

# THE224 Christian Narrative 2 Redemption

## Unit 3a Order of Salvation Part 1

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Hello and welcome to Christian Narrative 2. This is Session 3A, the Order of Salvation Part 1. Our main teaching point today is that Jesus offers humanity new life. Now, what we're going to do in this session and in the next two sessions is lay out the order of salvation from beginning to end by looking at the individual parts that take place during salvation. Thinking about the process of salvation is kind of like thinking about the process of shooting a gun. When we pull the trigger and shoot a gun, cognitively we recognize that there are many things that are happening almost simultaneously in order for that gun to successfully shoot a bullet. Yet what we see is the bullet coming out at the end of the gun and hitting the target somewhere down the range very quickly. Salvation is somewhat like this. There are many different pieces and parts, and the only way that we see these parts individually is by slowing the process way down. So as we go through these next three sessions, keep this in mind that much of this is happening in a very quick pace when we accept Christ. And many of these things occur so that we can become saved. And our goal is to slow that way down and take a look at the various parts through the next three sessions.

So let's start by looking at the activity of God. Specifically, even after Jesus sacrificed on the cross, it still takes an action on the part of God in order for humanity to be redeemed. We read in Romans 8:5-10, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

As you listen to the words of that passage, we get a very clear contrast between the life of the flesh, the mind of the flesh, and the life of the Spirit or the mind of the Spirit. And frankly, before we come to Christ, we are against Christ. We don't want to have anything to do with him. And so even though Christ has died on the cross, it still takes activity on the part of God in order for anyone who is within humanity to take advantage of the salvation offered to us through Jesus Christ. Now, what is that action? Well, God overlooked in the past the sin of humanity. And in the future, post-cross, God fully applies his wrath and penalty for sin on his son. These are the activities that God is willing to do on our behalf. And so we must start at the outset by saying salvation is so very clearly an act of God. It is not an act of man. It is an act of God. Ephesians 1:4-6, "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 to himself as sons (and daughters) 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."

No matter what you get from these next three lessons, I pray that that one statement that salvation is an act of God is enough to bring you to a place of praise and worship for who God is. So let's take a look then at the first part: election. Salvation's first part is election. Defined, election is an act of God before creation in which God chooses some people to be saved only to his sovereign pleasure and not according to their own... Now, as we consider election, what we have to do is talk about this word predestination. It's a word that some of us maybe have never heard before. It's a word that some of us have heard before and don't like. It's a word that some of us have heard and consider to be very, very important. But let's talk about predestination as we see it in scripture, and then we'll have to see how this connects back here to election.

Defined, predestination is the idea that God has elected some to be saved (we call those the elect), and thus by logic, some not to be saved (those who come under reprobation). Now, what's clear from Scripture (and you have a long list here). I'm not going to read through all of these passages. I'll select a few) is that God does, in fact, seem to elect some people for his kingdom. We read in Acts 13:48, "When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed." Now, according to this passage in Acts 13, it's clear that some of those Gentiles who were listening to the message were appointed to believe to have eternal life, and so they believed. And so clearly, we see this act of God selecting or electing some to be saved.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake." God has chosen you. A choosing that is going on. If salvation is an act of God, then no matter if it's everyone or one person or some number in between of all the human beings created, God must choose to save people because it's his act. Salvation is his act. Again, Romans 8:28-30, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined (and there is that word) to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he called, and those whom he called he justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

So we can see from Scripture, and you can take a look at these other passages on your own time, that it's very clear that God has elected some to be saved. And as we turn our attention to the other side, what we also see is that God elects some to not have entrance into his kingdom as well, in the Scriptures. Again, you have a list of passages there. I will highlight just a few for us. Romans 9:17-22, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?' But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?" God talking about how he used Pharaoh in the Old Testament to bring his people out of Egypt and how Pharaoh was a foil in many ways. God electing him to be hardened.

1 Peter 2:8, "And 'A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.' They stumble (those who stumble) because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do." And so we're not going to go deeper into this idea, but what we have to recognize is that the Bible does give us passages in Scripture that talks about the idea that God elects some for his kingdom and elects some not to have entrance into his kingdom. So election, and thus salvation, should always be a source of comfort even though there is this idea of predestination or the elect and the reprobate, because as we come to passages that talk about election, we see that it should result in worship. Romans 8:28, "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Ephesians 1:5-6, "He predestined us for adoption to himself 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." Whether you're wrestling with predestination or not, whether it is something that you've mentally grasped or something you're still wrestling with, what we must do is come to a place of worship because every single person

that has a relationship with God has one because God has chosen to elect them for salvation. And this should cause great joy and encouragement in our life.

Reprobation, or the opposite of election, and thus the rejection of the gospel, should not bring anger. Rather, it should bring sorrow. In fact, as we look at how God responds to those who are reprobate, who reject the gospel message, he is sorrowful. And we should share that sorrow. Ezekiel 33:11, “Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” Also in Romans 9:1-4, “I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.”

Really, when we see people reject the gospel, we shouldn't be angry at God or that individual. Rather, we should be sorrowful. This is the response of God. It's the response of God's people in the scriptures, and so it should be ours as well. And the reality of election also does not negate the need for evangelism. Paul speaking to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:10 says, “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” Just because God elects and doesn't elect does not take away the necessity of the church to be about the proclamation of the gospel. That's our primary role. And so we have to recognize that election does not take away from the need for evangelism.

