

The Finale

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[0 : 00] Well, we begin this series on September 17, 2018.

That was very soon replaced with the permanent title of Salvation God's Way.

I was reviewing the lessons in preparation for our summary tonight. Couldn't figure out why that first lesson was only four pages long.

And then it came to me, we fed the ladies that night. So after we fed, we cleaned up, then there was time for four pages. So that was just a brief introduction.

Tonight marks our 69th and final lesson in this series. I did a little approximate word count, some 200,000 words since we started.

[1 : 15] I wish that I could have surpassed Reverend Spurgeon's published sermons. That's 52 million words. This evening, the plan is to do a summary of what we've studied now for the past 32 months.

And the first item mentioned was the Ordo Salutis, which is Latin for the order of salvation. And that order is as follows. The decrees of God.

Foreknowledge, predestination, and election, which is God's choice of some to salvation. Effectual call or regeneration, that's the new birth. Conversion, which involves repentance and faith.

Justification, a declaration of right standing before God. It's a legal declaration by God. Adoption, placed into the family of God.

Sanctification, progressive growth in holiness. Perseverance, remaining in Christ. And glorification, which we finished up last week.

[2 : 24] Receiving a resurrection body. In the first lesson, we define the decrees of God. And for our purposes of summarizing tonight, I'm only going to give you the shortened definition.

The decrees of God are His eternal purpose according to His will, whereby He has foreordained whatever comes to pass. His decrees do not negate the responsibility of people for their sins, nor does it mean that God is responsible for sin.

Well, that marked our beginning point. As we moved from there through the order of salvation, and we went at breakneck speed, and were able to do so in a very brief 69 lessons.

The next topic we looked at was foreknowledge, predestination, and election, or God's choice of some to salvation. Those three are interrelated.

We all know the words predestination and election are a lightning rod for the evangelical church today. It's been a lightning rod for some throughout church history, going all the way back to the church fathers and their published works, following the close of the inspired canon of Scripture.

[3 : 44] Years before our current series, many years ago, I had breakfast with one of our church members, now a former church member. I don't think I impressed him too much. I had heard that he told his Sunday school class that the word predestination was not in the Bible.

I had written out some scriptures on a piece of paper and asked him to read it, which he did, and it went as follows. For truly in this city they were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

That's Acts chapter 4, verse 27 and 28. In Romans 8, 29, you should have it memorized by now, For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Romans 8, 30, And those whom he predestined, he called, and those whom he called, he also justified, and those whom he justified, he also glorified. First chapter of Ephesians, very famous chapter, verses 5 and 6, In love 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.

And then in Ephesians 1, 11, In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things, according to the counsel of his will.

[5 : 21] My friend, after he read all those passages, handed me the sheet of paper back, and he said, See, I told you the word predestination is not in the Bible.

And walked out and joined another church. Looking back, though, on that, I think that was actually a seed within me that eventually led to this study.

I really believe that. I realized that after a person's ignorant comment that we need to look at the subject of salvation or the order of salutis in depth, and that's what I've tried to do.

We next moved into the effectual call or regeneration. We know this as the new birth. Much of what we know about the new birth is found in the discussion between Jesus and a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus.

We find this in the opening words of the Gospel of John, chapter 3. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

[6 : 34] The man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God. For no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

I think it's significant that Jesus just ignored his comment. Flattery. He just ignored it. Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound.

But you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. Here we were introduced to a term that has at times been quite popular, both in the church and in the culture, that term being born again.

[7 : 44] There is some unfortunate confusion concerning that phrase. In the Greek language, it's the Greek word *anōthen*, and it means, and it's better rendered, born from above.

The Lord Jesus was talking about a spiritual birth that originates with God, comes down from heaven, settling on a person chosen by God to receive it.

It's amazing that many, including some well-meaning Christians, have tried to reduce this miraculous God-centered event down to a formula that is at the beck and call of fallen sinful people.

It is as if we can merely rub the bottle and summon the genie whenever we take a hankering. In truth, it doesn't work that way. God and God alone is responsible for the saving of a soul.

It's not a formula. If it was a formula, then we could control the wind. Because Jesus said, it's like the wind. No one knows where it starts.

[8 : 49] No one knows where it ends. We do know it blows. It's blowing out there right now. Of course, this is Oklahoma. It's supposed to blow. When a person is born from above, it is said that he has been converted.

