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Systematic Theology - Lesson 18

The Plan of Redemption (Part 1)

I. Introduction: The Problem of Salvation

- The Plan of Redemption traces God's work from eternity past into eternity future as He reconciles people to Himself through the saving work of Jesus Christ.
- The central question: How does the salvation accomplished by Christ actually become ours?
- Redemption is not God's emergency response to an unexpected problem; Scripture roots salvation in God's eternal purpose and works it out in history through Christ.

A. Salvation Assumes a Problem

- If we need to be saved, we must ask: Saved from what? Saved to what? Saved by whom?
- Christianity does not begin with self-improvement. It tells us that we need rescue.
- The gospel begins with the recognition: I cannot save myself.

B. Redefining the Problem

- Our culture often moves the problem from sin, guilt, and rebellion against God to circumstances, self-fulfillment, and what others have done to us.
- Scripture recognizes real suffering and injustice, but it does not allow us to locate evil only outside ourselves.
- If the fundamental problem is sin, the answer is not merely education, affirmation, or changed circumstances. We need a Savior.

"A shallow view of sin inevitably produces a shallow view of salvation." — Charles Spurgeon

C. The Heart of Sin

- The temptation of Eden was not simply to disobey God, but to live independently of Him.
 - We want to be our own authority, our own judge, and our own master.
- Sin is not merely breaking God's rules; it is rejecting God's rule.

D. The Problem Is Within

- Jesus traces sinful actions back to their source: the human heart.
 - **Mark 7:21–23**
- Sin is not merely something around us; sin is something within us.
- The biblical diagnosis of humanity is far deeper than we normally imagine.

"The problem is deep enough that salvation must come from somewhere outside us."

E. The Remedy Is Outside of Us

- We cannot save ourselves.
 - We need rescue from sin, guilt, death, and God's righteous judgment.
- The same God whose holiness requires judgment is the God whose love provides salvation.
- Christian salvation is not self-improvement. It is divine rescue through Jesus Christ.

"He who thinks lightly of sin will think lightly of the Savior." — Charles Spurgeon

"Not until we take God seriously will we ever take sin seriously." — R. C. Sproul

F. From Problem to Plan

- We need salvation.
- Christ has accomplished redemption through His death and resurrection.
- The question now becomes: How does God bring sinners to receive the salvation Christ has provided?

II. The Order of Salvation

- The Order of Salvation asks how the salvation accomplished by Christ becomes ours personally.
 - **Jonah 2:9 — "Salvation belongs to the LORD!"**
- Salvation belongs completely to God: He conceived the plan, Christ accomplished the work, and the Holy Spirit brings conviction and draws sinners to Christ.
- Scripture also repeatedly commands people to repent, believe, receive, and follow.
- We hold both truths together: God is sovereign, and man is responsible.

A. Salvation in Three Tenses

- We have been saved — Ephesians 2:8.
- We are being saved — 1 Corinthians 1:18.
- We will be saved — Romans 5:9.
- Salvation is both an event and a continuing work of God with a final fulfillment.
- We have been saved from sin's penalty, we are being delivered from sin's power, and one day we will be delivered from sin's presence.

B. Why an "Order"?

- No single passage lists every aspect of salvation. The Order of Salvation is a biblical synthesis.
 - We compare Scripture with Scripture to understand what God does, what we are called to do, and how these truths relate.
- The Bible is inspired; our theological arrangement is our attempt to understand what the inspired Bible teaches.

"Our goal is not to make Scripture fit our system; our goal is to make our understanding fit Scripture."

C. Romans 8:29–30

- Paul gives a framework: foreknowledge → predestination → calling → justification → glorification.
- Romans 8 is primarily about the security and purpose of God's saving work, not a complete list of every aspect of conversion.
- God's saving purpose moves toward glory: believers are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.
- The destination of salvation is not merely "I don't go to hell." God's purpose is Christlikeness; salvation restores what sin has marred.

D. The Biblical Flow of Salvation

GOD'S SAVING PURPOSE → THE GOSPEL CALL → THE SPIRIT'S CONVICTION & DRAWING → REPENTANCE & FAITH → REGENERATION — NEW BIRTH → JUSTIFICATION & ADOPTION → SANCTIFICATION & PERSEVERANCE → DEATH / WITH CHRIST → GLORIFICATION

▸ **John 6:44; John 16:8**

- God always takes the initiative in salvation, but Scripture treats man's response to God's gracious call as real, necessary, and accountable.

