



SPECIAL LESSON: “JESUS SAVED ME – NOW I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS, PART 2”

SUNDAY, March 15, 2026, 11AM
Taught at: Ridgeview Classical Schools
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Review:

- Our new study series on **1 and 2 Thessalonians** has had some interruptions over the last few weeks. We’ve had a special lesson on Iran, and some other events.
- But to date, we’ve worked our way through the first chapter of **1 Thessalonians**, and we’ve seen that Paul is very thankful for this new body of believers.
- Per our lessons in this new series, we’ve seen Paul was confident that these new Thessalonians Christians were truly saved. We’ve learned why he felt as he did.

NOTE: But it all raises some questions for us right here, right now. These are questions like:

1. How should we properly define the Gospel?
2. Does God choose us, or do we choose Him?
3. Do we have eternal security as Christians?
4. Why do we struggle with doubts about our salvation?
5. What can we know about the issue of ‘backsliding?’

NOTE: With these questions in view, I’ve chosen to do a short special lesson series called, **“Jesus Saved Me – Now I Have Some Questions,”** and today is **Part 2** of that.

I answered the first of those five questions in **Part 1** on Sunday, Feb. 15th. As I said, our routine has been disrupted a little bit, and so we’re getting back on track now.

NOTE: Concerning that first question, ‘How should we properly define the Gospel?’ – we learned the following:

1. First, the Gospel, **broadly speaking**, is the responsible declaration, accurate interpretation, and proper implementation of the FULL counsel of God’s Word.
 - That means we must recognize Scripture as being the infallible, complete, eternal, and authoritative revelation FROM God TO us. (Only proper way!)

- And in recognizing God’s Word that proper way, the ‘Gospel’ in this larger sense, requires us to handle the **entire** Bible as God meant it to be handled.
 - And so, when the full ‘Gospel’ is taught, it means we read the Bible normally and interpret it literally – properly allowing for figures of speech where it is obvious those are used.
 - This is the Gospel – ‘broadly speaking’ – it is viewing and teaching the entire counsel of God’s Word with faithfulness, accuracy, and reverence.
2. But second, the Gospel, more **narrowly speaking**, is the good news concerning Jesus Christ and the way of salvation.
- This is the definition of the Gospel that we are more familiar with. It’s the message that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, that He rose again on the third day, and that He is the only way for us to gain eternal life.
 - The word ‘Gospel’ in this sense literally means ‘good news’ – and as we learned, this ‘good news’ is only ‘good’ if there is a proper understanding of the ‘bad news.’
 - The bad news is we are born into sin, our sin condemns us to Hell, and there is absolutely nothing we can do to save ourselves.
 - The ‘good news’ is Jesus loves us, He does not want us to be eternally condemned, and He has made provision by His grace to save us from this fate.
 - We have a choice we need to make. We need to “believe” in Jesus Christ – that He is Lord - and we need to trust Him fully for our salvation.
 - That is the right choice. This saves us from our condemnation. It’s all about what Jesus Christ has done for us. It’s all about believing in Jesus Christ and putting our faith in Him.

NOTE: As *Romans 10:9* says, “If you declare with your mouth, (1.) **“Jesus is Lord,”** and (2.) **believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,** you (3.) **will be saved.**”

NOTE: It’s been a month since we took that deep dive into this question of ‘What is the Gospel?’ I encourage you to go back and re-listen to that lesson and re-read those notes as many times as you need to.

They are posted on our website right now under this ***Thessalonians*** series. You will see the ‘special lesson’ designation. These are very important issues, and we need to be reminded of them over and over.

NOTE: Now, I want to tackle the next question on that list, and I’ll tell you up front that it’s a ‘toughie:’

- A. “Does God choose us, or do we choose Him?” (NOTE: This is going to be some heavy stuff, so I encourage you to restrain your impulses and listen carefully....)
NOTE: When we say, ‘God chooses us, that is also known as ‘sovereign election.’ When we say, ‘We choose God,’ that is also known as ‘free will.’

1. Speaking very generally here, those that emphasize the ‘sovereign election’ side are typically called ‘Calvinists,’ and those that want to camp on the ‘free will’ side are known as being ‘Armenian.’
2. Both of these terms come from two historical figures that made a big deal about these positions, and over time, folks have tended to collect around one side or the other.
3. Sovereign election **and** free will are BOTH taught in Scripture. BOTH are true. BOTH apply to the salvation experience.
4. It’s often an unwise thing to be ‘sitting on the fence,’ but in this case, that’s the proper place to be. We don’t want to fall on one side to the exclusion of the other view.
5. This creates a natural tension that leaves many people feeling uncomfortable. We may be a bit troubled over **who exactly** is in control of our eternal destiny. Is it us? Or is it God?
6. One thing that needs to be stated up-front here is we like things to be measurable. We are human, and it’s just the way we are. We like things we can put in a box which we can easily understand.
7. But the Bible teaches both truths. It teaches that God is sovereign in our salvation; **He chooses us.**
8. And the Bible also teaches that humans are responsible for their choice to believe in Jesus Christ and to put their full faith and trust in Him. **We are held accountable to choose Him.**

NOTE: If you are hoping that I will completely and exhaustively resolve this ‘theological tension’ for you today – then I am going to disappoint you. I cannot do that. Nobody can.

It’s like the doctrine of the Trinity. The Bible teaches that there is one God, but He eternally exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three are co-equal in power and glory, identical in their essential nature, and worthy of receiving the same honor, confidence, obedience and love. We cannot really ‘wrap our minds’ around that, but we accept it and believe it by faith.

This whole ‘sovereign election’ and ‘free will’ matter is similar in its incomprehensible nature. This all boils down to being a matter of God’s infinite character – it is not a matter of our finite comprehension.

Isaiah 55:8-9 underscores this difference between God and us. It says, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

If we could understand everything about God and how He operates, thinks, moves, plans, ordains - - and how He shows us mercy, grace, and love - - then He really wouldn’t be God!

He is far beyond our ability to understand, and we need to trust Him and find comfort in that. He is bigger than us – by far!

NOTE: Back to this ‘theological tension’: This is what we also call a ‘**paradox.**’

9. It’s called a paradox because the Bible clearly presents both truths which seem to be saying disparate things – ‘sovereign election’ and ‘free will.’
10. In the process, this paradox does not fully resolve, to our human satisfaction, how these two truths fit together. **Let’s look at some definitions here:**

NOTE: We’ll start with Sovereign Election (AKA ‘Predestination’):

- This means that God, out of His own sovereign will, and out of His own mercy, **chooses** certain individuals for salvation.
- The Bible teaches this decision by God to choose us for salvation took place **before** this world and this universe was ever created. God knew us THEN, and He chose us THEN.

Ephesians 1:4-5 makes this point very clear. It says, *“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he **predestined** us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—”*

- Here’s the kicker: this choice by God – this ‘sovereign election’ or this ‘predestination’ - **is not based on our future actions or faith from that original point in eternity past**
- This is known as ‘unconditional election.’ It means God elected certain people to salvation “with no conditions or strings attached.”
- The emphasis here is God elects people to salvation by **His own sovereign choice** - - again....not because of some future action that He knows they will ultimately perform.
- God does not elect people to salvation because of some terms or conditions they will eventually and independently meet.
- It is ‘unconditional election.’ Again, the Bible is clear about this....

John 1:12-13 states, *“But to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God - They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but **a birth that comes from God.**”*

- ✓ Those who are saved become God’s children by HIS will, not by their own.
- ✓ They did not become God’s children by any virtue of human nature or good performance. God is the one who makes them His children.

Romans 9:16 further adds, *“So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”*

NOTE: This passage in **Romans** gives us another important insight into this matter of God’s sovereign election for our salvation.

- ✓ It emphasizes that God's sovereign election is based on His mercy.
- ✓ This sovereign election by God is not based on human effort, or any human merit.
- ✓ It’s based entirely upon God’s mercy – which means we ‘do not get what we deserve.’

- ✓ In another way of looking at it - this mercy (this 'not getting what we deserve') highlights this entire issue as being a matter of **God's choice** rather than coming about by any **human attempt**.
- ✓ The Bible makes this case for 'sovereign election' very clear. It is a fundamental doctrine of Scripture.

NOTE: Now, let's consider this matter of Free Will: This is the other side of the equation.

NOTE: This applies to our salvation too (and again, I remind you, this is 'heavy stuff,' so keep listening carefully...)

- As humans, we have the ability to make choices, including responsible choices and moral choices.
- We can choose on this very day to make good decisions, and we can also choose on this very day to make bad decisions. This is our 'free will.'
- But this 'free will' character that we have is not uninhibited liberty - - it's not even the 'ability' to do anything at any time.
- The Bible clearly teaches that our 'free will' is constrained in some respects. It has certain limitations that come from that fact that we are born into sin.
- Bluntly put, we are trapped by our sinful nature. We are **bound** – or we are 'limited' - by that same sinful nature.
- It's like being placed in a jail cell. We have the freedom to pace around in that cell, but we are also trapped by the walls of that cell, and we can go no farther than those four walls.
- It does not matter how much we might desire to go beyond the limitations of that cell, we are still constrained by it.
- It is the same way with our sinful nature. Because of sin, we are imprisoned within a cell of corruption and wickedness which permeates to the very core of our being. Again – everyone is BORN INTO this state-of-affairs.
- Every part of us – every part of our human nature - is in bondage to sin: our bodies, our minds, our desires, our wills, and so on.

Jeremiah 17:9 tells us very clearly that our hearts are '*deceitful and desperately wicked.*' Before salvation, our choices and our efforts are marinated in a pre-existing condition of absolute depravity.

Contrary to secular humanism, mankind is not inherently good. Mankind is inherently evil.

Romans 8:7 states our dilemma as a result. It says, "*For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.*"

- The Bible is very clear that, in our natural and unsaved state, we are incapable of choosing that which is good and holy. In fact, we are in rebellion to God. That is our natural sinful state.

- Put another way, we do not have that capacity in our “free will” to independently choose God, because our will is not sufficiently or capably ‘free’ in that sense.
- Rather, it is constrained by our sinful nature, just as a prisoner is constrained by the walls of his cell. **It’s a REAL dilemma.**

NOTE: The Bible teaches that our "free will" to choose God must be enabled. And it is the Holy Spirit that enables our ‘free will.’ That happens when He draws us to Him.

- This is called the ‘*quickening of our spirit*’ in some translations of the Bible.
- True believers in Jesus Christ are ‘*spiritually quickened*’ by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. They are enabled, by the Holy Spirit, to believe the Gospel.

NOTE: In **John 16:8**, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit. He was going to physically leave His disciples, and He said to them, “*When [the Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*”

- Our world is a sinful place, and it has been that way since the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. A curse has been placed on humanity ever since...
- The Bible teaches that one of the Holy Spirit’s tasks is to convict the world of its sin. In other words, no amount of preaching, explaining, teaching, pleading, condemning, or accusing will bring about this conviction of sin, **unless the Holy Spirit is at work in the sinner’s heart.**
- It is the Holy Spirit’s job to convict a person. It is the Holy Spirit’s job to reveal to us our sinful condition from which we need to repent.
- And the most basic sin the world is guilty of is *unbelief*. And so, the convicting power of the Holy Spirit is at work in the world “*because they believe not in [Christ]*” (**Cf. John 16:9**).
- When a person properly responds to the Holy Spirit’s conviction, the Bible teaches that this is the point of ‘quickening.’
- This is the point at which a person is enabled to believe and to place their full faith and trust in Jesus Christ.
- This happens because He draws us to Him. It’s not possible any other way. **John 6:44** says, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.*”
- The Holy Spirit – at this moment, in this process – ‘revives us and makes us alive’ so that we can respond properly to the truth of the Gospel.
- Think of it this way: this is the point where our ‘free will’ is held accountable to **MAKE THIS CHOICE**. This is the point where the heart of the sinner who is lost is ‘quickened’ or ‘made alive’ to respond properly to the truth of the Gospel.
- This is where our ‘free will’ is held responsible to do the right thing. We must make the right choice to **BELIEVE IN** Jesus Christ and to trust Him fully for our salvation.
- Plenty of people will have the opportunity to make the right choice, but they will neglect to. They will find any number of reasons to not do the right thing.