That was the next item we looked at in the order of salvation. There are two things that require a person to be converted.

It takes faith and it takes repentance. And it is amazing that the church down through the century continues to argue over the particulars of these twin truths.

And the unresolved question for many is this. Do we repent because we have faith or do we have faith because we have repented?

And there's been an argument on that forever. Churches in this town tonight would not agree over how to define that. The truth is that these are two sides of the same coin.

[9 : 52] Like all coins, they have two sides. You can't separate them. If you have one, you have the other. The other great news is that these two essentials, faith and repentance, when you boil it all down, are both grace gifts of God.

Fallen man cannot conjure up faith and he can't conjure up repentance. That's required for salvation, but we can't conjure it up.

It's a grace gift of God. And when it comes to us and we do repent, we do exercise faith unto salvation, you can mark it down, that was from God.

God did that. Give Him the credit. Why can't we conjure up these two qualities or two characteristics? Well, Paul answers that, of course, in the very famous chapter 3 of Romans. And these are all quotes from the Old Testament. A lot of times we fail to realize that. Starting in verse 10 of chapter 3, None is righteous. No, not one. No one understands.

[11:01] No one seeks for God. All have turned aside together. They've become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. Their throat is an open grave.

They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asp is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. And their paths are ruined and misery. And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. That is the plight of fallen mankind right there.

That's a description of fallen people. If a man is to be saved, God must do it. That's called salvation God's way. Remember a number of years ago, I had an interesting discussion as a dear friend, brother in Christ.

And he felt like that our salvation was 60% God and 40% us. I said, well, when you see Jesus in heaven, how much credit are you going to give him for being there?

[12:10] He said, oh, 100%. I said, why? He just told me it was 40% you. Pat yourself on the back. Tell him, didn't I do good? You did good. I did too. Well, I couldn't say that.

I said, you better not because you'd be wrong. Well, and then we came to the great theme of justification. And we often speak of this as justification by faith.

That's very scriptural. It is a work of God toward man and not the other way around. Justification by faith is a legal declaration that the person who is the recipient has been restored to a state of righteousness through belief and trust in the work of Christ rather than on the basis of one's own accomplishments.

Now, we spent a considerable amount of time on justification. Weeks and weeks and we still could not plummet to depths. We never will. Justification is the very topic that launched the Reformation and the recovery of the Gospel which had been buried for a thousand years by the Roman Church. And it's still buried within the Roman Church. When Martin Luther, the great reformer, was still a lost Roman Catholic monk, he struggled.

[13:43] He agonized over the doctrine of justification. And he tried and tried and he grunted and groaned that he might conjure up enough justification to feel himself born again and saved.

And he made a good faith effort at it and he kept failing. Those struggles included daily confession of sin that sometimes lasted all day. His record was 15 straight hours of confessing sins.

These were the sins he committed the previous day and remember, he was isolated in a monastery on top of a mountain in rural Germany. But he confessed for 15 straight hours.

He started back to his room. He remembered one sin he hadn't confessed. He went back and he wanted to start over. And the father confessed and said, no, we're not going to do that. You're a malingerer. We're not doing that.

They thought he was just trying to get out mopping floors or whatever monks did. He then made a journey to Rome his thinking was if I can just visit the holy city, the Vatican, that will help me.

[14:57] Well, it didn't. He then climbed the ladder in church stairs that was made up of 28 rock steps and he stopped to pray on each step.

He crawled up those on his knees. And he stopped at each step and prayed. And he didn't get justified, but he did get sore knees. They were very sore.

One day, Luther was reading a scroll of the book of Romans and his eyes went down to Romans 1, verse 16-17 and he was doing something I can't do.

He was reading it in the Greek language, the language of the New Testament. And this is what it said and this is a literal translation from the Greek language.

For I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation. Did you hear that? The power of God for salvation is the gospel to the Jew first and also to the Greek or Gentile.

[16:08] Now listen to this. For in it, a righteousness from God is revealed from faith for faith as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

The light bulb came on for Luther. That was the first time he realized it's not my righteousness that is essential to a true relationship with God through Christ.

It is an alien righteousness outside of us that comes to us by grace. It was the righteousness that comes from God based upon the cross of Christ.

By that divine righteousness that comes from God, we are justified and saved for eternity. And when Luther saw that, the Reformation was launched.