So election is the first part. Or as you see here, I've called it Part 1A of salvation. That's because Part 1B is what we call the gospel call. This can be defined as the call of God received through human proclamation of the gospel in which people are drawn to a saving faith. So God calls people to himself. This is very clear. We've read some of these, right? We've looked at Romans 8:30. “Those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he justified.” We can see in 1 Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” We see that it's very clear that God calls people to himself, and the means by which God calls people to himself in the New Testament is through the proclamation of the gospel.

And so we see that this part of election, really the second part of it (maybe if you want to call it Part 2, that's fine. I've decided to call it Part 1B), is this gospel call. Now, sometimes this is distinguished between a couple of things. You might hear somebody call this a gospel invitation, the proclaiming of the message of the gospel which may be rejected. And sometimes you may hear people talk about the effective calling, an invitation from the king that cannot be rejected. Some people will look in Scripture and say there's a difference here. Some people might hear the gospel, but it's the effective calling given by God through human beings that people can't resist. This is another form of understanding election. We don't need to get too deep into this, but we recognize that God uses human agents to proclaim the gospel, that this gospel call is part of the salvation process. In other words, the elect step into salvation or respond to God because of the gospel call. Therefore, the gospel call must be part of his salvation process. So the first part is election. The second part is the gospel call.

Then we move to Part 2 in its true form, which is regeneration. Defined, this is the secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us. This is also sometimes called being born again. Now,

regeneration is promised to us by God. Even back in Ezekiel 36, we read about this idea that God was going to regenerate his people. There starting in verse 26, “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” So regeneration is promised by God and it is a willful act of God. Now, we already said earlier on that salvation is an act of God, but it’s worth repeating time and time again that this process of salvation is God’s gift to us. Regeneration is no different. James 1:18, “Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” The secret act in which God imparts new life, new spiritual life to us is his willful decision.

So we must ask the question, “Well, then what does regeneration implant?” It gives us new spiritual life which impacts the intellect, the will, and the emotions of an individual. And this is an instantaneous event often occurring in our subconscious. In other words, we can’t look back and go, “You know, I really remember that moment that I was regenerated.” However, if you have a relationship with Christ and you’re watching this PowerPoint, perhaps you can think back into your own life and remember a moment when your heart or your mind or the way you thought about something was picked. And for the first time in your life, you saw God differently. Christ became real to you. The tangibility of your sin became palpable. And in that moment, we can say that there was a moment of regeneration.

And so this is what regeneration gives us. And what it produces in the individual is the ability to respond to the call of God in one’s life. So if we’re following the process of salvation, one is elect from before creation. God’s divine choice was upon you or upon me or upon another individual. That person then receives the gospel call. This gospel call, maybe they’ve heard it many, many times, but in this call, there is a moment of regeneration, again an act of God whereby God allows there to have new spiritual life so that they can respond then to the gospel message that they’ve just heard. So if you’re following, Part 1A election, Part 1B the gospel call, now Part 2 regeneration.

And this brings us to Part 3, conversion, our willing response to the gospel call in which we sincerely repent of our sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation. The key to conversion is a turning away from sin and deciding to depend on Jesus to personally save us. John 1:12, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” A turning away. Conversion is a willful act of the individual in response to the call of Jesus. Matthew 11:28-30. Great passage in Scripture. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Now, it might be strange perhaps for some of us to hear that the third part of salvation is conversion when conversion is our response to the gospel call and a place where we repent our sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation. But again, I want you to recall the illustration I gave us in the beginning. When we fire a gun, there are many different things that are going on, seemingly simultaneously, in order to produce the gunshot. Yet if we slow time down, very slowly, we see that there is a very clear order that is taking place in order for that gun to shoot successfully. So salvation is a process which happens in a seemingly instantaneous moment. But when we slow it way down, we’re going to see that there is a clear order that is taking place.

So let’s pause for just a minute and consider the order of salvation. We’ve talked a lot about this process of being elect and then hearing the gospel message and then being regenerated and then conversion.

Let me try and bring to your mind kind of how God brings this about. We know that there are the elect, that God has chosen some to be responsive to the gospel call. So elect and the gospel call, they go out even before point one here. They go out. People hear the message. So we see the call of God comes through this gospel message, and now the work of the Holy Spirit is in the person's life. It is through God and the Holy Spirit then that someone is regenerated. Once they hear the call of God, once they experience the work of the Holy Spirit in their life, they come to a point of regeneration. Once they've been regenerated, the call of God and the work of the Holy Spirit again now come back to them.

And this now, because they've been regenerated, because they have the ability now to respond, the individual then responds to the further call of God by acting on this gospel in faith, acknowledging their sin, and submitting to Christ. Regeneration then bears its fruit through the act of conversion, a God-initiated symbiotic relationship. Why is it God-initiated? Well, because if the person wasn't elect, they didn't hear the gospel call. And if they hadn't been regenerated, they could not convert. But because those things have happened, they can make a willing choice to respond to God. A lot that we've talked about. This is definitely a chockfull PowerPoint. But let's end by reminding ourselves of the... Jesus offers humanity new life. As we look at the order of salvation, we must start with this. We were dead, but in Christ we live again. That's something worth worshipping about.