

THEOLOGY SESSION 8

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

What a great word that word “salvation” is! It includes the cleansing of our conscience from all past guilt, the delivery of our soul from all those propensities to evil which now so strongly predominate in us; it takes in, in fact, the undoing of all that Adam did. Salvation is the total restoration of man from his fallen estate; and yet it is something more than that, for God’s salvation fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. It finds us broken in pieces by the sin of our first parent, defiled, stained, accursed: it first heals our wounds, it removes our diseases, it takes away our curse, it puts our feet upon the rock Christ Jesus, and having thus done, at last it lifts our heads far above all principalities and powers, to be crowned for ever with Jesus Christ, the king of heaven.¹

Charles Spurgeon

Group Work: What does salvation mean to you, personally?

¹Charles H. Spurgeon. *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*. Vol. 4. (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1858), 353.

²J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, 146.

WHAT IS MEANT BY SALVATION?

*The master theme of the Christian gospel is salvation. Salvation is a picture-word of wide application that expresses the idea of rescue from jeopardy and misery into a state of safety. The gospel proclaims that the God who saved Israel from Egypt, Jonah from the fish's belly, the psalmist from death, and the soldiers from drowning, saves all who trust Christ from sin and sin's consequences.*² (J. I. Packer)

*Salvation is the work of God that delivers us from sin and its penalty, restores us to a right relationship with him, and imparts to us eternal life.*³ (Kenneth Keathley)

Salvation and the Trinity:

1. God the Father

Scripture depicts the Father as the ultimate source, planner and initiator of salvation.⁴

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

... who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began. (2 Timothy 1:9)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:17-18)

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. (1 John 4:14)

2. God the Son

Scripture depicts the Son, Jesus, as completing redemption through his obedient life and atoning death.⁵

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight. (Ephesians 1:7-8)

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:15)

²J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, 146.

³Kenneth Keathley, "The Work of God: Salvation," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 686.

⁴Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 44.

⁵Ibid.

3. God the Holy Spirit

Scripture depicts the Holy Spirit as the one who applies, makes effective, and preserves the redemption Christ bought for those who believe.⁶

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

... he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (Romans 8:16)

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. (Titus 3:4-6)

The Order of Salvation (“ordo salutis”):

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

The “ordo salutis” is a very important concept because the doctrine of salvation is so rich and nuanced, and involves so many different realities, that we will not understand it the way that we should if we do not define all of its elements very carefully. We grow in sanctification and holiness as we grow in our understanding of the gospel, and realize all the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ; and so, if we are unclear on the many precious things that God’s Word has to say about the order of events which his salvation brings about in our lives, we will remain immature in our faith and conduct.⁷

1. *Election* (God’s choice of people to be saved)
2. *The gospel call* (proclamation of the gospel)
3. *Regeneration* (being born again)
4. *Conversion* (faith and repentance)
5. *Justification* (right legal standing)
6. *Adoption* (membership in God’s family)
7. *Sanctification* (right conduct of life)
8. *Perseverance* (remaining a Christian)
9. *Death* (going to be with the Lord)
10. *Glorification* (receiving a resurrection body)⁸

⁶Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006).

⁷www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/qna/ordosalutis.html

⁸Wayne Grudem *Systematic Theology*, 670.

COMMON GRACE

*Common grace is the grace of God by which he gives people immeasurable blessings that are not part of salvation.*⁹
(Wayne Grudem)

*Common grace is different from saving grace in its **results** (it does not bring about salvation), in its **recipients** (it is given to believers and unbelievers alike), and its **source** (it does not directly flow from Christ's atoning work).*¹⁰ (Wayne Grudem)

Examples of Common Grace:¹¹

- The physical realm
- The intellectual realm
- The moral realm
- The creative realm
- The societal realm
- The religious realm

*You are not a believer in Christ and yet you are still out of hell. That is the grace of God. You are not in hell, but you are on earth in good health and prosperity. That is the common grace of God. The vast majority of those who read these words are living in comfortable homes or apartments. That is common grace. You are not fleeing as refugees along the highways of a country desolated by war. That is common grace. You come home from your job and your child runs to meet you in good health and spirits. That is common grace. You are able to put your hand in your pocket and give the child a quarter or a half dollar for an allowance. It is common grace that you have such abundance. You go into your house and sit down to a good meal. That is common grace. On the day that you read these words there are more than a billion and a half members of the human race who will go to sleep without enough to satisfy their hunger, the fact that you have enough is common grace. You do not deserve it. And if you think that you do deserve anything at all from God beyond the wrath which you have so richly earned, you merely show your ignorance of spiritual principles.*¹² (Donald Gray Barnhouse)

Reasons for Common Grace¹³

1. To **redeem** those who will be saved

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

2. To demonstrate God's **goodness** and **mercy**

The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made. (Psalm 145:9)

⁹Wayne Grudem *Systematic Theology*, 657.

¹⁰Ibid., 658.

¹¹Ibid., 658-662.

¹²Donald Grey Barnhouse, *God's Wrath, The Book of Romans*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 25.

¹³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 664-665.

3. To demonstrate God's ***justice***

But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. (Romans 2:5)

4. To demonstrate God's ***glory***

Reflections on Common Grace¹⁴

1. Common grace does not mean that those who receive it will be ***saved***
2. We must be careful not to ***reject*** the good things that unbelievers do as totally evil
3. The doctrine of common grace should stir our hearts to much greater thankfulness to God

How can a right understanding of the doctrine of common grace strengthen our intimacy with God?

How can a right understanding of the doctrine of common grace strengthen our missional activity?

¹⁴Wayne Grudem *Systematic Theology*, 665.