



Jesus
Atonement
Salvation

Jesus, Atonement & Salvation Part 5

Hi guys!

Welcome the last companion of our current series for the podcast!

Let's remind ourselves of the 4 things we're looking at throughout the next few weeks, which are:

- How Jesus saved us
- What Jesus saved us *from*
- What Jesus saved us *for*
- Why Jesus saved us

In last week's episode we looked at the idea of Heaven & Hell, what they are and the Biblical data for them.

In today's session we're looking at our fourth and final point – why did Jesus save us?

Why
Jesus
Gives

In this episode, we looked at something really cool called predestination. Similar to last time, I present the three ideas Christianity has of viewing this issue, and allow you to make the decision of which you want to believe!

To be clear, just like we reviewed in the last companion piece, these are three options that any Bible-believing Christ-loving Christians can believe! None of this is heresy, so don't worry too much. Predestination, just like we reviewed before, is an *open-handed* issue.

To remind us, then – we have looked at the sole way to gain reconciliation with God is through Christ, who died for us out of His love for us, in order to save us from Satan, sin and death, in order to save us to a Heaven in which there is no suffering or pain, and eventually to join God in the new Jerusalem when the Earth is made whole again.

That's the amazing news we have to share!

Again, as a reminder, the reason we have been saved is LOVE.

John 3:16 "for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life".

I find it interesting that the reason we have this fallen world in need of salvation was also because of God's love – He loved us enough to give us free will and not be robots, which we as humanity abused to revolt against Him who loved us. This then set in motion the means through which we are saved, Jesus, because of God's love.

Here's one thing to remember throughout the remainder of this episode – the methods of salvation and theories on atonement are all interesting to look at and important to understand, but the enduring reason behind it all is love. God's love.

With that said, let's look at something called predestination!

In terms of what this whole predestination thing is, here's the dictionary definition –

"the doctrine that God has ordained all that will happen, especially with regard to the salvation of some and not others. It has been particularly associated with the teachings of St Augustine of Hippo and of Calvin."

Simply put, predestination is the study of who goes to Heaven and who goes to Hell, and how God decides!

For a fuller idea of this topic, let me share with you some Biblical passages that give strong credence to the idea of predestination:

- Ephesians 1:4-5 says *"Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will"*
- Romans 8:29 says *"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"*
- 2 Timothy 1:9 says *"Who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began"*

- Ephesians 1:11 says *“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will”*
- Galatians 1:15 says *“But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace”*
- Titus 1:1, when referring to himself, Paul says he is *“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness”*
- Romans 8:33 says *“Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies”*
- Romans 8:30 says *“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified”*

That’s a longer list than I shared in the podcast, so you’re welcome.

We can agree there’s a lot of strong reason to believe that God had a knowledge of whom will be saved before time began.

A lot of the conversation revolves around something in the Bible known as ‘the elect’. I’ll give you an example of this, in addition to Romans 8:33 and Titus 1:1 above, in Luke 18:7 Jesus says

“And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?”

Which led to the idea that there is a specific set of people that God has chosen for salvation.

So, the idea of predestination has been around for a long time, with the 1500’s being when it really kicked off as a subject of study in something called the reformation, when the Western churches essentially decided they wanted to separate from the Papal power in Rome.

In today’s episode, we looked at 3 doctrines of predestination, and you can choose the one you like!

Bit of a warning, though – people often get quite hot under the collar about predestination, so if you’re going to talk about it with people expect some vociferous conversations!

The way I chose to do this, for the sake of time, is to simply give you the basic ideas of each, some pros and cons, and leave it there.

Below is the bullet-pointed summary list I worked from in the podcast, with some added details.

