



Talks 26-28 of Michael Eaton's Whole Counsel of God series

OVERVIEW OF SECTION:

WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION, PART 1 (TALK 26):
TENSES OF SALVATION/ ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

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WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION, PART 2 (TALK 27):
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?: FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD/SANCTIFICATION

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WORKING OUT YOUR SALVATION, PART 1: TENSES OF SALVATION/ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

TALK 26

Contents:

A. Introduction

B. Working out our salvation 6:46

INTRODUCTION

Starts with an Intro to the Whole Counsel of God:

Acts 20 v27

I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Phil 2 v12-13

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, 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.

Reminder of what we are doing. We are trying to survey what Paul calls 'The whole counsel of God.' Paul is summarising his ministry.

Paul has a total overview of the God. Similar to systematic theology but not a systematic theology in the sense that it is used today (where the Bible is marginalised). In the true sense of systematic theology it is what you believe after you have expounded the entire Scriptures. What you believe after expounding the whole bible is your theology. This is the whole counsel of God.

It's a kind of story that begins with God; then Creation; Humankind & The Fall into Sin; The Person of Jesus Christ & Salvation > Contents of Grounded 1

WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION SALVATION HAS STEPS AND STAGES IN IT (6:46)

Bible doesn't spend a lot of time telling us how to get saved. It doesn't take much time to say – you can put it in a sentence. Paul says to the Philippian jailor "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved".

What happens after you get saved? It's now a bigger, richer picture at the heart of the Christian gospel.

The Bible is not spending chapters and chapters telling us how to get saved, it spends most of its time telling us how to work out our salvation. What we do next. How to give our lives to God.

Paul never says “work for” our salvation but once we have attained our salvation by grace, we are called to “work out”.

The word salvation has 3 tenses:

HAVE BEEN – justification, new birth, in Christ, children of God

Eph 2 v8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

ARE BEING – we are progressively becoming like Jesus, undoing all the damage of sin, growing in grace, getting rescued from the consequences of sin, we are cleansing ourselves

1 Cor 1v18

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

2 Cor 7v1

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Col 2v6-7

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

SHALL BE – finally redeemed in the body on the day of resurrection, final reward is in the body, the glory of God will be shared with us, we hope for what we do not see. Waiting for our adoption. Body has not been saved. We are justified – finished – we can't be more accepted. Waiting for salvation to touch our body. The resurrection of the body. Hoping for salvation – waiting for the final hope.

Heb 1 v14

Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Phil 3v20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Romans 8v23

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

There are various illustrations of salvation in the Bible and these often include all 3 of these tenses:

A RACE

1. Qualified for the race
2. Run the race
3. Win the race

1 Cor 9 v24-27

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

A BUILDING

1. Put on a foundation
2. Built yourself up
3. God moves in by the Spirit

Eph 2 v19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

A MARRIAGE

1. Engaged to God
2. Being prepared for marriage
3. Marriage consummated

ISRAEL

1. Redeemed by the blood of the lamb
2. The journey of faith – we are pilgrims
3. Enjoy the rest of God having accomplished what they were saved for

You can get your salvation BUT ruin your life by not moving on in salvation. That doesn't mean that they lost the salvation (they left Egypt) but they never got to the Promised Land.

Jude v5

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

Knowing these 3 tenses is important because they are different.

When you are saved, it is sudden, and you can have assurance because the very second you are given salvation, you get the end, peace with God!

What about the bit in-between? That doesn't change the end – salvation is a gift that doesn't depend on how well you do – you are saved by grace - by doing nothing!

Romans 8v28-30

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Notice how it is as good as done – you are already glorified if you are justified. You get the end at the beginning.

It is the SECOND STAGE that takes time – being saved. The FIRST and THIRD STAGE are without works because of Jesus and not because of you.

How do you reconcile the statements that you are saved by faith but yet your righteousness needs to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisee's?

- Status – saved by faith
- Working out our salvation – doing the work of God
- False teaching can occur here:
- Try to add “works” to justification
- Try to remove “works” from sanctification

The Christian life is not “ceasing from struggling and strife” – NO, we are called to work out our salvation, put on the armour of God and fight the good fight.

People want an active justification and a passive sanctification – it is the other way around! There is nothing passive about serving God. It is the difference between being dead and alive. You do not ask a corpse to help, but you do ask someone who is alive.

