Systematic Theology: Soteriology

Week 3: Effectual calling, faith, and repentance

## Introduction to the series

* When you hear the word *soteriology*, what does mean to you?
* Some think of high theology, stuffy rooms, and old men arguing over large oak tables.
* Others think…I have no idea what that word means…and I probably don’t care even if I did.
* Hopefully you land somewhere between these two descriptions.
* Simply put, soteriology is the study of salvation or the study of the doctrine of salvation.
* In other words, it is the study of what one group of people believe about salvation. That group can be anything from a church to a political party. For our purposes, we are going to study what the Bible says.
* It is important to have a full and broad understanding of what the Bible says about our salvation so that we know that we are saved and so that we know what comes with our salvation.
* There are many different ideas and teachings about salvation, and it is our responsibility to make sure that we know what God has ordained and expects from His creation.
* Here is schedule for the upcoming lessons:
	+ 09/08: Introduction
	+ 09/15: What is the atonement, both declarative and practical?
	+ **09/22: What does effectual calling, saving faith and repentance mean?**
	+ 09/29: Missionary Share: Tim George from Mozambique
	+ 10/06: What is justification or what does it mean to be justified?
	+ 10/13: What does it mean to be adopted by God?
	+ 10/20: What is progressive sanctification and how does it operate in my daily Christian life?
	+ 10/27: Missionary Share: Jeff Street from Canada
	+ 11/03: What does the perseverance of the saints mean for me today and for eternity?

## order of salvation

* Central to our thoughts on salvation is the order of salvation.
* In other words, we want to know what God has revealed to us about what He has done and then how we are to respond to His works towards us.
* “There is no time sequence in this, as if we could be called for a while before we are regenerated, and then live regenerated without having repented, and then we could repent but not turn to Christ, and then finally come to justifying faith. No, they are all logical steps in the same event. When God calls us we are immediately regenerated, and we turn from sin to God in one action, which justifies us. And those who are justified are immediately glorified in the sense of being adopted as children of God.”[[1]](#footnote-2)
* Paul gives us an idea of what the *order of salvation* looks like in **Romans 8:29-30** “For 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; and these whom **He predestined**, **He also called**; and these whom **He called**, **He also justified**; and these whom **He justified**, **He also glorified**.”
* Foreknew…Predestined…Called…Justified…Glorified…
	+ This is your chain of redemption or your order of salvation.
* We are not going to be going over this complete list of the order of our salvation, but it is helpful to know some of the terms that cause much confusion in the church today.
* In the first place, it may be easiest to place the gift of faith in the order of salvation, since Scripture is clear that faith is the condition of justification. Sinners are said to be justified “by faith” (Rom. 3:28; 5:1; Gal. 3:24), “through faith” (Gal. 2:16), and “on faith” (Phil. 3:9). A sinner will not be declared righteous in God’s sight unless he believes, and it is only through the instrumentality of faith that he will lay hold of the righteousness of God in Christ. Thus, it is proper to place faith before justification, and because faith is itself the instrumental cause of justification, nothing ought to come between them. Therefore, we may add faith to our *ordo salutis* as follows: effectual call, faith, justification, and then glorification.[[2]](#footnote-3)
* Further, we must also consider that saving faith is always a repentant faith, for the faith that turns to Christ for salvation necessarily turns away from sin and self-righteousness (Acts 26:17–18; 1 Thess. 1:9)
* We can read that the people that God **foreknew**, those He **predestined** to become conformed into the image of Christ.
* Regarding whom God foreknew:
	+ In fact, Paul is not talking about our Creator's knowledge of facts but rather His knowledge of individuals. That might seem to be a subtle distinction, but it is significant. The New Testament's references to God's knowledge and foreknowledge of people have to do with His knowing them in an intimate, salvific way ([John 10:13](https://www.esv.org/verses/John%2010%3A13/); [1 Cor. 8:3](https://www.esv.org/verses/1%20Cor.%208%3A3/)). In other words, when God foreknows a person, He sets His love upon him. Our Lord's choice of men and women for salvation is based on His decision to set His love upon them, not His knowledge of what they will do.[[3]](#footnote-4)
* Regarding predestination:
	+ The English terms predestine and predestination come from the Greek word proorizō, a compound word that means "to determine beforehand." Essentially, predestination refers to setting the destiny, goal, or end of something before it happens. The concept of predestination can refer to anything that happens in history; however, the most common usage of the term among Christians is in reference to salvation.[[4]](#footnote-5)
* These above two definitions are from a Calvinistic point of view.
* From an Arminian point of view:
	+ Notice the conjunction, “for”’; it ties what is about to be said with what has just been said. We know what God has done for the Old Testament saints, those that He “already knew, He predestined, (aorist indicative, completed action) to be conformed to the image or likeness of His Son. They died long before Jesus was even born but they are still a part of the promises of God! God planned from the beginning to bring their salvation to completion in Christ Jesus. Moreover, those He predestined (aorist indicative, completed action) He justified (aorist indicative, completed action) and those He justified He glorified (aorist indicative, completed action). If Paul had any intended notion that he was speaking to the Roman Christians he would have used the same tense he used previously in verse 16, that being the aorist passive subjective. He did not do so because he was speaking here of the Old Testament saints who had already died but God had provided hope for.[[5]](#footnote-6)
	+ They believe that when Paul says “saints” in verse 27, it means OT saints, not those to whom Paul is speaking to right then.
	+ What is the largest issue with stating that as a fact? There is nothing in all of chapter 8 that would lead us to believe that Paul ever had anyone from the OT in mind when he wrote this chapter.
	+ I believe that the “for” at the beginning of verse 29 is explanatory in nature. Meaning that Paul is now explaining why he can say in **verse 28** “And 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.”
* These are just some thoughts on foreknowledge and predestination.

