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Why Did God Choose To Make Salvation Secure?

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We humans like “why” questions. They appeal to our desire to know that the events of life occur for a reason. If we know why something happened the way it did, we feel reassured that the universe is not random; some larger force is at work bringing about the greater good. There’s an intrinsic comfort in knowing “why.”

For instance, one day Jesus and His disciples passed a man who had been blind from his birth. Immediately, the disciples wanted to know the cause. “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2) Expositors and commentators have picked that question apart, trying to determine the disciples’ intent. Were they merely looking to lay blame? Or, were they asking a deeper question; one that peers beyond the surface facts and digs for the root cause. *Why* was this man born blind? Was his impairment a response to his parents’ behavior? Or, was it something he himself did prior to his own birth? Was it a matter of purposeless chance or random fate? Or, was there some larger cause - some pattern to the fabric of human existence - that lay behind this man’s plight?

“Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” (John 9:3)

With that one concise statement, Jesus pulled back the curtain that separates physical life from spiritual truth and gave His followers a glimpse into the mind of providence. This blind man was an object

¹ See www.SalvationByGrace.org.

lesson. The answer to the question “why?” was wrapped up in God’s glorification of Himself. There was no blame, no guilt, and this blindness was far from random. This fellow lived with blindness his whole life so that Jesus would have someone to heal. And there was no discussion of the relative fairness or justice of the situation. God designed both the miracle and the means; and they both served His glory.

That event – the intersection of the blind man with the Lord of glory – is a microcosmic example of the central theme of the whole Bible. That is: what God does, He does for His own glory, according to His good pleasure. The purpose behind everything, indeed the answer to every “why?” question, is rooted in God’s glorification of Himself.

Philosophers speak in terms of “first cause.” If human life has purpose, then something caused life to exist in order to fulfill that purpose. But, I would argue that God is more than merely the “first cause” behind the events of human life. He is the purpose and focus of everything that occurs in His universe.

Long ago, God proclaimed His absolute supremacy over all things, causing the prophet Isaiah to write:

“That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” (Isa. 45:6-7)

Jehovah of Scripture describes Himself as being the Creator, the cause, the purpose and the final end of all things. When He calls Himself *El Shadday*, or God Almighty, certain implications become axiomatic. For instance, if God is indeed omnipotent, or all-powerful, then there is no residual power separate from Him. No event empowers itself in a universe ruled by one who has “all power.” That is why God declared His absolute authority over light and dark, peace and evil. The Lord does *all* these things. Without Him nothing is formed, nothing exists, nothing occurs.

“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:3)

But, even beyond the fact that all creation was manufactured by God, it is equally true that all creation was formed *for* God. It all serves His purpose.

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” (Rev. 4:11)

All things that are, or which have ever been, find their purpose in the glorification of God. God empowers all things; therefore all things happen in accordance with His will and good pleasure. The events of history, playing out in time, serve God’s greater purpose: the revelation and glorification of Himself.

But—for some inexplicable reason, human beings think that God’s absolute supremacy stops at the doorstep of their “free will.” With almost unimaginable hubris, the creature stiff-arms the Creator, shoving His hand in the Almighty’s face and announcing, “I will decide for myself how much influence I will allow you to have over me!”

As Shakespeare’s Hamlet said, “Aye, there’s the rub.” Even the most Arminian theologian will give lip-service to the notion that God is indeed all-powerful and that He created the universe according to His own plan. But, a dividing line is formed when a Calvinistic adherent declares with equal certitude that the salvation of any individual human falls under the exact same hand of utter sovereignty.

But salvation, especially if we are discussing eternally-secure salvation, must be aligned with every other aspect of the Almighty’s creation and therefore must exist for one reason only: the glorification of the One who designed and administered it.