The SECOND STAGE includes works of faith – this is where the warnings in Scripture come (warnings do not relate to assurance)

How much of your practical salvation can you lose? Lots - but even that is not losing your salvation. You have moved from God but He has not moved from you. You have fallen in the Kingdom but you are not out of the Kingdom.

FINAL STAGE – you can lose levels of glory in the final day. Your resurrection can't be lost but it can be damaged (i.e. you can be saved through the fire)

1 Cor 15 v41-42

⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. ⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable

Why do you want to know what it is like to be saved by fire? Aim rather for high glory – have Jesus say “Well done my good and faithful servant”

Practical implication of this teaching

Do NOT bother moving on to the SECOND STAGE when you are unsure of the FIRST STAGE. Make sure you are qualified for the race, make sure your building has a foundation – before you work out your salvation.

How do know we have assurance of salvation (FIRST STAGE)?

1. Trust in the promises of God – put your faith in Jesus
2. The gift of the Spirit – we are given the spirit of adoption as a seal

Eph 1v13-14

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

If you can find a promise that you feel is not being met, turn that promise into prayer. Plead the promises into prayer. Lay hold of the promises like Isaiah and Jacob.

3. You receive confirmations in your own life that you are not the same person – you can confirm your salvation

1 John 3:14

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers.

But, very importantly, this is the last way of getting assurance of salvation. It does not come first, or even second, but third. Notice that we're not trying to detect our salvation by the degree of our godliness. If we do that, we're doomed to undermine the assurance of our salvation. However, just as John said in 1 John 3:14, all new Christians will notice a new love and affection, however small or imperfect it is, towards fellow-Christians. This serves as a confirmation of our salvation.

THE TEACHING ABOUT WORKING OUT SALVATION, PART 2

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD/SANCTIFICATION

TALK 27

Contents:

A. Three dimensions to working out our salvation

1. Fellowship

2. Sanctification

A. THREE DIMENSIONS TO WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION

Fellowship

Seek the Lord and be in fellowship with God. Don't make the mistake of loving godliness more than God. If you do that, you will end up a Pharisee and legalism.

Sanctification

Holiness can become a thing in itself that get focused on. This is a mistake; it needs to be in the context of rejoicing in God Himself. It is not a thing in itself.

Ministry

No such thing as holiness without serving God. No one is holy without serving God.

1. FELLOWSHIP

At the very heart of working out our salvation is seeking God. To seek to know Him closely, hear His voice and know the power of the Holy Spirit. We seek the:

Character of God

We can know God in a personal way. There is a big difference between knowing God and knowing about God. It is not easy to practically know the difference. J.I. Packer and A.W. Tozer are authors who have tried to do that have had limited success.

HABAKKUK – when he meditated on God, it affected him, he was living on God

THE WOMEN AT THE WELL – everlasting life is found in Jesus Christ. She started to speak about religion but Jesus taught that spirit and truth are what really counts – we are to live on him.

JEREMIAH – he buys land that the enemy is camping on and then wonders what he has done. At that point he appeals to the character of God.

JESUS – He said that we must eat his body and drink his blood. We are to look unto Jesus – miracles, purposes, blood, his intercession.

We are not good at this. There are conferences often arranged in a way where planners have no intention for people to seek the Lord – it is programmed out. You can see that South Africans have time for holidays – have we made time for fellowship with God? There doesn't appear to be a culture that makes time for God, except for the poor. Jesus taught this by saying that the rich struggle to enter into the Kingdom because they are so busy with other things – this is not salvation, but working out salvation.

You need to find time to spend with God:

- Block out time in your diary
- Say that you need 10 hours sleep – use the time on either side for God
- Need time daily, weekly and monthly with God
- Blocking out mornings when on holiday

We need to spend time with God. This is often put in terms of marriage – a deep intimacy with God that cleanses us. That is why Song of Songs is in the Bible – spending time with God is sweet – “Behold, I stand at the door and knock” – we must be ready to let Him in.

Eph 5 v25-27

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Fellowship is also often spoken of as a meal. Some marks of a meal: You are not in a hurry; Not under pressure of time; No special agenda

We must not put sanctification ahead of this – this is not a law in the godly life, this is the instinctive thing in salvation - the first thing Jesus is doing when he saves us is to restore fellowship with God! There is no Christian faith without this. We must not take this for granted.