E. Grace & Response

- God initiates. God calls. The Spirit convicts and draws. WE **RESPOND (1)**: Repent. Believe. Receive. Follow.
 - **John 3:16; Acts 16:30–31; John 1:12**
- Human response does not compete with grace. Faith does not earn salvation; faith trusts the One who has done the work.

"Faith is not the price of salvation; faith is the empty hand that receives the gift God has provided."

F. Logical, Not a Stopwatch

- The Order of Salvation does not mean Step 1 → **WAIT (2)** → Step 2 → Wait → Step 3 → Wait.
- Many aspects occur **TOGETHER (3)** in conversion; the "order" helps us understand their relationship.
- When a sinner turns to Christ in repentance and faith, God forgives, justifies, gives new life, adopts, indwells by the Spirit, and begins sanctification.
- We separate these doctrines to understand them, not because the believer experiences them as isolated events on a stopwatch.
- Salvation **BEGINS (4)** with God: His grace, His purpose, His initiative.

III. Election / Predestination

- Salvation did not begin with us. Before we ever sought God, God had already purposed redemption.
 - **Ephesians 1:4**

- Election is first a doctrine about God's grace, initiative, and purpose. The question is what Scripture means when it speaks of God choosing, foreknowing, and predestining.

"Election tells us that salvation is not an accident of history. Redemption has always been part of the sovereign purpose of God."

A. Chosen "In Christ"

▸ Ephesians 1:4

- God's saving purpose is centered in Jesus Christ. Paul repeatedly speaks of salvation as being "in Him."
- The purpose of election is to be **HOLY (5)** and blameless in love before Him.
- Election is not merely about destination; it is about transformation.

B. Predestined for What?

▸ Romans 8:29

- The destination established for God's redeemed people is **CHRISTLIKENESS (6)** and final glory.
- Predestination is meant to give believers confidence in God's saving purpose rather than invite speculation about hidden things.

C. Foreknowledge

▸ Romans 8:29

- Biblical foreknowledge is more than God simply knowing **FACTS (7)**.
- Evangelical Christians disagree about exactly how foreknowledge relates to election, so this is an area for theological humility.
- What can we say with confidence? God is never surprised; His knowledge is perfect; His redemptive purpose is eternal.
- God does not **LEARN (8)**; He does not react helplessly to history.
- Scripture holds together God's knowledge, purpose, and call with the genuine human commands to repent, believe, receive, and follow.

"God's sovereignty never makes the gospel invitation artificial, and human response never makes God less sovereign."

D. The Election of Israel

- God chose the nation of **ISRAEL (9)**.
 - Deuteronomy 7:7
- Israel was not chosen because it was greater or more deserving, but because of God's **LOVE (10)** and purpose.
- Israel's election did not mean every individual Israelite was automatically eternally saved; God's chosen people were still called to believe, obey, repent, return, and trust Him.
 - Genesis 12:3
- Israel was chosen not merely from the nations but for the nations: "all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

“God’s choosing is never merely privilege; it always carries purpose.”

E. Romans 9 — “Jacob I Loved...”

▸ Romans 9:10–16

- Romans 9–11 addresses the question of Israel’s rejection of Messiah and the faithfulness of God’s redemptive purpose.
- “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” quotes Malachi 1, where Jacob and Esau represent Israel and Edom.
- God is free to accomplish **HIS (11)** purpose.
- Mercy is the point: God owes salvation to no one; salvation exists because God is merciful.

“Grace is never something God owes us. The moment grace becomes owed, it is no longer grace.”

F. Sovereignty & Human Response

- Scripture holds **BOTH (12)** together: God is sovereign, and man must respond.
 - Romans 9:15; Romans 10:9–13

“We do not honor God’s sovereignty by explaining away human responsibility, and we do not honor human responsibility by shrinking God’s sovereignty.”

G. Election & Evangelism

- God’s sovereignty does not make evangelism unnecessary; it makes evangelism **HOPEFUL (13)**.
 - Romans 10:14
- God uses preachers, missionaries, churches, parents, friends, and ordinary believers to proclaim the gospel.
- We do not know beforehand who will respond, so we preach Christ to **EVERYONE (14)**.

“Election is God’s business. Evangelism is ours.”

- God’s saving purpose enters history through a message: Christ died for **OUR (15)** sins and rose again.

H. What Election Should Produce

- Humility — salvation is grace.
- Gratitude — God sought us first.
- Security — God’s purpose is faithful.
- Mission — the gospel is for the world.

“I may not be able to draw the line where God’s sovereignty ends and human responsibility begins—and Scripture never asks me to. It tells me to believe both.”

