

## THE BAPTIST VIEW OF SALVATION

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### INTRODUCTION

Salvation is a wonderful subject for the Christian to think about, for in doing so he contemplates the great grace and love of God as shown to man in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Christian also cannot think about salvation without realizing the greatness of his new position in relationship to God accomplished through God's redemptive act and work of grace and power in his heart.

In the writer's mind "The Baptist View of Salvation" is almost the same as saying "The Biblical View of Salvation." Baptist scholars claim to hold

a strong biblical view of this great doctrine and the writer believes this to be true. The writer bases his own view of salvation upon a background of fifty years in the life of Baptist churches and a theological education in two Southern Baptist seminaries.

To set the limits of the study to begin with, it should be noted that the purpose of the study is to set forth what the writer understands to be the generally accepted Baptist belief concerning the doctrine of salvation. The study will necessarily be condensed for the sake of publication in the book of these (*Chim Sin Ron Jib*). The author is indebted greatly to the contributions made by such great Baptist scholars as E.Y. Mullins, W.T. Conner, Hershel H. Hobbs, and Frank Stagg.

The writer does not intend to make a comparative study concerning the view of salvation as held by other denominations. However, to put the Baptist view in perspective, Dr. W.R. White's comments are worthy of quoting at this point.

Southern Baptists belong to the Calvinistic (elective grace) wing in their concept of salvation, but it is a modified Calvinism to which they hold. However, there are distinct points of departure from the other denominations of this classification. For instance, we stoutly maintain that the medium of personal faith is indispensable for each person. Children incapable of disbelief are incapable of belief, and are therefore wards of God's mercy.

Out Presbyterian friends and related groups believe in salvation through the electing grace of God, but substitute parental or proxy faith for the personal faith of children who are incapable of individual choice. On the other hand, there are those who are Arminian in theology (free will and works) who will not accept proxy faith, yet with whom we differ as to salvation by works.

Hence, Baptists are distinctive in their concept of salvation. They differ from both Arminians and Calvinists, even though they have an element in common

with each.<sup>1</sup>

In the progress of this study some of the statements relating to salvation in “The baptist Faith and Message”<sup>2</sup> will be quoted, but the discussion will not be limited to such. The study will deal with three main points, God’s provision of salvation, man’s reception of salvation, and the nature of salvation. The scriptural teaching that all men are sinners and separated from God and in need of salvation is a foregone conclusion.

## I. GOD’S PROVISION OF SALVATION

### 1. A Plan of the Ages

The Bible teaches that after the fall of man in the Garden of Eden God purposed to redeem fallen humanity (Gen. 3:15). The plan was made clearer and more concrete in the call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-2). This means that God has taken the initiative in saving mankind and this includes the doctrines of election and calling. These find ample support in the Scriptures.

“All that the Father gives me will come to me,” declared Jesus, and “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:37, 44). “You did not choose me,” Jesus told the Twelve, “but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide” (John 15:16). Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:4-5 that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and “destined us in

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<sup>1</sup>W.R. White, *Baptist Distinctives* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1946), p.19.

<sup>2</sup>“The Baptist Faith and Message” is based on The New Hampshire Confession of Faith and was adopted by Southern Baptists in 1925.

love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will." "In Romans 8:29, 30 Paul joins together God's foreknowledge, his foreordination, his calling, his justification, and his final glorification of the saints in a bond of spiritual unity and trades all back to the eternal purpose of God."<sup>3</sup> Other scriptures such as 2 Thess. 2:13 and 2 Tim. 1:8-9 support the idea that there is an election and effectual calling to salvation according to God's grace and sovereign will.

Baptists believe that the election to salvation by God and the reception of salvation by man are two sides of the same coin.

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which he regenerates, sanctifies and saves sinners. It is perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. It encourages the use of means in the highest degree.<sup>4</sup>

Conner suggests that God does not arbitrarily choose some for salvation and pass over others. But God foresees man and his total environment, takes into account all the factors related thereto, and out of his grace plans to save him. "Election means that, of his own free grace, God becomes redemptively immanent in the life of an individual sinner, and that he does so on purpose."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, God takes the initiative and plans, provides,

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<sup>3</sup>Edgar Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia; The Judson Press, 1917), p.343.