ME gave the example of when he is squeezed for time and needs to choose between fellowship with the Lord or preparing a message, better to fellowship the Lord. The fellowship can sustain a poorly ordered message but not the other way around. The most important thing is fellowship with the Lord. ME sometimes gets asked “How much time do you study?” To which he is tempted to reply “None” because he views it as time in fellowship with the Lord. It is not an academic thing, neither is preparing to preach – the Christian life is not about gaining information. The Christian life is more like football than maths – we need to get out there and do things with the ball! You learn a language by using it, not just studying it. It is mastering a skill and not growing in a body of knowledge.

2. SANCTIFICATION

We can confuse holiness with severity (seriousness) and become harsh.

What does it mean to live a holy life?

We tend to say “Well, to keep the commands” and although that is true, it is not really adequate because the holy life is not a matter of walking under the law.

We are not under the law; we are under grace, in Christ.

The Bible does use the word fulfil however – we are to fulfil the law now that we are in Christ and live by the Spirit.

ME uses the analogy of playing Scrabble. Psalm 119 meditates on the holiness of God using all the letters of the alphabet. Why? Because it is such a big subject and it is a useful tool to drag out all the different elements. We need to, like a game of Scrabble, spell out all that we know about the holiness of God. This would include:

- Assurance – being sure of God (no-one who is holy is unsure of God)
- Abiding – stay where you are (you got everything right when you were saved)
- Accountability
- Allegiance
- Ambition – the desire to do something good for God
- Anticipation – expecting good from your God

- Boldness – all holy people are bold
 - Brightness – shining for God and the delight of God is on your life
 - Bible-guided – the Bible guides, corrects and rebukes your life
-
- Concern – for God, his work
 - Care – for people
 - Certainty
 - Compassion
 - Compulsion – the love constrains
 - Confidence
 - Conviction
 - Christ-centredness
-
- Desire
 - Devotion
 - Discernment
 - Discipline – routines to your life
-
- Endurance
 - Ease – holding nothing against God
 - Encouragement
 - Energy – you are not keeping anything up, he is keeping you up

We will stop here – only at E– but do you notice how this holy Scrabble outstrips the 10 commandments!

THE TEACHING ABOUT WORKING OUT SALVATION, PART 3: SANCTIFICATION CONT.

TALK 28

Contents:

1. Three dimensions to working out our salvation
2. Sanctification (Cont.)
3. Ministry

WHAT DOES IT MEANS TO LIVE A HOLY LIFE? (CONTINUED...)

ME continued with the A-Z of holiness – Freedom, Faithfulness, Grace, Humility, Justice, Knowledge, Leadership, Meekness, Neighbourly, Orderliness, Peace, Quietness, Rejoicing, Satisfaction, Transparency, Victory, Wisdom, Youthfulness, Zeal etc.

These are the fruit of the Spirit – these are slower than works which occur now. One of the keys to the spiritual life is that there are no shortcuts – you can't be a shortcut farmer. The Christian life is one of fruitfulness – there is a discipline involved – no shortcuts. You put love first and these fruit emerge from love.

You should focus on loving people and not God – why? Because you can fool yourself into believing that you love God but it is not that easy to fool yourself when you aim at loving other people! The real test is the love of people.

WHY SHOULD WE BOTHER WITH SANCTIFICATION?

Not to be justified.

1. Because of the character of God

We are trying to get close to God and if you want to be close to God, you must take note what God likes. God is light, so don't be messing around in darkness.

1 John 1v5-7

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

2. Because of the design of God

God has designed for us to be made holy. If this is our destiny, we can do it! The key to predestination is to use it in the manner in which it is intended to be used i.e. it means that we can be holy.

Romans 8v29-30

²⁹For 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. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

The key to predestination is to use it in the manner in which it is intended to be used i.e. it means that we can be holy. The purpose of our salvation is to purify us and make us zealous for good works. If you don't flow with this plan, the very purpose of your life will not be fulfilled!

Titus 2v11-14

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

James uses justified by works in the sense of fulfilling the purpose for which we were saved (not the same usage as Paul). James points out that works are vital in order for us to fulfil God's purpose for our lives. Abraham went to a greater level of blessing when he worked out his salvation.

James 2v20-23

²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God.

Sanctification can be fun because the victory is assured – you fight the fight of faith. Like a rugby match, you get up when you get knocked down. You are not under law and are therefore not condemned. You begin to enjoy the battle!