Option 1 – Arminianism: Free Will of Man

Developed by Jacob Arminius in the mid-late 1500’s (poor bloke only lived to 49, dying in 1609), Arminius basically wanted to reject the idea of strong predestination and affirm the idea of humanity’s free will, with the following kind of provisos:

- All of humanity was affected by ‘the fall’ (inheriting Adam’s fallen nature), but are not spiritually helpless (so we are capable of making good choices)

- Adam's fallen nature being inherited can be seen in Romans 5:12 – *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned”*
- God enables every sinner to repent but doesn't interfere other than to send the Holy Spirit to prompt the person's spirit with conviction
 - 2 Chronicles 7:14 says *“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land”*
Why say 'if' unless there is a choice? Also, this is an if... then... statement. Remember that for later.
- The sinner then has the power to either respond to or ignore the prompting of the Holy Spirit
- A person does not need the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in order to believe in God, faith is an act of man and it precedes spiritual rejuvenation
 - John 1:12 – *“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”*
- Faith is the contribution of man to salvation
 - Acts 2:38 – *“And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”*

This view sees 'election' as conditional, meaning

- God foresees who will freely believe in the gospel and then selects them to be part of this 'elect'
 - Romans 8:29-30 – *“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. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified”*
- This, then, is determined by man's choice, not the directing of God or the Holy Spirit
- It's the sinner's choice of God, not God's choice of the sinner, which leads to salvation

On the atonement, as we discussed the last couple of weeks, Arminianism would say:

- Christ's death made salvation available to everyone but secured it for no one (the cross is only effective if man chooses to accept it)
 - John 3:16-18 – *““For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”*

Because it comes down to the sinner's choice, Arminius believed the Holy Spirit can be rejected.

- Faith precedes belief and regeneration
 - John 1:12 again

- Those who do not have faith can reject or resist the prompting of the Holy Spirit
- So, essentially, man's free will limits the Holy Spirit and God

In addition to this, Arminianism also believes that believers can be lost

- So, Christians can lose their faith and apostatise

A good tag line for Arminianism would be 'man, not God, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation'.

Now, there are some pros to this belief!

- It affirms free will, which I don't think we ever want to reject or diminish because a) it's so obviously apparent and real, b) its existence makes God not a monster and c) we need it in order to utilise a defence to the problem of evil & suffering, as we know
- It still holds to lots of core Biblical ideas, such as the fallen nature of man, the prompting of the Holy Spirit on non-believers, and Christ's salvatory work on the cross

But there are quite a few cons...

- Doesn't work brilliantly with scriptural references to being enslaved to sin, which we see quite regularly
- God's sovereignty is badly diminished, essentially hand-tying Him to react to the choices we make
- Christ's work of salvation on the cross didn't actually assure salvation for everyone, or indeed anyone, which doesn't mesh well with scripture
- Teaches that believers can reject their faith at any point and apostatise, which is directly contradictory to some Biblical teaching

That's Arminianism then! Let's have a look at its absolute opposite, Calvinism.

Option 2 – Calvinism: Sovereignty of God

This understanding of predestination was propounded by John Calvin, also in the mid-1500's (this poor bloke was only 55 when he snuffed it! Why do the best always die so young?).

Calvin wanted to reject Arminianism, and affirm strongly the Biblical idea of sovereignty and predestination. Here's the major notes.

Calvinism believes in something called 'total depravity':

- Because of the fall of man in the garden, man is unable to believe the gospel by himself
 - John 6:44 – *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day"*
- Man's will, therefore, is not free at all – it is totally enslaved to sin
 - Romans 3:9-11 – *"What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God"*
- Faith occurs *after* regeneration and is a gift of the Holy Spirit

- Belief and faith are God's gift to the sinner, not vice versa

Which led to something called 'unconditional election', which means

- God's choice of saving certain people before time began is simply His use of His sovereign will
 - 2 Timothy 1:9 – *"Who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began"*
- God gives salvation as a gift prior to any act by man – faith, repentance, etc. are all the gifts of God
- God chooses the sinner, not vice versa
 - John 6:44 again

Calvin also added something called 'limited atonement', so not universal, meaning

- Christ died **only** for those God has elected
 - John 6:44 again, again
- Which means Christ guaranteed salvation on the cross

And with regard to the elect, Calvin believed the Holy Spirit cannot be rejected

- Which he called 'irresistible grace'
- By which he meant that simply hearing the gospel can, and will, be rejected, but the Holy Spirit cannot be
- Thus, the Holy Spirit irresistibly calls the elect and is not limited in applying salvation by man's will, it's not at all dependent on man's cooperation.
 - Ephesians 1:4 – *"Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him"*

Due to which, he believed that believers cannot be lost, called 'the perseverance of saints' because

- Since God elected you for no reason, and the Holy Spirit regenerated you without any input or choice from you, God can ensure you don't lose your salvation regardless of what you might want
 - Luke 10:20 – *"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."*

A good tag line for Calvinism, then, would be 'God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gifts of salvation.'

