

THE EQUIP INSTITUTE

Theme: Baptist Beliefs

Topic: BF&M (2000): Article IV: Salvation

Fall 2025

Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and his Word for the sake of living rightly before God in his world. The topic this week is Article IV in the Baptist Faith and Message (2000), which is on the doctrine of salvation.

Article IV

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

Key Biblical Texts

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (John 10:28-29)

¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:21-26)

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom. 8:29-30)

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.... ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Rom. 10:9-10, 13)

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12-13)

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. 1:9-14)

Observations

Exposition of Article IV

Historical Context

The major changes to this article actually occurred between the 1925 and 1963 editions. The BF&M (1925) mostly followed the New Hampshire Confession in affirming a moderate or modified Calvinism. In 1963, the BF&M was revised so that some of the original Calvinistic language was softened because Southern Baptists enjoyed no consensus on most of the “doctrines of grace.” The 1963 edition adopted language that was more broadly evangelical, aiming to include nearly all Southern Baptists who were not either hyper-Calvinists or Arminians. Only one change was made in 2000, which will be discussed below.

Key Ideas

Salvation is holistic, including both our souls and our bodies

Salvation is available to anyone who believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and such belief is necessary for salvation

Salvation was secured in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus

Salvation occurs in four stages

The first stage is regeneration, when we are born again and made new creatures

Regeneration is a change of heart, initiated by the Holy Spirit, that is evidenced by repentance and faith

Repentance is turning from our sin toward God, while faith is entrusting our life to Jesus as our Lord and Savior

Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences rooted in God’s grace—you cannot have one without the other

The second stage is justification, which is God’s full exoneration of our sins on the basis of Jesus’s perfect obedience to God’s commands

Justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone

Justification is foundational to our personal relationship with God, which is evidenced in our peace with God and his favor toward us

In justifying us, God relates to us as though we are not sinners, even though we are sinners, because Jesus identified with sinners, even though he was not himself a sinner

The third stage is sanctification, which begins at the moment of regeneration when the Holy Spirit indwells the believer

Sanctification includes being set apart for God's purposes

Sanctification includes ongoing moral and spiritual maturity

Ongoing sanctification is the norm for believers and is evidence that one has been regenerated

The final stage is glorification, which is the culmination of salvation and represents the final and permanent state of all those who are saved

The Revision

A sentence was added to the first paragraph: "There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord." This was in direct response to three ideas: **pluralism**, **universalism**, and **inclusivism**. Pluralism says there are multiple paths to salvation that might be more or less equal. Christianity is only one path among many. By the turn of the twenty-first century, pluralism was the default understanding of most non-Christians in America and other parts of the West.

Universalism is the belief that all people will be saved because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. There are two versions of universalism. Some deny the existence of hell; all people go to heaven when they die. This is the more radical option because it denies the existence of hell. Mainline progressives and liberal Catholics sometimes argue for this view.

Other universalists believe hell is real, but the experience of hell isn't everlasting. One day, hell will be emptied and all the previously damned will be saved. Proponents often argue for postmortem conversion, believing all people in hell will eventually repent and believe. This view was advocated by some of the early church fathers and has appeared off and on in church history.

Inclusivism argues that some who've never heard the gospel will be saved, through the work of Christ, if they respond to God's general revelation or glimpses of God's truth in other religions. Many famous Christians have held this view. It is the most common view among Arminians and the Eastern Orthodox. Inclusivism is the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, which argues there are "anonymous Christians" in all religions, and even among atheists.

In 2000, Southern Baptists wanted to be clear that conscience faith in Christ is required for salvation. There are no anonymous Christians. The only exceptions that most Southern Baptists would probably affirm are very young children, who are not yet old enough to believe, and those who are developmentally incapable of believing.