He had to gather some steam, but that's the starting point of the Reformation. And it was just amazing. Then he looked at the doctrine of adoption.

[17 : 23] That's defined this way. That part of salvation in which God receives the estranged sinner back into the relationship and benefits of being His child. The term connotes positive favor as contrasted with mere forgiveness and remission of sins.

The beauty of adoption for us is that Gentiles are grafted into Abraham's family through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are placed into the family of God.

The Old Testament Jews say, well, that's impossible. They're a bunch of dogs. That can't happen. Well, it happened. And then we next undertook a lengthy discussion and study of the doctrine of sanctification.

I love that. That's a great study. When we are justified, we go through a gate called sanctification. Sanctification.

And we're put on a narrow road. And we travel that. Now, you all remember, broad is the way that leads to destruction. And I taught for years and I probably taught in here that, you know, all these cults and occult and world religions are on that broad way, but we're on the narrow way.

[18 : 39] And then I heard a guy I trust and he said, the broad way are lost church members. I had to really think about that. They're lost church members.

They're on the broad way. They're going their way. They're the guys of Matthew 7. Lord, Lord, did we not do these wonderful things for you? That's the broad way.

The narrow way is Christ. It's a constricted narrow way. It's interesting that word in Greek. It's a little door that's low. You've got to get on your knees to go through there and you can't carry anything with you.

Can't carry your spouse. Can't carry your kids. Can't take your grandkids. They're going to have to enter if they're going to be saved. You can only fit through that yourself.

And we did this lengthy study of sanctification. That is a three-step process. It occurs at initial salvation.

[19 : 37] It then causes us to progressively grow in Christ's likeness. It is ultimately completed when we see Jesus face to face.

going to be like Him because we're going to see Him as He is. So we've got this three-step process of initial salvation, progressively growing into Christ's likeness, and ultimately like Jesus when we see Him face to face.

And I have every now and then people say, well, you know, I got saved when I was nine. My mom made me go forward and I shook hands with the pastor. But I've never grown in Christ's likeness. I haven't been to church in 30 years and I don't pray.

Well, go back and examine yourself. See if you're in the body of Christ. I mean, that's all I would say to that person. I don't know what else to say to them.

We then looked at perseverance of the saints, which is our preservation in Christ. He preserves us. He preserves us. True believers, though buffeted and bruised, remain in Christ by the power of God's Spirit.

[20 : 55] What about those who do not remain but abandon the faith? 1 John 2.19 They went out from us because they were not of us. For if they'd been of us, they would have continued with us.

But they went out that it might become plain that they are all not of this. That's what happens. That's what happens. And many that leave go into apostasy.

No one who's never heard the gospel can ever be an apostate. They may be an unbeliever and they may end up in hell but they're not apostates. Apostates have heard the truth, flirted with the truth, embraced certain parts of the truth, and then walked away and worked against Christ and against God and against the Spirit.

That's apostasy. And then we came to the doctrine of glorification. Did that last week in the final message. Last week. That glorification is the final step in sanctification.

We're sanctified our entire Christian walk from the first moment until we get to the end. Glorification involves the removal of all spiritual defects.

[22 : 17] We become Christ-like, but how? Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him because we

shall see Him as He is.

Hasten the day when we depart and are with Christ. So certain is our glorification that God speaks of it in the past tense.

We looked at that in Romans chapter 8 last time. We have been glorified. In God's mind, we've already been glorified. There is a saying that I don't actually believe, but I will say it in connection with the final study of salvation God's way.

All good things must come to an end. And so we're completing our study of this great topic of salvation tonight. But I want to make a final comment.

And after that, I will have to explain to you why I chose to make this final comment because it's not going to make any sense to you. But there's a reason I'm making it.

[23 : 29] I live on a farm. I do not claim to be a farmer. I know farmers. I have the utmost respect for them.

The elderly gentleman and his wife left me most of my farm. I bought a few dozen acres, but they left that to me because I was the closest they ever had to a son.

They had no children. I worked in his dairy, and I use that word very reservedly. I got in the way. I was about seven or eight at the time, and I know I just was trouble.

But I'm going to close our study of all these weeks and months. I'm going to choose for this illustration a farmer that raises crops.

