Salvation by Grace

This handout is on Christian beliefs about how salvation works. You need to read this side of the handout but only read the other side if you have time. According to the **AQA specification** you need to know the following things:

‘Beliefs and teachings about:

• the means of salvation, including law, grace and Spirit.’

Key terms:

**faith** – belief (which here, implies you act on that belief)

**folklore religion** – the version of a religion believed in by many people, with lots of mistakes and mixed in with ideas that are from outside of that religion. (For example, folk Buddhism is usually mixed in with the religion of Daoism and ancestor worship which was not originally taught by Buddhism.)

**grace** – something good that you have not earned, e.g. a present or being forgiven for something bad that you did

**salvation** – being saved from hell/going to heaven

**scripture** – holy books/the Bible

In folklore Christianity people think that if you are good you go to heaven and if you are bad you go to hell. However, in terms of what *scripture* says, this is not the case. The Bible teaches that all people are sinners and *nobody* is good enough to go to heaven. Paul writes in Romans 3:23, ‘All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’. John, one of the Twelve Disciples writes, ‘If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.’ (1 John 1:8)

According to the Bible this means that **we cannot go to heaven and deserve hell**, unless our sinfulness is taken away. According to the New Testament, God loves the human race and does not want to condemn them so, he becomes a human being, Jesus, and dies on the cross to take our punishment on himself and offer forgiveness to all. Without this forgiveness we cannot enter heaven. ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.’ John 3:16

Therefore, the Christian scriptures teach:

1. Nobody is good enough to earn their way into heaven by good deeds because good deeds in God’s eyes cannot cancel out any bad deeds;
2. To be saved you need to have faith in Jesus and his death on the cross;
3. Salvation is by **grace**; a free gift from God.

This is sometimes remembered as:

God’s

Riches

At

Christ’s

Expense.

The means of salvation including law and the Spirit



In folklore Christianity it is believed that by obeying the biblical **law** you can get into heaven. However, this is the opposite of what the Bible says (see above by grace). All who break the biblical law in any point are unworthy of heaven. According to the Bible, everybody has broken the two greatest laws to love God and to love their neighbour as themselves. Therefore the law condemns. ‘The letter kills but the Spirit gives life.’ (Paul in 2 Corinthians) God’s Holy **Spirit** gives new life to believers who have repented of their sins and turned to receive Christ as their Lord. This new life is called ‘regeneration’; you become a new person. The Spirit gives a believer power to change and he intercedes (prays) with God the Father for the believers. The Spirit dwells within the hearts of believers and guides them towards God’s will and away from sin although, believers still do sin at times.

Examples:

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

**Jesus teaches in Luke 18:9**He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: **10**“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.**11**The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12**I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’**13**But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’**14**I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” [Exalted = lifted up]

### The Parable of the Prodigal Son [Father = God; older son = someone who thinks he’s a good person; younger son = someone who realises he’s a sinner]

**11**And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. **12**And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. **13**Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.**14**And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. **15**So he went and hired himself out to[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+15&version=ESVUK#fen-ESVUK-25595b)] one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. **16**And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

**17**“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! **18**I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. **19**I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ **20**And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. **21**And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ **22**But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. **23**And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. **24**For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

**25**“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. **26**And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. **27**And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ **28**But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, **29**but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. **30**But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ **31**And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. **32**It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”