

March 9, 2014
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Communion
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to study Romans 10:13.

1. What happened when you were saved from sin?
2. Explain the effectual call of God versus the general call of God.
3. What did you do when you received salvation?
4. What did God do when you were born again?

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU GOT SAVED? Romans 10:13

Paul's promise, "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13) is actually a quotation of the same promise from Joel 2:32. The ancient prophet declared, "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls" (Joel 2:32).

Salvation sounds so simple, doesn't it? Salvation is presented in the Bible as a simple matter of believing in Christ, confessing our sins, and trusting Him to save us. Therefore, we present salvation as a very simple matter. Sometimes we make it sound too simple with the result that a sinner often makes a religious or emotional decision but no salvation occurs. How do we know? Time generally proves that there was no new birth because new birth begets change—obvious change.

We have this simple gospel tract available. It has become known over the years as "The Apple Tract," because on the cover it asks the simple question, "Why doesn't this tree produce apples?" The answer given inside says, "Because it is a peach tree." The thrust of the argument in this tract is that when we become God's tree, we produce God's fruit. To that end it points to this question, "When you got saved, what changed?" If we have an inkling of everything that takes place in the spiritual realm when a person is born again, we have to conclude that things are going to change. How could they not?

There is Progressive Change in Salvation

One aspect of the progressive change that is taking place in a sinner is God's call. There are various terms we could use to describe this experience. We will consider four terms that explain God drawing a sinner to salvation. All four terms are synonymous, and yet each has a unique part in a sinner coming to Christ.

First, God calls. In God's calling a sinner to salvation, there is a general calling. It is true that God does reveal Himself to all people in many ways. It is true that because of God's self-revelation, all people are responsible to believe Him. It is also true that most do not. Nevertheless, God in this sense has been faithful to call all people to salvation in Christ. This is the calling Jesus described in the parable of the wedding feast in which many people refused the invitation when He said, *For many are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14)*. Some Bible students refer to this general calling of God as the external call. Famed theologian Louis Berkof wrote, "The external call consists in the presentation and offering of salvation in Christ to sinners, together with an earnest exhortation to accept Christ by faith, in order to obtain forgiveness of sins and life eternal." (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, London: Banner of Truth, 1939, p.459)

Everyone is privileged to experience to some extent God's general call. But a person comes to know salvation only because of the effectual call of God. This calling is what Paul described as a certainty for each person who God predestined for salvation. He

wrote, *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 8:30)*. No one can come to God to be saved without God issuing the effectual call. So what does this call sound like, feel like, look like?

The second similar term helps explain God's effectual call. The sinner comes to Christ because God draws. We must realize that this is an actual work by God. Again, God drawing the sinner to Christ is the only way to salvation. If God does not draw the sinner, there is no hope. That is what Jesus meant when He taught, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6)*. He also taught quite plainly that *"no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:44)*. Often this drawing process is unnoticed by the sinner. Converted sinners can testify to a new-found interest, or curiosity, or something that made them think about their relationship with God. After salvation, we understand fully that this was God actually, spiritually drawing us to the Savior. Often God uses other people and circumstances in this process.

The third similar aspect is that God enlightens. In this work of grace, God the Holy Spirit helps the sinner see God revealed in nature and conscience. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God. At some point, the sinner must believe God's Word. Abraham set the example for us. Paul argued, *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:3)*. Being enlightened by God is necessary because salvation is not a matter of what we feel. It is a matter of believing what God said. What God said is clearly recorded in the Bible. So then it has to stand that *faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17)*. It is often a case of progressive revelation in which God reveals more as the sinner responds to God's enlightening.

Finally, in the process of calling sinners to Himself, God convicts. This is simply rebuke from God. God rebukes us by revealing the truth of His word in our minds and hearts. Conviction comes from God unfolding His truth to work on our consciences. Because God's law is written on the conscience, the person is rebuked when disobeying that law, until the conscience is seared. In the case

of the effectual call, conviction leads to humble contrition, acknowledging that God's rebuke of sin is correct. This is the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised regarding the Holy Spirit, *"And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8)*.

