

INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

INTRODUCTION

- The doctrine of salvation is known as *soteriology*...which comes from two Greek terms: *soter* meaning “savior” or “deliverer” and *logos* meaning “word, matter, or thing”
- In systematic theology it is used to refer to the study of the biblical doctrine of salvation
- This area of study is concerned with what God does in rescuing sinners from their sin and drawing them into a relationship with Him
- It often includes such topics as the nature and extent of the atonement as well as the entire process of salvation, conceived as an eternal, divine plan by which God rescues lost and erring sinners and brings them back into eternal fellowship with himself
- It deals with the provision of salvation through Christ and the application of it through the Holy Spirit
- Many regard this as the primary theme of Scripture with the glory of God as its goal:
- “The question of being saved is the supreme question of the Bible. The subject matter of the sacred Scriptures is the subject of salvation...*Salvation* means to be rescued from some calamity. However, the Bible also uses the term *salvation* in a specific sense to refer to our ultimate redemption from sin and reconciliation to God. In this sense, salvation is from the ultimate calamity—the judgment of God.”¹
- “In coming to the doctrine of soteriology, the student of Scripture arrives at the pinnacle of Christian theology because the themes and topics addressed in the study of salvation run to the very heart of the gospel and to the center of redemptive history.”²
- “Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, must be the grandest theme in the Scriptures. It embraces all of time as well as eternity past and future. It relates in one way or another to all of mankind, without exception. It even has ramifications in the sphere of the angels. It is the theme of both the Old and New Testaments. It is personal, national, and cosmic. And is centers on the greatest Person, our Lord Jesus Christ. From God’s perspective salvation includes the total work of God in bringing people from condemnation to justification, from death to eternal life, from alienation to filiation. From the human perspective it incorporates all of the blessings that being in Christ brings both in this life and the life to come.”³
- “The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest of all treasures given to the church and the individual Christian. It is not *a* message among many but *the* message above them all. It is the power of God for salvation and the greatest revelation of the manifold wisdom of God to men and angels. It is for this reason that the apostle Paul gave the gospel the first place in his preaching, endeavored with all his might to proclaim it clearly, and even pronounced a curse upon all those who would pervert its truth.”⁴
- Man’s eternal salvation is what the Bible is about
- In one sense, there is no greater theme that we could study than this one!

¹ R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, 159.

² MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*, 485.

³ Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 277.

⁴ Paul Washer, *The Gospel Call and True Conversion*, vii.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THIS TOPIC

It is a Source of Wonder and Awe

- This salvation which was anticipated in the OT is so glorious that, even though it was not to be fully revealed for generation, the prophets desperately longed to understand it
- So absorbing was the subject that they gave themselves to discovering when it might come to pass and who the Savior would be

1 Peter 1:8-12 ~ and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. 10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven...

- The prophets knew the Savior would be born of a virgin and His name would be Immanuel (Is 7:14)...that he would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)...that he would be of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10)
- The prophets saw all this and more...and they couldn't help but wonder
- Even the angels desired to look into this great salvation

1 Peter 1:12 ~ It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

- Often we take our salvation for granted...we become numb to the blessings we have in Christ...we become desensitized to the wonders of the Gospel...we allow trials to cause us to lose perspective
- Pondering our glorious salvation helps prevent those issues...and keeps us in wonder and awe of the great grace we have received
- We have received what the prophets longed to understand!

It is a Cause for Worship

- Studying soteriology helps us realize that the ultimate purpose of salvation is that God might be glorified
- Although we receive the benefits and blessings of salvation, ultimately salvation is for God
- “Before addressing the doctrine of soteriology, it is necessary to consider that the driving purpose for which God saves his people is in accordance with his ultimate purpose for all things—namely, to bring glory and honor to himself. Because believers receive such immense blessings at the hand of God’s saving grace, it is a common misconception to assume that God’s chief regard in salvation is to sinners themselves. The privilege of being chosen by God for salvation on the basis of nothing in oneself; of being provided a substitute of such worthiness and honor as the Son of God himself; of receiving the gift of the new birth apart from any works of one’s own; of being united to Christ, declared righteous apart from works, adopted into the family of God, and conformed into his image, progressively on earth and perfectly in heaven—the flood of gracious benefits that man enjoys in salvation tempts the student of Scripture to believe that God’s saving love terminates ultimately on man. Scripture, however, reveals that salvation is not man centered but God centered.”⁵

⁵ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 486.

