which helps overcome total depravity and aids convicted sinners in accepting the Gospel in faith and repentance which are human works. Prevenient grace leads to saving grace; it leads to choosing salvation (thus overcoming total depravity). It can be resisted.
- **EVANGELICAL PREVENIENT GRACE:** a false view that is similar to Wesley's. Regeneration is man's choice (enabled by prevenient grace) and not God's. This makes saving faith the fruit of unregenerate man. Faith results in salvation instead of the Biblical teaching that the divine gift of faith results from regeneration.
- **ROMANIST PREVENIENT GRACE:** is the grace necessary to receive the grace conveyed by a sacrament.

Atonement

You give an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves.
Exod 30:15

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul. Lev 17:11

Therefore we have brought an offering for the LORD ... to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD. Num 31:50

The covering of sins from God's eyes. The satisfaction of God's justice regarding the sins of people atoned for. The removal of the wrath of God from atoned-for sinners. The guilt of sin is made invisible to the eyes of God.

The words 'atoned', 'atonement' and 'atoning' only appear in the OT; atonement is not a doctrine discussed in the NT. Instead the apostles talk about propitiation. This is because of the repeated mention of the sacrifice of animals as an offering to God to atone for the sins of men. This typological atonement looked forward to the fulfilment in the cross of Christ, which finally propitiates God.

In the KJV 'atonement' appears in Rm 5:11 but here *katallage* really means reconciliation.

In the OT 'atonement' is the root word *kaphar* (Strong's 3722). It literally means: to cover, to cover over, pacify, purge, make an atonement, make reconciliation, cover over with pitch, propitiate. The covering of sin by the blood of a substitute satisfies the wrath of God and therefore the repercussions of this satisfaction are reconciliation and peace with God.

Atonement is closely connected to forgiveness. In the OT 'to forgive' is *salach*. This really means 'lightness', 'lifting up', 'to be at peace'. One can only be at peace with God if there is a prior atonement for that person. In the NT forgive is *aphiemi*, which means 'to let go', 'to release'.

The fact that this root is also applied to the word ‘pitch’ gives colour to the typology of the Ark: ‘Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it (pitch it, *kaphar*) inside and outside with pitch (*kopher* – from *kaphar*, ‘price of life’) ’ (Gen 6:14). The pitch saved the occupants from the divine judgment of the flood. Atonement saves those in Christ from divine judgment against sin.

By the suffering of the sinner’s atoning substitute, the divine wrath on sin is propitiated, and as a consequence of this propitiation, the punishment due to sin is released and not inflicted on the transgressor. This release, or non-infliction of penalty, is forgiveness in the Biblical representation.

WGT Shedd.

Propitiation

Justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood. Rm 3:24-25

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Heb 2:17

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins. 1 Jn 2:2

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. 1 Jn 4:10

Modern theologians⁴ do not like the idea that God is angry with sin and sinners (Ps 5:5-6) so they twist the original meaning of ‘propitiation’ – ‘turn away wrath’, to expiation - ‘turn away sin’.

The fruit of atonement is propitiation – the turning away of God’s anger against a sinner for his sin.

The Puritan John Owen analyses propitiation as follows:

- There is an offence to be taken away. [I.e. sin, lawlessness.]
- There is a person offended who needs to be pacified. [I.e. God.]
- There is an offending person; someone guilty of an offence. [I.e. man.]
- There is a sacrifice to make atonement for the offence. [I.e. the cross of Christ.]

Christ’s divine nature enables him to pay the penalty for sin; his human nature enables him to do so on humanity’s behalf. ... it conceives the satisfaction of Christ less as payment of a debt and more as payment of a penalty, to satisfy justice and the demands of the law and to redeem humanity from the power of sin and death into which sin had enslaved them.

John Calvin, Institutes, II, 12-2-3, p466.

⁴ E.g. CH Dodd.

Aspects affecting the redeemed

Redemption

Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Rm 3:24

Of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. 1 Cor 1:30

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Eph 1:7

With His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. Heb 9:12

To redeem is to buy back something. Thus Greek texts speak of redeeming a slave or redeeming a prisoner. In salvation redemption is from the wrath and justice of God. Payment has to be made to compensate for the cost to God's justice. The release is from the law of God which sinners broke.

