

#0231 - March 23, 2009 Why We Believe What We Believe – Salvation Part 1

[Easley:] You and I have the very Gospel of Jesus Christ, the one, the only means of salvation. How will you handle it?

[Lepine:] This in *inContext* with Michael Easley, I'm Bob Lepine. And Michael, we're going to hear a message today on something that we better get right, not only for ourselves but also as those who have been charged with communicating the Gospel. We better understand the doctrine of, can I say the big word, soteriology, right?

[Easley:] Good. That's good. You did good. To understand how we're saved, what we're saved from, what we're saved to and, unfortunately these words, like a lot of "religious" words, are entangled and embroiled in a lot of misinformation. So this is an exciting study. To see what is salvation. What does it actually mean?

[Lepine:] And I want to get right to it. This is part one of a message originally given to the students at Moody Bible Institute, Michael teaching on the subject of salvation.

[Easley:] How can anyone in a few minutes explain the grandeur of salvation? How would you talk about salvation so rich and free? What would you say? Where would you turn? Seems to me the doctrine of soteriology is the most important, is the greatest theme in all of the Bible. Soteriology, of course, from *soteria*. *Soter*, the Savior. Soteriology, the study of salvation. At the most basic definition we would think salvation from something, but we need to elaborate a little; salvation to something. We are being saved from and being saved toward.

This semester I have been encouraging and nudging all of us, myself probably more than anyone as I read and reread and study these themes anew, to look at some of the key doctrines why we believe what we believe. Today I want to briefly touch on why we believe what we believe about the doctrine of salvation, this great, perhaps the greatest of all themes of the Bible that you and I are to handle.

When you start studying this salvation concept, you can begin a lot of ways, like with any branch of theology. Where would you start if you had a blank sheet of paper in your Bible? Where would you begin to think through the issue of salvation? We could think about terms. If you come from different traditions, church experiences, some of us are from Bible church backgrounds, Baptist church, Methodist, Pentecostal, Assemblies, Catholic, all kinds of "ologies" and "isms" and doctrines and different denominational backgrounds. You bring those to the table and there are lots of synonyms.

People will use words interchangeably to talk about what it means to be saved. A list I made this week, not necessarily inclusive of all important terms; but adoption, assurance, atonement, baptism (many traditions, baptism is inseparably sewn into what it means to be saved), the concept of election and predestination (which I love but many people hate), the idea of eternal security, the simple concept of faith, of belief, justification, perseverance (which is another theology that when you walk into you get gum all over your shoes very fast, what's it mean to persevere?), reconciliation, redemption, regeneration, repentance (does repentance have a role, a part of the process of a person getting saved or is it something else?), sanctification. All these and others are sort of a cocktail of terminology that give us this drink called salvation. Sometimes they're confusing, sometimes they're related, sometimes they're just distant

relatives, but they're terms that all fold into this idea.

The crucial piece, of course, is how, precisely, is a person saved? What has to happen? In our doctrinal statement I read article four, "Man was created in the image of God, but fell into sin and in that sense is lost. This is true of all men and except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Salvation is by grace, through faith in Christ who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The retribution of the wicked and unbelieving and the rewards of the righteous are everlasting and as the reward is conscience, so is the retribution."

Now, that phrase is full of many nuances of soteriology. Not only does it address the issue of man's lost estate, man's need of salvation by faith through grace, but it also branches into a retribution idea. Not only the salvation, but what happens to those who are not saved. So you can see right at the get-go and as you study different books of theology on your own, you'll say, "Wow. There are a lot of pieces in here. Which ones are the crucial pieces that we need to hold on to and understand?"

Why we believe what we believe about the doctrine of salvation is not important, men and women, it is crucial. It is perhaps the most crucial piece you will ever own. To know how to explain why you believe what you believe about this doctrine of salvation.

If we started with terminology and looked at the Old Testament, we would find a handful of terms that will tip God's hand, so to speak, to show us what the doctrine of salvation is about. If you have a Bible, open to Exodus fourteen verse thirteen, Exodus fourteen verse thirteen. As Moses has led Israel through the plagues and now hot on their heels Pharaoh and his army changing his mind once again, pursuing them and in front of them is the sea and they are wondering what's going to happen. Moses says, verse thirteen of Exodus fourteen:

But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever."

