

Special: Spring 2024 #6

April 28, 2024

Series Title: Behold Our King!

Today's Message: The Doctrine of Salvation, pt 3; John 3:1-21; 1 Peter 1:1-25

The doctrine of salvation should be of great interest because of its great importance. Salvation, of course, means that your sins are forgiven, and that God's judgment is no longer against you. But as we think about salvation it may occur to you that salvation has several steps, each which glorify God; and each step is a miracle of God worked out in the life of a person for their eternal good.

Our thoughts about salvation understandably focus on the New Birth. As wonderful as the birth of a human is, none can compare to the supernatural birth of a child of God through the power of God the Holy Spirit! Although the world may not notice the new birth of a child of God, heaven rejoices! Luke 15:10 tells us that Jesus declared, "There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." All heaven rejoices over the miracle of salvation, while few on earth even notice!

The birth of a child of God is a spiritual resurrection of sorts. When someone is born again that person passes into a new life, becoming a new creation at the moment of new birth! Where once the person was dead in trespasses and sins, they are now instantaneously made into a new person with a new heart and new spirit, alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11)! Where once that person was a son of Adam and by nature an object of wrath, now, because of the great love of God, the person once dead, once under wrath and judgement becomes a child of God the Father who is in heaven. It is something God initiates and accomplishes. This leads us to our next point.

Salvation is a sovereign act of God. Remember the first principle of salvation is that salvation is all of God. Stated plainly, "salvation is of the Lord. (Jonah 2:9)" Everything about our salvation was set forth in *eternity past* in accordance with God's "predeterminate counsel and foreknowledge." This means that in *eternity* the Triunity of God *foreordained*, or made a deliberate, unilateral decision to graciously save some sinners of His choice.

This begs the question, *but how would God save sinners?* According to His sovereign right, God chose to save His people through the life and death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John is replete with verse after verse concerning the eternal divine nature of the Son of God who became flesh and dwelt among us. So, we learn that salvation is all of God through Jesus Christ. **(Review sermons 4 and 5 for notes and scripture references.)** But we should also see steps emerging as we talk about salvation.

The sequence of salvation or, salvation applied. You are probably thinking, *I know that there is more to the doctrine of salvation than just the new birth.* And you are right! As necessary as regeneration is, it is not the whole; it is only a part of the process of salvation. And that sequence or process is what we are trying to apply to our understanding of salvation. Last time (sermon #5) we talked about the doctrine of Election. Election was the first step in the sequence of God's responsibility in our salvation.

So, if we lay out the sequence it is as follows: 1) Election. God takes responsibility for the election, or choosing of those He will save. 2) Regeneration. God causes new birth. 3) Justification. God justifies sinners. 4) Conversion. God provides all the gifts and powers, and the creature responds. 5) Adoption. God establishes a permanent relationship with those He saves. 6) Sanctification. Of God and yet we participate. 7) Glorification. God relieves us of this life, completing our salvation.

I) Salvation Applied: How God Unilaterally saves His people: the Steps [of God's] salvation.

A) Election. God chose His people before the foundation of the world according to His eternal determinate counsel (Ephesians 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13; Acts 2:23, 4:18; 1 Pet. 1:2; John 6:37ff).

1) The Core of Election: God elected His people according to His pleasure (Ps. 115:3).

