

Soteriology
Lesson 22
The Work of Salvation

By
Dr. David Hocking

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Now, you will see at the back of your notes something called “The Work of Salvation.” This is something that I hope will be a blessing to you, helpful to you, and you’ll use it many, many times in the future. You know the Bible brings great insight to all those books we read and all those speakers we hear, including this one. And everybody fights over these doctrines of salvation, when they occur and how.

There are Calvinists who say you cannot repent and believe until you are regenerated. Now without looking at this, I certainly see the wisdom of that. We’re dead in trespasses and sins. “There are none that doeth good, no not one. There’s none righteous; no, not one” (Romans 3:10). So until we’re born again how could we ever do the good thing and believe in the Lord. So, strict Calvinism teaches that you must be born again before you can believe and repent. I understand that.

There are also people who believe that when God chose us, He knew that we were going to receive Him; therefore, He chose us on that basis. There are others who say that He chose you regardless of whether you were going to believe. And I look at the question and I think you’re wrong on that. Why? Because obviously whoever He did choose, also believed. So what difference does it make?

I think that’s why we have to talk about this subject because I know this issue pretty well. I know the wars. I know the fights. I’ve debated it and it comes down to this: if the Bible says something, then that’s the truth even if you can’t understand it. If the Bible says that, then that’s true! See the issue in this whole discussion is what does the Bible say, not what you think it says. Not reading a statement and then saying, “Well what that really means is....” Well, now you’re the same as a Mormon! You can’t trust (understand) the Bible unless it’s rightly interpreted, namely by you! See, we’re off base.

Our whole country is suffering terribly because we have shifted from the Constitution of this country being the authority to now the Justices’ interpretation of the Constitution being the

authority. The late Justice Earl Warren actually came out and publicly in print—it's a very famous statement—he actually said that “Our Constitution has no value except as it is interpreted by the Supreme Court Justice.” That's the same argument every cult uses. “You can't understand the Bible. You can't take the Bible for what it says. It has to be corrected interpreted by us.” And our justices have been interpreting clear statements in the Constitution in ways that were never intended by the original forefathers. And they're getting away with it. Why? Because all of America has shifted—we've all shifted. Why? There's no absolute truth any more. Absolute truth today is, “Is it correctly interpreted?” That's why terms like, “Is it politically correct?” now are very important terms to people. But that's really nonsense. Something is either correct or not correct. It's either true or not true, but we don't think that way anymore.

You know years ago we used to have one of the major classes in universities that dealt with philosophies, which was the class in logic. I mean you could hardly go through those philosophical courses unless you had your course in logic. I have searched and searched, I can hardly find any universities anymore that teach it. Because if we did start thinking logically, we'd come to the conclusion that most of our viewpoints are totally irrelevant. They are not based on truth, on absolutes. But see, our culture doesn't believe in absolutes. Most of you grew up in an age of relativism. Anywhere from 1950 to now is really the age of relativism. There are no absolutes. Nothing is concrete. Everything has to be interpreted. And as a result, this whole Christian culture is saturated with that kind of thinking. So you take sides. If you happen to like the logical presentation of somebody telling you what the Bible *really means*, then you follow them. And you become devotees and you're upset about everyone else who follows somebody else and they like the way they interpret.

There are very few people in this culture who can listen to opposing viewpoints and say, “You know, I like the way they both said that.” Of course, what the Bible says *is*. Most people don't like it if it's not the way you believe it should be interpreted.

Can you be satisfied with biblical statement regardless of understanding it? God's ways are past finding out and that's something you have to come to eventually. You can in your early pursuit of this get all bent out of shape, but eventually you have to come to something. Biblical statement is the truth in the original text, regardless of how it's interpreted. The interpretation doesn't make it accurate. The interpretation opens up the door for inaccuracy.

Now, I'm saying all of that because we're going to look at what the Bible actually says about when something happens and it doesn't, as it relates to salvation. Now, will you notice we divided it up?

The Work of Salvation

- **The Plan of God**

*Foreknowledge • Purpose • Election
Predestination • Calling • Drawing • Conviction*

- **The Human Response**

Confession • Repentance • Faith

- **The Position in Christ**

*Reconciliation • Redemption • Adoption • Fellowship
Justification • Sanctification • Glorification*

- **The Work of the Holy Spirit**

Regeneration • Indwelling • Baptism • Sealing

First of all, something that pleases the Calvinists is the plan of God in bringing salvation to humanity. They are more interested in that than perhaps Arminians are who are more interested in the fact of becoming a Christian. So I decided, let's put all seven of those down and let's see if we can find an order in the Bible. Then when we come to the part which human response plays that is where everybody enters the discussion. And everybody's theology has three human responses—confession, repentance and faith. But did you know that some people believe those

are given to us by God, are in fact not human responses, but results of God's gift. So we've got to look at that matter.

