



God's Sovereignty and Salvation

What God Has Done to Put Things Right



Memory Verse

"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that just as it is written, LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

1 CORINTHIANS 1:30-31



Discussion starter:

- Is salvation a monergistic work (*God alone*) or a synergistic work (*together with us*)?

"No sinner was ever saved by giving his heart to God. We are not saved by our giving, we are saved by God's giving."—A.W. PINK

Salvation Is of the Lord

The Christian Gospel asserts that if man is to be saved from eternal damnation and reconciled to God, it will not and cannot be by *man's works*, but by *God's grace alone* through *faith alone* in *Christ alone* to the glory of God alone.

In **1 Corinthians 1:30-31** we read,

³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

The Apostle Paul tells us in these verses that boasting in salvation is excluded because salvation is from the Lord, from beginning to end. But the question is: How can we be sure? Where is the proof of this in Scripture, and to what end should an understanding of this truth lead in our lives?

Where are we told that salvation is of God from beginning to end? Here are two verses that make it clear:

- **Jonah 2:9**—"*...Salvation is from the LORD.*"

In the King James Version, it reads, "*Salvation is of the LORD.*" The NIV puts it, "*Salvation comes from the LORD.*" In whatever version you read it, it still means the same: Salvation is **from**, **of**, and **by** the Lord and the Lord alone.

- **Psalms 3:8**—"*Salvation belongs to the LORD...*"

It can't get any clearer than that! *He calls us by His grace, He quickens us by His Spirit, and He keeps us by His power.*

Theological Views of Salvation

There are three camps people usually fall into when talking about God's sovereignty in salvation: **Calvinism**, **Hyper-Calvinism**, or **Arminianism**. As Christians, we are not to be interested in taking sides or falling into one camp or another. Our desire should be to discover *what the Bible says* and *what it means by what it says*. What we discover about God's sovereignty in salvation should lead us to obey His command to evangelize in a way that pleases Him.

As a believer, you need to be personally acquainted with what the Bible teaches about God's sovereignty in salvation and evangelism for three reasons:

1. It will **guard** you from *perverting the Gospel* because of an unwillingness to define doctrine or terminology.
2. By doing so, you will place **the Holy Scripture** as the sole *authority* for your faith and practice.
3. It will **protect** you from *justifying actions* that promote the worldly reasoning that "the ends justify the means."

Let's clearly define some key terms en route to discovering what God's Word says about His sovereignty in salvation.

Key Terms Defined

Calvinism was named after the sixteenth century pastor, theologian, and reformer, John Calvin, whose ministry, along with Martin Luther, became the influential force of the Protestant Reformation. The teachings of Calvin were not used as though he were the standard of truth. Calvinism was the label that intended to designate that glorious doctrine of the Bible that teaches that *salvation is of grace from beginning to end*. The five points of Calvinism have been summarized under the acronym TULIP:

- T. Total Depravity**—This is the biblical teaching that our rebellion against God is total. Apart from grace, there is no delight in holiness and there is no glad submission to the sovereign authority of God (*Romans 3:9-10, 18; John 3:20-21; Romans 7:18; 14:23; 8:7-8*). Total depravity does not mean that man is as evil as he could be; it means that there is no good in man that could satisfy God.
- U. Unconditional Election**—This is the biblical teaching that there is no condition man must meet before God chooses to save him. The only condition for salvation is faith (*Ephesians 2:8-9*), but faith is not a condition for election. Election is a condition for faith (*John 10:26; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-30; 9:11-12; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11*).
- L. Limited Atonement**—This is the biblical teaching that what Christ achieved on the cross for those for whom He died secures the benefits of salvation for all whom the Father chose for His Son. The atonement is limited in scope or application, but it is not limited in its power or effectiveness (*Isaiah 53:11; Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:68; John 10:11; Titus 2:14*).
- I. Irresistible Grace**—This biblical teaching means that God can overcome, through the internal operation of the Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel, the resistance due to sin and cause the person to become open, or receptive, to the Gospel of Christ so that he or she can be saved (*John 6:44, 64-65; Acts 16:14; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; 2 Timothy 2:24-25*).
- P. Perseverance of the Saints**—This is the biblical teaching that the elect will not only be saved finally, but that they will also persevere in obedience, which comes from the faith that they have been given as a gift from God (*Mark 13:13; John 8:31; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2; 1 John 2:3-6*).

