

## Three Doctrines about Salvation

### **Introduction**

One of the most important topics – if not *the* most important topic – which is debated in Christian circles is the topic of “soteriology”. That topic discusses the subject of *salvation* - that is, the exact process by which a person is granted eternal life.

As with most other theological topics, there are many different beliefs about how, exactly, a person can be saved. However, from my experience, there are three *primary* belief systems about that subject – and those three beliefs will be discussed in this post.

### **The “Evangelical” Doctrine**

The “evangelical” belief system is (by far) the most *common* salvation belief, among mainstream Christian denominations. According to this belief, everyone has the opportunity to be saved, during this current age – due to the crucifixion of Jesus.

In other words, **each and every** person has the *ability* to be saved, right now – all that is required is that any given person decides to follow Jesus.

This belief system is extremely “human-centric”. In other words, since salvation is currently accessible to *everyone*, that means that the *entire* salvation decision rests with humans. In other words, God does not really enter the picture at all – instead, each person’s salvation (or condemnation) rests with *him*, alone.

So, for all intents and purposes, the “evangelical” doctrine states that salvation is *completely* determined by humans – i.e., God essentially has **nothing** to do with salvation.

### **The “Calvinistic” Doctrine**

A subset of Christian denominations subscribe to a more “Calvinistic” belief about salvation. This belief states that God, Himself, has already decided which people will be saved, and which people will be condemned.

Basically, before the earth even existed, God looked forward in time, and saw *every* human being who would *ever* be born. Then, God arbitrarily “divided up” those humans into two groups – the “saved” group, and the “condemned” group.

This belief system is extremely “God-centric”. In other words, in this belief system, God has **complete** control over any given person’s salvation – the person, himself, does not have **any** influence over his salvation *at all*.

In fact, in this belief system, the decision about whether you will be saved or not has already been made – that decision was made, by God, *millions* of years ago!

So, the “Calvinistic” doctrine states that salvation is *completely* determined by God – i.e., humans have absolutely **no control** over their own salvation.

### **The “Reciprocal” Doctrine**

A tiny minority of Christian groups have a “reciprocal” view of salvation. There are several different points to note about this doctrine. First of all, this doctrine states that it is necessary for God to explicitly “call” any given person, in order for that person to have any ability to be saved.

In other words, if God does not call a given person, then that person cannot be saved, at all.

In addition, this doctrine states that God is **not** calling everyone, during this **current** age. In other words, God, is only calling a *subset* of people, during the current age.

Finally, this doctrine states that if God *does* call a person, then it is incumbent upon that person to “respond” to God’s call. In other words, God’s call *allows* a person to be saved; but then the person, himself, needs to start *trying* to follow God and Jesus, if he wants to be *saved*.

So, according to this “reciprocal” doctrine, salvation is the result of “cooperation”, between God and humans. In other words, both God and humans are involved in the salvation process.

### **Which doctrine has the most Scriptural support?**

Of course, whenever any theological doctrine is discussed, it is necessary to determine *which* of the various beliefs holds the *greatest* claim to Scriptural truth. So, consider the following passages:

1. God’s “call” to salvation:

**John 6:44 (ESV):**

<sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

**John 6:65 (ESV):**

<sup>65</sup>And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

Both of the above verses indicate to me that God needs to explicitly “call” any given person – *before* that person will have *any* ability to be saved.

Next, consider these passages:

2. The sower:

**Matthew 13:18-19 (ESV):**

<sup>18</sup> “Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup>When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

**Luke 8:9-12 (ESV):**

<sup>9</sup>And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, <sup>10</sup>he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’

<sup>11</sup> Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup>The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

Both of the above passages indicate to me that knowledge about the kingdom of God is necessary for salvation – *and* that God is **NOT** revealing that knowledge to *everyone*, during this age!

Finally, consider these passages:

3. The “ifs” of Christianity:

**Colossians 21:1-23 (ESV):**

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup>he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

**1 Corinthians 15:1-2 (ESV):**

<sup>1</sup>Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup>and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you— unless you believed in vain.

**Hebrews 10:26-27 (ESV):**

<sup>26</sup>For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

All of the above passages indicate to me that God is *not* offering salvation to *everyone* during this age – and even if He *does* offer salvation to a given person, that person, himself, needs to “respond” to God’s call, in order to be saved.

**Conclusion**

From all of the above information, it appears to me that the “reciprocal” doctrine about salvation is the closest to the truth, among the three overall doctrines. If you would like more information, a study that goes into much more detail about this topic can be found at the following URL: [God’s Call to Salvation](#)