<sup>4</sup>"The Baptist Faith and Message," Article IX.

<sup>5</sup>W.T. Conner, *The Gospel of Redemption* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1945), p.61.

and effects salvation. "Salvation from beginning to end is God's work."<sup>6</sup> He cannot save those who refuse to accept his offer of salvation.

## 2. A Gift of Grace

Baptists strongly believe that God has provided salvation as a gift to sinful man because He is a God of love and grace. Salvation is a gift of God, free for the taking through faith in Him. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast"(Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation cannot be earned by good works or bought by any amount of offerings or sacrifices man can make. Jesus Christ is himself the one all-sufficient sacrifice for sin and it is through Him that God's grace comes to sinful man (cf. John 1:17).

The salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, through the mediatorial office of the son of God, who by the Holy Spirit was born of the Virgin Mary and took upon him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by his personal obedience and made atonement for our sins by his death.<sup>7</sup>

"Salvation roots in the grace of God," Stagg accurately says. "For bankrupt sinners with no ground of their own upon which to stand, with nothing of their own to hold up to God for his reward, it is their only hope; but it is their sufficient hope."<sup>8</sup>

## 3. An Act of Love

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.67.

<sup>7</sup>"The Baptist Faith and Message," part of Article IV.

<sup>8</sup>Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1962), p.80.

believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). “But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

These and many other Bible verses teach that God loves man and sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross to make man’s salvation possible. The penalty of man’s sin was paid by Jesus (2 Cor. 5:15, 18-21; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:24) through his death on the cross. This makes the crucifixion of Jesus an act central to the doctrine of salvation. This aspect of God’s provision for man’s salvation is known as the “atonement.” Christian theologians through the centuries have proposed various theories of the atonement to try to explain how Jesus’ death paid the ransom for man’s sin and brought reconciliation to God. However, Baptist scholars have found them far from satisfactory.<sup>9</sup>

Southern Baptists would probably agree that Hershel Hobbs more than any other one man in the latter part of this century has delineated Baptist beliefs. In his book, *What baptists Believe*, he discusses the atonement as follows:

In his atoning work Christ has made reconciliation possible. God made man for his fellowship, a fellowship broken by man’s sin. A holy God could not ignore man’s sin. A merciful, loving God could not ignore man’s plight in sin. In his incarnated being God was in Christ reconciling man to himself (2 Cor. 5:19-21).

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<sup>9</sup>W.T. Conner, *Redemption*, pp.97-112; Mullins, pp.306ff.; Hershel H. Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), pp.97ff.

<sup>10</sup>Hershel H. Hobbs, *What Baptists believe* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1964), pp.91-92.

In his life, death, and resurrection Jesus satisfied the demands of God's holiness. He overcame the power of sin. He was both "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). Through faith man receives this atonement as a gift of God's grace (Eph. 2:8).<sup>10</sup>

The work of Christ in behalf of man is not limited to his death on the cross, but it must also include his sinless life and his resurrection from the dead. Because Christ was without sin, He faced no penalty on his own, but instead He could be a perfect sacrifice for sin, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 2:29); Heb. 9:11-15, 28). Furthermore, the resurrection of Christ meant the complete defeat of sin, death, and the devil. It proves the claims of Christ and His authority to be an all-sufficient Saviour. His resurrection is the first-fruits of eternal life for those who believe in the atoning power of his death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23). The believer dies to sin by being crucified with Christ and he is raised to new life (spiritual and eternal) by being resurrected with Christ (Rom. 6:1-11).

#### **4. A Work of Power**

God purposes to save mankind according to the counsels of His will as He acts in grace. Out of love for lost humanity He gave His Son Jesus to take the sins of the world upon himself as He died on the cross. Now in order to effect salvation in the life of the individual, God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, must work in the human heart to bring about that change. So salvation involves all three persons of the Holy Trinity.