And as you might imagine, the word here is *yah'shua*, salvation, which gets folded into our term Joshua and Jesus, the root of *yasha*, which occurs three hundred and fifty plus times in your Old Testament. Now, there's a temporal use of almost every time the word salvation occurs. There's this being saved from, what are they being saved from? Well, the threat of Pharaoh breathing down their necks to kill them. The sea in front of them was death, Pharaoh's army behind them was death and unless God saved them and delivered them.

Now, when you think through these kinds of salvations, they're all temporal. They're only saving from context: An enemy, a disease, an illness, fear, "save me from this thing." And then God saves them but they have to yet wait again for the next issue. These are all sort of shadows of salvations, postponement until the greater salvation is needed.

Salvation gains spiritual significance very quickly. In fact, as you walk through the Old Testament, this concept of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt is often found in the prophets and in the Psalms of looking back for Israel, "Look how God saved us!"

Psalm 106, Isaiah 43, Hosea thirteen, all point back, many others, to the Exodus from Egypt that “God delivered us!” And of course, the great Passover significance, all the imagery: The innocent lamb, blameless, guiltless, spotless; the blood on the doorpost and the lentils. The killing of the animal, the eating of the roasted meat, the haste with which it’s prepared, the herbs to remind them of the bitter times in Egypt, all that imagery. And then the angel of wrath destroys all the firstborns who are not under the blood. What a horrid night that must have been.

And then under the cloak of darkness they escape and they lead out knowing that God has saved their firstborn by the death of a firstborn animal. The image can’t be missed. “You make this a perpetual memorial. Don’t forget it! You were saved! You were delivered by the blood of that shadowing lamb.”

This concept of deliverance carries all through the Old Testament again and again. God saved His people from their sin (parallel bondage in Egypt) to a new land of rest (both literal and spiritual, which they did not enter). And the haunt of that remembrance, the aroma of that first roasted lamb, would transfer all the way through the Jewish generation of believers and pious looking forward to salvation, men and women who loved God.

Now, when you make this trans-continental jump, you look at the way the words are used outside the Bible. For example, if you look at Greek before our New Testament was penned, there are a number of fields of meaning of the term salvation, *sozo*, that are quite interesting.

To be saved from a peril. If a physician cures you in, outside of Greek New Testament, you are saved. Also, an interesting nuance I discovered was “keeping” as in keeping alive or being pardoned by the law. Think about that for a moment. To be saved, if you were in trouble legally, you’d have to be pardoned, or somehow justice must be paid or you are going to be killed if it’s a capital offense. In that sense, the word “saving” means “to be kept alive by the law”; interesting use beyond the Bible.

Well, if we make another trans-continental jump to the New Testament, let me give you six ways salvation is colored in.

First of all there are stories of healing. Jesus uses the term no less than sixteen times in this way in the New Testament. We have both *sotiria* and *sozo* central to this discussion. For example, in Luke chapter seven verse three:

When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.

I find it interesting, those of you who have been abroad, when you’re in a culture that has no phone, no fax, no technology, just rumor in a village is amazingly quick. The handful of times I’ve been overseas where there’s zero technology, where it’s like a campout, just a person entering a village runs through that entire village in seconds. And you can hear the rumor of, “This guy raised somebody from the dead,” racing through these villages and cities and this leader says, “Go get Jesus to save the life of my servant.”

A second way we see is salvation from sin. In fact, at the announcement of Jesus’ birth in Matthew 1:21, we read:

"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus [that's back to the yah'shua, salvation], for He will save His people from their sins."

Here we have the being saved *from* their sinful condition.

