

Foreword

The Simplicity of Salvation

When it comes to spiritual things, people often struggle to keep a biblical balance. The tendency to become biblically imbalanced generally originates from a partial knowledge of doctrine. These individuals have learned just enough scripture to see one side of the issue. But instead of going further and appreciating the greater truth, they stop and proclaim their knowledge to be already complete. This causes them to complicate things instead of realizing the beautiful simplicity of God’s true teaching.

The subject of personal salvation provides an excellent example of this phenomenon. On the one hand, there are those who see the truth of salvation by faith alone, but they do not ponder long enough to see the depth of the faith necessary for a true conversion. As a result, they create formulas and simple menus for salvation. *Pray this prayer; say these words. Did you mean it?—Then, you are saved; now thank God for saving you.* Some people who are led in such prayers are indeed saved by God, but their salvation is a result of the fact that they were already spiritually ready to trust in the Lord—not the result of some magic formula or prayer. Unfortunately, there are far too many who are led by such “soul-winning” methods into false conversions, and thus they are provided with a false hope.

Those on the opposite side of this imbalance issue see the error of those espousing the formulaic prayers and overlooking the depth of faith necessary for salvation. They realize that no one is saved by quoting formulas and signing salvation prayers. These individuals understand that people are saved via a true change in the heart. However, these people cannot

stop here. It is not enough for them to emphasize the importance of heart repentance and full faith in Jesus Christ. They claim that the requirements for dedicated discipleship are also requirements for salvation. Those on this side of the imbalance issue proclaim that one who seeks to be saved must be fully surrendered to the will of God; he must turn from every known sin; and in every way Christ must be Lord of his life. This approach requires the baby to be full-grown from the beginning and leans towards a works-based “salvation” doctrine.

Both of the above approaches are wrong because they elevate one side of God’s truth while ignoring another side. They see the elephant as the blind man feels him: as a trunk, or a leg, or a tail or an ear. But they do not see the elephant as a whole. They have stopped far short of full understanding.

Salvation is clearly by faith alone. When the Philippian jailer in the book of Acts asked what he must do to be saved, Paul replied, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*”¹ There is

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nothing to do in order to procure soul salvation but to believe on Jesus Christ. An understanding of this truth helps to avoid the error of requiring good works for salvation. Any action that men may require in addition to faith for the purpose of receiving salvation is an addition to God’s requirements. The prospective

convert does not have to quit his sins or fully surrender to God’s will. Salvation is by faith alone.

However, in order to avoid the other extreme, we must understand the fullness of this faith. Bible students of years gone by saw faith in three aspects. These three aspects of faith are easy to remember via the acronym: **KAT**. (**K** stands for *knowledge*; **A** for *assent*; and **T** for *trust*.) Saving faith requires all three components.

- **Knowledge** entails that a person understands the nature and basic meaning of the gospel. He must understand that Jesus Christ died on the cross for his sins, that He was buried and that He arose again the third day.²
- **Assent** means that the person must accept this gospel as true (not just know what it is) and accept that Jesus died personally to save him or herself. The person must see that the gospel is

¹ Acts 16:31

² 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

the sole solution for his own sinful condition and condemnation.

- **Trust** means that the person specifically places his or her trust in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for personal salvation. It is an act of faith to personally place one's faith in Jesus Christ.

I have used a very simple illustration to explain this step of faith that is called *trust*. As I am visiting with a family, I walk over to an empty chair. I ask them if they think that chair will hold me up. They usually agree that it would, and I tell them that I agree with them. I continue talking for a while about the chair's ability to support me, but I do not sit in the chair. Then I ask them how I could prove that I believe the chair would sustain my weight. They usually tell me that I need to sit in the chair. Only after sitting in the chair have I proven that I really believe that it will hold me. I have trusted in that chair.

The same concept is true of salvation. I can mentally agree that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins. I can say that I believe He *would* save me. But, until I trust in Him with my full heart for that salvation, I am just talking and thinking about it. Salvation is an act of the heart. It cannot be reduced to a formula. The formula may help someone understand what is happening, but there is always the danger that the person is trusting in the formula and not in the Lord Jesus. The soul-winner must avoid this at all costs.

