What is Salvation?

The story of salvation is a simple one, even a child can understand it, yet, in spite of its simplicity, there are some of the greatest minds, and intellects, of the world who fail to comprehend it. In fact, the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:17, "For Christ sent me to preach the gospel, not with words of human wisdom." The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not appeal to the intelligent mind. 1 Corinthians 1:18 continues, "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."

What is powerful reality to some, is a foolish myth to others. People are blinded by pride because they have a mind set, "I have no need of God!" How foolish and absurd that is.

THERE ARE THREE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS IN UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

First: GOD IS! The first verse in Scripture, (Genesis 1:1), states, "In the beginning God"

Digression from the worship of "One" God came when man began to ascribe supernatural qualities to various aspects of nature, such as the sun, the moon, etc. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Anyone who comes to God must believe that He exists!" God is accepted by FAITH, never by logic persuasion. To understand salvation one must believe that God is!

Second: GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF (AND HIS PLAN OF SALVATION) THROUGH HIS INSPIRED, INFALLIBLE, HOLY, WORD!

The Bible tells how God worked out a way for man to be saved. It tells the history of, How man failed, and how God did something about it! That's what "Gospel" (the Good News) is all about. God acted, by Jesus' incarnation, death, and resurrection, to save man.

How astonishing it is to realize that God brought Himself into the world through His Son, Jesus Christ and, gave us the Bible, a reliable source of knowledge concerning God and His plan for mankind. God acted still further when He gave His Holy Spirit, so His presence is possible for all men.

If we attempt, by human wisdom, to bring God's Word down to the level of man-made literature, it makes salvation difficult. We must accept God's Word as His infallible word to mankind.

Third: BELIEVE JESUS IS THE DIVINE SON OF GOD, WHO WILLINGLY CAME TO EARTH TO DIE AS OUR SACRIFICE, SO THAT OUR SINS MIGHT BE FORGIVEN!

If Jesus was only a man, then His death has no significance whatsoever, however, Jesus was virgin born, He was God in flesh, and He is the Savior of the world.

The thought of "God in flesh," certainly boggles the mind. If we doubt that God exists, that the Bible is His inspired Word to man, or, that Jesus is, in reality, the Son of God, then, it makes salvation extremely difficult to understand, and impossible to receive!

The story of salvation must begin with a sinless, and perfect creation. 1 Peter 1:19-20
What is Salvation?

states that we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake." God knew, before the world was created, how things would go. He knew man would lose the beautiful Garden even before it happened, and so, He planned to restore the broken relationship.

The story of Salvation begins at the beginning of time, in the Garden of Eden, back before the curtain of sin had rung down on the fairest scene this world has ever known. Senator Taylor of Tennessee once painted a beautiful word-picture of the Garden of Eden. We are apt to forget the glories and the grandeur of this home where God placed our first parents. Senator Taylor wrote, describing the Garden of Eden: "It glowed with ineffable beauty, rimmed about with blue mountains, from whose moss-covered peaks, a thousand glassy streams spread out ten-thousand bridal veils, catching a thousand rain-bows from the sun, gorgeous in their coloring. Grapevines staggered from tree to tree, drunk with the nectar of their own clusters. Where peach, plum and blood-red cherries, bending bough and bush, hung like drops of rubies and pearls. A wilderness of flowers . . . spring pulsing with bird song . . . dappled fawns played upon banks of violets, leopards, peaceful and tame, lounged in the copse of magnolia and lions panted in jungles of roses. A billowy landscape, festooned with tangled creepers and curtained about with sweet-scented groves of oranges and pomegranates. The air softened by a dreamy haze of perpetual springtime. Through the midst there flowed a truculent river, alternating, gleaming in the sunshine and darkening in the shadows."