Then, we have the problem of our position in Christ. Some people don't even put this in this category. They say reconciliation is also something God achieves before you ever become a Christian. All of these things need to be correctly looked at. And I'm not saying I'm correct. I'm giving you a guideline that I hope will be an encouragement for you to study your Bible and find out what the truth is.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ provides seven things for the believer:

- 1) Reconciliation – He is our peace!
- 2) Redemption – He is our ransom!
- 3) Adoption – He is our joint-heir!
- 4) Fellowship – He is our life!
- 5) Justification – He is our righteousness!
- 6) Sanctification – He is our sin-offering!
- 7) Glorification – He is our hope!

The presence and work of the Holy Spirit provides:

- 1) Regeneration
- 2) Indwelling
- 3) Baptism
- 4) Sealing

Notice that there are two categories under that final one. One, the position we have in Christ which is a result of God's work and our response, because of the death and resurrection of Christ! And there are seven things. But another is because of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit and there are four things, and not everybody agrees about that.

So let's back up and look at the plan of God. Seven things. Now the theologies will discuss all of these words and go into great length. And I just decided rather than sit here and

argue about each one of them and what they mean, I want to lay down, from the Bible, what precedes what.

Would you say conviction of sin would precede faith? Well, I think it would have to, wouldn't it? Do you understand?—because conviction is what leads you to believe! Well, that's very interesting if you just start backing up because in John 16, we learn in verse eight that “When he comes he will reprove, or convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, of sin because they believe not on me.” So there is a clear verse showing you that conviction comes before belief. All right, that's the way we're going. I just want to illustrate.

Now in the theologies, they talk about the doctrine of God *drawing* you to Himself. “No man can come to Me,” Jesus said, “unless the Father draws him” (John 6:44). Now, would you agree that you have to be *drawn* to the Lord before you, to use the Bible word, *come* to the Lord? If you're confused, look at the verse again. I'm not trying to interpret these words, I'm trying to place them in an order. So I look at John 6:44. Jesus said, “No man can *come* to Me [So, I'm just using His words.] except the Father which has sent me, *draw* him.” So, does drawing precede coming to Christ? Yes, on the basis of that verse. Is everybody still with me? You follow how we're doing this? Let's just keep backing up.

When we discussed this to begin our course, we had predestination, election, calling, what the differences are between those. But I asked myself the question: “Which precedes which?” Now, I know that calling precedes justification. So wherever justification is on this list, it better follow calling. Because “Whom He called, *them* He also justified” (Romans 8:30). Is everybody following that? Now it so happens that I've got justification way down the list here, but at this point understand that it precedes it. It (being drawn or called) also precedes fellowship of His Son. 1 Corinthians 1:9 says, “We're called into the fellowship of His Son.” So obviously you're called before that happens.

But I was surprised to find out that it follows election. Here's what I did find. Romans 9:11. It said, “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil that the

purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him that calleth.” Wow. Now, I know election has to precede calling. I know that calling has to follow election. Which means, I am chosen before God, in fact, calls me to Himself. Well right away, your mind starts working on that, doesn’t it? You want to interpret it. Wait a minute! If I’m chosen and then called, then that affects my belief about the reason why God chose me. I do know that predestination precedes adoption and calling. Romans 8:30 “...whom He foreknows...He predestinated and whom He predestinated, them He also called.” So He’s got to also predestinate us before He calls us. And it’s got to precede adoption according to Ephesians 1:5, “We were predestined unto the adoption of Jesus Christ.”

Well, then where does election fit in? Well, in Ephesians 1:4-5, it’s got to precede predestination. It doesn’t in some of the theologies, but it sure has to in the Bible because it says, “Chosen before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame, in love having predestinated us.” Some say, “Well that precedes *chosen*.” No, because in Romans 9:11 it says the purpose of God was decided before the children were ever born, ever done any good or evil, according to election might stand. So election has got to precede predestination and the purpose of God. It’s got to precede it.