A third way the word is used in many applications is salvation for the lost. Paul says is it this way in Romans 10:1:

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

Paul is praying for other people to be saved. I have been asked this question many times over the years. "Do we pray for people who are elect?" Well, the answer is yes. It says right there. Paul says, "I pray for them to be saved." That shouldn't even be a question in our theology. I know many of you, like me, have a list of names. Some of you have written them down, some of you have them in your head. There are people I have prayed for as long as I have been a believer in Jesus Christ that they will come to know Him. I at times get weary and tired and say, "Lord, why don't you answer my prayer?"

And then when God in His kind way gives me a dope slap [laughter], he says, "Michael, this is my work, not yours. You just keep praying. All I've asked you to do is pray. I haven't asked you to fix everything."

A fourth way the word is used is salvation from wrath. We don't like to talk about this in our culture. Romans 5:9:

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Back to the wrath of the Angel of Wrath in the Passover. Those not under the blood will suffer. So salvation is not just from sin, it's from wrath that's going to accompany those who are still in their sinful estate.

Fifth, we are saved to something, and this is kind of fun to study. We are saved to a glorious future. Listen to Philippians chapter three verses twenty and twenty-one:

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior

Are you eagerly waiting for a Savior or are you eagerly waiting for a paycheck? Are you eagerly waiting for a job? Are you eagerly waiting for a husband, a wife? Are you eagerly waiting your firstborn? Are you eagerly waiting your retirement? When's the last time you or I eagerly awaited our Savior? I've got to be honest, I don't wake up every day and say, "Lord, I really wish you'd come today!"

Now, when life's really crummy, I say, "Lord, I wish you'd come today." [laughter]

When life is sweet and joyful and easy and the weather's nice and my kids basically like each other [laughter], Cindy and I basically love each other, money in the bank, feel healthy, I'm not eagerly waiting Christ's return. Are you? Maybe you're better than me. God bless you.

Eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

[verse twenty-one] *who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

God the Father, through Christ, has the power to take this [pause] thing and resurrect it and by the exertion of His power glorify it into a new state. That sounds pretty compelling.

Sixth way salvation is used is that it is of God. Two passages in Revelation twelve and Revelation nineteen. Revelation 12:10:

I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

So there's what God is doing, but in that end scene, He's getting rid of Satan and the accuser to ultimately bring salvation about. And Revelation 19:1:

After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God

Well, what are the issues then and now? What are the issues if why we believe what we believe about salvation is critical, is crucial? What are the issues you're going to face?

Number one, you're going to face the corruption, the attack, the watering down, the addition to the Gospel. It has always been and it always will be. It was in the First Century in Paul's writing. There's no surprise that it exists today in our time frame. I find the two issues that seem to always kind of bubble up are the role of works and the assurance and the security of the believer.

What role does works play in salvation and how does a person know he or she is eternally secure?

Two aspects of that: the assurance of salvation, that I am assured of my salvation, and secondly that I understand the eternal security in Christ positionally and literally. If you were to look at denominational splits over the decades, this is the wedge that has hammered the split of the church. It's: What role does works play? What role does repentance play? Is repentance a work? How do you know if you're really saved? Can you lose your salvation? And this is where the gum on the shoes and the hair starts sticking to the gum on your shoes.

Ephesians 2:8-9 are very common to all of us. We know it well. We can quote it backwards and forwards in the King James and the NIV, but often we forget verse ten. Let me read it and you try to listen from a fresh set of ears:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

not as a result of works, . . . that no one may boast.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Let me give you a couple of quick definitions. Grace, of course, is the means by which we are saved. Grace is not simply undeserved favor. Grace is undeserved favor in the face of deserved wrath. It's not just that God decided to overlook our sins and like we overlook a child's minor disciplinary issue. God, by His grace, didn't just overlook it and say, "Okay, I give you a walk, I give you a bye, I give you a do-over."

Grace is His unmerited favor in face of deserved wrath. How do we embrace this? How do we get it? Faith.

For by grace you have been saved through faith

Faith is the means by which. We might say the embracing, the connecting, the way we appropriate grace and salvation. I put my trust in someone. I believe in them to do for me what I cannot do for myself.

I've shared with you before, many times in my postgraduate degree I had to have help. I had to find people who were smarter than me, who were better than me, and say, "Will you help me."

And they'd say, "Sure, I'd be happy to help you."

