

What is the scope of salvation?

So great a salvation Heb 2:3

The word 'salvation' is a very comprehensive term, which covers: election, predestination, providence, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification. Some of these are completed (e.g. election, regeneration, justification, adoption); some are partially complete (e.g. sanctification, glorification). Salvation does not simply mean being born again (regenerated), or converted (faith and repentance). The goal of salvation is to produce a community of God's people, united to Christ, redeemed from sin, and glorified in body, soul and spirit, (1 Thess 5:23) and thus enabled to serve God and glorify him for eternity. Thus to say that I was saved on such and such a day is defective; salvation is not yet completed. To say that we owe our salvation merely to the finished work of Christ neglects the work of the Father in electing, predestinating and controlling providence and the work of the Spirit in applying Christ's atonement in a myriad ways.

The Bible affirms salvation from many viewpoints, by many means:

- By grace: Eph 2:8.
- By Christ's resurrection life: Rm 5:9.
- By the means of faith exercised by a person: Lk 7:50. (Even though this faith is a divine gift Eph 2:8.)
- By the word of God Jm 1:21.
- By hope: Rm 8:24.
- By fire: 1 Cor 3:15.
- By what is symbolised in baptism: 1 Pt 3:21.

It also affirms many causes:

1. *The eternal purpose of God.* (The originating cause or initiative; salvation planned.) 2 Tim 1:9; Rm 8:29-30.
2. *The atonement and redemption of Christ.* (The meritorious cause; salvation achieved.) Isa 53:5; 1 Pt 2:24.
3. *The work of the Holy Spirit applying atonement.* (The efficient cause; salvation effected and applied.) Rm 8:9-17; 2 Tim 1:14; 1 Jn 3:24.
4. *The work of faith in the believer* through obedience and perseverance as the instrumental cause (though these are energised by God) as the instrumental cause. (Though our works do not save us, we are not saved without them.) Rm 6:12; 2 Cor 7:1; Phil 2:12-13; Heb 12:14; 1 Pt 5:6; 2 Pt 3:18.

Thus salvation is the work of the whole Trinity effected in men.

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Understanding Ministries

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