

The Five Phases of Salvation

When were you saved? This common question tries to pin eternal life down to some act at some point in time, but this is not right. The Bible teaches that salvation occurs in five distinct stages, or phases.

Salvation is a crucial subject in the Bible for us to understand. Even though the subject is so important for each person, there is still great controversy about how or when salvation occurs.

The Bible was given to make us wise about salvation (II Tim 3:15).

When were you saved? Is this Biblical? Did the apostles ever ask this question? How would they answer such a question? Were not we all saved at the cross?

Let's ask Paul the question.

Paul said he was saved before the world began (II Tim 1:9), when Jesus came into the world (I Tim 1:15), when the Spirit regenerated him (Titus 3:5), when he took heed to himself and the doctrine (I Tim 4:16), and would be saved sometime in the future (Rom 13:11).

Can you believe it? Paul clearly mentions five different stages or phases of salvation. And this is the key to understanding our wonderful salvation in Jesus Christ.

Since God saves sinners in stages, or phases, we must not limit salvation to just one idea or one event at one time. Paul saw his own salvation occurring in five phases.

It used to be called the *Ordo Salutis* of salvation, which means the order of salvation; but it is not studied or preached much any more. We live in the perilous times of the last days, when men no longer want sound doctrine preached to them (II Tim 3:1 – 4:4). They prefer fables over truth, so the true doctrine of salvation has been almost lost from the earth.

Everyone talks about “getting saved,” but no one can explain it from the Bible. There are “invitations” and “decisions” and “methods” for salvation, but none of these words or ideas is from the Bible.

Paul clearly taught five phases of salvation. Let us learn the five phases briefly, then study two charts with the Bible proofs and explanation. If you love understanding, you will love the charts.

The Five Phases of Salvation

The ETERNAL PHASE is God's plan and choice from eternity to allow sin into the world and to save His elect from it. Since He is eternal and sovereign, God planned in eternity all that He does in time. There are no surprises to God. He planned to allow sin, so that He could display His glorious grace in saving His elect from it and displaying His power and wrath on the rest.

The LEGAL PHASE is God's work to satisfy His holy nature and perfect justice for the salvation of His elect. Because every sin must be punished, He sent a Substitute to die for their sins. His perfect holiness and justice cannot overlook sins and acquit wicked men. He must punish their sins in Another, even Jesus Christ. And this He did at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago.

The VITAL PHASE is God's application of these benefits to us personally and individually. Though He planned to save us from eternity and legally did so with Christ's death on the cross, we still have a depraved and wicked nature at enmity with Him. So He regenerates us into a new life by His Spirit and gives us a new heart that loves Him and righteousness. This is being born again, and it is done entirely by the power of God sometime during our lives.

The PRACTICAL PHASE is our response to His salvation. He sends His Spirit into our hearts, and we cry "Abba, Father." With new hearts from regeneration, we seek the truth and love it when we hear it. We hear the gospel, and we believe it. We want to be baptized to show Him our love. We want to know more of what we can do to please Him, and we gratefully cherish all His promises, which give us comfort and peace now.

The FINAL PHASE is that great day in the future when we shall be declared the sons of God to the whole universe and enter heaven for eternity. Our bodies will be raised from graves and glorified into new spiritual bodies, and we will be thoroughly purged from all sin to be perfectly holy in His presence forever. This great conclusion to the plan of salvation is yet in the future.

With this brief explanation, look at [Chart #1](#), which divides the work of God into five phases. You will see that God operates in five phases, and even sin and condemnation occur in these five different stages. Please read the descriptions and see the many Bible proofs and explanations for these phases of salvation.

If you will study this chart and search the Scripture references to prove each phase, you will find an explanation and description of your salvation that will bless your heart. God has intended to save you from the very beginning, and He is faithfully working all the operations of grace to bring you to your predestinated end.

God has also chosen several different words to describe our salvation, like justification, sanctification, and adoption among others. By looking at [Chart #2](#), you will see that the various components of salvation are also easily understood by these five phases.

For example, sanctification means to be made holy for the use of God. We are sanctified, or made holy, in five stages. First, God chose us to be holy before the world began. Second, Jesus died to make us holy legally, or positionally. Third, the Spirit gives us a new holy nature that loves holiness. Fourth, we obey the gospel to live active holy lives. And fifth, we shall be made wholly holy, even with holy bodies, in the last day.

By reading chart #2 for the line called sanctification, you will know more about sanctification than 99% of Christians today. What should you do? Thank the Lord with your whole heart and live a holy life for Him.

Now, when someone asks you, “When were you saved?” you should ask him which phase he is asking about! You were saved before creation in God’s elective plan; you were saved at the cross in His legal provision; you were saved at an unknown time in your life by the Spirit’s regeneration; you were saved to knowledge and assurance of the truth by the gospel; and you will yet be saved at our Lord’s coming. Glory!

If you love this glorious plan of salvation, then it is your duty to find a church where this wonderful doctrine is taught, cherished, and obeyed; for the Father is seeking worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth.