

GOD IS: SALVATION

This time of year we call to mind five essential truths of salvation: by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone. It's appropriate to our study of God's attributes - perhaps most clearly seen in salvation: arranged by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit. By God's work, believers *have been saved*, and *are being saved*, and *will be saved*, as plumbed in previous columns. Let's examine further our present-tense experience of salvation, and what theologians call the "ordo salutis" order of salvation, in God's golden chain of redemption.

1- Golden links to salvation past - prior to the believer's personal experience. Romans 8:29-30 says "*For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son...and those He also called, and justified, and glorified.*" While not a comprehensive list, these are some of the most important links. We've already explored God's fore-loving fore-knowing, in electing and predestining those who will trust in Jesus. Planned before the foundation of the world, the atonement of Christ secured salvation for those who will believe in Him for salvation. By God's grace, believers are called, justified, reconciled, adopted, sealed, and even glorified, all in what we understand as eternity past. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says "*God is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*" In your experience, all this happens in regeneration. You think you flip the switch of faith, but Scripture shows us how it is all due to God's hand and His divine saving power.

2- Golden links of salvation present - what you personally experience in your earthly life. We look at this in linear fashion, though some aspects of salvation are sequential and some instantaneous and others progressive. We live out in real time what takes place in the mind of God in eternity past. What God has planned and accomplished then occurs in the context of history on earth. Jesus is spoken of as slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), yet it was in the fulness of time that God sent forth His Son to redeem us, so that we might receive the adoption as sons (Galatians 4:3). Your first experience is being drawn to faith, as Jesus in John 6 says "*all that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and whoever comes I will never cast out*" and "*no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.*" Jesus is speaking to unbelievers who had seen Him and yet did not believe. You like them are unable to come, apart from the sovereign work of God, because you are spiritually dead in sins and made alive in Christ by His will, grace and love (Ephesians 2). Those fore-loved are drawn by His irresistible grace. And by the regenerating gift of God, by grace through faith, to repent and put their trust in Jesus (Romans 10) because God's calling is effectual, and leads to conversion and faith.

As Titus 3 says, "*when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*" In your limited linear real-time experience, you think it all began with your believing, when it actually all comes down to God's fore-loving and enabling grace reaching from what we grasp as eternity past, which extends to eternity future (Eph 2). *By grace you have been saved - and raised up with Him, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus!* You can be confident to persevere to the end, as you are being sanctified, made holy like Jesus.

3- Golden links to salvation future - what believers will personally experience in eternity to come. Your confidence comes from God's promises. Romans 8:30 points to glorification, the consummation of the believer's union with Christ, after resurrection and judgment. Philippians 1:6 proclaims, "*I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus.*" This is God's work, start to finish. Your part today is sanctification, expressed in Philippians 2:12, "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*" Not to get saved but because you have been saved. Just as a first-century servant responds to the master who purchased him, so believers trust and obey the God who saves them and gives them His eternal spiritual life. Because He gives you both the want to and the how to. You live out the salvation He has given and guaranteed to complete. And that's the glory of the golden chain - salvation is all of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, from beginning to end, to His everlasting praise! Amen!