Salvation and Sovereignty

Whenever I’m discussing this subject, I like to borrow a page from the Socratic Method and make my point by asking four simple questions:

- (1) Ask any professing Christian, “Are you saved?” They will naturally reply in the affirmative.
- (2) Ask them, “*Who* saved you?” and they will invariably reply that God in Christ was their Savior. And, they’re right. But, that’s as deeply as most Christians seem willing to pursue the topic.
- (3) The proper follow-up question would be: “Does He save everyone?” The obvious, Biblical answer is, “No.”

- (4) So the fourth question is: “Did He save you accidentally, or did He do it on purpose?” Very few folk would be willing to answer, “It was an accident.”

So, the inescapable conclusion is: God saves some people and He does it on purpose.

The Bible unabashedly declares that God is Almighty. He has, and is, *all* the power. Therefore, as noted earlier, nothing occurs in His universe that He does not empower. So, the salvation of His creatures must of necessity also fall under His jurisdiction. Salvation requires power. The Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the grave raises spiritually dead people to newness of life.

“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.” (1 Cor. 6:14)

The Greek word translated “power” in that verse is “*dunamis*,” from which we derive our English word “dynamic.” The powerful, irresistible force of God is required to raise a sinner from his deadness into the glorious light of life in Christ. It is not the power of human choice, or decision, or work, or fleshly action that results in salvation.

Whatever power is necessary to accomplish any facet of the redemption and glorification of God’s people must be instituted, sustained, continued and ultimately completed by God Himself, or else there is some power in His universe separate from Him. In short, God saves – completely and utterly – those who are saved.

So, does He do that by mistake, or on purpose? And, if He does it on purpose, whose purpose is it? Scripture declares that mankind was formed by God, for God’s own purpose, according to His own will and good pleasure. Likewise, the salvation of any person happens according to God’s own purpose, by His own good, free and unencumbered will, to the glory of His grace.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, **according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace**, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his

will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.” (Eph. 1:3-9)

What God does, He does for His own glory.

Salvation and the Language of Eternity

One of the primary attributes of God is that He is eternal. By that we mean that He has always existed and will continue to exist for all the eons to come. Those are hard concepts for our finite minds to grasp. But being eternal, God not only speaks in terms of eternity; He is capable of declaring and controlling the events of time and eternity from His position of absolute power and authority, causing all things to come out exactly as He intended.

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” (Isa. 46:9-10)

When Jesus spoke of life, He used a term that only an eternal being could employ: eternal life. The life that Christ promises His people is the same life that dwells in Him: life everlasting.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have **everlasting life**.” (John 3:14-16)

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them **eternal life**; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.” (John 10:27-30)

That’s fascinating language. For something to be truly eternal, it must always be. But equally, it must have always been. The life that Christ procured on behalf of His people is life as everlasting as the Father Himself. That is one of the foundation stones on which the doctrine of eternal security is built. If Jesus gives life to any person and they later perish, then the life He gave them was merely temporal. Jesus would have been dealing dishonestly when He promised His sheep the security of the Father’s power to keep them.

As Christ's words plainly attest, the life of God deposited in the believer is life that has always existed and which will eternally prevail. But, there is another aspect of Jesus' words that is not to be missed. The very faithfulness of God is on trial. The power of God to rule over the events of His domain comes crashing down if any single sheep God intended for eternal life fails to inherit the gift the Father has prepared for him. In short, God's glory is at stake.

Nevertheless, God is so confident in His ability to secure the people promised to His Son that Jesus boasts of their combined strength. Jesus gives them life eternal and they shall *never* perish; neither will any man pluck them from Christ's hand. That's a bold declaration of power and authority. But, just to shore up His position and prove the inalterable nature of His decision, Jesus placed both the sheep and Savior in the hands of the Almighty. If God fails to protect the entire flock, each and every individual saint destined to eternal life, then God's glory is not simply tarnished, it is all but eradicated.

Throughout the Bible, God speaks the language of eternity. He declares that His mercy toward Israel is predicated on His love for them. But, He does not speak in terms of temporary or fleeting love. God's love is based in His own nature. It is eternal love.

