

A Gracious & Secure Salvation

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1. What is the Spiritual Condition of Man?

The Bible is unequivocal in its description of man in his natural state. From Genesis to Revelation man is described as *totally depraved*. The adjective “total” describes all the parts or faculties of a man; he is depraved in every part. This does not mean that he is as depraved as he could be. Common grace restrains men from great sin (Gen. 20:1f).

The Bible Speaks of man’s spiritual condition in terms of a death (Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 2:13). This is the fundamental result of the fall into sin. The reverse of this is life. Christ taught that entrance into the Kingdom of God is by being born again (John 3:5-7) with new life (John 10:10). The effects of this spiritual death are extensive; all mankind is affected universally (I Kings 8:46; Isaiah 53:6; 64:6). Every part of man is affected, so much so that only a work of God could deliver him. Left to himself man would continue in this state, for he is totally incapable of helping himself. If one is not convinced of their utter helplessness, and hopelessness, one will not be convinced of God’s provision in Christ and Christ sufficiency for salvation. If the total depravity and inability of natural man is denied the gospel of grace is undermined.

2. What is God’s Response to Depraved man?

If men are sinners by nature with no ability to help themselves to heaven, or seek after God, then how can anyone ever be saved? The answer is that God seeks after men (Luke 19:10). To put it in other terms, God has chosen (Ephesians 1:4) to save some out of their sin, without obligation to them or motivated by any condition in them (Job 9:12; Deuteronomy 7:7). God said concerning this choice of mankind “*Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated*” (Malachi 1:2-3; Romans 9:13). The unbeliever, by nature will not seek after God (Romans 3:11), but God has set his love upon mankind and chosen some to salvation (Psalm 33:12; 65:4). God’s response to a depraved humanity was one of grace and mercy. He came seeking lost sheep,

he came calling men to himself (Proverbs 8:1ff) inviting thirsty men to drink (John 7:37), hungry men to eat (John 6:35), weary men and women to come and find rest (Matthew 11:28); “*Who hath ears to hear, let him hear*” and come (Matthew 13:9).

3. For Whom Did Jesus Die?

Charles Hodge answers this question with another question: “*What was the design of Christ's coming into the world, and doing and suffering all He actually did and suffered? Was it merely to make the salvation of all men possible; to remove the obstacles which stood in the way of the offer of pardon and acceptance to sinners? or, was it specially to render certain the salvation of his own people, i.e., of those given to Him by the Father?*”

The simple answer is, those who were chosen by the Father in eternity past, were given to Christ as his “seed” (John 6:37 cf. Isaiah 53:10). For these Christ died in order to make certain and secure their salvation. If Christ died for all men then it follows that either all men will be saved or Christ’s death will have failed. In making Christ’s death so universal it robs it of its efficacy. Christ’s redeeming work was specific and therefore successful in design and accomplishment. It is not left to sinful man to determine whether the sacrifice of Christ would be successful. Christ’s intent in coming to earth was to earn salvation for his people (Matthew 1:21) and he was successful in doing that. John says in I John 2:2 that he made propitiation from the sins of the world. The context is clearly meaning the world in general as oppose to the Jews in particular. That is Good news for you today sitting in Canada, that God loved the part of the world of which you are part. You are therefore invited to come to him today and know him and be able to say, “*Christ died for me.*”

4. How Can I Answer the Gospel Invitation?

If God chose me in eternity past, and Christ secured my salvation by his death on Calvary, but I am depraved and incapable of seeking after God or coming to him, then how can I be saved? The answer is found in Romans 8:30 “*Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called.*” Just as in the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43-44), Christ called and with that call gave the ability to come forth; so When Christ calls a sinner to himself today the Spirit works in the heart, renewing it and making it willing (Psalm 110:3); it is then an *effectual call* (Ephesians 2:1). When the invitation of the Gospel goes out the Lord says “*he that hath ears let him hear*” (Mark 11:15 cf. “*Many are called, but few are chosen*” Matthew 22:14). But all men by nature do

not have the “ears” to hear the general and external call of the gospel. The Lord has to open the deaf ears (Isaiah 35:5) and make them hear to the saving of their souls. Spiritually dead men do not hear, but those who are made alive by regeneration (Ephesians 2:1) hear and answer the call of the Gospel. The call of the gospel goes out today; the promise of Scripture is clear *“him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out”* (John 6:37).