Again, there's pros and cons here.

The pros are:

- Really affirms God's sovereignty, which of course we would want to also, and really shines a light on the grace of God
- Guarantees salvation on the cross, which makes Jesus' sacrifice all the more meaningful
- Handles the Biblical idea of being enslaved to sin somewhat effectively
- Believers cannot be 'lost', which fits with the Biblical texts on the subject (like being written into the book of life)

But there are some fairly weighty cons:

- Removal of free will is an absolute horror show – God’s attribute of being all-loving is diminished, our defence to most of the issue levelled against Christianity are removed so we’re left with hand waving and saying things like “God’s a mystery” which is hugely unsatisfactory, and worst of all, when you dig right down, the removal of our free will can lead to something called determinism and God being the author of sin, which is direct contradiction to the Bible
- The idea of Jesus only dying for the people God has elected diminishes the cross hugely, in my opinion, and doesn’t mesh too well with some scripture
- God’s removal of our ability to reject salvation or the Holy Spirit makes him sound quite evil and makes us basically cosmic puppets. Some people have referred this doctrine of irresistible grace as the ‘rape of the Holy Spirit’ which is a bit strong, but it gets the point across
- There are constant logical inconsistencies in the arguments, like the idea that if God can make you enslaved to sin, then He can free you into another type of slavery – His own. That’s just... backward.

So, again, I know I’ve been a little withering there, and there’s probably loads of Calvinists who would be absolutely raging at that, but it’s important to challenge difficult ideas so that we can be set right! If this sounds good to you, then feel free to be a Calvinist!

Let’s review our last option we’re looking at.

Option 3 – Molinism: Sovereignty and Free Will

Luis De Molina, in the late 1500’s (bloke died in 1600 at the age of 65, so he did quite well in comparison to the others), chose to expound a less popular but more balanced view of predestination. His major idea was that you can have free will without having to diminish God’s sovereignty.

All of this, however, hinges on this idea of middle knowledge, as we’ve discussed before. Go back to the companion for part 4 of the problem of suffering & evil where we discuss this in detail.

Simply put – middle knowledge is God’s perfect knowledge of what *would* be. He knows what every human would do in absolutely every situation with perfect certainty. In the same ways as Scrooge was shown his future in a Christmas Carol, and then took action to ensure this true showing of a future would not occur, without in any way diminishing the truth of that future as what would have happened had he not changed, God sees what the future would be in any given direction we take with perfect certainty.

To put it another way, God has perfect knowledge of all ‘if... then...’ statements, known as counter-factuals. This means when you say ‘if I won the lottery then I would buy a house’ or whatever, God knows only those possibilities which are true.

Again, to understand this more, please go back to the companion in part 4 to really grasp this, as its essential here.

In the podcast I skipped over the Biblical data for middle knowledge, but allow me to (at great length) share what I mentioned here.

We see middle knowledge used in:

- 1 Samuel 23:6-14 – *“When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech had fled to David to Keilah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand. Now it was told Saul that David had*

come to Keilah. And Saul said, "God has given him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars." And Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. David knew that Saul was plotting harm against him. And he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here." Then David said, "O Lord, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O Lord, the God of Israel, please tell your servant." And the Lord said, "He will come down." Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the Lord said, "They will surrender you." Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition. And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand"

- Deuteronomy 18:22 – "when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him"
- Jeremiah 38:17-18 – "Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: If you will surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then your life shall be spared, and this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live. But if you do not surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand."