3. Because we expect to inherit the Kingdom

To "inherit the Kingdom" doesn't just mean that you are going to heaven. We can block the flow of God's heavenly authority in our lives by not walking in holiness.

We must lay hold of heaven before we get there. Some people under-realise the importance of heaven and others over-realise it. We need to receive the Spirit now as a foretaste of heaven. You can't get hold of the resurrection body now but you can get hold of the Spirit.

Spurgeon used to tread on the toes of people who used to claim to be sinless – they would get angry and he would tell them that they had just sinned! His point was that there are no shortcuts and we need to work out our salvation amongst flashes of glory (i.e. miracles – like Lazarus being raised from the dead). You can't take what God is not giving (i.e. you can't claim resurrection glory now – only flashes of it). An over-realised eschatology can lead to a misunderstanding of healings, miracles etc. The body is not yet redeemed and therefore there are no shortcuts.

4. Because of the promise of reward

Everything that you do for the Lord will be laid up as treasure in heaven. There are warnings of Scripture – not about our salvation – but about rewards. They are warnings that if you are not careful, you will not get back what God wants to give you now.

Hebrews 10v35-36

³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

WHEN ARE WE SANCTIFIED?

5. Immediately at conversion

We become saints (i.e. sanctified people) the very second we put our faith in Christ. We are declared to be saints and put in the category of saints. We ought not to call ourselves sinners – we are strictly saints in terms of New Testament language – even if we are doing badly. It is not about how well you are doing, it is about what category you are in. You are dead to sin and in Christ.

6. Gradually our actual life catches up with our status

We are being changed from glory to glory. People used to argue over whether or not we change (19th Century). Some used to say that sin would be eradicated (Holiness movement). Others said that you never really change – let go and let God – don't really change. You are like a rod of iron in a fire, you never really change, God is the one who hears you and, were God to depart, you would return to your old self.

So there used to be this debate between those that said that sin was eradicated and those that said that it has been compensated for. The Bible's position is neither of those. It is in the middle - you do change, but you are not perfect. Only when you die, will you never sin again. ME told his children not to say "Daddy died" but rather to say that "Daddy went to greater life that he has never known before". ME will be more alive than ever when he dies because sin is eradicated.

WHO DOES THE SANCTIFYING?

7. God

Holiness teachers will say – let go and let God. You need to let go enough. God is the sanctifier. This tends to lead you into trouble though because it is a shortcut – it doesn't work because you still sin. So now you need to let go more, but that will drive you into insanity.

JC Ryle's book on Holiness was written against the Holiness movement even though he never said so. You do not let go and let God – you fight!

8. Us

We are called to do the fighting, we cleanse ourselves, we take up the battle – we are on the winning side, we are not on our own – but it is not passivity either. Ours is the activity, His is the strength.

“The battle is the Lord's” is loved by the Holiness movement. If you read the full story though, you'll find that the armies are not passive, they are in a fight. They misused the verse.

HOW DO WE GET SANCTIFIED?

1. We know who we are - we are in Christ, we reckon ourselves alive in Christ. This is not an emotion; we take by faith that we are alive to God in Jesus Christ. Even if you fail, sin will not reign over you.
2. You do have the Spirit. You are under the law of liberty.
3. You do have guidance in Scripture. You seek to grow in wisdom.
4. You maintain your joy – it is your strength.
5. Maintain your fellowship.
6. Expect God to help you with chastisement – like Paul's thorn in the side.
7. Spiritual warfare - NOT binding the devil BUT Eph 6 – be strong in the Lord, put on the full armour.

Eph 6 v 10-18

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

8. Plunge into the details – work out your responsibilities to your family, the state, the environment, yourself etc. Finally, get to the details. First there needs to be salvation before you can work it out. Attending to the details is the last thing you do.

3. MINISTRY

We all have been given gifts for ministry. Use your gifts and do that which has been prepared in advance for you to do. There is no need to manipulate. Do not get proud about your gifts – you will get glory in heaven. Do it all to the glory of God.

Ministry is part of the godly life. Your fellowship with God is preparing you for ministry.

Cromwell used to pray: “Lord, I might forget you today but please do not forget me”.

Cromwell charging into battle: “Trust in God and keep your powder dry” – this is a good motto for sanctification – God has saved us but we must live appropriately as a response.

One day Christ will say “Well done, my good and faithful servant” but we will respond “Well done, my good and faithful Saviour”.