

# [Four different views on salvation](https://assignbuster.com/four-different-views-on-salvation/)

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This paper looks at four different views experts have concluded of salvation. It talks about who will receive salvation and how we receive salvation. There are four different views of salvation and each view is represented in this paper. Douglas Giivett and Gary Phillips take on the hard restrictivist view, in that only those who have given their lives fully to Jesus will be saved. John Hick argues a pluralist view, in that all people will be saved if they believe in God. Clark Pinnok explains an inclusivist point of view that says that humans are saved through Christ alone accept through some exceptions.

Finally the soft restrictivist view explains that Christ is the only way to Heaven and that the Lord can reach those who have not yet been evangelized to. Given my research for this paper I will be agreeing with the soft restrictivists throughout this paper. Four Different Views on Salvation: Who and How do we Receive it? Salvation is living life eternally, that much can be agreed upon. Salvation itself is not much of an argument. The problem that I am researching is not ‘ is salvation out there?’

The problem lies when the question ‘ who does salvation reach? ’ is asked. Many people ask themselves the question ‘ who will live eternally in Heaven and what does salvation truly accomplish? ’ The pluralist view takes on the stance that Christianity is not the one and only salvific path, but that it is one among many others. They believe that the center of salvation is God, not Christ (Hick, 1995). The hard restrictivists believe the opposite. They say that salvation is only given because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Due to this belief, the very core of their viewpoint is that people get to Heaven through surrendering their lives to Christ, and becoming Christians (Geivett & Phillips, 1995). The inclusivist view says that God saves people through Christ alone; however, he makes this possible through ways that extend to all humanity. They flirt with the pluralist view in that other religions can be saved. However, the inclusivists do not believe this as strongly (Pinnock, 1995). A soft restrictivist says that those who respond in faith to the explicit preaching of the gospel will be saved but cannot conclude that only those will be saved (McGrath, 1995).

Many different approaches can be taken when tackling the issue of salvation. As a result of this lots of opinions have formed . I first became interested in the question of salvation in the third grade. I had two ‘ best’ friends, one a very strong, conservative Christian and the other an extremely nice, Jewish good girl. To me, both seemed to be great people and I did not see an issue in their two different religions. One day, however, a problem did occur. My Christian friend told my Jewish friend that she better believe in Jesus because right now if she died, she would be going to Hell.

This completely ruined their friendship and put me in a predicament; I hated confrontation and honestly did not know what to do. Ever since that day I have wondered how salvation works. I have gotten many different opinions but have never formed my own or researched it entirely. I chose this particular topic because this question really bothers me. Now that I have done the research and know more about salvation I mainly agree with the soft restrictivist view, meaning that I also dabble in agreement with the hard restrictivists and the inclusivists at times.

I rarely see eye to eye with the pluralists. Although I love their optimism, I cannot be certain that their view is correct. I do, however, acknowledge their thoughts and find them interesting, but in the end I believe they are false. My point of view is that of a soft restrictivist because it is the most realistic and truthful. Salvation is living life eternally and receiving salvation can be done through Christ alone. Salvation is universally attainable. Salvation is not restricted by human accomplishment. Salvation, in the end, is judged by God.

First we receive salvation through Christ alone. A pluralist, like John Hick (1995), would tend to disagree. His basic philosophy is that good people receive salvation. He thinks that Jesus Christ, although an extraordinary human being, is the son of God as we too are children of the Lord. He does not think that God could possibly be completely human while fully God. Hick says, “ The simplest possible model would be a divine mind in a human body. But this was not acceptable, because a being without a human mind would not count as a genuinely human being” (Hick, 1995, p. 56).

A pluralist does not believe that Jesus is the ticket to Heaven, but that His Father is. This is where I must disagree with John Hick and his pluralist view point. Jesus is the way; God sent His son to die for our sins so that we could live eternally. We, as sinners, needed Jesus, to die for us. On this point I agree with the hard restrictivists, such as Geivett and Phillips who said, “ God the Father ordained the death of his Son on the cross in order that life might come to those who fulfill a specific condition: belief in him” (Geivett & Phillips, 1995, p. 234).

The point is also reiterated in the Bible, for example John 3: 16 says, “ This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life” (The Message). Another example is in Romans 6: 23, “ But God’s gift is real life, eternal life, delivered by Jesus our master. ” Lastly, in John 14: 6, “ Jesus said, “ I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me. ” Jesus is the way to Heaven. I cannot doubt that.

The pluralists say that God is the only way to Heaven but that completely contradicts the Christian faith, it debates the very truth we stand on. God sent His son, Jesus, so that we may live. We receive salvation through Christ, alone. Second salvation is universally attainable. Many people want to take on the pluralist and inclusivist view simply because it seems harsh not to. We know that God loves and it seems unfair for Him to allow those who have not heard about Jesus to rot in Hell. They throw around phrases such as “ God wills that everyone be saved” and they have proof to back it up.

Paul wrote, “ God wanted everyone, not just Jews, to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out, regardless of their background, regardless of their religious standing. The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you, so therefore you can look forward to sharing in God’s glory” (Colossians 1: 26-29). God loves all of His children and wants everyone to be with Him someday in Heaven. On this point, I agree! The soft restrictivist point of view does too! McGrath, a soft restrictivst, says, “ Salvation is available universally.

The Christian proclamation of salvation is not bounded by any geographical, cultural, or social divide. One need not join a Christian denomination to receive God’s salvation” (McGrath, 1995, p. 176). Later, he goes on to say, “ In no way does Christianity declare that salvation is only a possibility for those inside its bounds” (McGrath, 1995, p. 176). Soft restrictivists do not deny that God desires all of His children and that everyone is invited to eternal life. However, both the inclusivists and the pluralists argue this point, when in fact they are agreeing with the soft restrictivists.

