

What the Bible Says About Salvation – Part 3

Randy Thompson
Valley Bible Church

Review / Introduction

Lesson 1

In our first discussion on the doctrine of salvation, we looked at some presuppositions for our study. We derive our theology from the Scriptures and not logic, therefore, we will adjust our thought processes to align with Scripture. We will strive to walk in the Spirit allowing the words of Christ to richly dwell within us so that we can ask the Spirit for illumination. And we apply a consistently normal or plain, literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic.

We generically defined salvation as the work of God whereby He saves individuals through Christ from the penalty, power, and one day the presence of sin. It is completely God's work and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Eph 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Pet 1:18-19).

Finally, we sought to understand the condition of all people apart from God's saving work. All people are sinners (Psa 51:5; Rom 3:23; Ecc 7:20) with a sin nature (Rom 5:12). They are wicked (Gen 6:5; Jer 17:9; Ecc 9:3; Mark 7:20-23), dead (Eph 2:1-3), blind (2 Cor 4:4), captive (2 Tim 2:24-26), darkness-loving (John 3:19-20), alienated-from and hostile-to-God (Col 1:21), sin-slaves (Rom 6:17-18; John 8:33) walking according to Satan's anti-God world system (1 John 2:15-16; 5:19; John 12:31; 16:11; 14:30; 17:15-16).

Theologians call this helplessness and hopelessness (Eph 2:12) due to the corruption of sin "Total Depravity" or "Total Corruption" or "Total Inability". Every aspect a person is tainted by sin leaving them completely unable to move towards God on their own. They are dead and dead people cannot make themselves alive. Sin has placed each person in a state of separation from God, destined for wrath, helplessness and hopelessness before Him. God, in His grace, must intervene. The solution for sin which separates people from God is salvation.

Lesson 2

In our second study we looked deeply at the atonement. The atonement is the work that Christ did in his death to pay the penalty for sin.

God's perfect, intrinsic, character moved Him out of love, holiness, and wrath and in justice to have the only One possible be the sacrifice for sin – Jesus.

The Scriptures clearly and consistently describe His sacrifice as a penal substitutionary atonement. The guilt of sin demanded the penalty of death and Christ was the vicarious sacrifice for that sin penalty. Christ's sacrifice was propitious – it satisfied the demands of God's holiness and wrath toward sin. Sin placed us in alienation from and enmity with God and Christ's death reconciled us to God. Christ's death was the ransom price to the Father to redeem us from slavery to sin and the Law. Sin, death, and Satan were defeated by the atonement.

Christ's sacrifice is of infinite worth but is only applied to the elect.

Today we will begin to look at the process of salvation.

The Steps in the Salvation Process

The following are the steps in the salvation process or ordo salutis (order of salvation). Some of these steps occur simultaneously but are ordered here for understanding. Steps 3, 4, and 5 occur essentially at the same time, but are broken out here to highlight those steps.

1. Election
2. The gospel call, draw, and the gift of saving faith
3. Conversion
- 4a. Regeneration
- 4b. Justification
- 4c. Forgiveness
- 4d. Adoption
- 4e. Baptizing
- 4f. Indwelling
- 4g. Sealing
- 4h. Bestowing spiritual gifts
- 4i. Sanctification
5. Perseverance (or preservation)
6. Death
7. Glorification

Remember our presupposition to “commit to derive our theology from the Scriptures and not logic. We will adjust our thought processes to align with Scripture.” This order does just that. In most orders of salvation by reformed theologians, “regeneration” comes before “conversion”. That is logic and not the Scriptures. We will look at that in future lessons.

Sovereignty

First some definitions...

God’s Sovereignty can be defined as God’s rule over His creation using His absolute power. All things are under His rule and control, and nothing happens without His direction or permission. He works all things (not just some things) after the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11) and for His maximum glory. His purpose is all inclusive and is never thwarted (Isa 46:11).

The decree of God refers to His sovereign purpose – His comprehensive plan that includes all events that will ever occur.

