



THEOLOGICAL POSITIONS ON SALVATION

Four major theological views of salvation are held within the “Christian” community:

Roman

Theological Position: Salvation is by faith **plus** works

The Roman Catholic position requires faith plus works for a person to obtain salvation. *Justification is by faith, but not by faith alone.* Salvation is a merited reward.

Reformed

Theological Position: Salvation is by faith alone, **but** faith that works

Rejecting the Roman Catholic teaching, the Reformers of the sixteenth century broke from that tradition, understanding that salvation was by faith alone. To counter the Catholic claim that the Reformers were teaching antinomianism (lawlessness), and thus believers could live anyway they wanted, the Reformers began teaching that *justification is by faith alone, but not by faith that is alone*—meaning that works are a proof of one’s salvation. If a person has no works, then he has no salvation. However, in doing this they mixed the initial coming to faith with a subsequent walk of faith, thus confusing grace with works.

Arminian

Theological Position: Salvation is by faith alone, **but** salvation may be lost

This position also arose during the sixteenth century, teaching that salvation is indeed based on faith alone, but salvation can be lost by committing certain sins or through the lack of good works.

Free Grace

Theological Position: Salvation is by faith alone, **really alone**

The fourth view is the Free Grace position that salvation is by faith alone, really alone—making a clear distinction between coming to faith and walking by faith. Salvation is through faith (trust) in Jesus Christ. However, after that initial act of faith—coming to Christ—one is to walk by faith (in good works) in the Christian life. *Coming to faith* concerns a *relationship* with Christ; *walking by faith* relates to *fellowship* with Christ. No amount or any type of work by any person is a prerequisite for or sustainer of salvation; but once saved by faith alone, growing in fellowship with Christ is a lifelong journey in good works.

Conclusion

In the first three views works are essential for salvation—either a person needs works to gain salvation, or if he doesn’t have works, he shows that he was never saved, or he is now not saved, even though he once was. Each has a list of what is required to be saved or what keeps a person saved. The lists vary, even within those three viewpoints, and yet no one holding any one of those views can be absolutely sure he is saved! However, in the Free Grace view of salvation, works are not a means of obtaining, proving, keeping, or assuring salvation; rather, salvation is received simply and freely by faith alone in Jesus Christ. *Salvation is received freely, but intimacy in fellowship with Christ is costly.*