There are those who hold that our world evolved from a chance beginning over millions of years. This "Atheistic" theory, violates the first basic assumption, that GOD IS! It is one of Satan's attempts to get man to rebel against the claims of God, IS THE BIBLE TRUE? There are those who, because they cannot understand how God created the world, attempt to try to live comfortable with a "foot-on-each-side" of the CREATION-EVOLUTION issue.

The Bible is NOT a science book, it's intention is not to enlighten us on points of science, but, rather its purpose is to tell us of Redemption.

Why speak of evolution here?

Because, the story of Adam and Eve is crucial to the reasonable- ness and the power of God's plan of salvation. The story of Creation has everything to do with Salvation. 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 states, "For since death came through a man, [that is, through Adam] the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man [through Jesus Christ]. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

Someone may ask, "Why am I to blame for Adam's sin? Romans 5:12 gives the answer, "Just as sin entered the world through one man, [Adam] and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned!" Romans 3:23 adds to this when it states, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

God created man different from any other creature He had created, He endowed man with goodness, intelligence, conscience and a will.

Did sin originate with God?

To understand the answer to that question, we must know that Satan is a Person.
What is Salvation?

Matthew 4:1-11 makes this very clear when Jesus was tempted of the Devil. Jesus said in John 8:44, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." The Devil is a very real Satanic Person!

Because Adam sinned, all mankind is born under a spiritual, moral, handicap. Adam brought the penalty of sin into the basic nature of man when he disobeyed God, however, through Christ, the Second Adam, salvation is the remedy for the complete "SINFUL NATURE" of man. God made man that he might bring glory to God. Man was God's crowning creature, with a perfect body, soul and spirit. Man possessed, what no other creature possessed, reason and moral awareness. However, all of this was marred by the blot of sin.

Someone asks, "What if man had never sinned?" However, that is only speculation and we must live with reality! Who is to blame? Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the snake, and on and on it went.

The story of Satan is very real. Ezekiel 28:12-15, and Isaiah 14:12-14, tell the story of Satan's fall from God's grace long before man was ever created. Why didn't God just destroy the Devil? God, certainly, never lost control. Psalm 76:10 teaches, "God makes even the wrath of men to praise Him." God turned the rebellion of Satan to His own purpose, to prove the voluntary love, and obedience, of His children.

Satan fell from his perfect state in Heaven and became God's adversary, the deceiver of mankind. The story of the fall of man, is known by all, and Scripture teaches that the result of that fall was that man became "depraved . . . bad . . . corrupt . . . debased!" Man was deeply effected, physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually.

God's Word teaches that when man sin:
1. Man died (Romans 5:5-14) He died spiritually, and began to die physically. Careful study of Romans 5:5-14 shows this to be true.
2. Man's character was corrupted. Romans 3:11 states, "There is none that seeketh after God."
3. Creation cursed and man lost dominion - Romans 8:18-25.
4. Man's sin brought about Christ's death. - Romans 8:1-8 (Romans 8:3, "God condemned the sin of men and the condemnation took place in the flesh of Jesus")

WHAT WAS THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN?

Romans 3:23 states, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The relationship which God intended to exist between Himself and man, was shattered by inner discord and outward conflict. Removal of these spiritual, moral, handicaps is what Salvation is all about.

SIN IS UGLY

Satan disguises sin to be something that it isn't, but sin is rebellion against God. Sin is "Failure to hit the mark," it is failure to listen when God speaks; it is going beyond a permitted boundary, and it causing one to stumble and fall down.
What is Salvation?

TWO ILLUSTRATION IN SCRIPTURE

Hosea, in the Old Testament, wanted his wife, Gomar to return to him, not for what she could do for him, but, because he loved her and wanted her love in return. The Hebrews have a word which is translated as "leal love," or total, complete, love. That's what Hosea wanted from Gomer. That's what God wants from us . . . true love!

In the story which Jesus gives of the Prodigal and the Elder son, the Elder son rejected his father's love ever bit as much as the Prodigal son. The only difference is that the Elder son stayed home and the Prodigal son left. The point of Jesus' parable is that the Father wanted the love of both sons, the one at home, and the one away from home.

