



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ◇ DEO ◇ GLORIA

## HOW GREAT A SALVATION, Part 3

### Understanding the *Ordo Salutis* [Order of Salvation] of God The Sovereignty of God and the Free Will of Man

Romans 8:28-30

June 29, 2008

- I. The Fall of Man
- II. The Nature of Man
- III. The Drawing of Man
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- 1.) The Covenant of Redemption [Decrees of God]
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- 4.) Regeneration
- 5.) Conversion [Faith / Repentance]
- 6.) Justification
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- 9.) Perseverance
- 10.) Death
- 11.) Glorification

- Over the past two weeks, we have looked at God's sovereign decrees prior to Creation; this week we will examine the fulfillment of those decrees *in His creation*.
- In today's society, especially in America, man's free will has been elevated to a nearly idolatrous, god-like status. It is not that the Bible is silent on the concept of man's free will, it is simply that it focuses overwhelmingly on God's freedom and sovereignty. So, one of the greatest *apparent paradoxes* in the Scriptures is the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's free will.

## I. The Fall of Man

- ❑ One of the most common attacks against God's sovereignty in salvation is the assertion that God's sovereign choice violates or even destroys man's free will. However, the doctrines of sovereignty, predestination and election in no way threaten a biblical concept of the free will of man.
- ❑ A biblical understanding of the Fall of man [in Adam], and the subsequent sinful Adamic nature [which follows] demonstrates that, although man's will is free, he remains in a desperate state of need for a Savior in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### ***Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689:***

God has endued the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice, that it is neither forced, nor by any necessity of nature determined to do good or evil.

**Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well-pleasing to God, but yet was unstable, so that he might fall from it.** [emphasis added]

- ❑ Born in the fourth century, the great theologian Augustine articulated a biblical distinction between man's **free will** and **perfect liberty** before and after the Fall.

In his book, *The Consequences of Ideas*, R.C. Sproul describes Augustine's [b. 354 A.D.] view of free will.

"God created man [Adam] with a free will, in which he also enjoyed perfect liberty. Man had the faculty of choosing what he wanted. He had the ability to sin and the ability not to sin. He freely chose to sin out of his concupiscence (an inclination that leans to sin but is not sin).

As a result of the first sin, man lost his liberty but not his free will. He was plunged, as divine punishment, into a corrupt state known as original sin, losing the ability to incline himself to the things of God. This resulted in man's absolute dependence on a work of divine grace in his soul if he were ever to move toward God. Fallen man is in bondage to sin. He still has the faculty of choosing, a will free from coercion, but he now is free only to sin, because his desires are inclined only toward sin and away from God. Now..."the ability not to sin" is lost and in its place... "the *inability* not to sin."

- ❑ Again, **before** the Fall, Man had "the ability to sin" and "the ability not to sin." However, **after** [technically, because of] the Fall, Man no longer has the ability not to sin.
- ❑ However, it seems that most Christians today see themselves in the state that Adam and Eve were in **prior** to the Fall – that is, in a state where they possess the

ability, apart from a sovereign work of God, to please God in their actions. This sort of view [Pelagian] reflects a belief that states that Adam's sin only affected him.

- ❑ Still other Christians will often say that we all have a *propensity* or an *inclination* to sin...not that we are sinful [which is what the Bible reveals].

## II. The Nature of Man

- ❑ There are few doctrines presented in the Bible which are more clearly articulated than the **nature of man** after the Fall.

**Genesis 6:5:** “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

- ❑ Clearly put, apart from Christ man is **spiritually DEAD**.

**Ephesians 2:1,5:** “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,... even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”

**Colossians 2:13:** “When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,”

- ❑ In fact, the Scriptures clearly state that we were **born sinful**. That is to say, we were not simply born with an inclination to sin; we were born with a sinful nature.

**Psalms 51:5:** “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, / And in sin my mother conceived me.”

- ❑ Furthermore, not only are we born sinful, but in our spiritually dead state, we are **enemies of God**. There is no such thing, biblically, as a state of neutrality with God.