But then I thought, wait a minute! We’ve got a problem here because purpose, which is in the person of God, precedes election. Is anybody getting confused? Maybe my definition of purpose wasn’t correct. See, He even predestinated me, Ephesians 1:11-12, according to the *purpose* of Him. So the purpose preceded the predestination. So God’s purpose, to give glory to Himself, had to precede His plan. And the plan has to be preceded by His choice, so His choice would have to be rooted in His purpose. Therefore, the reason God chose you was to bring glory to Himself. Do you follow?

The moment you shift gears a little bit and you don’t accurately state what the Bible says, you can just easily find something else. Well, He chose you because He knew what you were

going to do. Or, He loved you so much He needed an object to love, or whatever. No, that's not true. It can't be true.

But the interesting thing is that I know that all of it was based on foreknowledge, predestination and His election and His choice. 1 Peter 1:2 says, "Elect according to foreknowledge." We're actually chosen according to that. Which means God knew ahead of time what He was going to do. He knew the reason He was going to do it ahead of time, to give glory to Himself. And He chose you on the basis of that without any other factors. As a result of that choice, choosing you to give glory to Himself, knowing all about it ahead of time, He then laid out a plan of how it was going to be achieved.

Predestination means a plan ahead of time, a horizon ahead of time. He knew He would have to call you to Himself because you wouldn't come of yourself. And in order to achieve that, He'd have to draw you. You're so bad and stubborn, rebellious, and in order to make you respond to the drawing He'd send the Holy Spirit to convict you. Isn't that interesting?

You know, and as I backed up and took a look at the whole thing, I said, "Glory to God! What a marvelous layout this is!" And all of a sudden it dawned on me. The whole thing glorifies God, from beginning to end!

But now we get to that part, that human response plays and everybody gets all bent out of shape. So let's just take a look at faith, repentance, and confession and see what precedes what.

Confession Precedes:

- **Faith** – “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.” (Mar 1:5)
- **Forgiveness** – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)
- “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38)
- **Receiving Eternal Life** – “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” (Acts 11:18)

Now, in the Bible, faith—let’s start with faith—(start at the end) and work backwards. Faith precedes salvation by grace. That’s very clear, Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 2:8. And it (faith) also precedes regeneration in John 1:12 because only those who receive Him are born again (paraphrased). It precedes receiving eternal life. And yet there are theologies that say, “No. You get eternal life from regeneration, which then leads to your ability to believe.” Now it all happens simultaneously; it happens in a moment, but people fight over what the order is.

Faith precedes receiving the Holy Spirit in John 7; the sealing of the Spirit in Ephesians 1:13; forgiveness in Acts 10; justification...boy I can’t tell you how many theologies taught the opposite of that...you are justified so that you can believe. No, you’re not! You are justified because you did believe. It precedes the baptism of the Holy Spirit also in Acts 11. Wow! Now what are we going to do? That means that all the doctrines dealing with that have got to be moved down the line.

Repentance Precedes:

- **Faith** – “For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. (Matthew 21:32)
- “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1:15)
- **Forgiveness** – “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” (Mark 1:4)
- “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38)
- **Receiving Eternal Life** – “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” (Acts 11:18)
- **Given by God** – “Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” (Acts 5:31)

Well, what comes before faith? In the Bible repentance does. And I find very few people wanting to agree with this. So I think we better look it up. What do you think? Let’s look it up Matthew 21:32. I went over this and went over this. I said, “David, it isn’t you that’s the authority. Now, just say whatever the Bible says.” Sometimes people say repentance is the first word of the gospel, repent and believe the gospel. But let’s just walk through it.

Matthew 21:32,

For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, but you believed him not:
but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it,
repented not afterward, that ye might believe in him.

Does Jesus indicate that repentance precedes faith?—absolutely in the last phrase. I think I’ll hang out with Jesus rather than the theologies.

In Mark 1:15 we have another interesting example. It says, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Well apparently, repentance precedes faith. Do you think this might be a problem in the way we’re presenting the gospel today? How often is repentance taught? Yet according to the Bible, repentance precedes it. It even precedes forgiveness. Of course you say, so does faith! It precedes receiving eternal life, but so does faith! And repentance is given by God.

Confession Precedes:

- **Faith** – “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.” (Mar 1:5)
- **Forgiveness** – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)
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- **Receiving Eternal Life** – “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” (Acts 11:18)

Well, we’re not done yet. One of the interesting things is we’ve got confession. You know people believe you don’t have to confess in order to be saved. Lots of people believe that. They believe you have to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and confession is a product of a true believer. Is that really true?