Lost mankind is separated from God and in a state of spiritual death due to trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-2). He needs to be regenerated, or born again (John 3:3). This is only possible through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in man's heart. "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit,"

Jesus said, "he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

The Holy Spirit produces the new birth. When man turns in faith to Jesus, by the mysterious process of regeneration he is born of the Spirit (John 3:5; cf. John 1:12). The Holy Spirit is the attending physician, and more, at the birth of every reborn soul. He also seals the believer unto redemption (2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14). He gives the assurance of salvation (1 John 5:4-12).<sup>11</sup>

Since salvation from start to finish is God's work, the Holy Spirit is active in the world to convict sinners of their lost condition and to convince them to receive Jesus as their Saviour. In fact, this is one of the crucial functions of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11). Apart from the power of the Holy Spirit drawing men to Jesus and entering the human heart to give new spiritual life, there can be no salvation. Man has to depend on the work of the Holy Spirit for salvation and this is a very important aspect in the Baptist view.

Regeneration or the new birth is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit, whereby we become partakers of the divine nature and a holy disposition is given, leading to the love and practice of righteousness. It is a work of God's free grace conditioned upon faith in Christ and made manifest by the fruit which we bring forth to the glory of God.<sup>12</sup>

## II. MAN'S RECEPTION OF SALVATION

God has fully and wonderfully provided a plan of salvation that is freely

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<sup>11</sup>Hershel H. Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), p.60.

<sup>12</sup>"The Baptist Faith and Message," Article VII.



available to all who hear the gospel message. But the acceptance of salvation, in the Baptist view, rests on an individual's decision of the will. It is expressed through the acts of repentance, faith, and confession and results in man's conversion.

## 1. Repentance and Faith

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby, being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contribution, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Saviour.<sup>13</sup>

That repentance and faith are conditions of salvation is a matter with strong biblical support. Jesus preached, "repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15). Paul told the Ephesian elders that his ministry had been one of "testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Peter also preached repentance (Acts 2:38) and faith (Acts 10:43; 1 Pet. 1:9) as prerequisites of salvation.

There are two Greek words in the New Testament for repentance. While one carries the idea of regret with an emotional element, the one commonly used to express the state of mind necessary for the forgiveness of sin is *metanoia* (*metanoeo*, verb). It means a change of mind or attitude.

While it may involve remorse or godly sorrow, its basic idea is a change in the direction of one's life (Acts 9:1-6). It involves a change of attitude toward God

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., Article VIII.

and sin: from hating God one comes to love him; from loving sin one comes to hate it.<sup>14</sup>

“Repentance is forsaking our thoughts and our ways and turning to God’s thoughts and God’s ways.”<sup>15</sup>

Repentance is followed by the exercise of faith. Repenting, one turns to God in faith as he trusts in Jesus for salvation. Faith involves intellect, for there must be something or someone in which to believe (2 Tim. 1:12). But intellectual belief is not enough. The devils believe and tremble (James 2:19). Faith also involves assent that Christ’s death does suffice for sin (Acts 2:36-41). Faith furthermore includes the volitional act of trust. Being convinced of the saving efficacy of Christ, the individual surrenders his soul to him (Rom. 1:16). The New Testament abounds in this truth. Paul, in Romans, declares salvation to be a matter of faith from beginning to end.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Confession

Baptists do not believe in secret discipleship (Matt. 10:32-33) and, therefore, they place a strong emphasis on public confession of faith in Jesus. They do not make it a condition of salvation, but an act of obedience and a testimony to a changed heart. Generally Baptists would agree with the statement of W.R. White that “repentance is initial but faith is terminal in salvation. . . . we conclude that the experience of salvation is realized at the point of faith—that faith which follows repentance.”<sup>17</sup>

However, Baptists do not deny the element of confession in salvation

<sup>14</sup>Hobbs, *Believe*, p.94.

<sup>16</sup>Hobbs, *Fundamentals*, p.105.

<sup>15</sup>White, p.23.

<sup>17</sup>White, p.24.

as stated by Paul in Romans 10:9-10:

If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.