What does God want for man?

The answer is in the beautiful, original, creation where God placed our first parents. Like untreated sewage, flowing into a beautiful fresh water lake, ugly sin, belching contamination, ruined God's plan for man. Satan is like a vicious vandal deliberately pushing a beautiful lamp off a table onto the floor, where it is smashed into thousands of pieces.

Some think that Salvation is God taking something like Elmer's glue, sweeping up the shattered fragments of His original creation and gluing the pieces back together again. But, a repaired lamp is never as good as the original and, that is not what God does at Salvation. God is not like a frustrated adult, running around after Satan picking up pieces and salvaging whatever He can. No! God uses the "wrath of Satan" to bring praise to His Name (Psalm 76:10).

The "New Creation," produced by God's plan of salvation, is better than the original was in its perfect state. A child of God is redeemed and filled with the grace and love of Christ.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, "How Do I Love Thee? - Let me count the ways." Could love ever face a greater challenge than when God faced man's fall into sin? Man, deserving nothing good, let alone LOVE, was loved by God. God is Love, therefore, He could not leave man alone.

LOVE FOUND A WAY!

God found a way in the Garden of Eden. God said, "I will put enmity between you... [Satan]...and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he...[her offspring, Jesus Christ] ...will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15), that is, God would allow Satan to injure the seed of woman, Jesus Christ, but, in the possess, Jesus Christ would destroy Satan!

John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

God will not force salvation on anyone. God gave man a will. Man's "choice" (his will) does not save him, but, rather, it can allow God to do so.

WHY DID THE PLAN OF SALVATION INCLUDE A SACRIFICE?

Hebrews 9:22 answers, "The law requires that everything be cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." And, Leviticus 17:11 states, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar it
is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

Why God choose blood to give life to man I do not know, but Scripture plainly states that He did. The reason all the sacrifices of the animals of the Old Testament were required by God was because they were all pictures of Jesus Christ dying, shedding His blood, for mankind.

John the Baptist cried out, when he saw Jesus Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" (John 1:29) Hebrews 10:10 states, "Jesus, perfect sacrifice, offered ONCE for all!"

The death of Jesus Christ is the central event (doctrine) of the Christian faith "Christ died for our sins!" Christ's death is indispensable to the Christian faith.

The Christian faith has four cardinal doctrines, three of which are meaningless without this first cardinal doctrine, Christ died for our sins.

When Adam sinned, it broke the communion between God and man. As a result, there was an obstacle between God and man, that must be removed. Only God could do that. What way did God choose to remove the barrier between Himself and man? God choose to send His Son to carry the sin penalty man should have paid. Christ died! The death of Christ brings an inward miracle, however, the great miracle on which Christianity rests is THE RESURRECTION of Jesus Christ.

When the validity of Christ's resurrection is accepted, all miracles of Bible become believable. Every Christian's faith stands, or falls, on the central miracle of Christ's resurrection. Evidences of Christ's resurrection are well established. We have God's sacred Word, the empty Tomb, the testimony of disciples, who saw Jesus after He rose from the dead. The evidence is sure. The RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST proved Jesus was all He claimed to be. "Salvation:" means, "to be set free from sin and all of its penalty.

THERE ARE THREE WORDS IN THE BIBLE, PERTAINING TO SALVATION, WHICH MANY FIND HARD TO UNDERSTAND.

First, REGENERATION

Scripture tells us that sinful man is "dead in his trespasses and sin." He needs a new life At the moment of salvation, this "new, spiritual, life, is imparted by the Divine act of regeneration."

Regeneration is not gaining knowledge, nor moral improvement, it is not baptism or joining a church. Regeneration is A COMPLETE CHANGE, it is trading in an old life for a new one! "Born-again" is the regeneration aspect of Salvation. Regeneration is a new birth, a change wrought by the Holy Spirit, by which one becomes a "New Creature" in Christ Jesus! 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" Old things are passed away, one becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Regeneration is NOT energizing the old life with new ability, and power, but, rather, it is being re-created by operation of the Holy Spirit.
What is Salvation?