**Romans 8:7:** “because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,”

**Titus 3:3-5:** “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 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,”

***Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689:***

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

- Consequently, apart from the sovereign, regenerative act of the Holy Spirit, we are **dead in our sin...enemies of God**. As such, we are completely **unable** to accept Christ as Savior by faith [actually, we do not want to]. We are unable to exercise faith, for faith in Christ is a **spiritual decision**; yet we are spiritually dead.
- In other words, a spiritually dead individual is no more likely to accept Christ as Savior as a decomposing corpse is to reach out and hold the hand of a grieving loved one.
- Therefore, **until one realizes the spiritually dead and sinful nature of man apart from Christ, he will never understand the true miracle of regeneration – that is new birth in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and the will of the Father.**

□ Thus, the next logical question is: if faith is necessary for salvation, and the unregenerate man is wholly unable to exercise faith, then how is **anyone** saved?

- The answer to this most fundamental question, once again, begins by understanding God and how He works.

**III. The Drawing of Man**

- The first “step” in our salvation comes through God’s effectual drawing of us to Himself. This “drawing” by God is an absolutely necessary aspect of our salvation.

**John 6:37, 44:** “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out...**No one can come to Me** unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” [emphasis added]

- The word, here, for “can” is the Greek word *dunatai* [δυναται], meaning “power” or “ability.” In other words, this passage could be translated, “Do one **has the ability** to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.”
- It is the same distinction in the English words “can” and “may”
  - A student in a classroom may ask, “Can I sharpen my pencil” to which the teacher responds, “I don’t know, **can** you?” The teacher, in this case, is asking a question which implies an obvious positive response [“I don’t know,

do you have the ability to sharpen your pencil?"] Whereas, what she is implying is that the proper question is not "Can I sharpen my pencil, but rather, 'May I sharpen my pencil?'"

- ❑ Some Christians believe that this passage is referring to a "prevenient grace", a general drawing, compelling, or luring, by the Father [through the assumed means of the Holy Spirit] of all or some of mankind.
- ❑ However, John 6:44 does not allow such an interpretation.

"The combination of Verse 37 and Verse 44 prove that this 'drawing' activity of the Father cannot be reduced to what theologians sometimes call 'prevenient grace' dispensed to every individual [or at least to many], for **this 'drawing' is selective**, or else the negative note in Verse 44 is meaningless." D.A. Carson

- ❑ The word for "draw" here is the Greek word *helkusay* [ελκυση] which is translated, most accurately, **drag**.
  - This word occurs eight (8) times in the New Testament: John 6:44; 12:32; 18:10; 21:6; 21:11; Acts 16:19; 21:30; and James 2:6.

**John 21:6** "...They cast therefore, and then they were not able to **haul** it in because of the great number of fish."

**John 21:11** states, "Simon Peter went up, and **drew** the net to land, full of large fish..."

**Acts 16:19** states, "they seized Paul and Silas and **dragged** them into the market place before the authorities,"

**James 2:6** states, "...Is it not the rich who oppress you and...**drag** you into court?"

In the Greek, the verb for "draws" is much stronger than most translations put it. Literally, it means "drags." Unregenerate man does not want, and in fact hates the things of God. But when God decides to claim someone for His own, that regenerate person all of a sudden wants, and in fact loves the things of God (John 3:5-6). David P. Henreckson

"Well, you say, what do you mean by ["draws"]? I mean this, that God had to overcome the resistance of your will, God had to overcome the reluctance of your heart, God had to overcome your loving of pleasure more than [your] loving of God, your love of things of this world more than Christ. I mean that God had to put forth His power and draw you; and if any of you know anything of the Greek...look up that Greek verb for "draw" in John 6:44...It means "use violence." It means to drag by force. There is not a Greek scholar on earth that can challenge that statement...It is the same Greek word that is used in John 21 when they drew the net to the land full of fishes. They had to pull with all their might, for it was full of fishes. They had to DRAG it. Yes, my friend, and that is

how you were brought to Christ. You may not have been conscious of it, you may not have known inside yourself what was taking place, but every last one of us was a rebel against God, fighting against Christ...and God had to put forth almighty power and overcome that resistance and bring us to our knees; and if any of you object to that strong language, then I am here to tell you, you do not believe in the teaching of this Book on the absolute depravity of man.” *The late Baptist theologian and author Arthur W. Pink*

- ❑ To quote John Piper, God’s effectual drawing of His people is nothing short of “the triumph of sovereign grace over our rebellious wills.”
- ❑ Yet, the question remains, “**How does God draw His people to Himself?**”
- ❑ To answer this question, one must first understand that **God ordains the ends and He ordains the means.**
- ❑ Simply stated, the “ends” is the salvation of His people; the means is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the proclamation of the Word of God.
- ❑ Thus, we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are called [and therefore, we are responsible] to faithfully and indiscriminately proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to all men, without exception.