“The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.” (Isa 25:1; 46:11; Eph 1:11) (from the Westminster Shorter Confession)

God’s providential actions are the outworking of His eternal decrees.

All Scripture are from the NASB95 unless noted.

The Scriptures declare that God is sovereign:

²⁵Have you not heard? Long ago I did it; From ancient times I planned it Now I have brought it to pass, ... (2 Kings 19:25)

²I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. (Job 42:2)

³But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. (Psa 115:3)

²¹Many plans are in a man's heart, But the counsel of the LORD will stand. (Prov 19:21)

²⁴The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, (Isa 14:24)

⁹"Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; ¹¹Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it. (Isa 46:9-11)

¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, (Eph 1:11)

The Father sovereignly plans and brings about all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psa 145:8-9; 1 Cor 8:6). His plan was formed in eternity past (Eph 1:4, 2 Tim 1:9, 1 Pet 1:20) and is wise, perfect, and beyond our full comprehension (Rom 11:33-36, Psa 104:24, Prov 3:19).

God has decreed for His own maximum glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11) all things that come to pass (Dan 4:35; Eph 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chron 29:11). In His sovereignty, He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Hab 1:13; John 8:38-47). His sovereignty does not absolve people of their responsibility; people are still accountable (1 Pet 1:17).

God's plan encompasses His directive will (Isa 45:18, Dan 4:35, Dan 2:21, Eph 1:4) and His permissive will through which He brings things about through secondary means (such as the free will sinful acts of people).

God's decree includes the means to accomplish that decree. He is sovereign in all things yet uses various means to bring about that sovereign purpose. God has elected individuals for salvation, but He uses the preaching of the gospel to bring them to Himself (Acts 10).

The Sphere of God's Sovereignty

Over all things (Psa 103:19; Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11)

¹⁹The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all. (Psa 103:19)

Over all of nature (Psa 135:6-7; Jonah 1:4; Matt 8:26-27; 5:45; Amos 4:7-9)

⁶Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.

⁷He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind from His treasuries. (Psa 135:6-7)

Over physical laws (Ex 14:21-22; Josh 10:12-14; 2 Kings 6:5-6; Isa 38:7-8)

²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided.

²²The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. (Ex 14:21-22)

Over angels, Satan, and demons (Jude 6; Psa 103:20-21; 1 Chron 21:15; Job 1:12; 1Sam 16:14)

⁶And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, (Jude 6)

Over nations (Psa 33:10-11; 47:7-9; Dan 2:20-21)

¹⁰The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples.

¹¹The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation. (Psa 33:10-11)

Over human beings (1 Sam 2:6-7; Prov 21:1; Gal 1:15-16)

⁶The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. (1 Sam 2:6-7)

Over animals (Matt 17:27; 1 Kings 17:4-6; Jonah 1:17)

²⁷However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me.” (Matt 17:27)

Over “accidents” (Matt 10:29; Prov 16:33; Jonah 1:7)

²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. (Matt 10:29)

Over free acts of people (Ex 3:21; 12:35-36; Prov 16:9; Rom 9:18)

²¹I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. ... ³⁵Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; ³⁶and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. (Ex 3:21; 12:35-36)

Over sinful acts of people and Satan (2 Sam 24:1 with 1 Chron 21:1; Gen 45:5 with Gen 50:20; acts 2:22-23 with Acts 4:27-28)

²²“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—²³this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (Acts 2:22-23)

²⁷For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. (Acts 4:27-28)

The final thing that God is sovereign over is salvation...

❖ **What does understanding God’s sovereignty produce in you?**

Election

The idea of God’s sovereign choice is throughout the Scriptures:

⁶For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; **the Lord your God has chosen you** to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Deut 7:6)

Election is NOT that God is omniscient and knows who could believe should they be given a chance and then He “elects” those people for salvation. The Scriptures don’t teach that. But is also doesn’t make logical sense because then in some credit for my salvation goes to myself. And God’s plan is for His own glory, and He does not share His glory (Isa 42:8; 48:11)

Election is God’s unconditioned choice before the foundation of the world of those individuals whom He would save (Matt 22:1-14; Rom 3:10-13; 8:27-30; 9:6-24; 1 Cor 1:18-19; Eph 1:3-11; 2:8-9; Acts 13:48; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10; 1 Pet 1:1-2; 2 Pet 1:10; 2:13).