The deliverance of God's elect from a state of sin into a state of salvation by the means and merit of the ransom paid by Christ on their behalf.

Alan Cairns, Dictionary of Theological Terms.

In the NT redemption is usually the word *apolutrosis*, meaning the delivery from captivity by the intervention of *lutrou* – the price of ransom. *Apolutrosis*, *lutrou*, *lutrosis* derive from the verb *luo*, to loose.

Ransom

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Matt 20:28

The Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all. 1 Tim 2:5-6

A ransom is the price paid to redeem someone or something, such as the release of a prisoner. In salvation the price paid is the precious blood of Christ (1 Pt 1:18-19).

So, in salvation the elect are redeemed, bought back by a ransom, from their captivity to God's law and curse against sin.

Salvation

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. Rm 1:16

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thess 5:9

God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 2 Thess 2:13

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation. Heb 2:3

Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!
Rev 7:10

The act of being saved. This is the doctrinal locus of soteriology.

The Greek word *soteria* (Strong's 4991) means: deliverance, preservation, safety, salvation (both as the present possession of all true Christians and future salvation); the sum of benefits and blessings of Christians redeemed from all earthly ills.

It is the salvation from our enemies: sin, death, the Devil, demons and the world. While 'deliverance' refers more to the transfer into a new kingdom, 'salvation' regards being saved from our enemies.

Deliverance

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.
Gal 1:3-4

God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us. 2 Cor 1:9-10

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Col 1:13

The act of being delivered from the bonds which held us down: sin, the world and the Devil. Deliverance equates to salvation, which is the word more frequently used.

However, deliverance more regards the transfer out of one kingdom and into another. We are delivered from this present evil age, from the power of darkness and conveyed into the Kingdom of God.

Remission of sins

This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Matt 26:28

Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'. Acts 2:38

Whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins. Acts 10:43

Without shedding of blood there is no remission. Heb 9:22

Remission was a word used more at the beginning of the Gospel age, such as by John the Baptist, but not so much afterwards. It appears 9 times in the NT. It does not appear in Paul's letters (unless you include Hebrews but even here it is an abstract reference). The apostles tend to use more forensic words, such as propitiation or justification.

Remission (*aphesis*) means forgiveness, release from bondage, cancellation of guilt; the removal of sins from the eyes of God (not just a passing over).

Regeneration

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Titus 3:4-6

Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Jn 3:3

Regeneration is being born again as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The need for regeneration is due to the fact that humans are dead towards God and lost in total depravity – unable to do any good or spiritual work.

And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Eph 2:1

Arminians and Pelagians teach that regeneration results from the prior action of man's will in choosing to believe the Gospel. Free will belief results in the action of God. Some English Arminians teach that this initial action of the will rests upon a mythical common grace to all that overcomes total depravity (see earlier). CG Finney even stated that a man regenerates himself.

Calvinists teach that God sovereignly regenerates an elect person through the preaching of the Gospel (the effectual calling) and this results in the conversion of the will expressed in faith and repentance. The doctrine of total depravity means that man is powerless to exercise his will towards God. God is sovereign in salvation and he initiates faith in the elect. Faith and repentance are gifts from God and cannot be generated by sinful humans who are dead to God.

Conversion

The act of being converted from one thing into another; from sinner into saint. It consists in faith and repentance, both of which are gifts from God.

Renewal

He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing [*anakainosis*] of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing [*anakainosis*] of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Rm 12:2

Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed [*anakeinoō*] day by day. 2 Cor 4:16

Be renewed [*ananeōō*] in the spirit of your mind. Eph 4:23

And have put on the new man who is renewed [*anakeinoō*] in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. Col 3:10

Ananeōō [Strong's 365]: to renew (in the mind).

Anakainoo [Strong's 341]: to cause to grow up, new, to make new; new strength and vigour is given to one; to be changed into a new kind of life as opposed to the former corrupt state.

Anakainosis [Strong's 342]: a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better.