Again in Mark 1:15 it says, repent ye and believe the gospel. But in Mark 1:4 it says, “John baptized in the wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance for [or unto] the remission of sins.” So apparently repentance precedes receiving forgiveness.

You say, “Well, I don’t understand. What are you getting at here?” Well, Peter on the Day of Pentecost said, “Repent and be baptized,” (c.f. Acts 2:38). Confession precedes faith in Mark 1:5, “There went out unto Him all the land of Judea and Jerusalem were all baptized of Him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.” Verse 4 says, “Preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” The text is “having confessed their sins.” It’s already occurred. Already occurred!

Now let’s go to 1 John and see if we can figure this out. 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins.” You see that? Confession, first of all, precedes faith, Mark 1:5. Forgiveness 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just [to what?] forgive us.” Does forgiveness follow confession? Yes. You see in some theologies, forgiveness or justification is granted as a result of God’s work and then the result is repentance and confession. Everybody following me? But technically in the Bible you can’t do that.

Go to Acts 11 and look at this again, verse 17-18 when Peter is recounting the story of what happened at the house of Cornelius. It says,

17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?
18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

So the life would have to follow their confession, which was made back in chapter 10:43 of Acts. When Paul recounts the story, he’s got their decision preceding receiving eternal life. You say, “Well I’ve always felt that, but this is very difficult.”

Number one, it is not clear in terms of human response what precedes what. Number two, all three acts of human response however, must occur in order for conversion to take place. All

three acts of human response—confession, repentance, faith—must occur before conversion takes place. And number three, the results of salvation are always dependent upon human response. Now what are we talking about here? These are the results of salvation. You've been reconciled. You've been redeemed, adopted. You have fellowship. You are justified. All of those, every last one of them is dependent upon confession, repentance and faith.

So, what does that help us to understand? And maybe not much, but I think the following is true. Salvation clearly is of God not man. It is planned by God. It is given to man by God. It's worked by God, controlled by God, produced by God. It's definitely of God. That's the first thing that we conclude.

Secondly, is that God's plan never eliminates human response. Is salvation all of God? Absolutely! I don't care if you're Calvinistic, or Arminian. He foreknows. He purposes. He elects. He predestines. Salvation is of God. But, what is dangerous in this subject is where human response comes to play. None of the wonderful doctrines that we're learning ever eliminates human response. And I think where the struggle lies is what precedes what and it's really not necessary for us to find the answer. Our part is to do what God says: "confess, repent, believe." Our ability to do so is the question. Calvinists say you don't have the ability to do so, so you have to be regenerated first. No. Because in John 1:12, your receiving Christ precedes being born again. So you're wrong.

This is just my view of theological difficulties. This whole argument: you have to be born of God in order to respond to the gospel, it seems to me that it isn't regeneration that we're talking about but it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Let me just try to explain what I'm talking about. I think the answer to this whole argument on Calvinism and Arminianism, at least one of the parts of it as it deals with human response, is that human response doesn't occur because you've been regenerated, as a lot of Calvinists feel you have to say because we're depraved, we're unable to do anything right, etc; but that isn't the issue. Human response occurs because of the work of the Holy Spirit, which in fact does not include regeneration because in the Bible it

follows your faith. You are born again as a result of believing and receiving Christ. But does that mean that the work of God wasn't there when you believed it? Does it mean that it's just your decision and God moves in on the basis of...? No. You see, God's been working in you all along. Like Philippians 2:12 and 13 says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God that works in you."

Does God propitiate those who will never believe in Him? The answer is yes. Christ is our propitiation, not for our sins only but for the sins of the whole world, even those who reject Him because propitiation deals with the satisfaction of God's wrath against sin. You don't have half of the death of Christ. When He died He died for the whole world in some sense, the sense of propitiation. Yet we know no one is going to be redeemed, set free from the consequences, unless they believe it.

So what does that make us? Calvinists? Arminians? Hopefully people committed to the Bible with a certain humility in them that says, "I don't understand all the ways of God but whatever this Book says, I know that's the truth."