According to Hobbs, confession spoken of here is more than saying mere words. "It involves the conviction that by his resurrection Jesus is Lord to such a degree that you will stake your life and soul on it."<sup>18</sup>

It is Baptist practice to urge repentant sinners to come forward in a church worship service to confess Christ as their Saviour and Lord and to ask for baptism. This action is seen as a prerequisite to baptism, and practically speaking, Baptists view it as an element in salvation. Theoretically, however, they separate confession from repentance and faith and usually see it only as one's testimony to Jesus. But the writer feels that in most Baptist churches this act of "confession" is not properly understood or practiced as a genuine element in the salvation experience. For this reason many have become church members without experiencing true salvation. They have been received on the basis of a pseudo-confession. Baptists should be encouraged to give proper attention to this aspect of salvation.

### III. THE NATURE OF SALVATION

The Baptist view of salvation regarding both God's part and man's part has been discussed briefly. It now remains to examine what salvation really is. Salvation is such a rich and full spiritual experience that Paul and others picture its meaning or nature in several ways. Various terms referring

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<sup>18</sup>Hobbs, *Believe*, p.96.

to salvation must be discussed if we are to get a full picture.

Baptist scholars understand salvation to have a threefold nature or to consist of three stages. Salvation is an instantaneous act, a continuing process, and a consummation.<sup>19</sup> There is a transaction that takes place to initiate the Christian life. God works to effect it, but He continues to work to sustain the Christian life. Salvation is not fully completed until a glorious consummation takes place in the future. "Salvation must be eschatological to be complete. It must be brought to finality. What God has begun he will complete unto the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:9)."<sup>20</sup>

Such terms as forgiveness of sin, redemption, regeneration, justification, reconciliation, and adoption refer to the act of salvation. The process is known as sanctification and the consummation is called glorification. The writer will discuss the nature of salvation with a study of these terms.

## 1. Forgiveness of Sin

"The first and fundamental thing in salvation is God's act in forgiving sin."<sup>21</sup> "Forgiveness" and "to forgive" occur mainly in the Gospels and the Book of Acts. The original meaning is to send forth or discharge, or to send away or let go. When used in connection with sin, the basic idea is "the removal of the barrier to reconciliation, the banishing of the sin. . . . In forgiveness the sins are sent away or dismissed; the person is drawn into a closer relationship."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Hobbs, *Fundamentals*, pp.102ff.; Conner, *Redemption*, pp.139ff., *The Faith of the New Testament*, pp.334-35.

<sup>20</sup>Conner, *Redemption*, p.144.

<sup>21</sup>Conner, *Faith*, p.127.

<sup>22</sup>Stagg, p.92.

Dr. Stagg goes on to say that forgiveness is necessary, it is possible, and it is right. It is a positive and creative act, not negative such as indulgence. Forgiveness is an act performed by God based on the atoning work of Christ on the cross and man's response of repentance and faith. (Acts 10:43).<sup>23</sup>

## 2. Redemption

One of the key ideas for salvation in Paul's writings is that of redemption, but Jesus expressed that very thought when he declared that "the Son of Man also came . . . to give his life a ransom for man" (Mark 12:45). The basic idea is release from bondage or deliverance from captivity. It is closely related to forgiveness of sin (Col. 1:13-14), but it has a wider meaning. "Redemption is deliverance from death and corruption (Rom. 8:21), from creaturely weakness and misery (Rom 7:24ff.), from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), and from the present evil age (Gal. 1:4)."<sup>24</sup>

Conner lists four points that are crucial to an understanding of redemption. (1) Sin is seen as involving bondage and this is vividly expressed in Romans 7. (2) Christ ransoms us from this captivity through the shedding of his blood (Eph. 1:7). (3) Paul makes redemption to include the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). (4) Redemption also means to Paul final deliverance from corruption and death, and God's Holy Spirit given to redeem man seals him unto the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30; Rom. 8:23).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp.92-95.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp.89-90.

<sup>25</sup>Conner, *Faith*, pp.343-45.

### 3. Regeneration, Eternal Life and Adoption

Salvation is spoken of as regeneration, or a new birth in the Scriptures. Jesus declared to Nicodemus that in order to see the Kingdom of God he must be born anew (John 3:3), a birth wrought by the Spirit of God (John 3:5). Paul saw the state of sinful man as one of spiritual death, but out of great love God “made us alive together with Christ” and gave us spiritual life (Eph. 2:5). Those who are in Christ are new creations (2 Cor. 5:17). Peter wrote, “By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3).