God’s choice is required because all people are dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). Since people are dead, blind, held captive, etc., the remedy must come from outside themselves. The dead cannot cause themselves to be alive.

The Scriptures declare that we have been “made alive” (Eph 2:4-6) and “born again” (1 Pet 1:3) by God (from outside ourselves).

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (Eph 2:4-6)

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has **caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Pet 1:3)

The Scriptures are clear that God “chooses” individuals for salvation:

¹⁶**You did not choose Me but I chose you**, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. (John 15:16)

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and **as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed**. (Acts 13:48)

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as **He chose** us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵**He predestined** us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Eph 1:4-6)

⁴knowing, brethren beloved by God, **His choice of you**; (1 Thess 1:4)

¹³But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation** through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (2 Thess 2:13)

¹Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, **for the faith of those chosen of God** and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, (Titus 1:1)

¹⁰For this reason I endure all things **for the sake of those who are chosen**, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. (2 Tim 2:10)

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen** ²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. (1 Pet 1:1-2)

¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and **choosing you**; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (2 Pet 1:10)

⁵Listen, my beloved brethren: **did not God choose** the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? (James 2:5)

¹⁴These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and **those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.**” (Rev 17:14)

Over and over, the New Testament says that God chooses for salvation those who have no power to move themselves towards Him due to the corruption of sin. This choice is unconditional. It is all from God and in no way depends on the people who He is choosing.

❖ **What does understanding election produce in you?**

Free Will

What about “free will”? How does “free will” play into God choosing individuals for salvation? To help us think through this question, one can ask, “Does God have free will?” or “Can God choose to do whatever He wants?” The answer is an unequivocal “yes”. But in reality, it is a qualified “yes”. God is free to do whatever He chooses according to the counsel of His own will (as we have seen before in our definition of God’s sovereignty). But He can only choose to do that which is consistent with His nature. For example...

¹Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, ²in the hope of eternal life, **which God, who cannot lie**, promised long ages ago, ³but at the proper time manifested, *even* His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, (Titus 1:1-3)

Similarly, people can only do that which is consistent with their nature. We saw in our review what that nature is. The condition of all people apart from God’s saving work is that all people are sinners with a sin nature. They are wicked, dead, blind, captive by Satan, darkness-loving, alienated-from and hostile-to-God, sin-slaves walking according to Satan’s anti-God world system. Every aspect a person is tainted by sin leaving them completely unable to move towards God on their own. In fact, Romans 3:11 actually states that there is “no one seeks for God”.

So, everyone has a free will, but it is limited to the sphere of their fallen nature. This means that they cannot seek after God. God must intervene. And He chose to start the process in eternity past with election.

The Gospel Call, Draw, and Conversion

In eternity past, God chose those individuals whom He would call out slavery to sin. He sovereignly chooses to pour out His love, grace, and mercy on the undeserving for His maximum glory. Only God knows who are elect and need the gospel to bring about their salvation, so God commands the elect to take the gospel to all so the elect can hear.

To bring about the salvation of His elect, He takes the gospel to them. All whom the Father appoints to eternal life (Acts 13:48) He will call to Himself (Rom 8:30) by sovereignly causing the gospel to be told to them (Acts 10; Rom 10:8-17).

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many **as had been appointed to eternal life believed**. (Acts 13:48)

¹²so that you would walk in a manner worthy of **the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thess 2:12)

²⁷and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*. ²⁸And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His purpose*. ²⁹For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰and **these whom He predestined, He also called**; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:27-30)

⁸But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, ⁹that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. ¹¹For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.” ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; ¹³for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴**How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?** ¹⁵How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!” ¹⁶However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” ¹⁷**So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.** (Rom 10:8-17)

While the gospel will be preached in all the world (Matt 24:14), it becomes only effectual by the power of the Holy Spirit as God draws people to Himself, “For many are called, but few *are* chosen” (Matt 22:1-14).

