

Modern Universalism in the Pentecostal Church Contrasting Views of Christ's Redemption

✿ Modern Day Universalism (A New Gospel of "Inclusion") ✿

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." — John 3:16 (New King James Version)

(NOTE: Understanding and believing this verse will solve many theological problems and questions.)

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I. The Origin of Universalism

There is a view in Christianity among some that states EVERYONE is already saved or will be saved by God at the time of the end and that no one will be lost (perish) to a Christless eternity. This view is called **Universalism**. The Universalism view seems to raise its theological head throughout the history of the Church. However, it is rather "new" to the traditional Pentecostal Church and its off-shoots. Therefore, it has confused some and angered others. But, it is **not biblical**, even though it is well-intended that its proponents wish for everyone to be saved. The Universalist teaching is not found in Scripture as a teaching of Jesus or the apostles, but it does trace its roots to the early church scholar and philosopher, Origen (c.185-254).

Note on Origen: Origen is the first Christian philosopher of note to propose and actively teach the theological Universalism notion. Origen tried to blend Greek philosophy and Christianity. He had many "interesting" beliefs and actions. (Like castrating himself so he could be more pure and "holy.") Origen even believed Satan was not beyond repentance and salvation, a view for which he was condemned.

II. Modern Day Attempts to Rename It – "Gospel of Inclusion"

Today, the Universalism doctrine is in the Pentecostal camp under its new name: the *Gospel of Inclusion*. Of course, this new name greatly helps the teaching become socially acceptable because, who would want to teach a "narrow" doctrine? The spirit of this age and the intellectual climate of our times says, "Let's *include* everyone!" and it is in this spirit that this doctrine has cloaked itself in modern, non-offensive, "politically correct" language. Some modern day Universalists don't even use biblical terms like "lost." They declare, "People aren't *lost*; they are just *uninformed*, or *unknowing*." Today, the proposed 21st century "new revelation" is declared as a "*newer emphasis on Grace and Love*." But, it's the same old doctrine the Bible-oriented Church has rejected for more than 1,800 years.

III. The Theology of Universalism - Its Various Forms

There are many forms of this teaching, but the central characteristic of all of them is that mankind IS now or will someday be SAVED (in heaven, in Christ, redeemed, reconciled). Generally, Universalists strongly disagree with the idea of God allowing people to be in hell and stress the love of God so strongly that they ignore His justice and His great abhorrence of sin and sinfulness.

1. The Universal Restoration Theory of Origen

Origen (I'd call him, the father of theological Universalism heresy in the Christian Church) believed all humanity will be saved, but many will have to spend a time in "hell" (hell functions as a *purgatory*) and then be purified and admitted to heaven. This is also called the *apokatastasis*. This word is the Greek word found in Acts 3:21, translated "restoration."

2. The Theory of Universal Reconciliation

According to the Universalists' view, Christ's death on the cross accomplished its purpose of reconciling all mankind to God. What separates humans from God is merely "in the mind." They say our salvation message should be, "*You are ALREADY saved!*" not "*You have the opportunity to be saved.*" This view says, humanity only needs to be told they are already saved so they can enjoy the blessings of the salvation they already have.

3. The Theory of Universal Pardon

In this view, God threatened to punish men forever, but in the end He will not do so, but forgive or "pardon" everyone. These teachers believe there is no need for personal faith because God will treat ALL as if they do have faith in Christ.

4. The Theory of God Automatically Saves the Unevangelized

This is the fourth and mildest form of Universalism. It states that God only sends persons to hell who actually have heard the Gospel and rejected Jesus Christ as Savior. This is, of course, a thorny challenge to the Church. However, the Scriptures teach that the Judge of the Earth will do right and that the secret things belong to God (Deuteronomy 29:29). Also, it seems as if Paul was urged to present Christ to the *lost* so that they can be saved and receive salvation. If they will be ultimately be saved, why go? And most Christian theologies believe in degrees of punishment in hell for those who will be judged according to their works (Revelation 20:12).

IV. Primary Scriptures Used to Support Universal Salvation (A Partial Scriptural View)

Romans 5:15-16, 18 (All Scriptures are from the New King James Version)

But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. (16) And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. (18) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

Romans 5:6-10

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.(7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. (8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. (10) For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, (19) that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

1 Timothy 4:9-10

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. (10) For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

1 John 2:2

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

V. A Clearer Scriptural View of New Testament Salvation: Key Scriptural Verses and New Testament Words on Salvation

THE KEY SCRIPTURE JOHN 3:16

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes** in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Other Scriptures

Five Groupings of Important Salvation Terms and the Scriptures: 1. Believe, Receive, Faith
2. Redemption, 3. Judgment, 4. Reconciliation, 5. Justification (Righteousness)

1. *Believe, Receive, Faith*

John 1:12

But as many as **received Him**, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who **believe** in His name:

The Universalist believes the verses above say Christ saves all (without necessity of belief). However, they are merely saying: Christ **HAS MADE HUMAN SALVATION POSSIBLE**. Individuals must still believe. Faith has been the requirement since the beginning.

NOTE: As a matter of fact, **without faith** (ESPECIALLY without faith in Christ, God's Son) it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God the Father. (Hebrews 11:6) This New Testament Greek Word, *adynatos* – translated as *impossible*, emphasizes three interrelated facts. That without FAITH:

1. It is **NOT Possible** to please God;
2. One is **Unable** to please God; and
3. One is **Powerless** in pleasing God.