Salvation is universally attainable. Third salvation is not restricted by human accomplishment. An inclusivist, such as John Sanders, believes that the unevangelized should still be saved (Fackre, Gabriel, & Sanders, 1995). Hard restrictivists, like Geivett and Phillips (1995), say that all those who have not heard the Word will be damned. My response, the soft restrictivist response, stands somewhere between the two. I believe that salvation is not restricted by human accomplishment. Inclusivists argue that it is not fair for those who have not heard the Gospel to go unsaved.

I agree with this but I also believe that God does not rely on human success and failure to preach the gospel. “ Where the word is not or cannot be preached by human agents, God is not inhibited from bringing people to faith in him. Even if that act of hope and trust may lack the fully orbed character of an informed Christian faith” (McGrath, 1995, p. 179). When inclusivists claim unfairness in that Christians have not yet reached and preached to all parts of the world, they are forgetting and almost doubting the power of God. God has planned ahead; he knows before our failures, where we, as Christians, will and will not reach.

McGrath explains, “ Christians are asked to proclaim the good news of love of God for his people in the sure knowledge that there are no barriers of culture, race, language, gender or status to its acceptance. Yet we must never think that it is by preaching the gospel that we are somehow making salvation possible” (McGrath, 1995, p. 179). This thought that inclusivists proclaim, the unfairness of the damnation of the unevangelized, makes no sense. They speak as though the Holy Spirit is silenced. God’s saving work cannot be exclusively restricted to or dependent on human agencies.

Clearly, he is not dependent on us! McGrath says, “ Christians may have failed to make the good news available to all; this does not mean that God will fail in his intention to make salvation a universal possibility” (McGrath, 1995, p. 180). For example, McGrath explains, in an Islamic nation where preaching the gospel is punishable, many Muslims become Christians through dreams and visions in which they are addressed by the risen Christ (McGrath, 1995, p. 179). We should never believe that our creator depends on His creation; He knows what steps we will take before we take them.

Salvation is not restricted by human accomplishment. Lastly, salvation in the end is judged by God. Our human brains may never be able to fully comprehend the issue of salvation. We must ask the same rhetorical question that Abraham does, “ Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? ” (Genesis 18: 25). I look to God for the answers, not within my earthly brain. The soft restrictivist does take on this same train of thought. “ We may not fully understand the issues; nevertheless, we firmly believe that we may rely on the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness of God” (McGrath, 1995, 180).

I believe that we, as Christians, should go about our days as though those who have not surrendered their lives to Christ are not yet saved. I do not think, by any means, this means that we should take on a superior and judgmental view. I simply think that we need to spread the word as though people need to hear it. It is important for us not to look down on those who do not believe because we do not decide, God does. Like Geivett and Phillips (1995) explain though the particularist view, or hard and soft restrictivists view points, the exclusivist view is the most plausible.

If we, as Christians, spread the word and believe that Jesus Christ is the only path to salvation by taking on this ‘ exclusivist’ point of view, we are playing it safe. For if the pluralist point of view is correct than the pluralists, inclusivists, and exclusivists will still be saved. If it happens that the inclusivist point of view is in all actuality correct, then both the inclusivists and the exclusivists will be saved. If in the end the exclusivists were right, then only they will be saved. God has given us a mission as Christians to go forth and be disciples of the world.

He does not call us to judge, because in the end God is the judge. In conclusion, I am a soft restrictivist. Through the journey of researching I think that this viewpoint suits me best. I believe that Jesus Christ is the savior of the world. I know that His death forgives our sins and that by believing in Him we may receive eternal life. Although I love the optimism and even hope that it is true, based on my evidence I cannot fully agree with the thoughts of the pluralist. It is specifically stated throughout the Bible that Jesus is the way.

I cannot twist words to conclude that God is the way and that Jesus is simply an amazing being. I also believe that salvation is universally attainable because God does not discriminate. God does not care what race a person is, culture they are a part of, or geographical location they live in. He wills that all of His sons and daughters join Him in the afterlife someday. God wants each and every one of us! Like the Bible says, “ It is God’s wish that all people will be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2: 4).

We need to choose to accept Christ. However, God also chose to make each one of us, in the hopes that we would choose to reconcile with Him in the end. The question is then possessed, what about those who may have chosen to believe in Jesus Christ but were never reached by evangelists? I do not fully understand the question. Does God not know that these people will not be reached? Does the Creator of the universe rely on His creation? Does He, ultimately, depend on us? No! God wants us to go forth and preach the message but He does not need us to.

It is our job as Christians to go forth and make disciples of the world, but not because God is incapable of doing things himself! God is not restricted to and certainly not dependent on human beings. The last thing I believe with all my heart, in the end God is the judge. Regardless as to if I had been researching this topic for years or months, ultimately who does and does not receive salvation is not left to me. If it were, I would choose that everyone be saved. However, it is not up to me and that leaves me to take on the most evidently supported viewpoint with the little knowledge that can be comprehended in my human brain.

I may never be able to understand God’s exact plan for who is and is not saved; but if I believe in an exclusivist point of view, I will ultimately reach more people for fear that without reaching them they may not receive eternal life. My point of view is that of a soft restrictivist because it is the most realistic and truthful. Soft restrictivists and myself agree that salvation is living life eternally solely through Christ alone. Salvation is universally attainable. Salvation is not restricted by human accomplishment. Salvation, in the end, is judged by God.