I don't even like the word Calvinian. To me, it's very confusing. Let's take a couple of doctrines just for a moment, something to fight about. We have in Calvinism the fourth tenant, it's called irresistible grace. God's grace is so powerful (wonderful) it's impossible to resist it. Does that sound good? There're some problems that I have with this. I don't want to have any problems with it, but I do. In Hebrews 10:29 it says, that you "have done despite [or insulted] the Spirit of grace." A lot of people say that's not irresistible grace that's just a part of the process by which grace was extended to the man and he's in rebellion. Wait, wait, wait! We're talking about those who sin willfully.

In the Old Testament was there any hope for anybody who sinned willfully? No. They were cut off from Israel forever. There's no more sacrifice for sin. So quit telling me this guy has hope. He doesn't have hope. "It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). We're talking about judgment, consequences. "How much sorer punishment

than those who died without mercy under the law of Moses?" (cf. Hebrews 10:27-28). So, what is he saying? Can you insult the Spirit of grace? God giving you what you don't (deserve). Can you refuse it?

Now the other passage that bothers me a little bit, is in Acts chapter seven, in Steven's message he says in verse 51, "Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. You do always resist the Holy Ghost." How can you be with straight face and no tongue in cheek, a pure Calvinist, and say that God's grace is irresistible when in fact, the Bible indicates that they were resisting the Holy Spirit? They were insulting the spirit of grace. You see what I mean?

Now if you mean the grace of God that brings salvation, we've come to know the Lord, yeah, I understand then how it is irresistible. God's going to work on you and convict by the Holy Spirit and draw you. But to say that that grace cannot be resisted is absolutely a flat denial of what the Bible actually says. And the Calvinist will interpret that differently and say, "Well, that only applies to unbelievers." And again my Bible answer is, "What difference does that make?" You said it was irresistible grace. God said it can be resisted and insulted. Who cares by whom? The fact is the doctrine. Do you understand? You carry a doctrine too far and you all of a sudden are off base.

The same way with the atonement, did He die only for the elect? Well, He certainly did die for the elect. Can we agree on that? Do we understand that all people who go to heaven are there because they believe that Jesus died for their sins? Well, some people argue that one. What about babies that die? When did they ever believe in the gospel? But didn't the atonement of Christ cover depravity as well as individual sinning? There're a lot of issues here, aren't there? Just a lot of things we don't understand. People say, "Well what about the Old Testament believers," you know? Wait a minute. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. What did he believe?—that a seed, a person would come through his line and would save the world. Excuse me, I think we all have to come through the Messiah.

Now, when you're backing up and you look at all this and you're trying to explain it and you're trying to understand it, did Christ die for the elect? Yes. Did He die only for the elect? Yes, in the sense of redemption, if that's what you mean. But did He die only for the elect in the sense of propitiation? No. He died for the non-elect as well. His death on the cross *was* sufficient for the entire world, but it's only efficient for those who believe. In other words, are you a Calvinist or are you an Arminian? I don't care! I just want to be true to the Bible.

So do you see what happens to us? When you start trying to interpret it too far, you wind up getting heretical instead of saying what God says and no more, no less. It doesn't mean we all understand it. I don't understand all of this. I know salvation is of God. I know God is sovereign. I know He works. People say to me, "Oh you sound like a Calvinist." Well, I hope I sound like the Bible. I don't want to sound like a Calvinist. Some of the greatest Calvinists who ever lived were the greatest evangelists who ever lived. So if your Calvinism leads you NOT to be evangelistic, you'd better go back and study your Bible again, and history as well!

You take Arminians. I think Arminians are clubbed over the head entirely too much. There are many Arminians who are quite Calvinistic. When an Arminian friend of mine, who is dying of cancer, called me on the phone, I said, "Well, maybe you want one of your Arminian friends to come." He laughed on the phone and said, "Arminianism won't help me now." We were kind of laughing about it. I said, "You're really not an Arminian at all. He says, "No, I'm not." He's a guy who has preached Arminianism, but again, in fact, believes in the security of the believer now that he's dying.

Hello world? Do you understand what happens to all of us? In a crisis, all of a sudden the real truth comes out. You know you've been spending your whole time arguing with everybody, but in the bottom line, where the rubber meets the road so to speak in your life, when God's beginning to work in you, all of a sudden, things change.

Father, thank You for Your love to us, Your grace, Your mercy, Your kindness through our Lord Jesus Christ. Continue Lord, to give us a soft spirit and a humble attitude towards Your word. Fill us with grace, kindness, mercy, and compassion toward one another. And I pray that You would continue to make us like the Berean Christians, who search the Scriptures daily to see whether those things are so. Thank You, Lord, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.