- 2) The Cause of Election: God elected a people unto salvation according to His initiative and love.
 - 3) The Certainty of Election: God applies His electing grace not dependent on those of the elect.
 - 4) The Comfort of Election: God will save and eventually bring to eternal glory the full number of His elect, chosen from before the foundation of the world.
- B) The Gospel Call and Regeneration: God effectually calls and regenerates His people.
- 1) The Gospel call goes out to all, but is received by His choice ones, who through faith in the message of the Gospel believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.
 - (a) Regeneration is a unilateral sovereign act of God and is the first step in our personal experience and enjoyment of God's gift of salvation. It is something that happens to you and for you. It is good because it is of God.
 - (b) Effectual Call and Regeneration must occur simultaneously.
 - (i) The Gospel is preached (The Call) to all but is effectual for the faith of the elect.
 - (a) **Read Romans 10:8-10, 14-17**
 - (ii) The act of regeneration is NEVER independent from the preaching/hearing of the Word!
 - (a) 1 Peter 2:23: "For you have been *born* again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."
 1. Regeneration is the work of God through the Holy Spirit (John 3:8), that instantly makes us alive to God and dead to sin!
 - a. Romans 6:11: "In the same way, count/ reckon yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."
 - b. Eph. 2:4-5: "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love for us, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."
 - (c) **A Good Principle**: God the Father elects before time, regenerates in time, applies the Gospel on time, and saves for all time and eternity.
- C) Justification is solely the work of God (Romans 8:30, 33): "It is God who justifies."
- 1) A quick lesson from Romans 3:23-26
 - (a) Who does God justify? Sinners Romans 3:23-24a: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified..."
 - (i) (Sinners have a failed performance record; fallen short; no self-justification.
 - (b) Why does God justify sinners? Romans 3:24b: Because He wants too: "by His grace as a gift" (see also Ephesians 2:5, 8-9)
 - (c) How does God justify sinners? Romans 3:25b: By faith.
 - (d) What is the object of the faith that saves? Romans 3:24c-25a: Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of incomparable worth, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood.
 - (i) Christ Jesus is **impeccable**. His performance record was perfect. He needs no one to justify Him. He came as a gift from God, as a substitute for us, reckoning/ counting/ crediting His performance record to the account of all who receive Him by faith.
 - (a) "[God] justifies those who have faith in Jesus." Romans 3:26
 - (b) Rom. 4:5: "However to the man who does not work (that is, abandons his hope in his performance record) but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith (in the righteous performance record of Christ Jesus) is credited to him as righteousness."
- D) The Conversion of a sinner occurs upon regeneration by the Spirit, evidenced by repentance and belief in the Truth. However, conversion originates with God. Both faith and repentance are gifts.
- 1) Saving faith is a gift God bestows on the elect.

- (a) Ephesians 2:8-9: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—so that no one can boast.”
- 2) Repentance also is a gift from God.
 - (a) 2 Timothy 2:25 informs us that repentance is a gift from God leading to a knowledge of the Truth.
- E) Adoption: Before time God had chosen to make a permanent relationship with His elect by adopting them into His family at the moment we are regenerated and justified!
 - 1) Ephesians 1:5: “In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—”
 - 2) Adoption is initiated by God but comes through faith in Christ Jesus!
 - (a) Galatians 3:26: “You are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”
 - (b) 1 John 3:1-2: “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!...now we are children of God!” (see also John 1:12-13)
- F) Sanctification is threefold: Positional, Progressive and Perfective (theological terms)
 - 1) Positional sanctification: this is closely related, if not laminated to justification. When we are justified, we are legally declared righteous. And at the same time, at the moment of saving faith, our position changed from being “in Adam” and the kingdom of darkness, to now being forevermore “in Christ” and His kingdom! By an act of grace through faith God has “Rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:13-14)
 - (a) 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”
 - 2) Progressive Sanctification: see section II B
 - 3) Perfective Sanctification: This is synonymous with “glorification” when are finally perfected. See Glorification next in **point “G.”**
- G) Glorification is the completion of salvation yet future to us, when we see Jesus as He is, and are finally free once for all from the presence and the pleasure of sin and made like our Lord Jesus.
 - 1) 1 John 3:2-3: “Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies Himself (progressive sanctification), just as He is pure.”

II) Our Cooperative Response to God’s Gift of Salvation

- A) Conversion and Progressive Sanctification also carries with it the idea of personal repentance in action. The Spirit, having made us new creatures in Christ, works in us providing faith and spiritual power, and we work.
 - 1) Our work is ongoing and simple: To present ourselves as slaves of righteousness (Rom.6:16-19).
 - 2) We “offer our bodies to God as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God” and no longer live in conformity to the pattern of the world (Romans 12:1-2)
 - 3) We “put off” sinful practices and habits and “put on” practices which please God.
 - (a) See 2 Cor. 5:9-10; Eph. 4:22-5:20; Colossians 3:1-17

III) Appendix: A Summary

- A) Election, Calling, Regeneration, justification: Salvation in the past tense: I have been saved.
 - 1) Ephesians 2:8-9
- B) Conversion and Sanctification is the present tense of salvation: I am being saved.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 1:18
- C) Glorification is the future tense, the perfection of salvation: I will be saved. (see 1 Thess. 1:10)