## effectual calling

* The effectual call is understood as God’s sovereign drawing of a sinner to salvation. The effectual call to a sinner so overwhelms his natural inclination to rebel that he willingly places faith in Jesus Christ.[[6]](#footnote-7)
* How important is effectual calling in the Bible?
* Peter thought that it was very important to know this doctrine and its effects in your life.
	+ **2 Peter 1:10a** “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you…”
* We just read about it in **Romans 8:29-30** “…whom He predestined, He also called…”
* Before looking at the specific call to salvation, briefly, there are two calls in the Bible.
* God’s call to sinners for salvation is expressed in two ways in the New Testament: General Calling & Effectual Calling. A general call to everyone through creation, conscience, the canon of Scripture, and the gospel of Christ. The second is an effectual call that connects believers with God’s work outside of time.[[7]](#footnote-8)
* There is a general call to salvation that goes out to all who will hear.
	+ **Matthew 22:14** “For many are called, but few are chosen.”
		- This is a classic text to show that while many will know and hear the gospel, that does not mean that they are born again.
	+ **Acts 2:38-41** “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, **as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself**.’ And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation!’ So then, **those who had received his word were baptized**; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”
	+ Notice what Peter says, he gives the gospel and the general call to all the people who were listening. He also says that their salvation is in the hands of God as He calls people to Himself.
	+ Then, it wasn’t that all the people were saved, in fact it says only **those who had received his word were baptized.**
		- In other words, there were some that didn’t *receive his word*. Why didn’t they receive the words of Peter? Because, as the text says, the Lord didn’t call them to salvation.
* I want to make a very important point…just because these people did not respond to the gospel right then does not mean they are not elect for salvation.
* Many of us hear the gospel many times before coming to faith in Christ.
* This means that we do not stop preaching the gospel to people, even when they seem to be closed off to it or even hostile towards it.
* We never know when God’s call to a sinner will take effect in their lives. We are responsible to share the message with the people that God has put around us. That is our faithful work as ministers of the gospel.
* **John 6:44**a “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...”

### How can we, as Peter exhorts us, make our calling and election sure?[[8]](#footnote-9)

* **Do you have a conviction of your sin?**
* The Spirit prepares people for conversion. He shows them their sin and guilt, impresses upon them the wrath of God against them, the hopelessness and misery of their situation and their need of salvation. Paul writes, ‘The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith’ (Gal. 3:24).
* Natural religion says that if you are a good person you will get to heaven. The Spirit convicts us that we are hell-deserving sinners. If we want true conversions ministers must preach the law, seeking the aid of the Spirit to convict the sinner of his sin.
* **Has your mind been enlightened to the knowledge of Christ?**
* Conviction of sin is good in itself but is not enough.
* This is a work of the Spirit warning the sinner and so leaving him without excuse. Some go through a time of feeling emptiness, meaninglessness, sin, guilt and danger and are troubled. Then they harden their heart and go on in their sins as before. Thank God for conviction of sin but don’t stop there or you will perish. Having shown the sinner his lostness and hopelessness, it is then the normal pattern for the Spirit to enlighten the mind in the knowledge of Christ. To the convicted sinner longing for deliverance the Spirit reveals Jesus Christ dying on the cross to save sinners.
* **Do you have a renewed will?**
* We are somewhat like an alcoholic who detests drink, longs to be rid of it, but is shaking and trembling for alcohol and the bottle in front of him is irresistible. By nature we are addicted to sin and rebellion and we need the Deliverer to set our will free to choose the Saviour.
* Salvation is of God from beginning to end. The Spirit having convicted us of our sin and enlightened our mind in the knowledge of Christ and renewed our will, *now persuades and enables us to receive Christ*. ‘What must I do to be saved?’ asked the Philippian jailor, and he received clear direction: ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved’ (Acts 16:31).
* The new life is not one of perfection but of direction. It is not one that is free from sin, but one that desires to rid itself of sin and knows that it can only go to Christ for freedom.
* Growth in spiritual areas of our life can only take place because we have been called by the Spirit. There are no fleshly, man-centered tools that can bring out spiritual change in our lives.