¹³But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. ¹⁴It was for this **He called you through our gospel**, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess 2:13-14)

The draw of God in the heart of His elect cannot be frustrated or rejected. It is clear that people resist the gospel message. This is not resisting God’s call, but simple doing what their nature demands. Some influence greater than our totally depraved natures must be brought to bear upon our souls in order to respond to the gospel. Once that “Efficacious Grace” is brought to bear it cannot be resisted.

³⁰**and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified;** and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:30)

³⁷**All that the Father gives Me will come to Me**, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. (John 6:37)

⁴⁴**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;** and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:44) [Draw means to draw, drag off, or to lead, impel]

⁴⁵It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.'
Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. (John 6:45)

¹⁴A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and **the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.** (Acts 16:14)

It is important that the gospel that is preached to the unsaved includes all aspects of the gospel – the condition of depravity and alienation from God, the sacrificial sacrifice of Jesus, the resurrection, and the nature of saving faith (1 Cor 15:3-4). We want the elect to hear the true gospel and we don’t want the non-elect to accept something that isn’t the true gospel and think they are saved.

Part of God drawing the elect to Himself is the conviction of sin and their need of a savior by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

⁷But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸And **He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. (John 16:7-10)**

As God brings the gospel to the elect and draws them to Himself, convicting them of sin and the need for a Savior, He also gives them the gift of saving faith. All of salvation is a gift including even the faith that is exercised.

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and **that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-9)**

We mention “saving faith.” The Scriptures are clear that faith (noun) or to believe (verb) is the means by which people are saved from their sin.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

⁴⁷“Truly, truly, I say to you, he **who believes has eternal life.** (John 6:47)

A faith that saves is more than acknowledging the truth of Jesus’ prophesied coming, virgin birth, sinless life, divinity, work on the cross, and resurrection. You can believe all those things to be true and still not be saved from your sin, for even the demons believe.

¹⁹You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:19 see also passages like Mark 1:23-24)

So, what is “saving faith”? Saving faith is not mere intellectual assent to facts concerning biblical truth, the gospel, or the person and work of Christ. Saving faith is trusting Christ’s work to save from sin infused with a blend of heart attitudes:

1. Repentance which is turning *from* sin and turning *to* God in faith

¹Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of **repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,** (Heb 6:1 see also Luke 24:46-47; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 20:20-21; 2 Cor 12:21; Rev 9:20-21; 16:11)

2. Surrender to Christ as Lord

⁸But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, ⁹**that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;** ¹⁰for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Rom 10:8-10)

3. Self-denial

²³**And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.** ²⁴For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

²⁵For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

²⁶For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels. (Luke 9:23-26)

4. Forsaking all

²⁵Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, ²⁶“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ... ³³So then, **none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.** (Luke 14:25-33)

5. A desire to follow Jesus

²⁷My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and **they follow Me;** ²⁸and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:27-28)

6. A desire to obey Jesus

³⁶He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but **he who does not obey the Son will not see life,** but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

All aspects of saving faith are a gift from God.

Why is understanding saving faith so important? Because our goal in sharing the gospel is not to make it easy for unbelievers to think they have come to Christ. Our goal is to share the gospel with the everyone so that the elect can hear the life-giving message and be converted. Only true conversion by grace through faith through the true gospel with true saving faith brings about the blessings of being made alive in Christ for the elect.

Conclusion

God is sovereign in all things including salvation. All of humanity, due to their own choice has chosen to rebel against God and are therefore without hope in this life and destined for hell in the next. In eternity past God chose those on whom He would bestow His love, grace, and mercy. At God’s perfect time, He brings the gospel to His elect, draws them to Himself, and give them the gift of saving faith which they exercise. At this point they are converted.