

CHAPTER 6: THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (SOTERIOLOGY)

I. Introduction

Salvation is the central theme of the Bible and the Christian faith. The doctrine of salvation addresses humanity's deepest need: redemption from sin and reconciliation to God. The Holy Christian Church International (THCCI) upholds the gospel of salvation as revealed through Scripture, shaped by the teachings of the church fathers, and rooted in the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition, affirming that salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone. It is a gift of God's grace, available to all who believe, receive, and follow Christ.

THCCI Statement of Faith: "We believe that salvation is a gift of God, given by His grace, and received by faith alone. Salvation is made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring the sinner to repentance, faith, and new life."

II. The Need for Salvation (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3)

A. The Universality of Sin (Romans 3:23)

Scripture is clear that all human beings are in need of salvation because of the universal reality of sin. In Romans 3:23, Paul states: *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* This condemnation is universal and applies to both Jews and Gentiles alike. Sin is not just a matter of isolated acts but a deep corruption of human nature, resulting in a separation from God.

The apostle Paul expands this in Ephesians 2:1-3, describing the lost state of humanity: *"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world..."* Sin brings spiritual death, and it is through this state of deadness that salvation must occur.

B. The Consequence of Sin (Romans 6:23)

Romans 6:23 highlights the grim reality that *"the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* The consequence of sin is eternal separation from God—death, both physical and spiritual. This makes the need for salvation urgent, for only through Christ can this penalty be satisfied.

III. The Provision of Salvation (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

A. God's Love and Christ's Atoning Work (John 3:16)

Salvation is not initiated by humanity but is an act of God's immense love. *"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"* (John 3:16). The provision of salvation through the sacrificial death of Christ demonstrates God's love for fallen humanity. This act of grace is central to the Christian faith.

B. Christ's Atonement (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

Romans 5:8 emphasizes that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us: *"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* This death is understood as atonement for sin, a vicarious sacrifice on behalf of humanity. In 2

Corinthians 5:21, Paul states that *"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."* Christ's atonement is the means by which God reconciles sinners to Himself, bearing the penalty of sin and offering forgiveness and new life.

IV. The Process of Salvation

A. Regeneration (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5)

Regeneration, also known as being "born again," is the first step in the process of salvation. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who imparts new spiritual life to the believer. Jesus explains in John 3:3-8 that unless a person is born of the Spirit, they cannot enter the kingdom of God. In Titus 3:5, Paul speaks of the "washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." Regeneration is essential for a person to be saved, for it enables the sinner to respond to God in faith.

B. Justification (Romans 3:24-26; Ephesians 2:8-9)

Justification is the legal declaration by God that the believer is righteous in His sight, based not on the believer's works but on the merit of Christ's death and resurrection. Romans 3:24-26 states, *"and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."* Justification is a gift of grace, received by faith alone, and not by works. Ephesians 2:8-9 further clarifies that salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, so no one can boast.

C. Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3; 1 Peter 1:2)

Sanctification is the process of becoming more like Christ and growing in holiness after justification. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, *"It is God's will that you should be sanctified..."* This is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, empowering them to live a life pleasing to God.

D. Glorification (Romans 8:30; 1 Corinthians 15:52-54)

Glorification is the final step in the process of salvation, where believers are fully transformed into the likeness of Christ and are given glorified bodies. Romans 8:30 declares, *"Those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified."* This is the ultimate hope of the Christian—the final redemption of the body and the complete removal of the presence of sin.

V. The Role of Faith and Grace in Salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 16:31)

A. Faith as the Means of Receiving Salvation (Acts 16:31)

Faith is the means by which we appropriate the salvation provided in Christ. In Acts 16:31, the apostle Paul tells the Philippian jailer, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."* Faith is the act of trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ, relying upon Him alone for salvation.

B. Grace as the Source of Salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Salvation is entirely the work of God's grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 states that *"it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."* Grace is unmerited favor, a free gift that cannot be earned, but only received.

VI. The Wesleyan-Pentecostal View of Regeneration and the Second Work of Grace

A. Regeneration and Initial Faith (John 3:16; Acts 2:38)

Regeneration is the spiritual birth that precedes salvation. In the Wesleyan-Arminian view, regeneration is not merely an inward transformation but the initial impartation of the new birth that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. This faith is necessary before regeneration. The believer's response to the gospel in faith is the means through which the Holy Spirit regenerates the heart.

B. The Second Work of Grace (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 1:22)

Wesleyan and Pentecostal traditions emphasize that after regeneration, there is a subsequent work of grace known as the "baptism in the Holy Spirit." This is distinct from salvation and provides empowerment for holy living and service. Acts 1:8 records Jesus' promise: "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...*" Frank Macchia in *Baptized in the Spirit* emphasizes that this second experience empowers the believer for a life of holiness and effective ministry.

C. Pentecostal Scholarship and Faith's Role in Regeneration

Pentecostal scholars like J. Rodman Williams and Craig Keener argue that regeneration is not merely a doctrinal event but a dynamic encounter with the Spirit, bringing about real transformation. Williams, in *Renewal Theology*, explains that regeneration is a work of God's grace but that it involves the full participation of the believer's faith in responding to God's call.

VII. Conclusion: THCCI's Affirmation of Salvation

The Holy Christian Church International affirms that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. It is essential for every believer to experience the transformative power of salvation, responding in faith to the gospel, and living out the life of holiness and empowerment through the Holy Spirit.

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VIII. Questions for Further Discussion and Reflection

1. How does understanding salvation as a gift of grace shape our view of Christian life and ministry?
2. What role does faith play in receiving salvation? How does this compare with other theological perspectives?
3. Reflect on the process of sanctification. How can we, as believers, actively participate in God's work of sanctification in our lives?
4. In what ways does the baptism of the Holy Spirit empower believers for a life of holiness and service?

5. How does understanding salvation as a process (regeneration, justification, sanctification, glorification) affect our understanding of God's ultimate purpose for us?
6. How should we approach discussions about salvation with those of different theological perspectives, particularly with those who deny the need for regeneration or the second work of grace?