

GOD TALK

(aka "Theology")

Part One – The relation between Repentance and Conversion in the Order of Salvation

What is the "Order of Salvation?" or "How is a person saved?"

The salvation of the individual consists of seven parts:

1. Vocation or God's Call
2. Contrition and Repentance
3. Conversion, also called regeneration or being "born again," i.e. saved
4. Justification by grace through faith
5. Sanctification
6. Preservation, also called perseverance or election
7. Mystic Union

VERY IMPORTANT!!! This is a "logical" sequence ONLY, not a sequence in TIME. These items can take place one by one over time or all at once immediately. We divide the actions of God as He saves a person into these parts so that we may study them individually. The moment of an individual's salvation is both INSTANTANEOUS and IMPOSSIBLE TO DEFINE! Within ourselves can know that it HAS happened, and HOW & WHY it has happened, but not precisely WHEN it happened.

1. Vocation

- a. God calls to sinners and invites them to receive and enjoy the results of Christ's work of redemption.
 - Human beings in themselves have no knowledge or understanding of the way of salvation. By nature, we are unable to conceive of and unwilling to seek salvation. This is the result of original sin. It is the natural condition of every single human being that comes into this world at the very moment of conception – without exception! The Bible gives us many descriptions of this natural spiritual condition.

Psalm 14:3 All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

Psalm 53:3 Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

Ephesians 4:18 [Unbelievers] are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Romans 8:7 The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Colossians 1:21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

Colossians 2:13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.

Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Galatians 5:17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.

James 1:14 But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

First Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

First Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

b. Therefore, if Christ's work of redemption is to save a person, God Himself must bring that sinner to receive salvation.

Second Corinthians 5:19 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children."

➤ **This is the reason for the absolute and essential need of God's call to the sinner! Salvation BEGINS and ENDS with God, NOT us!**

c. In the course of time God proclaims salvation and invites the sinner to receive it.

Romans 1:5-7 Through Him and for His Name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. 6 You also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. 7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:28-30 We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

First Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

d. God's call is often found in Scripture in the form of an invitation.

Matthew 11:28 Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink."

Isaiah 55:1,3 Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 3 Give ear and come to Me; hear Me, that your soul may live.

e. This call from God is identical with the proclamation of the Gospel and is the call to saving faith.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Second Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

f. God's action in calling is through the Means of Grace. This is His ordinary way of calling.

Second Thessalonians 2:14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:14,17 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

First Corinthians 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

g. God can and does sometimes call a sinner directly.

Acts 9:3-5 As he reached Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" 5 "Who are You, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," He replied.

- This kind of call is special and very rare. It was made occasionally in the Old Testament and even less often in New Testament times. Today the gospel has been preached around the world and the Holy Christian Church has been established through that preaching. The Bible and the Gospel in it is readily available to every person today. Thus, there is no need for a direct call from God, and He has not given any promise in the Bible that He will work in this manner.

h. God is moved to call sinners only by His own grace and mercy.

Galatians 1:15 God ... set me apart from birth and called me by his grace.

Second Timothy 1:9 [God] has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace.

Psalms 86:15 But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

i. When Scripture uses the term "call," it is referring to the effective outreach of God that brings the sinner to faith.

- Like all of God's Word, the gospel is always effective, that is, it is always able to convert or create saving faith, because the power of the Holy Spirit is always at work in it to create and strengthen such faith. Yet the gospel is not always efficacious, that is, it does not always create saving faith because of the stubborn rejection of human unbelief. God can be, and more often than not, is resisted in His gracious efforts at saving the sinner.
- God's call is serious, effective, and universal, even though not all who hear that call are brought to saving faith. God's call is not automatically efficacious. It can be rejected. God's call is not irresistible.

j. Not all who are called are saved.

Isaiah 65:2 All day long I have held out My hands to an obstinate people who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations.

Matthew 22:14 For many are invited, but few are chosen.

SIDE ISSUE: The Reason for the Rejection of the Gospel

a. The fault is always sinful human nature's resistance to God's grace.

Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

b. Our Lutheran Confessions explain it this way:

However, that "many are called and few chosen," (Matt. 22:14), does not mean that God is not willing to save everybody; but the reason is that they either do not at all hear God's Word, but willfully despise it, stop their ears and harden their hearts, and in this manner foreclose the ordinary way to the Holy Spirit, so that he cannot perform his work in them, or, when they have heard it, make light of it again and do not heed it, for which not God or his election, but their wickedness, is responsible. [2 Pet. 2:1ff ; Luke 11:49,52; Heb. 12:25f.] (Formula of Concord, Ep., XI, 11)

Acts 7:51 You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

c. God's call is never sham. It is always sincere.