Romans 4:3

For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Romans 4:9

Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that **faith** was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

Romans 5:15

But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to **many**. (That is to say, the gift of salvation is for “the many” who believed.)

Romans 5:19

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience **many** (literally, the many) will be made righteous. (Again, only for the many who believed.)

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been **saved through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

2. Redemption

Romans 3:24-25

being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (25) whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, **through faith**, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed

3. Judgment

Matthew 25:41

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ”

4. Reconciliation

Colossians 1:21-23

And you, who once were **alienated and enemies** in your mind by wicked works, yet **now He has reconciled** (22) in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight; (23) **if indeed you continue in the faith**, grounded and steadfast, **and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel** which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

5. Justification (Righteousness)

Romans 3:21-26

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (22) even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, **to all and on all who believe**. For there is no difference; (23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (25) whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, **through faith**, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, (26) to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of **the one who has faith in Jesus**.

Romans 5:17

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those **who receive** abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) (**Note: ONLY** for those who personally receive God's provision.)

Romans 5:9

Much more then, **having now been justified** by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Acts 3:19-21

Repent therefore and **be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing** may come from the presence of the Lord, (20) and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, (21) whom heaven must receive until the times of **restoration of all things**, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Times of Refreshing = the *personal subjective experience* of salvation
(God spiritually renewing the individual)

Times of Restoration = the **objective side** of salvation
(God literally renewing/restoring the heavens and Earth = New Heavens and New Earth)

Restoration here does not mean the salvation of all mankind, but rather the restoration of all things and all circumstances the Old Testament proclaimed. **It is the universal renewal of the Earth**. Yes, every knee shall bow (Philippians 2:10-11), and some in the obedience of faith, but yet many others in a submissive inner rebellion and hatred because they have been defeated by the Lord of lords.

This passage reveals the **chief error** of Universalism: not distinguishing between the OBJECTIVE redemption purchased by Christ on the cross and the SUBJECTIVE experience received by an act of faith. A scriptural view of salvation has **BOTH ELEMENTS**. The mere fact of Christ dying on the cross does not save me, but my faith in him brings this experience to me, and now I am redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 20:12

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

VI. A Quote from a Contemporary Christian Theologian

“God’s mercy has been shown to all humans, but only those who accept it will experience and profit from it. Indeed, Paul points out (e.g. in [Romans 11] vv. 7-10, 21-22) that some have rejected God’s mercy and, according, have not received his salvation. Thus, although salvation is universally available, it is not universal.” (emphasis mine)

Christian Theology, Millard J Erickson, Baker Book House, 1985, pages 1021-22.

[**Note:** This is an excellent evangelical theology, and highly recommended. There may be minor discussion points, but as an introduction to basic Christian Theology, it is hard to beat.]

VII. The Importance of a Proper View of the Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)

(Note: The theological term for the doctrine of salvation is: **Soteriology** – so-ter-ree-AH-low-gee.)

A correct view of the doctrine of salvation IS important because it lies at the very heart of the Christian Message and the Work of Christ. It is what the Church is all about. If people are ALREADY saved, then we must throw away many biblical terms like *sinner, lost, son of God, and Christian*.

Even the meaning of salvation in the Universalist view is changed to mean: *knowing something you are*, instead of: *becoming something you aren’t*. Other scriptural terms become so radically changed that they lose their salvic power. The Universalist’s message proclaiming, “*You are already a Christian!*” (redeemed by Christ), might still be quite *offensive* to a Jew, Muslim, Sexual Perversion and Abuse Religious Groups, any persons of other religions, or even to a Satanist or an atheist. Universalism seeks to solve the problem of people not accepting Christ by **forcing Christ on everyone** – whether they believe or not. However, it is because of our great care and concern for the lost that we as the Church of Christ declare and present the love of God as shown through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Universalism in any form, ancient or modern, is a feeble and spiritually impoverished attempt to help God out in His salvic purposes for humanity. It’s a devoted try and the motives are probably good, but it is still unbiblical and spiritually deceptive. It does not properly represent the judgment of God, the New Testament terms for salvation, the Savior Jesus Christ, or the role of belief in salvation as God’s requirement for receiving eternal life.

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A COMPARISON CHART OF SEVEN CONTRASTING STATEMENTS ABOUT BEING REDEEMED

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UNIVERSALISM	THE BIBLICAL VIEW
1. You are already saved.	1. Believe and you shall be saved.
2. You are already redeemed.	2. Redemption is available. Accept it or be lost.
3. Realize that you are saved.	3. Repent and Believe the Gospel.
4. Paul taught this.	4. It got its prominence with the philosopher and theologian, Origen in the 2nd century.
5. You are already reconciled to God.	5. Be reconciled to God.
6. This is a <i>newer emphasis</i> on Grace and Love.	6. It's the same old Universalism error. But, Jesus said, "Ye must be born again to enter into the kingdom of God."
7. It's a teaching of the modern apostle of faith, E.W. Kenyon.	7. Kenyon taught that righteousness belongs only to those who accept Christ. He taught that the objective work of Christ brings him "no sense of reality" until he accepts Christ. But, the <u>real</u> question is: What does the Bible teach?