“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” (Jer. 31:3)

The love of God is everlasting; therefore “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” (Rom 11:29) God never recants, never turns from, His call to His people. And the gift of life eternal is never negated. Eternal God has eternally secured the people He eternally loved – for His eternal glory.

And, inasmuch as His glory is at stake, the full scope of His infinite power is employed to guarantee the security of His people. Again, there is more than just their destiny on the line. The power of God that holds the stars in their orbits and feeds the newborn lions hangs in the balance. Either God is utterly and impregably in control, resulting in the eternal security of His people, or the very warp-and-woof of the universe is in jeopardy.

Salvation and the Golden Chain of Redemption

One aspect of God's glorification of Himself that rings loudly throughout the New Testament is the centrality of Christ in all things.

This is seen nowhere more clearly than in Paul's epistle to the Romans. God's purpose in making salvation secure is plainly stated in Romans 8:28-30, a passage often referred to as "the golden chain of redemption."

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, **that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.** Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. 8:28-30)

In this startling bit of clarity, Paul pronounced the scope of God's activity in saving His people. Those "whom he did foreknow" are the objects of a continuous series of beneficial actions on the part of the Creator. And importantly, it is God alone who is the actor. There is no synergy, no cooperative effort, demonstrated in this passage. Those with whom God had an intimate relationship in advance of their creation became the recipients of His sovereign hand of merciful provision. And notice that, despite frequent (and I would argue purposeful) misinterpretations of this phrase, God did not know something *about* certain individuals that caused Him to save them. Rather, He knew *them*. God knew the persons themselves, all of their sinfulness and depravity, their desperation and their failures. God knew every intimate detail of every sinner He deigned to save. Yet, He loved them everlastingly and predestined them to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Now, *why* did God determine to conform some people? The answer rings loud and clear in the text – "that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." God saved particular people – those whom He intimately loved before the foundation of the world – for the purpose of glorifying His Son, making Him the head over a great cloud of witnesses who would praise and worship the Lamb for their eternal redemption and salvation.

So, what did God do in order to complete His determination to glorify His Son? Well, those same people who were foreknown and predestinated were specifically called. The Holy Spirit of God, the earnest of our inheritance, took up residence in them, drawing them to the Father who eternally loved them:

“In whom [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” (Eph. 1:11-14)

The Holy Spirit is God’s “down payment” in the predestined believer. And just as a king seals His royal decrees with his signet ring, God’s elect are sealed with the Holy Spirit, protected and conformed to Christ internally by the power of the Spirit, and secured externally by the completed and fully-effective redemptive work of Christ. And once again, what is the end result of that work? “The praise of *his* glory.” Paul extolled the virtues of God in the salvation of men and women; the God who works all things after the counsel of his own will “that we should be to the praise of *his* glory.” This theme runs throughout the Pauline theology.

Returning to the Golden Chain, those same people who were foreknown, predestinated and called were also justified. The atoning work of Christ did far more than simply wash us from our sin. If we were merely sinless, we would be essentially neutral, neither good nor bad. But, in order to stand before God, our righteousness “must exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees.” (Mat. 5:20) In point of fact, to worship in the eternal tabernacle of God we must be holy, righteous, spotless, unblemished, and as righteous as Christ Himself. As a remedy, Christ’s own righteousness is imputed to our account and when God looks on us, He sees His Son. We are “accepted in the beloved.” (Eph. 1:6) The work of Christ is so complete that it encompasses everything necessary for our full, final and eternal redemption and salvation. We were eternally loved; therefore we were destined in advance to live with Him in glory. Thus, we were called and indwelt by His eternal Spirit. And the power of God that raised Christ from the grave raises us to walk in newness of life. By His death we are cleared of our offense and our guilt. But, by His resurrection we are fully and completely justified.

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to

that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness ...