In regeneration the penitent believer receives a new nature. This involves a moral and spiritual renewal of the will, aim, and purpose of life. Through regeneration God imparts to us his nature. . . . Regeneration is an act of God, not of man (John 1:13).<sup>26</sup>

Believing in Jesus and becoming regenerated means receiving “eternal life,” a term often used by Jesus and found in John’s writings. It is a central idea with John and the term “eternal life” occurs about eighteen times in John’s Gospel along with many uses of the word “life” alone to mean the same thing. What is eternal life? It is a blessing of the new birth and is set over against abiding under the wrath of God (John 3:36) and perishing (John 3:16).<sup>27</sup> “And this is eternal life,” Jesus said in his prayer, “that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent” (John 17:3). “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life.” Jesus declared (John 5:24). John in his

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<sup>26</sup>Hobbs, *Believe*, pp.98-99.

<sup>27</sup>Conner, *Faith*, p.483.

First Epistle wrote: “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life” (1 John 5:11-12). Eternal life is received when one receives Jesus as Saviour. It is endless life, but much more. It “is best understood as qualitative, not quantitative, as the contrast to the ‘death’ or ‘destruction’ which is separation from God. Since eternal life is God’s own life, it is known only in knowing him.”<sup>28</sup>

Having been born of God’s Spirit and given His nature, we become sons of God. Paul speaks of this as “adoption” (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5), having as its background the common practice of adoption by the Romans. Adoption is something conferred by God’s free choice as an act of grace upon all true believers.<sup>29</sup> To the Christians at Rome, Paul wrote: “you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ . . .” (Rom. 8:15-17). “Adoption stresses the family relationship in salvation, the free grace by which one is adopted into God’s family, and the fact that one is not a child of God by nature.”<sup>30</sup>

#### 4. justification and Reconciliation

These two terms are both used by Paul to describe the new state of the believer in relation to God. They are blessed effects accompanying the salvation experience and almost equivalent to it. The doctrine of justification

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<sup>28</sup>Stagg, p.113; see Conner, *Faith*, pp.481-89.

<sup>29</sup>Stagg, pp.110-11.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p.110; cf. Mullins, pp.401-09; Hobbs, *Believe*, p.100.

is developed and emphasized in the Epistle to the Romans (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-31; chaps. 5 and 8). Hobbs defines justification as follows; "This is the judicial act of God whereby he declares the sinner righteous as though he had never sinned, removes the condemnation of sin, and restores him to divine favor."<sup>31</sup>

The Baptist view of justification is stated as follows:

Justification in god's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of righteousness of all sinners who believe in Christ. This blessing is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but through the redemption that is in and through Jesus Christ. It brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other needed blessing.<sup>32</sup>

Reconciliation means practically the same thing as justification. In Romans 5:9-10 the two terms are used synonymously to refer to the same experience.<sup>33</sup> It refers to the act of bringing about a proper relationship between a holy God and sinful man and restoring peace. The four great passages in Paul's letters concerning this doctrine are 2 Cor. 5:18-20, Rom. 5:10-11, Eph. 2:6, and Col. 1:20-22.

Reconciliation is God's work of overcoming the estrangements bound up with man's sin. Just as sin involves man in a dual estrangement, from God and from his fellow man, so reconciliation is God's work in bringing man into proper relationship with himself and with his fellow man.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Hobbs, *Fundamentals*, p.106.

<sup>32</sup>"The Baptist Faith and Message," Article A.

<sup>33</sup>Conner, *Redemption*, p.180.

<sup>34</sup>Stagg, p.102; see Conner, *Redemption*, pp.180-81; *Faith*, pp.336-39.



## 5. Sanctification

The doctrine of sanctification refers to the present tense or continuing experience of salvation. The Scriptural basis for this is the statement in Eph. 2:8 that “you have been saved” (a perfect passive form of the verb which indicates that the action of the past continues to the present) and in 1 Cor. 1:18 where Paul says that we are “being saved.”<sup>35</sup> The encouragement to the Philippian Christians to “work out your own salvation” (Phil. 2:12) means for them to develop virtues and a life-style worthy of saved lives.