And I trusted them to do for me what I could not do for myself.

I've had a few minor surgeries in my life and when I tell that doctor, "Will you fix me?"

And he says, "Sure, I can fix you, won't be a problem," (they always say that, by the way) you go under. And have you ever thought about when they put that IV in you and you go to sleep what could possibly happen to you? I mean, they could draw pictures on you [laughter]. They could make fun of you. They could videotape you and make you do funny things under the influence of anesthesia. They could take the wrong organ. [laughter] It happens. They could also make a mistake and kill you. There's a morbidity rate at almost every surgery. They tell you, "Okay, there's a one-percent morbidity."

Meaning out of a hundred people who get this surgery, one dies. Next time you go under the knife, ask your physician, "What's the morbidity rate of this procedure?"

He'll say, "Wow, you know a big word." [laughter]

And when I say yes to that doc and he puts me out, I am trusting him to do for me what I cannot do for myself. And when I wake up, does the pain communicate he did something for me? "Wow."

When you trust someone, you are saying, "I believe in you, I put my faith in you, I put my mental, my heart, my kind of whole in you to say, 'You know what, I trust you to do this thing. You're going to do something for me I cannot do for myself.'"

Grace through faith, it's a gift of God. And the word is so profound. It's something God gives. We can't fix it, we can't appropriate it, we can't earn it, it's a gift. I don't know about you, but the last time someone gave me a birthday present, I did not pull out my wallet and say, "Can I reimburse you?" How silly.

Now, being Americans and humans, we say, "Oh, they gave me something for my birthday, I better give them something for their birthday." That's what Christmas cards are all about, by the way. It's this sort of, you know, sickness we do. "Well, they didn't send us one this year? They're off the list!" [laughter]

Who cares, right? Somebody cares somewhere, but it's this tit for that thing. No, no, no, no, no. A gift is a gift. I gave it to you.

[Lepine:] You know, Michael, I've been challenged by the fact that we have a lot of insufficient language that's being used as we talk about communicating salvation and the Gospel and I realized for my own life I need to make sure I understand this doctrine and talk to people differently than I used to. I haven't been to anybody recently and said, "You know, you need to ask Jesus into your heart."

[Easley:] Right.

[Lepine:] Because that's not a Biblical formulation of the doctrine of salvation.

[Easley:] First Corinthians 15:1-3 is perhaps the clearest place to go if you want a succinct explanation of the Gospel. That Jesus lived, died, was buried and came back from the dead and any and all who trust in Him are given eternal life. We add to it, we give, you know, "Ask Jesus into your heart." We embellish it. Trust the message. Trust Christ at His word and at the end of the day we're in far better *terra firma* if we're trusting what the Scripture says about salvation than how we try to add to it or make it more palatable. Just trust Christ.

[Lepine:] Well, and we want to encourage our listeners to take a more careful look at this subject by going to our website, incontextradio.org and getting information there about the study guide that we put together that comes with the mp3 CD that features all of the messages in this series and also comes with the *Moody Handbook of Theology*. And, again, the information is on the website, incontextradio.org and we hope you'll make arrangements to secure this resource.

[Incontextradio.org](http://incontextradio.org) is the website and Michael, we ought to let folks know that that website is going to be kind of a touch point for the future because there are some changes taking place here at *inContext*.

[Easley:] Well, in Moody's great kindness, Bob, we'll continue to do a broadcast, but it'll change format. It'll change venue a little bit and the *inContext* website will have the link to where we'll go in future with both some additional radio stations and to the internet. So, we're very thankful for Moody Radio's graciousness to let us do that and looking forward to an opportunity to keep on opening the Word.

[Lepine:] And those changes are going to take place in about two weeks, so again, let me encourage you to stay in touch with us via the [incontextradio](http://incontextradio.org) website. [Incontextradio.org](http://incontextradio.org) and, of course, you can contact us by phone at 1-877-3CONTEXT.

Now, tomorrow we're going to continue to look at what the Bible has to say about our great salvation. I hope you'll join us tomorrow for another edition of *inContext* with Michael Easley.