First Timothy 2:4 God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Second Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them, "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?"

d. The efficacy of God's call is assured by the efficacy of the Means of Grace.

Isaiah 55:10,11 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is My word that goes out from My mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Jeremiah 23:29 "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

e. The Confessions have the correct teaching:

God the Holy Spirit, however, does not affect conversion without means, but uses for this purpose the preaching and hearing of God's Word, as it is written Rom. 1:16: "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." Also Rom. 10:17: "Faith comes by hearing of the Word of God." And it is God's will that his Word should be heard, and that man's ears should not be closed. Ps. 95:8. With this Word the Holy Spirit is present, and opens hearts, so that they, as Lydia in Acts 16:14, are attentive to it, and are thus converted alone through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, whose work alone the conversion of man is. For without his grace, and if he does not grant the increase, our willing and running, our planting, sowing, and watering, all are nothing, as Christ says John 15:5: "Without me you can do nothing." With these brief words he denies to the free will its powers, and ascribes everything to God's grace, in order that no one may boast before God. 1 Cor. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:5; Jer. 9:23. (Formula of Concord, Ep., II, par. 4-6)

f. Calvinism wrongly teaches a special call only for the elect.

In distinction from common grace, the grace of God that brings people to salvation is often called "saving grace." Of course, when we talk about "common grace" and "saving grace" we are not implying that there are two different kinds of grace in God himself, but only that God's grace manifests itself in the world in two different ways. Common grace is different from saving grace in its results (it does not bring about salvation), in its recipients (it is given to believer and unbelievers alike), and in its source (it does not directly flow from Christ's atoning work, since Christ's death did not earn any measure of forgiveness for unbelievers, and therefore did not merit the blessings of common grace for them either). (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, p 657, 658).

In distinction from effective calling, which is entirely an act of God, we may talk about the gospel call in general which comes through human speech. This gospel call is offered to all people, even those who do not accept it. Sometimes this gospel call is referred to as external calling or general calling. By contrast, the effective calling of God that actually brings about a willing response from the person who hears it is sometimes called internal calling. The gospel call is general and external and often rejected, while the effective call is particular, internal, and always effective (op. cit., p 693).

Special or effective calling, then, involves an extraordinary presentation of the message of salvation. It is sufficiently powerful to counteract the effects of sin and enable the person to believe. It is also so appealing that the person will believe. Special calling is in many ways similar to the prevenient grace of which Arminians speak. It differs from that concept, however, in two respects. It is bestowed only upon the elect, not upon all humans, and it leads infallibly or efficaciously to a positive response by the recipient (Millard Erickson, Christian Theology, p 944).

Nor does the Word have in itself the intrinsic power to convert men and to produce holiness in them, as Lutherans contend. To the contrary, God and God alone is the efficient cause of all salvific grace. Accordingly, he must do his saving work by and with these means immediately in the hearts of men if they would in fact become instruments of grace (Robert Raymond, A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith, p 913).

g. God's call is universal. It is limited only by the extent of sin in mankind.

Matthew 9:13 But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

First Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus

came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.

h. It is God's will that His call reach every sinner. This is clearly taught in Scripture.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

First Timothy 2:4 God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Second Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness.

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation."

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

i. Though there may be differences in the external mode of the call, yet essentially it is everywhere the same. The gospel call has repeatedly gone out to the whole world.

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Romans 10:18 But I ask, Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Colossians 1:6,23 All over the world this gospel is producing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.

23 This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

j. God often judges and punishes people's contempt for his call by withdrawing it or by allowing delusions to prevail. Scripture gives specific examples of this judgment.

Amos 8:11,12 "The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land — not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. 12 Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it."

Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles."

Acts 28:26-28 Go to this people and say, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving." 27 For this people's heart has become

calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. 28 Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!

Second Thessalonians 2:10-12 They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

k. Yet it is not for us to judge wherever and whenever this judgment has taken place. We cannot in every case fully understand the ways of God.

➤ One Lutheran theologian put it this way:

But we grant that we cannot in these and similar special cases search out and set forth exactly why God makes these decisions. Nevertheless, we ought not to resort to any absolute decree of reprobation. Rather let us cling firmly to these universal pronouncements: God wants all men to be saved, etc. (Gerhard, Loci, vol XXII, ch V, par III, p 789).

l. Thus, the answer to the age-old question: "Why are some saved and others not?" cannot be given to the complete satisfaction of the human mind. There is indeed an answer, but it is hidden in the mystery of God.

m. In addition, any attempt to come up with answer that will satisfy human reason will be wrong and heretical, lead away from God's grace, and endanger salvation.