I once was told about a Nebraska farm. It was very large, and one of the pastures that this farmer owned, not all of them, but one of them, was 35,000 acres with no cross fencing.

[24 : 43] I mean, he had a square fence and no other fences, no ponds, nothing. 35,000 acres.

One pasture, and it had all a crop of corn growing in it. He raised corn. Now, I remember when this happened.

In the 1950s, Nikita Khrushchev, the prime minister of the Soviet Union, took a tour of America.

They took him to an auto plant in Detroit, and he looked at it, took a tour, and when he finished, he said, Soviet cars are much better than American cars.

He went to an aircraft plant out in Washington State, I think it was Boeing, looked at that, and he said, Soviet planes are much better than American planes. No, they're not.

They fall out of the sky all the time. When I was with Phillips, I was supposed to get on a Russian airplane, and I just delayed today. I wanted an American-made airplane. But he said, our planes are better than yours.

[25 : 53] And then, they took him to the middle part of America. And they took him to that pasture in Nebraska. And I think they actually built a platform, as I recall, and he was able to go up there, probably with some help.

He was a little rotund. And he looked out over 35,000 acres of corn. And they reported that tears began to stream down his face.

And he said to those that were gathered, he said, the strength of America is not in your nuclear arsenal. And the strength of America is not your economy.

And he looked out over that corn crop and he said, this is your strength. Right here. And he said, yours is the only country on earth that can feed the world.

And that's true. That's true. And he was right. Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas can just about feed the world.

[27 : 07] Just about. Well, back to my illustration. When a farmer wants to plant a crop, he has to do several things.

He must cultivate the land. That usually involves as a first step the plowing of the field. He then has to sow the seeds of the crop that he hopes to raise.

He also, at some point, adds fertilizer in an effort to raise the best possible crop. But in the back of that farmer's mind, he knows that he is totally dependent upon a force that is outside of him if he's going to have a successful harvest.

If the farmer is really smart and spiritual, he knows that force is God. So what is God's role in this? God, first of all, causes the seed to germinate. What does that mean? Germinate means the seed, the seeds begin to grow. They're in the soil now.

[28 : 23] They're not in a sack or in a bag or sitting on a shelf and they crack open and they put out shoots after a period of dormancy.

A seed can sit on a shelf for years and nothing happens. Put it in dirt, it comes to active life from dormancy and begins to grow.

Several years ago, I remember reading this, archaeologists found clay jars containing wheat seeds in the pyramids and I've been to the pyramids.

They took some and they planted them in good soil and they grew. They produced wheat. It was estimated these seeds were around 4,000 years old.

Just amazing. God also sends rain and sunshine. Without those two essentials, the crop will fail.

[29 : 24] farming is a joint venture between God and the farmer. Now listen to this very carefully.

The farmer cannot do what God must do and God will not do what the farmer must do.

See how that fits? farmer can't do what God must do and God is not going to do what the farmer is supposed to be doing at 4 o'clock in the morning.

Now here is my reason for this illustration. Just as farming is a joint venture between God and the Christian, the Christian farmer, farmer, so is holiness.

So is holiness. Now let's be sure we understand that. God is absolutely holy. He has no imperfections whatsoever.

[30 : 36] We on the other hand are not holy. but when we are saved, we are to pursue holiness.

Let me offer you a few scriptures. Psalm 71-22, I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God. I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O holy one of Israel.

Psalm 77-13, your way, O God, is holy. Psalm 99-1, the Lord our God is holy. Psalm 99-5, exalt the Lord our God, worship at His footstool, holy is He.

And then in Revelation 4-8, and the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.

Revelation 4-8, these are but a few passages and why do I bring these up? I do so because of these commands and I only picked two of them.

[31 : 54] Hebrews 12-14, without holiness no man shall see the Lord. 1 Peter 1-16, be ye holy for I am holy.

Next September, God willing, I hope to start a study tentatively titled Pursuing Holiness in an Unholy World.

It will go by a shorter title, we'll just call it Pursuing Holiness. Now, why did I choose that topic?

Because once we experience in reality salvation God's way, we are commanded and equipped at pursuing holiness.

and underline that thought pursuing. I hope through this study we can all learn how to go through that most worthy process.

The goal will not lead us unto perfection, but I hope it will be and become for all of us our direction.

[33 : 18] Not perfection. perfection. And this life, till we see Jesus, but we'll be unto our direction.