## saving faith

* **Philippians 1:29** “For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake…”
* Scripture is everywhere clear-the one thing a person must do to be saved is exercise "true saving faith" in Christ. Faith is the instrument that God uses to bring individuals into a saving relationship with Himself. That is not to say that faith is the basis of our salvation; rather, it is the channel by which God grants salvation. Noted theologian B.B. Warfield said, "The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Savior on whom it rests...It is not, strictly speaking, even faith in Christ that saves, but that Christ saves through faith."[[9]](#footnote-10)
* **The Reformers spoke of three aspects of faith**: recognition of the truth claims of the gospel, acknowledgment of their truthfulness and exact correspondence to man's spiritual need, and a personal commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ who, by virtue of His death, provides the only sufficient sacrifice for one's personal sin…the presence of all three components together results in saving faith. In other words, saving faith consists of mental, emotional, and volitional elements. Saving faith involves both the mind and the will.[[10]](#footnote-11)
* That is a beautiful picture of faith. **First**, there is recognition of Jesus' claim to be the "bread of life" ([John 6:35](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%206.35)) and the possessor of "living water" ([John 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%204.10)). **Next**, the unbeliever is convinced that Jesus' promise is really true and that it corresponds exactly with his profound hunger and thirst. **Finally**, the unbeliever acts-he begs Jesus to satisfy his hunger and quench his thirst. *True faith hears, believes, and actively responds*.[[11]](#footnote-12)
* **1 Thessalonians 2:13** “For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”
* **Saving faith and the gift of faith are two different operations of faith**. They both are gifts from God, but one is a once off, saving faith to all Christians, and one is a special gift to some Christians.
* The gift of faith may be defined as the special gift whereby the Spirit provides Christians with extraordinary confidence in God’s promises, power, and presence so they can take heroic stands for the future of God’s work in the church.[[12]](#footnote-13)

## repentance

* Repentance is one of the sweetest words when understood in the context of the gospel. It should evoke thoughts of the grace of God. It should make you rejoice. It is a key that unlocks joy in God. To understand why, we first need to understand what repentance is and what it is not. A short definition of repentance is this, repentance is a change in mind that is demonstrated through a change in life. Put differently, the way that you think about certain realities and situations changes, therefore, the way that you engage with them and respond to them will be different than in the past.[[13]](#footnote-14)
* **Acts 11:18** “When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, ‘Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.’”
* **2 Timothy 2:24-26** “The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”
* Repentance is ***literally*** turning away from the old life that you lived and then turning to God with new thoughts, affections, and ultimately actions.
	+ The term used for repentance is “μετάνοια.” It’s a compound word made up of the prefix “μετά,” or after, and “νοια” referring to thought. The idea is of a change of mind. After something occurs you think differently about it.[[14]](#footnote-15)
* **1 Thessalonians 1:9-10** “For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.”
* Repentance has action involved. It is not just sorrow over your sin, though it is in there, but then what are you now doing.
	+ This **is not** penance, but a new life. Not a life that is trying to make up for your sin, but a life that is now focused on Christ, cognizant of your sin, and seeking to display God’s goodness to all who are watching.
1. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/order-salvation> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. MacArthur and Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 569. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/predestination-and-foreknowledge#:~:text=In%20other%20words%2C%20when%20God,of%20what%20they%20will%20do>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/predestination-and-foreknowledge#:~:text=In%20other%20words%2C%20when%20God,of%20what%20they%20will%20do>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://soteriology101.com/2019/10/07/romans-829-30-or-how-we-can-trust-god-at-his-word/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://www.gotquestions.org/effectual-calling-call.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. <https://jonathanhayashi.com/doctrine-of-gods-effectual-call/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2013/effectual-calling/?srsltid=AfmBOoo55aNRSaD0T04mIAGfZC4v_qUnSPjQrSzIZcuyfeq2GJv0Au7z> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://www.gty.org/library/questions/QA164/what-is-the-nature-of-true-saving-faith> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. <https://www.gotquestions.org/gift-of-faith.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. <https://thecripplegate.com/the-beauty-of-repentance/> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. https://thecripplegate.com/the-beauty-of-repentance/ [↑](#footnote-ref-15)