- And they will face the eternal consequences of their wrong choice (**Cf. Rev. 20:11-15**).
 - Here we see the absolute JUSTICE of God. He is a JUST Judge.
 - Here we see all of faithless humanity from ALL the ages of history being assembled for judgment at The Great White Throne. This WILL happen!
 - This will be the moment they will be held eternally accountable for what choice they made with their ‘free will.’
 - Did they choose God when they had an opportunity to? Did they place their faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation? Did they depend on God’s mercy and grace when they learned of it – or did they walk away from it?
 - If they are in attendance to this event, then their verdict is sealed: they are condemned. But God is still a JUST God, and so He proves a point to each one.
 - Notice in **vs. 12**, “*books were opened.*” God keeps detailed records. Every choice and every element of everyone’s life is accounted for.
 - These records will PROVE they did NOT make a willful decision to believe in Jesus Christ, to put their faith and trust in His offer of salvation, and they chose to go another way instead.
 - Here we see they did not exercise their ‘free will’ as they should have done. And believe me – while we cannot fully comprehend all the nuances of this occasion – these people will KNOW they are guilty and they made the wrong choices on this earth and in this life when they had the chance to do otherwise.
 - So they will be tossed into the flames of Hell where **vs. 10** of that chapter says they will be ‘*tormented day and night for ever and ever.*’ It’s a horrible fate that defies our worst comprehensions.

LET ME WRAP UP HERE:

We have a paradox in this matter of ‘sovereign election’ and ‘free will.’

- Scripture presents both truths without fully resolving how they fit together.
- On one hand – and in the larger perspective - God's sovereign election is not based on foreseen faith, but rather, God creates the faith that He foresees in those He elects.
- On the other hand, we have this matter of ‘free will’ or **human responsibility**. While God is in control, He did not create us to be mindless programmable robots.
- As a result, we all are fully accountable for our response to the Gospel. Do we accept that good news and place our full faith and trust in Jesus Christ?
- Or do we reject the good news of the Gospel, ignore the message and the truth that we MOST need to pay attention to, and subsequently condemn ourselves to eternal condemnation?

Here is what I would say: “rest in the confidence that God is gracious, merciful, and good.” The Bible is abundantly clear on that truth. That is WHO God is. He never changes.

As **1 Timothy 2:3-4** says, “*This is good and pleasing in the sight of God our Savior who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*”

We can trust in the fact that Jesus Christ desires that we be saved. He wants to have us be in a right relationship with Him. And we NEED to be! We can depend fully on THAT truth.

Don't worry too much about the things we are not equipped to fully understand in THIS life. Rather, focus on the things we DO know and we ARE accountable for.

Chief among those things is we need to believe in Jesus Christ, we need to confess our sins and repent, we need to place our full faith and trust in Him, we need to cling to the truth that HE paid the price for our sins, and IN Him and THROUGH Him alone - - we can have eternal life. There is NO OTHER WAY to be saved!

NEXT WEEK: We are going to unpack the final three questions of this special lesson series:

1. Do we have eternal security as Christians?
2. Why do we struggle with doubts about our salvation?
3. What can we know about the issue of 'backsliding?'

Each of these three questions are closely related, but they each wrestle with a different aspect of the same general concerns.

But I'm closing a touch earlier today because I want our Q&A time to be a tad different. The issues we have unpacked today are challenging to understand, and I'd like to take this opportunity to share a bit, and to learn from each other.

I don't need to be the only one dispensing my thoughts and perspective. We can all learn from one another.



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Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God's Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don't pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don't teach what is NOT there. Don't force a passage to mean something it really doesn't.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

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