- Scripture is full of evidence that God’s fundamental commitment in all he does is to pursue the glory of his name
- God’s greatest passion is for himself, for His own glory
- “The ultimate foundation for our passion to see God glorified is his own passion to be glorified. God is central and supreme in his own affections. There are no rivals for the supremacy of God’s glory in his own heart. God is not an idolater. He does not disobey the first and great commandment. With all his heart and soul and strength and mind he delights in the glory of his manifold perfections. The most passionate heart for God in all the universe is God’s heart.”⁶
- Thus, the chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy himself forever

Exodus 14:4, 17-18 ~ Thus I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will chase after them; and **I will be honored** through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.” And they did so...As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; **and I will be honored** through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, **when I am honored** through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.”

1 Samuel 12:20-22 ~ Samuel said to the people, “Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. You must not turn aside, for then you would go after futile things which can not profit or deliver, because they are futile. For the Lord will not abandon His people **on account of His great name**, because the Lord has been pleased to make you **a people for Himself**.

2 Samuel 7:23 ~And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem **for Himself** as a people **and to make a name for Himself**, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom You have redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, from nations and their gods?

2 Kings 19:34 ~ For I will defend this city to save it **for My own sake** and for My servant David’s sake.’ ”

Isaiah 43:6-7 ~ “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth, Everyone who is called by My name, And **whom I have created for My glory**, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”

Isaiah 42:8 ~ I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.

Isaiah 43:25 ~ “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions **for My own sake**, And I will not remember your sins.

Isaiah 48:9-11 ~ “**For the sake of My name** I delay My wrath, And **for My praise** I restrain it for you, In order not to cut you off. “Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. **“For My own sake, for My own sake,** I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And **My glory I will not give to another.**

Isaiah 49:3 ~ He said to Me, “You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom **I will show My glory.**”

Psalms 106:7-8 ~ Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them **for the sake of His name**, That He might make His power known.

Jeremiah 13:11 ~ For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me,’ declares the Lord, **“that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory;** but they did not listen.’

Ezekiel 20:14 ~ But I acted **for the sake of My name**, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, before whose sight I had brought them out.

Ezekiel 36:22-23, 32 ~ Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but **for My holy name**, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the

⁶ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 15.

holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight... **I am not doing this for your sake,**” declares the Lord God, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!”

Romans 9:17 ~For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I raised you up, **to demonstrate My power** in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.”

Romans 9:22-23 ~ What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so **to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy,** which He prepared beforehand for glory,

- It is right for God to seek His own honor and be jealous for His own glory because He is infinitely greater than anything in the universe
- God delights in what is most delightful, namely himself
- Thus, it is not surprising that God’s chief aim in the salvation of sinners is his own glory
- And there is no greater testimony to God’s chief commitment to his glory in salvation than what Paul wrote about it in Ephesians 1

Ephesians 1:4-6, 12, 14 ~ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to **the praise of the glory of His grace,** which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved...to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be **to the praise of His glory**...who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, **to the praise of His glory.**

- “Though man is the recipient of God’s great love in salvation (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:4), he is not the ultimate concern of God’s saving grace. God himself and the glory of his name are uppermost in God’s affections. Any view of salvation that exalts man as God’s chief regard necessarily denigrates the glory of God.”⁷
- Thus, in order to worship the Lord properly, we must understand his salvation rightly

It is a Stewardship We Have Been Given

- A steward is someone who manages someone else’s household...and stewardship is the administration of someone else’s resources
- Each generation of Christians is a steward of the Gospel message and the truth of Scripture
- God calls us to guard this treasure...so that we can protect its precious contents...and pass the baton to those who come behind us

1 Timothy 4:15-16 ~ Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. 16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

1 Timothy 6:20 ~ O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”

2 Timothy 1:14 ~ Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

- We must faithfully understand and protect the glorious truths of the Gospel for the glory of God, the health of the church, the sanctification of our souls, and the salvation of the lost

⁷ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 487.

It is Surrounded by Great Confusion

- Confusion abounds today with respect both to the content and presentation of the Gospel and what God does in salvation
- “One of the greatest crimes committed by this present Christian generation is its neglect of the gospel, and it is from this neglect that all our other maladies spring forth. The lost world is not so much gospel hardened as it is gospel ignorant of its most basic truths. The essential themes that make up the very core of the gospel – the justice of God, the radical depravity of man, the blood atonement, the nature of true conversion, and the biblical basis of assurance – are absent from too many pulpits. Churches reduce the gospel message to a few creedal statements, teach that conversion is a mere human decision, and pronounce assurance of salvation over anyone who prays the sinner’s prayer.”⁸
- The sad and far-reaching effects of this gospel reductionism:

1. It further hardens the hearts of the unconverted

- A failure to proclaim a clear and accurate Gospel, one which doesn’t water down the demands of repentance, submission to Christ’s lordship, obedience, etc., only creates false converts who possess a false assurance about their eternal state
- “Untold millions walk our streets and sit in our pews unchanged by the true gospel of Jesus Christ, and yet they are convinced of their salvation because one time in their life they raised a hand at an evangelistic campaign or repeated a prayer. This false sense of security creates a great barrier that often insulates such individuals from ever hearing the true gospel.”⁹
- Many fall away from Christ or live lives marked by habitual carnality, demonstrating that they never truly came to know Christ
- This has resulted in many “unsaved believers” who are duped into thinking they are right with God, only to experience the greatest deception

2. It results in an unregenerate church

- When the Gospel is toned down, it diminishes the true demands of becoming a follower of Christ, thereby making it easy for many to profess to know God but by their deeds they deny him
- “With the preaching of the true gospel, men come to the church without gospel entertainment, special activities, or the promise of benefits beyond those offered by the gospel. Those who come do so because they desire Christ and are hungry for biblical truth, heartfelt worship, and opportunities for service. When the church proclaims a lesser gospel, it fills up with carnal men who share little interest in the things of God, and the maintenance of such men is a heavy burden upon the church. The church then tones down the radical demands of the gospel to a convenient morality, and true devotion to Christ gives way to activities designed to meet the felt needs of its members.”¹⁰
- In such churches, truth is repackaged in such a way as to not offend
- The result of this is a church that is filled with unregenerate “believers” rather than genuine disciples of Christ
- Thus, the purity of the church is compromised and, instead of being a holy bride set apart for eternal purposes, it becomes infiltrated with those who are carnal rather than godly

⁸ Washer, *The Gospel Call*, viii-ix.

⁹ Ibid, ix.

¹⁰ Ibid.

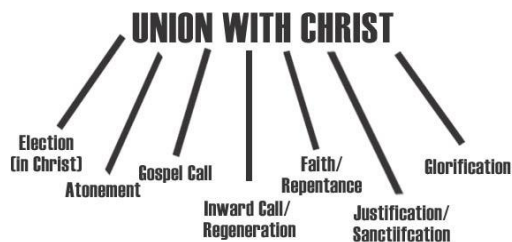
3. It brings reproach on the name of God

- Failure to adequately and properly communicate the Gospel will ultimately detract from the glory and majesty of God
- “Through the proclamation of a lesser gospel, the carnal and unconverted come into the fellowship of the church, and through the almost total neglect of biblical church discipline, they are allowed to stay without correction or reproof. This soils the purity and reputation of the church and blasphemes the name of God among the unbelieving. In the end, God is not glorified, the church is not edified, the unconverted church member is not saved, and the church has little or no witness to the unbelieving world.”¹¹

THE ORDER OF SALVATION

- The phrase *ordo salutis* is a Latin term that refers to the order of salvation as it appears in Scripture
- It deals with the steps or stages in the salvation of a believer
- It speaks of a way of organizing all the events of redemption in the consecutive order that they show up in an individual's life (as revealed in the Bible) when he is joined to Christ by the Holy Spirit
- This is the theological doctrine dealing with the logical sequencing of the application of the benefits in the redemptive work of God, through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit
- Salvation is not just a single act; rather, it is comprised of a series of distinct acts whereby God accomplishes the work of redemption in the life of a believer
- “All the benefits of redemption such as conversion (faith & repentance), justification, sanctification and perseverance presuppose a renewed heart (the existence of spiritual life) which believes. The work of applying God's grace is a unitary process given to the [believer] simultaneously in Christ. This is instantaneous, but there is definitely a causal order between regeneration and the rest of Christ's redemptive benefits which spring from it. Though these benefits cannot be separated, it is helpful to distinguish them. Therefore, instead of imposing a chronological order we should view these as **a unitary work of God to bring us into union with Christ.**”¹²
- “Jesus Christ is the source of all redemptive blessings, including regeneration, justification, sanctification. Election is the superstructure of our *ordo salutis* (a blueprint, so to speak, of what God intends to do for elect sinners in time), but not itself the application of redemption. Regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit which brings us into a living union with Christ, has a causal priority over the other aspects of the process of salvation.”¹³

1 Cor 1:30 ~ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,



- We must remember that we can never separate the benefits (i.e. regeneration, justification, sanctification) from the Benefactor (Jesus Christ)
- The entire process is the work of God in Christ and is by grace alone

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² <https://www.monergism.com/topics/ordo-salutis>

¹³ <https://www.monergism.com/ordo-salutis-order-salvation-0>

- “So we ought not to see this order as a linear order, but as a unitary work of God. Consider, if you strike the cue ball with a pool stick (cue), it rolls across the table and strikes the ball that you intend to sink into the pocket. The cue ball and the other ball strike simultaneously, yet it is the cue ball which causes the other ball to move. Likewise, it is the regenerating grace of God in Christ which gives rise to the other aspects of the application of redemption.”¹⁴