Renewal, or renovation, though rarely discussed, regards the changes to the elect person in this life making him more like the pattern of man in Christ Jesus. This renewal begins in the elect mind and leads to putting on the new man. The renewed mind leads to the soul doing the will of God.

Sanctification

The act of setting the elect apart for God in holiness. The removal of spiritual pollution in the elect and making them holy.

There are three tenses of sanctification, confusion of which leads to heretical views.

You were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Cor 6:11

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. 1 Cor 1:2

Of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. 1 Cor 1:30

Those who are sanctified by faith in Me. Acts 26:18

The past tense is that we were washed, we were sanctified. This is definitive sanctification, a once for ever event making us a saint before God, preserved in Christ. It occurs at the same time as justification.

You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit. 1 Pt 1:22

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Cor 1:18

We are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved. 2 Cor 2:15

If anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 2 Tim 2:21

For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one. Heb 2:11

The present tense of sanctification is that we are being washed, being sanctified; this is progressive sanctification. This is the continuing action of the soul to be more holy; putting on the new nature and casting off the old.

So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.
1 Thess 3:13

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thess 5:23

The future tense of sanctification is the final purification of the person (including a new body) forever to live with God for eternity. This occurs at the return of Christ in the clouds.

Justification

[Jesus] who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification. Rm 4:25

Through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. Rm 5:18

Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.
Rm 8:30

A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. Gal 2:16

This is the legal act of God by which 1) the sins of the elect are placed upon Christ and paid for by atonement and 2) the righteousness of Christ achieved as a man is imputed (accounted to, transferred) to the elect to make them righteous before God. This is the legal, heavenly standing of the saints. It has nothing to do with progressive sanctification; our standing is always secure. Justification is received by faith.

The basis for justification is the total obedience of Christ. This has two aspects, passive and active.

Passive obedience is the vicarious substitutionary atonement of Christ in death, which satisfies divine justice and pays for the sins of the elect. Active obedience is the righteousness of Christ, achieved by his life as an obedient man under law, which is imputed to the believer, which results in adoption (heirship) and eternal life.

Having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:7

The baptism in the Spirit

By one Spirit we were all baptised into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.
1 Cor 12:13

One baptism. Eph 4:5

As many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection. Rm 6:3-5

The act whereby the elect are brought into Christ, into one body.

There is only one baptism. Since 1 Cor 12:13 is clear that this baptism is a baptising into Christ then there cannot be another baptism (as taught by Pentecostals and Charismatics). The baptism in the spirit is not a second blessing, emotional, mystical experience that Christians get after seeking it in some manner.

Water baptism is not a second baptism; it is an outward testimony to the inner, spiritual baptism whereby the church is brought into the body of Christ.

The sealing of the Spirit

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.
2 Cor 1:21-22

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance. Eph 1:13-14

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Eph 4:30

'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.' And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand [i.e. the fulness of the covenant] of all the tribes of the children of Israel [the elect] were sealed.
Rev 7:3-4

The act whereby the elect are made the possession of God and spiritually marked as such by the presence of the Holy Spirit within. This sealing becomes a guarantee of heavenly security.

The sealing is the opposite of the mark of the beast, both are symbolically on the forehead (the mind). The mark results in worship of the beast; the seal results in worship of God.

The beastly mark

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand [actions, work] or on their foreheads [the mind], and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Rev 13:16-17

If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God. Rev 14:9-10

And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. Rev 14:11

Those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Rev 19:20

The mark is the testimony of Satan's servants committed to his will. The thoughts and actions are subservient to Satan.

The seal of the Spirit

This seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His'. 2 Tim 2:19

'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.' And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand [i.e. the fulness of the covenant] of all the tribes of the children of Israel [the elect] were sealed. Rev 7:3-4

The seal of God on their foreheads. Rev 9:4

Those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name. Rev 15:2

Then / *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. Rev 20:4

The seal is spiritual identification accompanying the indwelling Holy Spirit in the elect guaranteeing salvation, that results in an external testimony of worship of God and commitment to godliness.

Glorification

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Rm 8:18

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Col 3:4

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 1 Pt 5:1

When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. 1 Pt 5:4

Just pardoning sins is not enough for a complete salvation; man must also be given eternal life to secure eternal fellowship with God after the Final Judgment.