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Rom. 4:16, 22-25)

God accomplished these actions alone, without the aid of the creature. And, having fully provided everything necessary for the eternal security of His people, the last and final end of those people is an inescapable conclusion: “and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

Those who were eternally foreknown – loved in advance – were predestined to their eternal estate in God’s presence. Those people in particular were called to faith. Christ died for their transgressions, redeeming them utterly and completely, and He was raised for their particular justification. Those things being accomplished, Paul could say categorically, even speaking in the past-tense, that those selfsame people are glorified, eternally secure and sealed with the Spirit of God.

Now, back to the question: Why? Why did God choose to do all things so autonomously? He did it in order to bring glory to His Son; making Him the firstborn among many brethren. The salvation of sinners redounds to the glory of God, the sole actor in the process of redemption and glorification, to the end that His Son will be glorified above every name that is ever named.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil 2:9-11)

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts

said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” (Rev 5:11-14)

Salvation and the Problem of Sin

Lastly, returning to our original question, why did God choose to make salvation secure? It could be no other way. The only alternative would be a cooperative effort between the Creator and fallen creature, whereby each of them must perform some duty; each must add his part to the equation in order for the agreed-upon outcome to be achieved. Despite the appeal of such synergistic theology, and its wide acceptance in Evangelical circles, the plain declarations of Scripture make salvation based on mutual performance impossible.

Fundamental to sound Christian doctrine is a proper understanding of mankind’s sinful estate. That’s the starting place for any proclamation of the gospel of salvation. After all, were we able to save ourselves everlastingly, there would be no purpose for a Savior. There is no point in saving someone who can just as easily save himself. But, the Bible pulls the rug out from under our confidence and self-sufficiency. In our flesh, men and women are said to be “dead in trespasses and sins.” (Eph. 2:1) And lest we fail to feel the full weight of such a statement, the Psalmist David declared and the Apostle Paul repeated:

“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Rom. 3:11-12)

Spiritually dead humans, who neither seek God, nor indeed *can* understand Him, are not capable of holding up their end of any bargain struck between God and themselves. The Law of Moses made that abundantly clear. God offered rewards and blessings to any man who could live up to the Sinai Covenant. Do it and you live; fail to any degree and you die. Israel’s covenant of works is the perfect test case of synergistic soteriology. And not one human individual (save Christ) was capable of performing up to the standard.

But, long before the Law of Moses was added to Israel, God had formed an unconditional covenant with Abraham. Knowing that any agreement made with men would ultimately come up short, God made a covenant with Himself; a promise based on His own faithfulness.

God promised Abraham that his posterity would inherit the land of Canaan. He also promised him a natural descendant with Sarah and that through his progeny all the families of the earth would be blessed. Abraham was instructed to prepare animals for a covenant ceremony, cutting them in half and setting the pieces apart so that the participants of the covenant could walk through the bloody carcasses together. But, before Abraham could perform his part in the ritual, God put him to sleep. Then, taking the form of “two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie,” (Heb. 6:18) God passed through the animals alone, sealing the deal based on His own trustworthiness, dependent on no participation or cooperation from Abraham at all.

“And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” (Gen. 15:17-18)

In the book of Galatians, Paul identified the promised seed of Abraham, through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed, as Christ (Gal. 3:16). So, the promise of salvation came as a direct result of a covenant God made with Himself.

“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” (Heb. 6:17-18)

There is a remarkable contrast here, not to be missed. Paul argued that the Law of Moses came and went. It was added to Israel for the purpose of exposing their genuine sinfulness; to make sin appear all the more sinful. Then, the Law was nailed to the cross of Christ and taken out of the way; leaving the believer freely betrothed to a new husband, the risen Savior.