Second Biblical word many fail to understand is the word **JUSTIFICATION**, which means "to acquit, or, to declare righteous"

What happens at the moment of Salvation? The guilty, repentant, sinner stands before God and receives a sentence of acquittal. God, the Righteous Judge, instead of condemnation, gives pardon.

"**Justification**" deals with man's relationship with God. It is NOT related to our personal righteousness. Justification does NOT cause one to be righteous . . . that is what **REGENERATION** does . . . **JUSTIFICATION** is God's declaration that we **are** righteous in spite of our sin (disobedience) that filled our lives before the supernatural miracle of God's grace.

**Sin must be judged!**

We come to the Great Judge and ask forgiveness, He says, *"I declare you to be righteous! Your past is forgiven, forgotten, and your relationship to Me is restored!"*

Think of it, all our guilt, condemnation, and separation is removed by an act of **JUSTIFICATION**!

Romans 8:33 states, "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies."

The third word that is difficult to understand is the Biblical word, **SANCTIFICATION**. "**Regeneration**" is when we receive a *New Nature* in Christ Jesus. "**Justification**" is when we receive a *New Standing - imputed righteousness*. "**Sanctification**" is when we receive the *New Spiritual life* of Christ in our character and conduct.

Justification is the aspect of salvation that stresses, *we have been declared righteous, and holy!* Sanctification is what **makes us holy**. It is the processes of becoming like Christ!

There is an aspect in sanctification which God does in us and, there is an aspect in sanctification **we must do for ourselves!**

**GOD'S WORK** is, we are placed *"in Christ"* by the work of the Holy Spirit, that is what **regeneration** and **justification** does for us. Most of the New Testament concerns Christian living. The foundation of such living is *"in Christ."* 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 states, *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. In this text God appeals to the "carnal believer" to acknowledge indwelling Holy Spirit and to live as one purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ."

God's work in **SANCTIFICATION** is He imputes (*credits to the believer*) the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

**OUR PART** of the work of sanctification in our lives is given, in many places, but Romans 12:1 states, *"I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship."* This verse sums up
all Paul argued for in the whole book of Romans, "By the mercies of God, therefore, present your bodies a living sacrifice," offer yourself to God without any reservations.

**Holiness** results from the indwelling, living, Holy Spirit.

**SANCTIFICATION IS BOTH: INSTANTANEOUS & PROGRESSIVE**

The word "Sanctification" means: being set apart for God's use and possession.

The word "sanctification" also has the meaning of "purification," that is, washing inside and outside. The believer grows in holiness, his character grows more Christ-like through instruction in God's Word and the strength of the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Phillips translation states, "All of us who are Christians reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord." We are not looking into a mirror, we are the mirrors. God is looking into us. One translation states it this way, "We are transfigured in ever-increasing splendor into His image."

When you look into a mirror, you are not looking at the mirror, you are looking for the reflection of your own face.

Another illustration would be, if you placed a piece of iron in the presence of an electrified body, that piece of iron, actually, become electrified. It would be changed into a temporary magnet, as long as it was in the presence of a permanent magnet. As long as it remains side-by-side with the permanent attractive force, it remains a magnet!

There are, of course, other aspects of salvation, other than what we have studied here. Such as:

**ATONEMENT** - The state of being "at one" with Christ!

**ASSURANCE** - Certainly of being acceptance and forgiven

**RECONCILIATION** - Restoration of relationship between us and God

**REDEMPTION** - Deliverance from evil and bondage, through payment price Christ paid.

**REPENTANCE** - Godly sorrow for sin

What a thrill when we think of the great Love that reached down and lifted us out of sin, seated us in heavenly places with Jesus Christ!