

Series: God Saves #1393

Title: Romans 8.29-30

Warnings for Christians

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We return now to some introductory comments for our study of soteriology. Soteriology is the theological name for the doctrine of salvation that is written about with clarity in the Scripture. God invites us into His perspective on *how* He graciously saves us from our sin. As I said last time this portion of our ongoing discussion is directed towards men and women who are already in the family of God, that is those of us with saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are curious about God, but not yet a believer, we welcome you to be with us each weekday. It is only that it will not surprise me if you find yourself arguing against what I teach (what I have discerned *God* to teach us in His Bible).

And that is because those who reject or resist Christ as Savior (the true Messiah and only Redeemer), will inevitably reject the teaching of salvation (soteriology). For example, we are soon coming to the terms election and predestination. Frankly, there is some disagreement among Bible believing Christians as to what these terms mean, but always (in my experience) people who are *not* Christians will argue against the meaning of these terms that I will put forth on this radio broadcast and internet podcast. These doctrines – all under the major doctrine or heading of soteriology – are not what you need to know right now. *Who* you need to know is *Jesus Christ*.

These doctrines will not save you from sin. *Only Jesus* will save you! Once you surrender your life to Him, once He is *your* Lord, Master, and Savior, as you are discipled by Him, then you will reach a time when you are ready for going into the mind of God and learning about the actions God takes in our lives to rescue and deliver us from the sin that has made us slaves to the Devil and his ways. My testimony, as a born again Christian, is that Jesus is my Savior. I love Him. I honor Him. And I am always eager to introduce someone else to Him. Should you desire the introduction, email me or write to me (via regular mail) or contact me through my website, even through social media (Facebook and Instagram) and let me know you want to correspond.

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You are saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. What you need is repentance for your sin; a genuine sorrow for the ways in which you have offended God by how you think, act, and speak. You need to repent, an intentional turning away from your sin by your faith in Christ. These doctrines we now turn to are not (yet) for you. I hope that you hear this with gentleness and respect for you. By all means, keep listening. I am *not* telling you to turn this off or to stop downloading the God Is Podcast. I am not. I am only saying that it is Christian people, members of the family of God, my brothers and sisters in Christ, who are the primary audience for these comments. This teaching is what we can say are family matters. Soteriology is for the family circle. For those adopted sons and daughters of God.

And so it is to *you*, dear disciple of Jesus, that I will address this teaching. And there is something I want to say to you about *our* attitude as we approach this mighty and worthwhile task of understanding salvation from God's perspective. There are actually a couple of things I want to say.

First, like in any family, we may have disagreements in what we believe about the doctrine of salvation. Disagreement is to be expected and I welcome it. But I do not want to be militant about my views versus your views. I want to model my ministry on Christ. That is, I want to listen to what you have to say and then I will respond. And my prayer is that you will listen to what I have to say, and then you will respond. By listening, I mean to really hear and to digest what the other person is saying, not to listen only so you have a minute to find another way to ram home your point! Take predestination for instance. The church has historically had many creeds, councils, and controversies on this, so it is to be expected that we (today) will have disagreement. But let it not be rancor.

Second, and related, soteriology and all the doctrines that are attached to it, really ought to humble us – not puff up our pride! What the Bible has to say ought to lower us, not exalt us. And, let me be even more specific. What this upcoming study should do is *purify* us. These days together in the Bible should help us grow in our sanctification, making us more like Christ. I have in mind 1 John chapter 3 and verse 3, which reads, **“everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”** (1 John 3.3.)

These truths ahead of us, on the topic of being saved, means that we should pursue the Holy Spirit and ask Him to sanctify us; to purge sin and evil from us. We have this hope of salvation which fixes our attention on Christ, therefore let us be pure, just as Jesus Christ is pure. My prayer for you and for myself is that we will resist the pride of being right, that we will be humble, and that we will grow in our sanctification. And yes, this touches on how we treat one another in the family of God. Let’s allow these truths to make us grateful for all that God has done for us. And, together, let the redeemed say this: God alone be praised! He has proactively reached out to us, through His Son Jesus, and healed us from the terminal illness of sin. Hallelujah. What a Savior. Let us be humble fellow learners on our journey of discovering who God is.

First, like any family, we may have disagreements in what we believe about the doctrine of salvation. Second, and related, soteriology and all the doctrines that are attached to it, really ought to humble us – not puff up our pride! And third, I believe we must approach soteriology in great reverence for God. We must be like Moses at the burning bush. This is very holy ground. We will see the mind of God at work. It will be difficult for us to fully grasp each truth. That is because we are so limited. Being human does that to us. But we are not going to attempt to fully reconcile everything that is here. The Apostle Paul does not, nor shall we.

I said this recently: Paul lays out salvation from the divine viewpoint alongside the human viewpoint and he does *not* attempt to reconcile them. Why should we? I do not think we should do (or can do) what Paul did not (what Paul could not).

Fourth, let us be very careful that we do not approach these doctrines from a purely intellectual, philosophical, and/or theoretical position. To do so is to elevate our minds over the mind of God, and we can never do that. So to sit back, to sip our tea or coffee, and to debate and swirl around these teachings, as if we are in a library somehow detached from the real world; to argue for the sake of argument, no. In the words of the 19th century theologian Charles Hodge, “We must conform our theories to facts, and not make the facts conform to our theories (*Systematic Theology, Volume II, 335*).” And by facts he means biblical facts. Amen!

Fifth, we also must not approach this based on our feelings. There is the intellect, there is the philosopher in all of us, the theories we put forth, but there are also our feelings. Trust me, your *feelings* are bound to get involved in this discussion. In response to what you hear and how you make sense of it, I can hear it now, “but I feel that...” or “but my idea of a loving God is that He would...” Um, it is not our feelings that should drive us. We need to submit what we feel to God, and ask that He bring our emotions under His charge and control. Because here’s the reality: God’s truth upsets our feelings! It does. There are ways in which holy God ministers that challenge what we *feel* and this is for our good. So, by all means bring along your feelings, but do not decide doctrine based on them.

OK. Some food for thought to you Christians tuning in. All of you, please be back with us again tomorrow. We will continue to set up the doctrine of salvation as we continue to discover who God is.

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