Glorification involves being included in the body of Christ and partaking in his glory; '*grace is glory begun*' (Matthew Henry). At the return of Christ believers will be changed so that their body becomes a glorious body like that of Christ.

I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness. Ps 17:15

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rm 8:29

And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*. 1 Cor 15:49

When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Col 3:4

The Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body. Phil 3:20-21

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 1 Jn 3:2

The means of grace

These are the channels that God has deemed to be the vehicles of grace to the elect, or the means whereby Christ communicates to his people the benefits of his mediation. The channels are ordinary means but the transmission of grace by the Spirit is supernatural.

Traditionally the means are listed as the Word of God, prayer and the sacraments; i.e. baptism and the Lord's Supper (e.g. Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 154).

Some have included church attendance to slowly imbibe the Gospel message that leads to salvation, but this leads to the error of Preparationism, which affected some Puritans in history and affects some modern Reformed teachers today. The error is that a work of man leads to salvation. So in witnessing to sinners they encourage them to regularly attend church meetings. Going to church is not part of the initial Gospel proclamation; it is advice to converts after professing faith.

However, after conversion, fellowship with other believers is a means of grace to mutual edification. There is grace in fellowship.

The primary means of grace is the Bible. The Word has power to convict and edify. Indeed, knowledge of the truths in the Bible is vital to effect conversion. The power in this is from the Holy Spirit applying the word to the soul. A single verse can lead a person to God.

But the Holy Spirit can also awaken men without the use of ordinary means. This is important. Where there is no access to a Bible, the Holy Spirit sometimes directs a person's circumstances that leads them to conviction of sin and seeking God. One example is a lightning strike that killed a person next to another person that was spared, and prayed.

Prayer is a means of grace because men are saved by calling on the name of the Lord (Rm 10:13). By prayer saints are built up in faith.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are means of grace because they testify to the work of God and strengthen faith and encourage sanctification.

Aspects affecting both God and the redeemed

Reconciliation

We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Rm 5:11

That He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. Eph 2:16

By Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. Col 1:20

Sometimes atonement is defined wrongly as reconciliation (at-one-ment) but it rather means the satisfaction of God and sin covered over. Reconciliation is a different word and a different subject, though atonement enables reconciliation to occur.

The Greek words *katallage* (reconciliation) and *katallasso* (to reconcile) denote a change or exchange of money settling the differences between two former opposing parties. In doctrinal terms, reconciliation is the removal of the enmity between God and the sinner, and the establishment of a new relationship of peace on the ground of Christ's payment of everything due to God and his holy law because of sin. Thus texts speak of reconciliation being ascribed to the merit of Christ's blood.⁵

In simple terms, the blood of Christ pays the dues to God for sin and enables the reconciliation of God and elect sinners in a relationship of peace and friendship.

To make reconciliation (which Christ is said in many places to do), it is required, first, that the wrath of God be turned away, His anger removed, and all the effects of enmity on His part towards us; secondly, that we be turned away from our opposition to Him, and be brought into voluntary obedience.

John Owen, *The Death of Death*, p151.

Sonship

As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. Jn 1:12

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Rm 8:14

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:26

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Gal 4:6

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! 1 Jn 3:1

The result of regeneration: the act whereby the elect are brought into God's family as sons of God.

⁵ Sic Alan Cairns, *Dict. of Theological Terms*.

Sonship is about heavenly family relationships. Sonship is different to adoption. Sonship emphasises relationship, being in God's family.

Adoption

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Rm 8:15-17

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal 3:29

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Gal 4:4-5

Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself. Eph 1:5

Having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:7

The counterpart to justification: the act of legally making the elect an heir with Christ. The idea in Paul is the Roman legal system of adopting a slave to be the heir of an important person.

Adoption is about the inheritance of God; heirship with Christ.

It still has in view the children of God as sons, but it emphasises heirship, inheritance with Christ.

Conclusion

Salvation is a rich and glorious study, worthy of much time. Due to its complex nature, numerous words are utilised to describe the various functions within salvation. It behoves believers to understand these terms so that their comprehension of salvation is more complete.

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