

The Work Of Christ

Systematic Theology

Pastor Keith Shorter

March 29, 2026

The Beautiful Complexity of Our Salvation

Have you ever opened up a utility box on the side of the road and been amazed at the tangle of hundreds of wires inside? Or watched a cable technician work on a telephone pole, revealing an intricate web of connections that somehow all work together? That's what the doctrine of salvation is like—seemingly simple on the surface, but when you begin to explore it, you discover a beautiful, complex tapestry of God's work on our behalf.

Old Testament Foundations: Deliverance and Faith

To understand salvation, we need to start where God started—in the Old Testament. Two key words appear throughout those ancient pages that set the stage for everything to come: salvation and faith.

In the Old Testament, salvation meant something specific: deliverance. It was freedom from what binds us or restricts us. When Israel groaned under the oppression of their enemies, God raised up judges—deliverers—to rescue them. The book of Judges tells us, "Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies" (Judges 2:18).

Sometimes this deliverance came through people like Gideon, whom God commissioned to "save Israel out of Midian's hand" (Judges 6:14). Other times, deliverance came directly from Yahweh Himself. David declared, "Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed" (Psalm 20:6), and "This poor man called and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34:6).

But here's what's crucial: this deliverance wasn't just freedom from trouble. It was deliverance to God Himself for a special purpose. God told Israel, "I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no Savior" (Isaiah 43:11).

The second foundational word is faith. Abraham stands as the towering example. Genesis 15:6 records the first specific reference to faith in God's promises in the entire Bible: "Abraham

believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Even in the Old Testament, faith led to righteousness. Faith in the one true God opened the doorway to experiencing His deliverance.

These two words—salvation and faith—are like seeds planted in the Old Testament that would bloom into their full meaning in the New Testament.

The Motives Behind Salvation

What motivated God to offer salvation? We instinctively answer, "Love!" And we're right—John 3:16 tells us God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. But there's another motive equally important: God's justice.

Romans 3:25-26 explains that God presented Jesus "as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice... so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

God's love wanted to save us. God's justice required that the penalty for sin be paid. Both motives converged at the cross.

Four Needs, Four Solutions

As sinners, we have four desperate needs that we could never meet ourselves. Understanding how Christ met these needs unlocks the mystery of how salvation actually works.

1. Substitutionary Atonement: He Died in Our Place

We deserve to die as the penalty for our sin. Christ's death wasn't merely an act of sympathy—it was an act of substitution. First Peter 3:18 declares, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."

Jesus came to give "his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). This is called penal substitution—Jesus bore the penalty for our sin when He died. He experienced what we deserved so we could receive what we didn't deserve.

2. Redemption: He Paid Our Price

We are in bondage to sin and Satan. Redemption means deliverance by paying a price. First Corinthians 6:19-20 reminds us, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price."

What was that price? First Peter 1:18-19 answers: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed... but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

An interesting question emerges: To whom was this ransom paid? Not to Satan—he doesn't have the power to make demands on God. Perhaps the most honest answer is simply this: the price was paid, and the result is that we have been redeemed from sin. That's enough to fill our hearts with gratitude.

3. Reconciliation: He Restored Our Relationship

We are separated from a holy God because of our sin. Second Corinthians 5:18-19 celebrates the solution: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ... God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."

The sin debt had to be paid to the Father so that reconciliation could happen. The broken relationship needed mending, and Christ was the bridge builder.

4. Propitiation: He Satisfied God's Wrath

We deserve to experience God's wrath against sin. Propitiation means a sacrifice that satisfies the righteous wrath of God. Romans 3:25 tells us "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood."

This is perhaps the most sobering truth: when Jesus died on the cross, He experienced the wrath of God for your sins and mine—for the sins of the whole world. Without that propitiation, we would all be destined for eternal punishment.

Faith Alone

Notice the phrase "through faith in his blood" appears repeatedly. This is where Christianity stands utterly unique. No other religion bases salvation on faith alone. If you think you can add anything to what Jesus has done, you're missing salvation entirely. It's through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

The Wonder of It All

Titus 3:4-7 provides a beautiful summary: "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit... so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

Every need you have to know God was met through the cross of Jesus Christ. Substitution. Redemption. Reconciliation. Propitiation. Four needs. Four solutions. One Savior.

When you reflect on what happened that Friday two thousand years ago, understand this: Jesus experienced the wrath of God so that you wouldn't have to. He died your death so you could live His life. That's the gospel—and it's excellent and profitable for everyone who believes.