Hyper-Calvinism suggests that Gospel preaching is solely the means of ingathering the elect so the words "trust in Christ and you shall be saved" should only be addressed to elect sinners. Therefore, it denies the universal call of the Gospel.

Arminianism comes from the views of Jacobus Arminius. Arminius rejected Calvinist teaching on salvation. He believed we inherited pollution from Adam, but not guilt or a sin nature. Therefore, man is not totally depraved; he has the ability to will to do good and to conform to God's will so as to be perfect. This human will is one of the causes of regeneration.

Review 2.1

Question 1 of 3
What are the three verses that prove that salvation is of the Lord?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Question 2 of 3
There are three theological views of salvation. What are they?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



The Ordo Salutis

Is all of salvation from God? Or, are only parts of it designed by Him and other parts lie within our hands and power? The Ordo Salutis, or the order of salvation, answers these questions for us.

The great golden chain of salvation

One way of thinking of the order of salvation is by a series of golden links in a great golden chain. Each link represents one aspect of the glorious plan of salvation. The first link is found in eternity past, and then it comes down into time or history and swings back up into eternity future. The assertion the Bible makes is that, from beginning to end, each link is dependent on and secured by the mighty hand of a gracious God.

A. The first link in the great golden chain of salvation is unconditional election.

The biblical doctrine of election is that, before creation, God selected out of the human race, foreseen as fallen, those whom He would redeem, bring to faith, justify, and glorify in Jesus Christ. There are boatloads of passages by which the doctrine of election can be supported and built upon, however here are two that speak loud and clear:

- **Ephesians 1:4-5**—*“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.”*
- **Romans 8:29-30**—*“For those whom He foreknew [persons not events], He also predestined [means] 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 [experience]; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”*

B. The second link in the great golden chain of salvation is the effectual calling.

- **Romans 8:30**—*“and these whom He predestined, He also called...”*

Discussion: Since all are dead in sin, why do some people respond to the Gospel and are saved, and others reject it and are lost?

Matthew 22:14 says, *“For many are called, but few are chosen.”* That is to say, many are called with the external call, but out of those who are called externally, few are chosen to receive the effectual call. (See also Romans 11:29; Galatians 1:15-16; Ephesians 4:1-3; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 26; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 2:21; 5:10; 2 Peter 1:10)

Types of callings

The two types of callings are the **general call** and the **specific call**. What is the difference between the two? The general call is universal and external or outward; this is often described as the words of the preacher or the Christian as he witnesses, but not everyone answers this call.

The specific call of God is internal or inward. It is not only heard in the ears; it is also felt in the heart. Can a person be called specifically by God without the general call? No! Romans 10:17 says, *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”* No man can be saved without hearing the Gospel!

C. The third link in the great golden chain of salvation is regeneration.

Regeneration means to be made alive, to quicken, or to create life. It speaks of the implanting of divine life.

- **Titus 3:5**—*“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”*

- **Ephesians 2:5**—“even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”

D. The fourth link in the great golden chain of salvation is faith.

What is faith?

1. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:2. Paul says that not all have _____.
2. Faith is a _____ from God. (*Ephesians 2:8-9*)
3. Faith is an _____. (*Hebrews 11:1*)

Faith is also a guarantee. In 1 Peter 1:4-5, Peter tells us that we have been born again “to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” What Peter tells us here is that God's power is the means by which our faith is sustained.

E. The fifth link in the great golden chain of salvation is justification.

- **Romans 5:1**—“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Justification is the covering of our guilt in the courtroom of heaven by the blood of Jesus; it is also the bestowal of a favored status.

F. The sixth link in the great golden chain of salvation is conversion.

Conversion means turning away in practice from one thing to another. Conversion is the proof that we are regenerated. Regeneration is the inward implanting of divine life; conversion is the outward life and living of people who show that a great change has happened inwardly.

1. According to Acts 20:20-21, the two essential elements in salvation are a _____ from sin and _____ toward God.

- This verse tells us that repentance is turning from sin and placing faith in Christ.

G. The seventh link in the great golden chain of salvation is sanctification.

Read John 15:5. What can we do apart from Christ? _____

Christ must make us holy by His life. God's way of holiness is for you to come to Christ.

Discussion: Do we possess any ability to make ourselves holy? What about the desire to participate in spiritual disciplines like reading the Bible, prayer, participating in the Lord Supper, and hearing truth?

