



Salvation

The doctrine of salvation is a big deal in Christianity. In fact, our beliefs about salvation, based on what God has told us through the Bible, make Christianity totally unique among all major religions in the world.

Before we go on, if you are uncertain about your salvation or that of a loved one, and you want to talk it through with a pastor, we would love to help you! Please contact the church office at 630.585.7777 or e-mail us at crossroads@crossroadsconnect.net and we'll be happy to set that up.

Our Statement of Faith (from the Home page, go to the "What We Believe" panel) offers a short summary of our view of salvation:

Every human being (no exception) is corrupted by a natural rebelliousness against God that we call "sin." In this condition we are unacceptable to God and condemned to eternity apart from Him and His love. However, just like a guy who needs a heart transplant cannot solve his own problem by doing the surgery on himself, we cannot solve our "sin problem" on our own. Because God loves us, He's provided the solution, freely available to everyone: genuine faith in Jesus Christ. There is no other way apart from faith in Christ by which our sin problem with God can be solved.

Here is a bit more detailed explanation:

- "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Or, as the old saying goes, "No one's perfect."
- God IS perfect; it might even be better to say He's "perfectly perfect." And He cannot let even a tiny speck of imperfection into heaven because then it wouldn't be perfect any more.
- If we want to join God in heaven we've got a big problem because no matter how hard we try, we can't be "perfectly perfect." And there's another problem: our sins are like crimes against God (He made the rules, after all) and His perfection demands justice. Our "crimes" have to be paid for...but how? So unless something or someone beyond ourselves can step in and fix things, we're doomed (this is where Christianity departs from all other world religions that teach one form or another of working hard to be "good enough" for God.)
- The fantastic news is that someone did step in! Jesus Christ, as the second person of the Trinity of God, joined Himself with human flesh and entered our world. He came, John 18:37 tells us, to "testify to the truth" that He—and He alone—can take care of our debts to God and save us from our problem of imperfection.

- The basis for our salvation, the Bible teaches us, is simply to (a) accept our imperfection and our inability to pay our debt to God because of our sins and (b) put our faith in Him as our Lord and Savior. There is no other way to heaven. He proved His unique claim to being our Savior by willingly suffering death on a cross to pay for our sins against God, and then conquering death by rising again in glory to return to heaven.
- When our day comes to “face our maker,” God accepts us into heaven only because Jesus, as a result of our faith, has paid our debts and shared His perfection—His righteousness—with us. Jesus makes it okay again between God and us.

Can I lose my salvation?

The debate about whether salvation is permanent (you'll hear people say it as “once saved, always saved”) or conditional (I can lose my claim to God's grace by giving in to sin and walking away from my faith) has gone on among Christians for centuries and we're probably not going to end it here. But just so you know, here's where we come out on it:

- *Genuine* (real) faith permanently seals the believer for salvation. Since we cannot earn our salvation by being good enough, then we cannot lose it by being bad enough because *it has nothing to do with our “goodness” or “badness” at all*, but it is only by the work of Christ. Even our faith is not our own work, it is from God (Ephesians 2.1-9).
- But, there is a connection between faith and works that comes into play here. Suppose I built my own hang glider and told you I believed with all my heart it could fly. You would know my faith didn't mean anything unless I got in the glider and ran off a cliff, right? James 2:17 say “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” So in other words a living faith—a genuine faith—produces action (we're not talking perfection here; genuine Christians still sin and can even fall captive to patterns of sin, but there will always be evidence of their faith at work).
- There is such a thing as walking away from a *claim* to faith that was never real. This is why Jesus said a day would come when some would call him “Lord” but He will respond “I never knew you; away from me, you evildoers!” (Matthew 7:22-23). We need not fear that day! We know our faith is real and will save us simply by the fact that we are living life differently (again, not perfectly) because of it. At the same time, the person who rejects their claim to faith will still have to work hard at going to hell because they have to force themselves past a crucified Christ. God will never stop pursuing us in love until the day we die.