I. How Do I Know?

- How do I **KNOW** (16) that I belong to Christ? Not by discovering a hidden decree; look to Christ.
 - **John 3:36; John 6:37**
- The New Testament calls sinners to come, repent, believe, and receive Christ.

“The question Scripture places before the sinner is not, ‘Can you discover whether you are elect?’ but, ‘What will you do with Jesus Christ?’”

IV. The Gospel Call

- God’s saving purpose is made known through a **MESSAGE** (17).
 - **Romans 10:14**
- The gospel must be **PROCLAIMED** (18).
- Christ has acted → the gospel is proclaimed → people hear → people are called to believe.

A. What Is the Gospel?

- **1 Corinthians 15:3–4**
- Jesus died for our sins. Jesus was buried. Jesus rose again.
- The gospel is not “try harder,” “become religious,” or “clean yourself up.” It is news about what God has done in Christ.
- The word gospel (euangelion) means “good news.” News announces an **EVENT** (19).
- The gospel is an announcement that becomes an invitation.

B. The Gospel Calls for a Response

- **Mark 1:15; Acts 16:31**
- The gospel contains both an announcement and an invitation: repent, believe, come, receive, follow.
- These responses do not earn salvation. Repentance is not payment, and faith is not a work that purchases grace.

“We are not saved because faith is worthy; we are saved because Christ is worthy, and faith rests entirely upon Him.”

C. The Genuine Invitation

- The gospel is **OFFERED** (20).
 - **Revelation 22:17**
- The invitation to the gospel is **GENUINE** (21): Come. Believe. Receive.
- We can tell any sinner: If you repent and trust Christ, He will save you.

“No sinner who comes to Christ in repentance and faith will ever discover that Jesus did not really mean the invitation.”

- **John 6:37**

D. The Call Can Be Resisted

- People **CAN** (22) resist the genuine call.
 - **John 5:40; Acts 7:51**
- The invitation is real; the response is **REAL** (23).
- Human resistance does not mean sinners independently produce salvation. God is already calling, convicting, drawing, and revealing truth.

“Grace can be offered without being earned, and grace can be resisted without making God less sovereign.”

E. The Holy Spirit’s Work

- **John 16:8**
- The **SPIRIT** (24) convicts, draws, and reveals Christ.
- The gospel is proclaimed externally, but the Holy Spirit works internally. Salvation is never merely the result of human persuasion.
 - **John 6:44; John 12:32**
- God **DRAWS** (25); we respond.

“The Spirit does what our arguments cannot do: He brings the truth of the gospel home to the heart.”

F. “What Should We Do?”

- **Acts 2:37–41**
- Peter told convicted sinners: “**REPENT** (26).”
- At Pentecost the gospel was proclaimed; they heard; they were convicted; they were told to respond; they accepted the message.
- Conviction is not conversion. Conviction brings us to the place where we must respond to Christ.

G. Faith Comes from Hearing

- **Romans 10:17**
- God has chosen the gospel as the means through which people are confronted with Christ. That is why missions, preaching, personal evangelism, and teaching our children matter.
- We proclaim. God works. People respond.

“We cannot save anyone—but God has chosen to use saved people to tell unsaved people about the Savior.”

H. From Call to Response

- The gospel is proclaimed.
- The Spirit **CONVICTS** (27) and draws.
- The sinner is called to repentance and faith.
 - **Mark 1:15**

ANSWER KEY

1. **RESPOND** (Slide 41)
2. **WAIT** (Slide 47)
3. **TOGETHER** (Slide 48)
4. **BEGINS** (Slide 49)
5. **HOLY** (Slide 55)
6. **CHRISTLIKENESS** (Slide 56)
7. **FACTS** (Slide 57)
8. **LEARN** (Slide 58)
9. **ISRAEL** (Slide 60)
10. **LOVE** (Slide 62)
11. **HIS** (Slide 70)
12. **BOTH** (Slide 71)
13. **HOPEFUL** (Slide 73)
14. **EVERYONE** (Slide 75)
15. **OUR** (Slide 77)
16. **KNOW** (Slide 80)
17. **MESSAGE** (Slide 84)
18. **PROCLAIMED** (Slide 86)
19. **EVENT** (Slide 90)
20. **OFFERED** (Slide 92)
21. **GENUINE** (Slide 94)
22. **CAN** (Slide 97)
23. **REAL** (Slide 100)
24. **SPIRIT** (Slide 104)
25. **DRAWS** (Slide 106)
26. **REPENT** (Slide 109)
27. **CONVICTS** (Slide 112)