

Two Popular Salvation Narratives

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The “Got Saved” Narrative (revivalist traditions)

- Born into sin and in need of salvation—viewed as “getting saved”
- Some believe “age of accountability” provides an umbrella of protection for an undetermined amount of time
- Growing awareness of one’s own sinfulness often accompanied by rebellion
- Dramatic conversion experience when one “gets saved”
- Baptism as a symbol of the “got saved” experience when one received salvation
- Communion as a memorial of the death of Jesus Christ
- Growth in holiness, but not necessary for salvation
- Assurance primarily based on one’s past “got saved” experience
- Salvation viewed as a commodity received at a one-time event in the past
- Debates about whether or not one can lose this commodity called salvation

The Sacramental Narrative (liturgical traditions)

- Born into sin and in need of salvation—viewed as a process of transformation
- Baptism as adoption by the Spirit into the church
- Growing in faith and learning to overcome sin
- Communion as spiritual nourishment and the strengthening of our union with Christ and one another
- Confirmation as a public and mature expression of one’s commitment to Christ and a receiving of strength from the Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop
- Assurance primarily based on one’s present and active faith as well as the trust that God will keep you in eternal life
- Salvation viewed more as a reality you enter into and continue to grow in

Theological Observations

- Both narratives stress the priority of God’s grace and the necessity of human faith, but each also emphasizes important differences.
- Both narratives have potential pitfalls. The “Got Saved” Narrative can collapse salvation into a one-time event, downplay the role of the church, turn salvation into a commodity, or deemphasize the importance of holiness. The Sacramental Narrative can become ritualistic, create false securities, and neglect evangelism.
- Some conversions are quite dramatic and occur at a distinct point in time while others are subtler and occur over a long period of time. Still, there are some people who have always believed and so never experience a conversion.
- While an individual’s experience of salvation can have a distinct starting point, the Bible speaks of salvation in all three tenses: you were saved; you are being saved; you will be saved.