The statement of the Baptist view is as follows:

Sanctification is the process by which the regenerate gradually attain to moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts. It continues throughout the earthly life, and is accomplished by the use of all the ordinary means of grace, and particularly by the Word of God.<sup>36</sup>

In *What baptists Believe*, Hobbs writes:

Sanctification is the realization of god's will for one's life (1 Thess. 4:3-4; cf. 1 cor. 1:30). It begins with a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. At that moment the Christian is sanctified in that he is dedicated to God and his service. . . . Thereafter, through the Holy Spirit the Christian progressively grows in grace, knowledge, and service of and for Christ (2 Peter 3:18)<sup>37</sup>

Baptists do not believe that salvation involves any state of “sinless

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<sup>35</sup>Conner, *Redemption*, pp.141-42.

<sup>36</sup>“The Baptist Faith and Message,” Article X.

<sup>37</sup>Hobbs, *Believe*, p.102; see Conner, *Faith*, pp.340-43, who states that sanctification to Paul was an act and not a process.

perfection” on the part of believers in the world. However, they do believe the Scriptures which teach that all of God’s people are “saints” (those set apart for God, holy ones; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Rom. 1:7) and that they are to live pure and holy lives (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2:9). It is in this sense that salvation is viewed as having continuing significance.

## 6. Glorification

“The term ‘glorification’ refers to the ultimate and complete salvation which shall be realized in heaven.”<sup>38</sup> When man receives Christ by faith at a point in time, he is saved and given eternal life. But salvation encompasses the future and looks forward to a consummation. Paul speaks of this in Romans 8: “we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved” (vv. 23-24). As children of God we shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, sharing His glory in heaven (Rom. 8:17; Rev. 5:5-14; chaps. 20 and 21).

Although salvation in its Biblical meaning involves the future aspect, many denominations do not teach assurance of salvation like Baptists. The Baptist view is “once saved, always saved,” and based on the Word of God and his expression of faith in Jesus, the believer can know that he has eternal life.

This doctrine of “the security of the believer” is usually called “the perseverance of the saints” and is considered a Baptist distinctive. The basis for this doctrine is the nature of the salvation experience. It is a new birth into the family of God and the believer receives eternal life (John 3:16,

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<sup>38</sup>Hobbs, *Believe*, p.105.

36; 5:24). If it is eternal, it cannot cease, but it lasts forever. Peter confidently testified that “we have been born anew to a living hope . . . and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

The gift of God’s Spirit to the believer is also a guarantee of salvation. It is through the Spirit that we can call God “Father,” “the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). Paul spoke of believers being “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance,” meaning that the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the downpayment or assurance that spiritual inheritance will be fully realized (Eph. 1:13-14).

From the very mouth of Jesus have come some of the most assuring words concerning the security of the believer. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28).

“On the human side this is known as the perseverance of the saints. On God’s side it is called divine preservation. Saints persevere, and God preserves.”<sup>39</sup> Eternal salvation is based on the complete work of God’s power and grace. Man’s faith that is genuine and sufficient to bring to salvation in the beginning is a faith that endures unto the end. This does not mean that true believers will never sin again, but sin will not be their life-style (1 John 1:6-10) and they are cleansed and forgiven as they confess their sins to God.

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<sup>39</sup>J. Clyde Turner, *These Things We Believe* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1956), p.85.

The statement of the Baptist view in the revised “Baptist Faith and Message” adopted in 1963 reads as follows under the topic, “God’s Purpose of Grace:

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the cause of Christ, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.<sup>40</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The writer has attempted as best he could within the limits stated to present the Baptist view of salvation. The study was based on the accepted statements about salvation in “The Baptist Faith and Message,”<sup>41</sup> the writings of Baptist scholars on the subject, and the teachings of the Scriptures as a foundation. It is to be noted that the doctrine of salvation is central to Baptists and a proper understanding of it crucial to the health and life of the church. Let all who claim to be Baptists understand Baptist distinctives related to the doctrine of salvation. Grace is a key-word and Jesus is “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).

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<sup>40</sup>Hobbs, *Believe*, p.103.

<sup>41</sup>Almost one-third (eight) of the twenty-five Articles in “The Baptist Faith and Message” (1925) deal directly with Baptist belief about salvation.

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