This delicate balance of the doctrine of salvation can be seen in II Corinthians 1:12. In this verse, the grace of God works through the believer *"in simplicity and godly sincerity."*³ This is also how the

grace of God comes to the sinner for salvation. Both simplicity and sincerity are required for true salvation. Take away the simplicity of salvation and "salvation" becomes based on works. Take away the sincerity of the believer and "salvation"

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becomes based on a formula. **The seed of the word fell on good ground when the sinner came to the Saviour with "an honest and good heart."**⁴ **This wonderfully expresses the sincere heart of the true believer.**

³ II Corinthians 1:12

⁴ Luke 8:15

We are saved by believing in Jesus—nothing more and nothing less. This time of trust usually comes through an act of prayer. That person who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.⁵ However, the effective act of salvation is faith in Jesus Christ. Each person must come to the place where he or she quits looking at the chair and sits down with confidence, resting entirely in its strength.

You may still have many questions about the details of the doctrine of salvation. Answering those questions and giving you confidence in both how to be saved and how to know that you are saved is the purpose of this book. Your eternity is worth a careful reading of it. God has set out the chair. All you need to do is take a seat. Sit back, relax and enjoy the read!

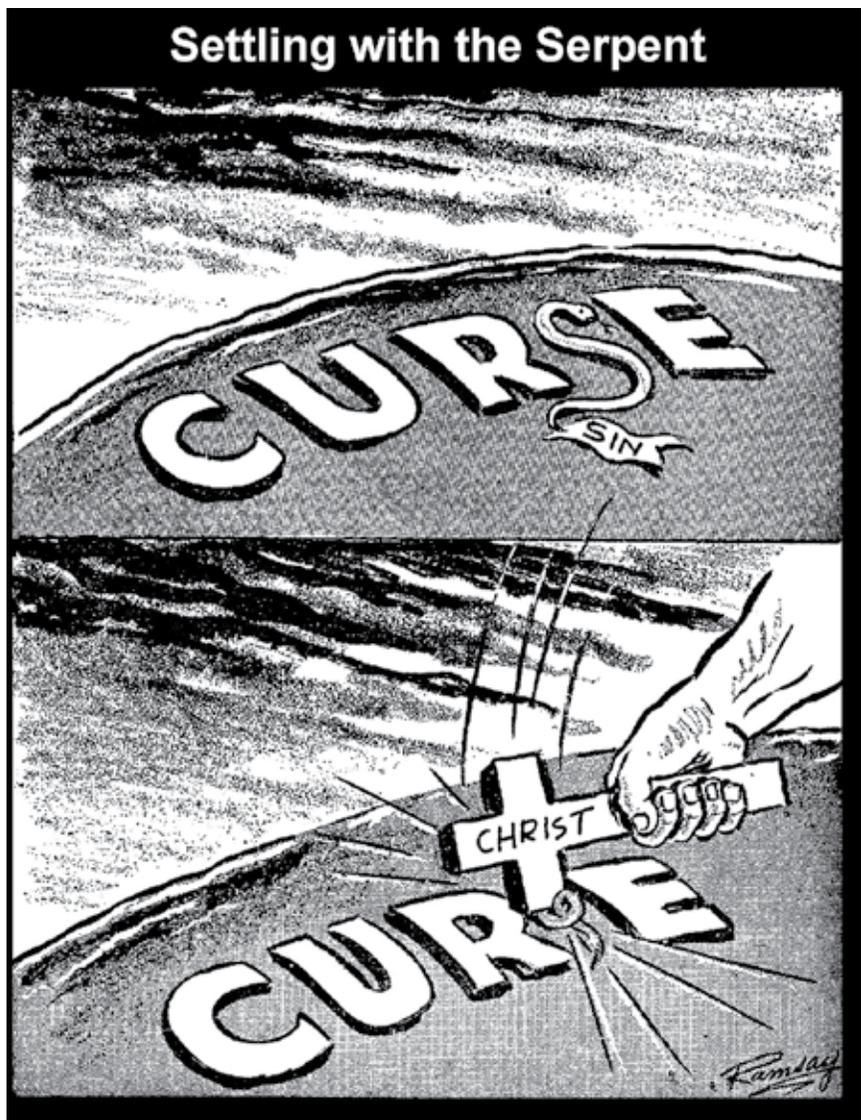
Dr. David Reagan
(1955—2007)
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⁵ Romans 10:13

Review Questions (Foreword)

- F-1. From where does a biblical imbalance generally originate? _____
- F-2. Those who understand salvation by faith alone must also consider the depth of faith necessary for salvation in order to avoid creating _____, resulting in _____ conversions.
- F-3. Those who require dedicated discipleship and a full surrender to the will of God prior to salvation are espousing a _____ - _____ “salvation” doctrine.
- F-4. What does the acronym KAT stand for?
- K _____
- A _____
- T _____
- F-5. According to Second Corinthians chapter one, both _____ and godly _____ are required for salvation.

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.⁶



⁶ Revelation 22:3-4