- The typical *ordo salutis* involves the following logical steps which describe how God saves his people

1. Foreknowledge
2. Election
3. Predestination
4. Effectual Call
5. Regeneration
6. Conversion
7. Justification
8. Adoption
9. Sanctification
10. Perseverance
11. Glorification

- Notice that #1-3 refer to God’s work prior to salvation, #4-8 and part of 9 refer to what is involved in becoming a Christian, part of #9 and #10 occur in this life, and #11 refers to what happens when believers die or Christ returns



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- Although there is not a singular text in Scripture that captures all of the steps of salvation, Romans 8:28-30 comes close

Romans 8:28-30 ~ 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. 29 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; 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.

- Verses 29-30 unfold in greater detail the elements included in the “purpose” of vs. 28 and these verses are a continued confirmation of the truth that all things work good to those who are the called of God
- The “for” at the beginning of v. 29 shows that there is a connection between vs. 28 and vs. 29
- They show why God keeps on working all their experiences together to their benefit
- In these two verses, Paul traces God’s good and saving purpose through five stages from its beginning in his mind to its consummation in the coming glory
- Why is it certain that God will work all things together for good in your life if you are a believer? → because you were foreknown by God...predestined to be made like Christ...called...justified...glorified!

¹⁴ <https://www.monergism.com/topics/ordo-salutis>

¹⁵ Tim Challies, <https://www.challies.com/visual-theology/visual-theology-the-order-of-salvation/>

- Our confidence that God is truly working all things to our good rests on the certainty of our redemption, which began before time with God’s foreknowledge and will end beyond time with our glorification
- Our confidence springs from the fact that God has worked in eternity past, is conforming us to the image of Christ in the present, and will bring us to glory in the future



- These verses contain what has been called “The Golden Chain of Salvation” or “The Golden Chain of Redemption”
- They describe the order in which God saves his people...the progress of God’s plan of salvation
- Each step in our salvation forms another link in the chain of redemption
- First, notice that it is an unbreakable chain...each link grows out of the former link to form one unbreakable chain
- Everyone whom is foreknown by God will also be predestined...and everyone who is predestined will be called...and everyone who is called will be justified...and everyone who is justified will be glorified
- No one is lost...everyone who begins on this redemptive chain will reach glory
- Paul accentuates the certainty of our salvation by linking each element to the previous one
- If one of them is true then they are all true...this is emphasized by the repetition of the connecting phrase “He also”
- The number who begin the chain will end the chain...none are lost along the way
- Talk about security...if you are in the golden chain of salvation, you won’t ever get out of it!
- Second, notice that our salvation spans eternity...it began in eternity past with God’s foreknowledge of us and culminates in eternity future when we are glorified
- Because God is not bound by time as we are, there is a sense in which the elements not only are sequential but simultaneous...God has made each of them an indispensable part of the unity of our salvation
- Our security in Christ is absolute and unalterable
- If fact, it is so certain that even the salvation of believers not yet born can be expressed in the past tense, as if it had already occurred
- And it is so certain that our future glory can be spoken of something already in the past (“glorified” = past tense)
- So, our salvation is an unbreakable chain which spans eternity – past, present, and future inextricably linked
- This reality is underscored by the fact that salvation is spoken of in past, present, and future terms
 1. We have been saved from the penalty of sin (Salvation is a Possession)

Ephesians 2:8 ~ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

2. We are being saved from the practice of sin (Salvation is a Process)

1 Corinthians 1:18 ~ For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

3. We will be saved from the possibility of sin (Salvation is a Prospect)

Romans 5:9-10 ~ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life

- Third, notice that the emphasis in vv. 28-29 is on the fact that God does everything
- The entire initiative in our salvation lays with God...it is entirely his business
- That God is the One who accomplishes every one of these steps is obvious in that every link in this chain represents a divine action
- This shows that salvation is from start to finish a work of the Lord
- It is not that God initiates our salvation and we complete it by our obedience
- Rather, he starts the work and finishes it without any help from us
- The initiative for salvation rests fully in the hands of a gracious and sovereign God and not in the hands of a sinful, lost humanity
- If any link depends on man, we are utterly lost, but the chain is unbreakable because salvation is of the Lord
- It clear from this golden chain that we are largely passive in salvation
- Even though we respond in faith and repentance, it is clear that those are gifts from the Lord
- “Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is not a human enterprise. Human beings cannot save themselves. Salvation is a divine work; it is accomplished and applied by God. Salvation is both *of* the Lord and *from* the Lord. It is the Lord who saves us from the wrath of the Lord.”¹⁶

¹⁶ R.C. Sproul, *Essential Truths*, 160.