All of these experiences are part of God's effectual call that result in salvation. These experiences can take place over a long period of time, or they can occur quite rapidly. But the drawing along toward Christ will happen while the sinner is progressively changing.

There is Instantaneous Change in Salvation.

At the moment of salvation, a certain response will occur in the sinner. At that moment, we believe. We fully trust what the Bible says about God and His work. We, immediately, fully believe God's completed work in Jesus Christ. When the Philippian jailer was brought under great conviction of sin (it appears to have been a quick process for him), he wondered what he should do. Paul and Silas said, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31)*. The jailer, like all sinners, simply needed to fully trust what God says about Himself. And at the same time, we fully trust what the Bible says about us.

Therefore, because we trust God's Word, we confess. We agree with God's assessment of us because we believe God's promise: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9)*. To confess is to say the same thing about ourselves that God says about us. It is not a matter of trying to dredge up every sin in the past. There are way too many sins for us to even remember. Besides, God knows better than we do what is in the past. To confess is to acknowledge that we have a fallen, sinful nature (human nature if you will) that is opposed to God in every way imaginable. In short, it is to acknowledge that God is absolutely just to condemn us in hell for eternity because of our offenses against Him.

The third thing we do at the point of salvation is repent. The verb means to express sorrow, to have a deep feeling of regret. The

noun means to be sorry enough to change. However, repentance is not just a matter of turning over a new leaf or making a resolution. Repentance is a clear change in which our minds are turned away from ourselves and our ways, toward God and His ways. It is a matter of laying down my arms of rebellion against God and taking up His case against myself.

Now here is the amazing reality of it all. We cannot do any of those things unless God empowers us to that end, and we will not do any of those things until God calls us with the effectual call. Those truths must come to bear because a sinner who is dead in sin cannot respond to truth by believing, confessing, and repenting. How can such a sinner get enough life to believe, repent, and confess?

At the moment of salvation, sinners come to Christ in faith believing because of ten acts of grace God showers upon us instantaneously. This is what God does.

God gives faith. The term faith in this case refers to saving faith which is not ordinary faith. What is ordinary faith? We might use that term to speak of the kind of faith nearly everyone exercises in many situations in life. Everyone exercises some kind of faith at various times. More specifically, many people in many ways exercise faith in Bible truths (i.e. they believe it is good to love your neighbor).

In contrast to that kind of ordinary faith, we have saving faith which is a gift from God that gives us the ability to fully trust Him for that which is incomprehensible – the salvation of the soul. Peter referred to this kind of faith when he wrote, *Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory (1 Peter 1:8)*. Peter understood that special kind of God-given faith because when he confessed that Jesus of Nazareth is God, *Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17)*.

Everyone who trusts God unto salvation does so because He graciously grants the gift of faith. Paul argued, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)*. He also reminded the Philippian Christians, *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not*

only believe in him but also suffer for his sake (Philippians 1:29). The sinner must have God’s help to believe. We can respond like the father of the demon-possessed boy who needed help. When Jesus told the father that his son could be healed if he would only believe, the man realized his finite limitations and cried, *“I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24)*. At the moment of salvation, God gives the seeking sinner faith to trust God (the object of faith) unto salvation.

Second, God justifies. Justification is an act of grace by which God judiciously declares the confessing sinner to be as righteous as Christ is. God is just to do so only on the basis of Christ’s work of expiating sin on the cross. Therefore, justification is not a matter of God *making* a sinner righteous. Justification is not an infusion of grace as the Roman Catholic church teaches. It is God’s forensic declaration that the confessed sinner is as right as Jesus Christ because of the work Jesus did for the sinner on the cross.