#### **IV. The Regeneration of Man**

- ❑ Because man is dead in His trespasses and sins apart from Christ; **God must perform a sovereign work of regeneration in order to enable man to receive the gifts of faith and repentance.**

**John 3:3, 5-8:** Jesus answered and said to him [Nicodemus], ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’”

- ❑ Just as Jesus states here to Nicodemus in John 3, **no one is able to see the kingdom of God without first being born again by the Holy Spirit.**
- ❑ Once again, the reason for this is that man is spiritually dead prior to regeneration [being born again].
- ❑ This is why in the biblical “Order of Salvation” **REGENERATION PRECEEDS FAITH.** Yet, in the understanding of most Christians today, faith is

the condition for regeneration. However, such an understanding not only is unbiblical, but it is equivalent to one saying that man has the ability to raise himself from the [spiritual] dead [through faith].

- ❑ One must, thus, realize that regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit is *no less a divine act* than when Jesus Christ called forth Lazarus from the grave (John 11:43).

The reason we do not cooperate with regenerating grace before it acts upon us and in us is because we can- not. We cannot because we are spiritually dead. We can no more assist the Holy Spirit in the quickening of our souls to spiritual life than Lazarus could help Jesus raise him for the dead. R.C. Sproul

“Unregenerate man is fully capable of understanding the facts of the gospel: he is simply incapable, due to his corruption and enmity, to submit himself to that gospel. And he surely responds to God every day: negatively, in rebellion and self-serving sinfulness...man cannot understand and *embrace* the gospel nor respond *in faith and repentance* toward Christ without God first freeing him from sin and giving him spiritual life (regeneration).”  
*The Potter’s Freedom*, James White, p. 101

***Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689:***

When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so as that by reason of his remaining corruptions, he doth not perfectly, nor only will, that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.

- ❑ In his first Epistle, Peter notes that the preaching of the Gospel is the **instrumental cause of our regeneration...that is the God-ordained means.**

**1 Peter 1:23:**

“for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.”

- ❑ It is significant to note that the Holy Spirit NEVER works in a vacuum; it is always in accordance with the will of the Father, the Work of the Son, and the proclamation of the Gospel.
- ❑ In fact, the Old Testament even prophesies God’s miraculous, sovereign work of regeneration.

**Jeremiah 31:31-34:**

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers ... ‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the LORD, ‘**I will put My law within them and on their heart I**

**will write it;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’”

**Ezekiel 11:14-21:**

“Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, your brothers, your relatives, your fellow exiles and the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those to whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, ‘Go far from the LORD; this land has been given us as a possession.’... **“I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,** that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. ‘But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads,’ declares the Lord GOD.”

**Romans 2:28-29:**

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision is that which is of the heart,** by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”

- ❑ When we examine all of God’s word, we see that regeneration involves the Father raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life through the power of Holy Spirit, in accordance with the work of Christ and the preaching of His Word. Furthermore, not only does God regenerate us, He takes our heart of stone, gives us a circumcised heart of flesh and writes His Law on it, so that we might walk in His ways.
- ❑ In short, in the work of regeneration, God gives us, His people, a new nature! Thus, we are now truly free and **able** to accept and fully embrace the free offer of the Gospel.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”  
2 Corinthians 5:17

“Once an individual has been regenerated and given spiritual life, He can understand and discern the things of the Spirit. God has opened his mind “... spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.”

Westminster Confession of Faith



## V. The Conversion of Man

- Once the Father draws us through the preaching of the Word and the regenerating Work of the Holy Spirit, He then grants us repentance and faith, thus converting us from being “in Adam” to being alive “in Christ.”
- **It is important to note that this in no way violates our free will.**
- One of the most helpful definitions of free will comes from the great American Puritan, Jonathan Edwards:

“With respect to the grand inquiry, ‘what determines the will?’ ...It is sufficient to my present purpose to say, it is that motive which, as it stands in view of the mind, is the strongest, that determines the will.” (Part 1, section 2)

*Concerning the Determination of the Will*, Jonathan Edwards

- John Gerstner, explaining Edwards’ view of free will, writes:

Your choices as a rational person are always based on various considerations or motives that are before you at the time. Those motives have a certain weight with you, and the motives for and against reading a book, for example, are weighed in the balance of your mind; the motives that outweigh all others are what you, indeed, choose to follow. **You, being a rational person, will always choose what seems to you to be the right thing, the wise thing, the most advisable thing to do.** If you choose not to do the right thing, the advisable thing, the thing that you are inclined to do, you would, of course, be insane. You would be choosing something that you did not choose. You would find something preferable that you did not prefer. But you, being a rational and sane person choose something because it seems to you the right, proper, good, advantageous thing to do.