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” (Col. 2:13-14)

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” (Rom. 7:4)

The Law of Moses was a completely conditional covenant, dependent on man’s willing cooperation and purposeful subjection to it. But, the Law was weak in that it could not save. It could not stoop to help the fallen sinner. It could only stand against him, righteously thundering down condemnation on the person who failed to live up to every nuance and detail. That’s what synergistic notions of salvation accomplish: judgment and damnation, because humans are incapable of living righteously enough to accomplish their personal holiness and sanctification. Salvation based on mutual agreement and joint-participation cannot result in anything except failure. Sinful humans cannot keep their part of the deal and the whole of the Old Testament speaks resoundingly to that sad reality.

So, God established a New Covenant; a covenant based on salvation by grace through faith. It was an unconditional covenant, based on the promise He made with Himself. In short, the sinful nature of man and his inability to hold onto God absolutely demanded that God eternally secure His chosen or no one could ever be saved.

Ephesians 2:4-10

Despite the length of this treatise and the language I’ve employed, I have really not said anything that the Apostle Paul did not say better. Perhaps no pericope of any Pauline epistle states the case more clearly than this:

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” (Eph 2:4-7)

Read that carefully, line-by-line. What God did, He did because He is rich in mercy and because of the great love wherewith He loved His people. Despite our wretched condition – stone-cold dead in sins and trespasses against His law and His holiness – the power of God that raised Christ from the tomb worked in us, quickening our spirits, enlightening the eyes of our understanding, and making us sit together

with Christ in Heaven. God is the sole actor in that entire list of gracious activity. But, then Paul reached behind the action to the purpose. With characteristic clarity, he answered the question we've been pondering for several pages: *Why* did God make salvation secure?

The answer: "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

God saves sinners for His own glory.

Conclusion

The reality of our eternal security is perhaps the best part of the Gospel of Christ, because it offers us comfort, reassurance and a "peace which passeth all understanding." (Phil. 4:7)

Life can be difficult. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." (Job 14:1) But, there is a great deal of comfort in knowing that the trials of our lives have purpose. Life is not random. Things do indeed happen for a reason. And, in the process of God glorifying Himself, He may take His children through valleys of weeping. But, we are never truly despondent. We are never forsaken. We are never without hope; because we know that the Sovereign of the universe is working all things for our good and for His glory.

If eternal security were not the teaching of Scripture, then our salvation would indeed be dependent on our cooperation. And we would never have any freedom or liberty in Christ. We would spend our days in the continuous, worrisome pursuit of more works, more faith, more personal perfection, never knowing when we had reached the goal or were secure in our performance.

The great news of the gospel is, "It is finished!" The legalist will tell us that we must work to be saved. But, the legalist can never tell us how much work is sufficient. He can never guarantee our eternal destiny because legalism offers no authoritative quotient of works versus sins by which to measure our progress. The legalist can only tell us to work endlessly in the vain hope that God will accept us on the basis of our sincere effort.

But, true Christianity offers genuine hope and a confidence that rises above the constriction of our fleshly failures. The gospel of free and sovereign grace promises us that we are secure in our Father's

hand, our sins are fully propitiated in the Son's perfect sacrifice, we are justified in the eyes of God, testified to by the raising of His Son, and we are "perfected forever" (Heb. 10:14) by the once-for-all work of redemption. Whom He loved eternally, He destined for Heaven, called, justified and glorified.

The law said: "Do, and live."

The gospel of grace says, "Live, it is done!"

So, does eternal security make sense? Well, biblically speaking it is the only position that makes any sense at all. Every other concept of salvation is dependent on failed and fallen creatures who have proven repeatedly, and to-the-person, that they are incapable of maintaining any deal that requires their perfect, continuous, unfeigned commitment. Surely God, who knows every man intimately from the inside out, knows enough not to depend on the consistency of humans to accomplish His eternal purpose.

But, a salvation that is based on the unchanging nature of a God who loves everlastingly, and a Savior who is able to save them "to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," (Heb 7:25) is a salvation that is not only eternally secure, but is the sole method of salvation by which all the glory, majesty, praise and worship goes to the One who formed, instituted, sustained and completed the plan in accordance with His own will, for His own good pleasure, to the glory of His grace.

And, that's salvation that makes sense.