Third, God sanctifies. In this act, God sets the trusting sinner apart unto Himself for His own service and glory. We should refer to this type of setting aside as positional sanctification. Progressive sanctification is our experience of fitting more and more, even on a daily basis, into the pattern of Christ. Perfect sanctification will be realized when we are with Christ in eternity and thoroughly sinless. But positional sanctification is what we are in God’s view because of Christ’s work. It is part of justification and could be called a result of justification. This aspect of sanctification is completed. Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth calling them *those having been sanctified in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2)*.

Fourth, God imputes Christ’s righteousness to us the moment we are saved. In this act, God credits the righteousness of Christ to the trusting sinner. This is like justification (probably part of it) in that we cannot earn Christ’s righteousness, but God declares that it is on our account now. The Bible often uses Abraham as an example of this act of God’s grace. Paul wrote, *No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:20-22)*.

Fifth, the moment we are saved, God redeems us. To redeem is to pay the price to buy something out. In a very homely way, to

redeem is to go to the pawn shop and pay the required price to get your item out of hock. Jesus Christ already paid the price to redeem sinners from the curse of the law, the penalty of sin, the power of sin. In the past great event of the crucifixion, *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” (Galatians 3:13)*. At the moment of salvation, God applies the price to us. So then we can say with Peter, *knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold (1 Peter 1:18)*.

Sixth, God regenerates us. McCune defines regeneration well when he writes, “Regeneration is the instantaneous, supernatural impartation of spiritual life to the spiritually dead” (Roland McCune, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p.49). That kind of miracle is necessary because the sinner is spiritually dead. In salvation, God does not remake a sinner or remodel an outdated or used-up person. God gives the person a miraculous, remarkable new birth. It must of necessity be a supernatural work of God. It truly is a very amazing act of God. That is why Jesus said to the teacher in Israel, “*Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:7)*. God does this miracle through the power of His Word. Peter reminded us, *Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God (1 Peter 1:23)*.

Seventh, in the instantaneous act of salvation, God forgives our sins. It is not that we confess sin to God and in reply God says, “Oh, that’s okay.” That is the kind of thing we say. And it may not qualify as forgiveness. Forgiveness is a transaction in which God, in response to our confession of sin, lifts those sins from us and removes them forever. He will never bring those sins up to accuse us again. God is justified to do this (has a legal right) because Jesus Christ became sin for us by taking our sin upon Himself. Therefore, *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)*.

Eighth, while God does all the previous seven acts of grace at salvation, he also converts our souls. The Old Testament and New Testament terms translated “convert” both teach that conversion is turning back, returning or repair. Therefore, conversion is turning away from sin and toward God. It is not a matter of changing your

mind but a matter of changing your relationship. It is not something the sinner is able to do, but something that God does to us. Conversion is obviously demonstrated by the sinner, but the ability must come from God. Therefore, Jeremiah rightly said, *Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old (Lamentations 5:21)*.

Ninth, and a really great action: God adopts us. Adoption is not the warm feeling of belonging to God – though the redeemed sinner does feel that way. Adoption is another legal idea of an adult son being placed in the position of a son of God and receiving all the rights and privileges that go with that position. At the same time, adoption establishes a relationship that gives great confidence in our standing with our Heavenly Father. It opens the door to all the blessings of being God’s literal child. God the Father sent God the Son *to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (Galatians 4:5-6)*.

Finally, at the moment of salvation, God unites us with Christ. Union with Christ is the inseparable spiritual bond between the redeemed saint and Jesus Christ. At salvation God places us “in Christ.” At that moment, we are miraculously, spiritually thrust into a unique relationship with Christ, which must also then, put us in a unique relationship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ prayer at the Passover Supper made this promise so plainly. He prayed to God the Father regarding the disciples, “*That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (John 17:21-23)*.

What an amazing thing this salvation experience is. Let’s not be so foolish as to think that a person can experience all of this and not change. The change will be obvious and radical! Not everyone will demonstrate the same level of radical response. But every tree that God plants produces His fruit (some 30, some 60, some 100 fold).

God's trees produce God's fruit. When God plants the tree, the tree grows. God never yet wasted a miracle.