*A Primer on Free Will* [emphasis added]

- In short, Edwards’ view of free will is quite simple: ***we are free to choose that which we desire most.***
- Yet, apart from the sovereign work of regeneration by the work of the Holy Spirit, fallen man will **always** choose to sin...for that is what his heart desires ***most.***

**John 8:43-44**: “[Jesus said to the Jews] Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you ***cannot hear*** My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies...” [emphasis added]

- However, once we are born again, we have a new love...a new affection.

- The nineteenth century Church of Scotland minister, Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), once wrote that regeneration involved “**the expulsive power of a new affection.**”

□ In other words, God does not save us “against our will” – He **frees...liberates our will.**

- Again, once the Father draws us through the preaching of the Word and the regenerating Work of the Holy Spirit, He then grants us repentance and faith, thus “converting” us.

## CONVERSION

- When we speak of “conversion” there are primarily two aspects of salvation that we are referring to: (1) repentance of sin; and (2) faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, conversion involves both a **denial/negative (repentance)** and an **affirmation/positive (faith)** aspect. Basically faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin; yet, it is important to remember that BOTH are essential for salvation. It could be said [roughly] that repentance represents our dying with Christ – the death of the old man [Adam]; and faith represents the resurrection of the new man [Christ].

□ Biblically, faith and repentance are **NOT** the aspects of salvation that are “our part.” Faith and repentance does **NOT** constitute the one condition that *we must fulfill* in order for God to save us. Faith and repentance, biblically, are **gifts of God.**

### ❖ **Repentance is a GIFT of God!**

- **Acts 5:31:** “He [Jesus Christ] is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to *grant repentance* to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” [emphasis added]
- **Acts 11:18:** “When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, ‘Well then, *God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance* that leads to life.’” [emphasis added]
- **2 Timothy 2:25:** “with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps *God may grant them repentance* leading to the knowledge of the truth,” [emphasis added]
- NOTE: Accompanying repentance is ALWAYS a new attitude toward sin – shame, sorrow, even hatred towards it (Romans 6:21; Luke 15:19).
- Not only does biblical Conversion involve repentance of sin; it also involves faith in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

❖ **Faith is a GIFT of God!**

- **Ephesians 2:8-9**: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
  - **Philippians 1:29**: “For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,”
  - **Ephesians 6:23**: “Peace be to the brethren, and love with *faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” [emphasis added]
  - **2 Peter 1:1**: “Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:”
- As with regeneration, the proclamation of the Word of God is the **instrumental cause** of faith.

“for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!’ However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, ‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?’ **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.**”

Romans 10:13-17 [emphasis added]

- ❖ These truths enable us to answer the question, “If God is absolutely sovereign in salvation, why evangelize?” The answer is simple: (1.) it is an act of obedience, for God commands us to evangelize [this point alone should be sufficient]; (2.) the proclamation of the Gospel is the God-ordained means for accomplishing His fore-ordained purposes; (3.) it is a supreme privilege to be used by Almighty God to accomplish His eternal purposes.
- ❖ Therefore, when one asks, “How are we saved?” The answer, biblically is simple: **by grace alone *through* faith alone.**

“The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Savior on whom it rests. It is never on account of its formal nature as a psychic [spiritual] act that faith is conceived in Scripture to be saving, - as if this frame of mind or attitude of heart were itself a virtue with claims on God for reward...It is not faith that saves, but faith in Jesus Christ...**It is not, strictly speaking, even faith in Christ that saves, but Christ that saves through faith.**”  
B.B. Warfield

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- Thus it is clear that a proper, biblical study of salvation reveals that it is ALL a work of God's grace. It is, indeed, a miracle that has no equal!
- Yet, many professing Christians today look for signs and wonders throughout their Christian walk. I believe that the reason for this is that the miracle of salvation is not sufficient for them. They do not see that **salvation is the greatest miracle one could ever imagine!** It is nothing short of the resurrection of the [spiritually] dead!

❖ **Read Ezekiel 37:1-10**