

THE FATHER'S PART IN SALVATION (Who Saves the Sinner?)

INTRODUCTION

If Christians are to be effective witnesses, they must get a divine viewpoint towards witnessing. They must come to understand that God alone saves men. Christianity is supernatural! Salvation is of Jehovah!

There must always be a balance between the human and the divine. While no man can have anything to do with the salvation of another person's soul, it is equally true that no person will be saved until he hears the gospel and responds in faith to Christ.

Christians must once again come to a realization that they are part of an infinite plan set in motion by an all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving and holy God. God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and in so doing this, He has appointed that the carrying out of His plan is to be through men. Christians are God's chosen channels to take the gospel to the unsaved.

The divine work in salvation will never be completely understood by a finite human mind. Divine revelation in the Bible declares that God initiates the sinner's salvation. This wonderful doctrine is to be believed, not reasoned out (Deut. 29:29). NOTE: That God saves according to His own purposes has been given to be a great comfort and encouragement to the Christian, not to frustrate and confuse him.

THE WORK OF THE FATHER IN SALVATION

Introduction: When it comes to the sovereign workings of God in salvation, we do not have all the answers but the Bible definitely teaches that God saves. We must take a large dose of intellectual humility and admit our finiteness. This doctrine is accepted because the Bible teaches it, not because we understand it all. NOTE: We Christians accept many doctrines because the Bible teaches them but we cannot explain them all (Trinity, God-Man, Inspiration, etc.). Where reason ends, faith begins.

The Father Plans Salvation: (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13). The choice of Christians to salvation is part of God's plan for this world. The "why" of this choice is not clearly defined other than He did it "according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:5, 11).

The Father Calls to Salvation: (2 Tim. 1:8-9; Rom. 8: 30; 2 Pet. 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 1:9 cf. 1 Cor. 1:23-24). This call of God brought the sinner to Christ, and in some mysterious way, God so worked that the sinner answered this call and received Christ. Apparently, when God gives this call it is always answered. NOTE: Because of this call, the Christian realizes he is numbered among God's people by sovereign grace and the Cross has real meaning.

The Father Initiates Salvation (James 1:18; John 1:13; 6:44). It is the will of God and His drawing grace that brings a sinner to Christ. Behind the will of man in receiving Christ is the will of God. POINT: This explains why salvation is purely by God's grace (Eph. 2:8-9). Grace is the unmerited favor of God. The Bible teaches that all men are rebellious sinners, lost, under God's wrath and headed for judgment. The question is not why does God save some and pass by others, but why does God save anyone, for no one deserves to be saved.

Further Study: (Eph. 1:4-11; John 6:34-71; 17:1-26; 10:1-42).

THE WORK OF THE FATHER IN SALVATION IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Introduction: Acts is the book that tells of the spread of the gospel in the first century. This is the book of evangelization through the acts of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles and the church. NOTE: Over and over again the book of Acts tells us that multitudes turned to Jesus Christ and put their faith in Him as Lord and Savior. Yet, upon a careful scrutiny of the book, it will be seen that behind man's belief in Christ was the will of God.

1. God has an elect people that will be saved (Acts 18:10)
2. God has a plan to save the elect (Acts 13:48).
3. God opens every opportunity for witnessing (Acts 14:27).
4. God alone regenerates the heart of the sinner (Acts 16:14).
5. God alone saves and adds people to the church (Acts 2:47).

THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS DEALING WITH SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Question: Sovereign election teaches determinism: bordering on fatalism. Man seems only to be a robot.

Answer: Fatalism says ends without means—blind certainty without God. Sovereignty implies *means* as well as ends (preaching, witnessing, prayer, responding to Christ, etc., are all means to the end). Besides sovereign election has an intelligent, wise, moral, just and loving God behind the plan. POINT: Election to salvation is very personal in which the God of Scripture is vitally concerned with the welfare of His own.

Question: Sovereign election denies freewill.

Answer:

1. The unsaved man's will is corrupted by sin and he willfully loves darkness rather than light (John 3:19). If man were left to his natural will to believe in his unsaved state, no one would ever come to Christ. Through the salvation process, the saint's will is being set free to obey God.
2. The Bible teaches both responsibility (free will) and sovereignty. It is a mystery and cannot be reconciled (Luke 22:22; Acts 27:24, 31; Acts 4:27-28; Matt. 11:27-30; John 6:37; Phil. 2:12-13; Acts 2:23; John 1:12-13).
3. The Bible never removes man's responsibility to believe, and no person can be saved until he exercises his will towards Christ.

Question: Sovereign election teaches double-predestination; that is, if God chooses some to salvation, He must also choose some to damnation.

Answer: The Bible teaches that all men damn themselves by rejecting Jesus Christ and deserve nothing, but those that come to Christ are brought to this state by the grace of God or they would have never been saved at all. Nowhere in the whole Bible does it directly indicate that there is double-predestination. The Bible does teach the election of some to salvation, and it may be implied from certain scriptures that the destinies of all men are foreordained (Rom. 9:20-24). The doctrine of sovereign election carried to its logical conclusion will produce the concept of double-predestination. However, Scripture is the final authority, not human emotion or logic. It is not necessary to carry every doctrine out to its logical conclusion. If one can stay close to the emphasis of Scripture, he will avoid many problems. The electing of some for salvation is an active word and the passing by some for salvation is a passive word. God never delights in the judgment of the unsaved. POINT: It seems that the writers of Scripture go out of their way to avoid the teaching of double-predestination but are bold in their teaching of God's sovereign election.

Further Study: Rom. 9:1-24

THE PRACTICALITY OF THE DOCTRINE OF SOVEREIGN ELECTION

It Teaches Humility and Gratefulness. The doctrine of sovereign election humbles the Christian, and he keeps asking himself, "Why me, Lord, why me?" Now salvation by grace through faith takes on a new meaning and perspective.

It Inspires a Spirit of Worship. Sovereign election will give one a new perspective of God. It will bring forth the praise of the believer to the glory of God (Rom. 11:33-36).

It Produces Boldness for Christ. This doctrine will give a Christian the boldness to stand against all opposing forces of Christianity because he will realize that he is a favored child of God and part of God's plan for this world.

It Demands Dependence on God. If the Christian is going to see salvation take place in the sinners he witnesses to, then God must open the heart. The Christian witness must trust God and pray for God to do His work in salvation.

It Builds Confidence in Witnessing. The Christian knows that when he puts forth the message of Christ some are going to respond because God is at work. Freewill theology gives no assurance that anyone will ever respond.

It Makes the Christian More Obedient in Witnessing. Sovereign election will make the Christian more zealous for the souls of lost men. The Christian will place his emphasis upon being faithful to God in his witness and not look at the results, for God alone saves. God puts his emphasis upon faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2).

It Takes the Pressure Off. The Christian in his witnessing comes to understand that the pressure is on God to save souls, and the Christian does not have to use pressure tactics or gimmicks to get men to make a decision.

Read John 17

NOTE: Sovereign election did not decrease the Apostle Paul's zeal, for he said, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10).