We also have some life-change stories similar to Scrooge in

- Isaiah 38:1-5 – "In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover." Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, and said, "Please, O Lord, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: "Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life."
- John 15:22, 24 – "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin... If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father"
- Amos 7:1-6 – "This is what the Lord God showed me: behold, he was forming locusts when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout, and behold, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said, "O Lord God, please forgive! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" The Lord relented concerning this: "It shall not be," said the Lord. This is what the Lord God showed me: behold, the Lord God was calling for a judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land. Then I said, "O Lord God, please

cease! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" The Lord relented concerning this: "This also shall not be," said the Lord God

- *Jonah 3:1-10 – "Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it"*

Additionally, Jesus Himself uses counter-factual language in

- *John 15:22, 24 – "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin... If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father"*
- *John 18:36 – "Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."*
- *Matthew 26:24 – "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."*

So, Molinism confirms and affirms human free will. We have the ability to choose for ourselves, reject the prompting of the Holy Spirit or not. Interestingly, however, you could make the argument that because of God's knowledge of counter-factuals, He may never even send the Holy Spirit to someone who would reject Him. This does away with any rejection of the Holy Spirit issues.

Additionally, Molina would have an unconditional-conditional election model that's somewhere between Calvinism and Arminianism. It's unconditional in the sense that we do not have to do anything to merit the gift of salvation and it is totally down to God's sovereign will of having made the world a certain way, but its conditional in that God has only called those whom He knows would freely choose to accept Him, so there is an element of us cooperating by freely choosing.

Molinism also has an interesting blend of limited-unlimited atonement, which I'll admit, sounds a bit mad. Something being unlimitedly limited is a mad thing to say. What this means, though, is that Christ's work on the cross was limited in that it assured the

salvation of those who God has already chosen, but it was unlimited in that the offer for salvation was made to everyone, but through God's middle knowledge He saw those who would freely reject it 100% of the time.

Molina didn't have a stance on loss of salvation, or the perseverance of saints, but in my opinion, if God can make a world in which the maximal amount of people would be saved due to His middle knowledge, then God could have also done the same with people apostatising.

So, the pros of Molinism are:

- Affirms free will, which we know we want to be able to do
- Affirms God's sovereignty in actualising the world according to His purposes
- Guarantees salvation on the cross without the excessive need of deliberately rejecting some for no reason
- Works in harmony with the Biblical data concerning being enslaved to sin, the fallen nature of man, the global nature of Christ's sacrifice, etc.
- Expands God's omniscience with the addition of middle knowledge
- Avoids the major pitfalls of the other two doctrines (loss of free will or loss of sovereignty)
- Fits really well with the idea of predestination and the Biblical data I presented at the top of the session

The cons are:

- It's quite a complicated concept, and the believer is at risk of being tied up in logical knots when trying to work it out
- Isn't particularly hard-line on the doctrine of being enslaved to sin
- Could be argued doesn't give God the full idea of sovereignty that Calvinism does, for example
- Doesn't deal much with the perseverance of saints

Right, the rest is up to you!

If you like the sound of Calvinism, feel free to explore that by following [this link](#). You may, however, want to consider looking into [this article](#) also.

If Arminianism is right up your street, check out [this article](#).

Finally, if you, like me, enjoy a bit of Molinism, there is a wealth of information [here](#) (just search for 'molinism') for you to look through, possibly beginning [here](#).

This draws our discussion of Jesus, atonement and salvation to a close! Hopefully now you have been able to come to your own conclusions on how Jesus saves us, why Jesus saves us, what Jesus saved us from and what we have been saved for.

Most important to remember is to just reaffirm that God's love is the driving force of all of this, His love for us corporately and you specifically, and Jesus' sacrifice restores us to God and eternal peace. The rest is for you to prayerfully explore.

This week, our scripture of the week is John 3:16! As cliché as it is.

"for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life".

So, why is that our scripture of the week? I want you guys to meditate on this idea of God's driving motivation for His sending Christ. Thank God for this huge gift, regardless of the method through which we receive it.

In terms of our question for the week, this one is pretty simple – which idea of predestination do you personally find most compelling? Let me know, I'd love to hear it!

Apologies for the long session!

As always, don't be afraid to get into the youth whatsapp chat and let us know how you are, what you're up to and what you're thinking. Get your prayer requests ready for Thursday and get involved in our Bible study! And you can grab us on Instagram @chawnyouth.