5. Is it Possible for a Christian to Lose His Salvation?

The answer is a definite No! If God has chosen me and Christ has secured my salvation on Calvary and the Holy Spirit has renewed my heart and brought me to Christ, then nothing can separate me from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39). The doctrine of the perseverance or the security of the Saints, does not apply to those who merely profess salvation but to those who truly possess salvation.

In Romans 8:29-30 we see that the glorification of the saints is an accomplished fact. Now if the Christian’s glorification is at present an accomplished fact, obviously the choice of God’s people is pre-determined. This is exactly what Paul says in Vs. 29; *“Whom he did foreknow...”* There is a particular group of people *whom* God has chosen and for *whom* Christ died. The work of Christ on the cross did not open up an opportunity for all and everyone to get into heaven; the work of Christ on the cross secured the glorification for those *“whom he did foreknow.”*

Conclusion

Some will say, if God has predetermined whether I go to heaven or not, then I am not responsible and there is nothing for me to do, either to accept or refuse. Many people cannot accept the sovereignty of God and the free-agency of man as two co-existing truths. But because man cannot understand how these two truths can coexist is not sufficient ground to deny them; God’s ways are above us. Some people think that the system that teaches both Divine sovereignty and human responsibility is a self-contradictory and self-destructive system. While the truths of the gospel necessarily present a sovereign Saviour, the responsibility of man is in no way negated. To do so would be to deny man of the dignity of the reasonable and responsible being that God has created.

In order to deal with this tension between Divine sovereignty and human free agency we first must ask the question why are people saved and why are people condemned. People are condemned because they sinned against God, people are saved because God showed mercy. **First**, we must understand is that God is God. He is totally and absolutely sovereign; supreme and independent. We must not impose our thoughts on God, but rather his thoughts must become ours. God as the creator is free to do as he pleases and we must recognize in all he does his love, justice and holiness. **Second**, men are sinners of the greatest magnitude. We have rebelled against God, trampled upon his Christ and followed our own lusts. **Third**, God owes man nothing. To damn all mankind in hell for all eternity would be perfectly just on God’s part. To accuse him of injustice for not saving all men, while he saved some, would be unjust on our part.

So much for God’s sovereignty; men ought now to stand in awe of Him, repent of our sin and love God with all our heart. This is what we are commanded to and are held responsible for as God creation. God holds men responsible for sin and for not repenting (Acts 17:30; Exodus 20:3ff; Proverbs 16:5). That the Word of God is replete with warnings and precepts for ungodly men is sufficient evidence that God views men as responsible for their actions and thoughts.

The Christian can rejoice that he knows God, because if God had not chosen him, he would not have chosen God and he would not be saved. God has chosen, Christ secured, and the Spirit has sealed our salvation! Christ did not purchase an opportunity for me to be saved if I wanted, he purchased me; this is as secure as salvation can get!

If there is one who desires a relationship with God on God’s terms, recognizing him as Lord and Saviour, then come and you will be received; Christ has said, *“Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out”* (John 6:37). But you must come on God’s terms, and by doing so, you will not only receive salvation, but you will be comforted to know that God has chosen you from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Having come, you will recognize with the hymn-writer the great assurance of knowing that your salvation was not in your own hand but in the hands of a sovereign God; *“I sought the Lord and afterward I knew, He moved my soul to seek him seeking me. I was not I that found, O Saviour True; No, I was found of thee.”*