In sanctification, just as in conversion, God works and we respond. God will not do the work of repentance *for* you or *in spite* (without) you, but will work in you as you respond in obedience.

H. The final link on the great golden chain of salvation is glorification.

Glorification is *sanctification completed*, and sanctification is *glorification begun*.

Review 2.2

Question 3 of 3

What are the five points of Calvinism based on the acronym TULIP?

T
U
L
I
P



An Important Warning

To despise *the means of salvation* is to despise *salvation itself*. When you are submitting to the sovereignty of God in the way of salvation, there will be obedience to the truth in the face of reason or confusion. Yet this admiration of God's sovereignty in the way of salvation comes as one humbles him or herself and refuses to establish his or her own righteousness, depending solely on the righteousness of God in Christ. William Cunningham once said,

"There is not a converted man on earth, in whose conscience there does not exist in at least the germ of the doctrine of election. It may be suppressed, perverted, misunderstood, but every converted man knows that if God had not chosen him, he never would have chosen God, and that if God, by His Spirit, had not exerted a decisive and determining influence in the matter, he never would have been turned from darkness to light and been led to embrace Christ as his Savior."

Discussion: Before moving on, make sure you understand what God's Word says about His sovereignty in salvation. Review the Scripture references.



Application

Skillful application of divine truth for the glory of God

A. What is to be our response to this great truth of God's sovereign grace and wonderful design in the Ordo Salutis?

- Be deeply Trinitarian.
- Be humble.
- Be amazed.
- Be assured of God's love.
- Be confident that what He started He will finish.
- Be holy for the world does not know Him, but we do and we know that He said, "*YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.*" (1 Peter 1:16)
- Be hopeful.
- Be focused on Christ and His kingdom.

B. Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you (2 Peter 1:10). This wonderful doctrine should lead us to some honest, healthy, scriptural self-examination. Ask yourself:

- Have I been the subject of that workmanship?
- Do I display the Spirit's fruit?

C. Do you see the great golden chain of God's amazing salvation?

1 John 3:1—"*See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God...*"



Serving Under the Sovereignty of God

How do you balance home, work, and church?

Principle: to practice: Don't compartmentalize your life. Put Christ first (*not prominent but preeminent*) in everything you do and in every relationship you have. (Matthew 6:33)



Singing Under the Sovereignty of God in Salvation

Hymns to help you worship

Profile: PHILIP P. BLISS (1838-1876)

- Born in a log cabin in Clearfield County, PA and loved to sing
- Had no formal education but was taught from the Bible by his mother
- Left home at age 11 to earn his own living and attend school to further his education
- Met singing teacher J.G. Towner who recognized his talent and persuaded him to pursue teaching music
- Moved to Chicago and formed an association with D.L. Moody who encouraged him to leave his job and become a missionary singer
- Died while attempting to extricate his wife from a train crash which he was on

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HALLELUHAH, WHAT A SAVIOR!

"Man of Sorrows!" what a name
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood
Sealed my pardon with His blood:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Guilty, vile, and helpless we,
Spotless lamb of God was He;
Full atonement! Can it be?
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Lifted up was He to die,
"It is finished" was His cry;
Now in heav'n exalted high:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

When He comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we'll sing:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!



When we rightly understand God's grace to all sinners, what actions should follow?



Are you ready for His return? If not, what would you have to do to get ready?

TAKEAWAY FOR TODAY:

The fourth stanza makes a reference to the truth that one of the purposes for Jesus' second coming is to gather those who were purchased with His blood and bring them home! While this will be a joyous occasion for some, this truth should be sobering as you consider unsaved friends and loved ones. Ask God to place a greater burden in your heart for the lost, to pray with earnestness for them and trust that He will do only that which brings Him the glory.

Answer Key

Review 2.1

Question 1 of 3

1. 1 Corinthians 10:30-31
2. Jonah 2:9
3. Psalm 3:8

Question 2 of 3

1. Calvinism
2. Hyper-Calvinism
3. Arminianism

The Ordo Salutis

The great golden chain of salvation

D.

4. faith
5. gift
6. assurance of things hoped for

F.

1. turning, repentance

G. nothing

Review 2.2

Question 3 of 3

Total Depravity
Unconditional Election
Limited Atonement
Irresistible Grace
Perseverance of the Saints

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible: 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation.