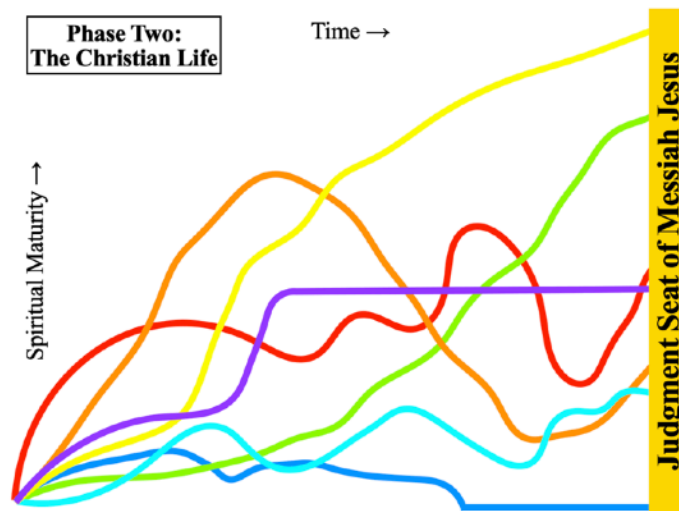


POSITIVE VOLITION

1. **Positive volition is one's inner capacity to respond positively to God.**
 - a. Volition is our heart attitude toward God at any given time.
 - b. God's general call through the six Cs precedes positive or negative volition in the order of salvation. The six Cs are: Consciousness, Creation, Conscience, Circumstances, Conversation, and the Conviction of the Spirit.
 - c. A person cannot be neutral toward God. One must be either positive or negative.
 - a. **Lk 11:23** 23 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.
 - (2) **Ac 14:4** 4 ... The people [of Iconium] of the city were divided. Some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles.
 - (3) See *The Antithesis*.
 - d. Each of our lives is a record of our positivity or negativity toward God.



- e. The Three Phases.
 - (1) In phase zero, unbelievers can be positive or negative to God. For the unbeliever, positivity leads to faith in Jesus; negativity leads to unbelief and condemnation.
 - (2) In phase two, believers can be positive or negative to God. For the believer, positivity leads to spiritual advance; negativity to God leads to spiritual decline.
 - (3) In phase three, believers will always be positive to God.

THREE PHASES OF SALVATION

Phase Zero	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
Condemnation	Justification	Sanctification	Glorification
Saved from nothing	Saved from the penalty of sin	Saved from the power of sin	Saved from the presence of sin
Life as an unbeliever	Moment of faith in Jesus	Believer's lifetime	Eternity future
No faith or works	Faith alone	Faith and works	Works alone

2. Biblical examples of positive volition include:

- a. The people of Nineveh in Jonah 3.
 - (1) They called a fast and put on sackcloth (v. 5).
 - (2) The king covered himself with sackcloth and set in ashes (v. 6).
 - (3) The king issued a proclamation for men and animals to fast and call out mightily to God (vv. 7-8).
 - (4) They turned from their evil way (v. 10).
 - (5) They believed God (v. 5).
- b. The man born blind in John 9.
 - (1) **Jn 9:6-7** 6 ...[Jesus] spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud 7 and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.... So he went, washed, and came back seeing.
 - (2) **Jn 9:11** 11 He answered, The man called Jesus made mud, anointed my eyes, and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed and received my sight.
 - (3) **Jn 9:17** 17 So [the Jewish leaders] said again to the blind man, What do you say about him, because he has opened your eyes? He said, He is a prophet.
 - (4) **Jn 9:25** 25 He answered, Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.
 - (5) **Jn 9:30-34** 30 The man answered, Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his desire, God listens to him. 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. 34 They answered him, You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us? And they cast him out.
 - (6) **Jn 9:35-38** 35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, Do you believe in the Son of Man? 36 He answered, And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him? 37 Jesus said to him, You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you. 38 He said, Lord, I believe, and he worshiped him.
 - (7) The positive volition of the blind man is to be compared with the negative volition of the lame man in John 5.
 - (a) **Jn 5:14-15** 14 Afterward Jesus found [the formerly lame man] in the temple and said to him, See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you. 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.
- c. The prodigal son in Luke 15.
 - (1) He comes to himself (v. 17).
 - (2) He decides to arise and go to his father (v. 18).
 - (3) He arises and comes to his father (v. 20).
 - (4) While he is a long way off, his father sees him, feel compassion, runs, embraces him, and kisses him (v. 20).
 - (5) He confesses his sin before heaven and before his father (v. 21).
 - (6) He was dead but is alive (v. 24).
 - (7) He was lost but is found (v. 24).
- d. The men of Israel in Acts 2:

- (1) **Acts 2:37-41** 37 Now when [the men of Israel] heard [Peter's message] they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do [positive volition]? 38 And Peter said to them, Change your minds and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ...40 And with many other words he testified and continued to exhort them saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. 41 So those who received his message [faith in Jesus] were baptised, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
 - e. Cornelius in Acts 10.
 - (1) He was a devout man who feared God with all his household (v. 2).
 - (2) He gave alms generously to the [Jewish] people (v. 2).
 - (3) He prayed continually to God (v. 2).
 - (4) An angel of God came to him in a vision (v. 3) when he was praying (v. 30).
 - (5) His prayers and alms ascended as a memorial before God (vv. 4, 31).
 - (6) He obeyed the angel's instructions and sent for Peter (vv. 7-8).
 - (7) He was an upright and God-fearing man (v. 22).
 - (8) He was well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation (v. 22).
 - (9) He called together his relatives and close friends (v. 24).
 - (10) He is prepared to to hear all that Peter has been commanded by the Lord (v. 33).
 - (11) He feared God and does what is right (v. 35).
 - (12) The Spirit fell on him (v. 44), and he was baptised (v. 48).
 - f. Lydia in Acts 16.
 - (1) She came to a place of prayer out side the gate of Philippi on the Sabbath day (v. 13).
 - (2) She was a worshiper of God (v. 14).
 - (3) Jesus opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul (v. 14).
 - (4) She was baptised (v. 15).
 - g. The Philippian jailer in Acts 16.
 - (1) He trembled with fear and fell down before Paul and Silas (v. 29).
 - (2) He asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (v. 30).
 - (3) He listened to Paul as he spoke the word of the Lord (v. 32).
 - (4) He washed the wounds of Paul and Silas (v. 33).
 - (5) He and his family were baptised at once (v. 33).
 - (6) He rejoiced he had believed in God (v. 34).
 - h. Saul between Acts 7 and Acts 9.
 - (1) See *Saul's Conversion*.
- 3. God carefully observes our moment-by-moment volitional attitude toward him.**
- a. God looks on the heart.
 - (1) **1 Sa 16:7** 7 Man looks on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks on the heart.
 - b. God searches all hearts and knows whether we are seeking him.
 - (1) **1 Ch 28:9** 9 ...You, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for Yahweh searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.
 - c. Our ways are before the eyes of God.

- (1) **Pr 5:21** 21 ...A man's ways are before the eyes of Yahweh, and he ponders all his paths.
- d. The eyes of God are in every place.
 - (1) **Pr 15:3** 3 The eyes of Yahweh are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.
- e. The hearts of the children of man lie open before God.
 - (1) **Pr 15:11** 11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open before Yahweh. How much more the hearts of the children of man!
- f. Yahweh tests hearts as a crucible tests silver and a furnace tests gold.
 - (1) **Pr 17:3** 3 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and Yahweh tests hearts.
- g. God searches our innermost parts.
 - (1) **Pr 20:27** 27 The spirit of man is the lamp of Yahweh, searching all his innermost parts.
- h. God weighs the heart.
 - (1) **Pr 21:2** 2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but Yahweh weighs the heart.
- i. God knows our hearts.
 - (1) **Lk 16:15** 15 ...You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.
- j. God is not far from each one of us.
 - (1) **Ac 17:27** 27 ...That they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.
- k. Principles.
 - (1) God weighs the hearts even of "those who have never heard."
 - (2) We cannot escape the gaze of God or hide from him our volitional attitude.

4. Even in their fallenness, unbelievers have the capacity to seek God.

- a. Key verse.
 - (1) **Ac 17:26-27** 26 ...[God] made from one man every nation of humanity to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek (ζητέω, pres. act.) God, if indeed perhaps (εἰ ἄρα¹ γε) they might feel their way toward (ψηλαφάω, aor. act. opt.)² him and find (εὐρίσκω, aor. act. opt.) him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us....
- b. Other verses.
 - (1) **Is 55:6-7** 6 Seek Yahweh while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near.
7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to Yahweh, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

¹ "[T]o express someth. tentative, *perhaps, conceivably* (BDAG, 127).

² "[T]o touch by feeling and handling, *touch, handle*...to look for someth. in uncertain fashion, *to feel around for; grope for*; in imagery of humans in their search for God" (BDAG, 1098). The conditional optative "is the use of the optative in the *protasis* of a *fourth class* condition (the conditional particle used is *εἰ*). It is used to indicate a *possible* condition in the future, usually a remote possibility (such as, *if he could do something, if perhaps this should occur*)" (D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 484).

- (2) **La 3:25** 25 Yahweh is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.
- c. Unbelievers are judicially dead, but not mentally or volitionally dead.
- (1) **Eph 2:1-2** 1 ... You [Ephesian believers] were [judicially] dead in [because of] the [personal] trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience....
- d. Just as faith is non-meritorious, so positive volition is non-meritorious.
- (1) **Ro 4:5** 5 ... To the one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness....
- (2) Faith and positive volition are not “works.” They are the antithesis of work.
- (3) Faith and positive volition are not something to boast about.
- (4) Positive volition doesn’t justify, but it does make justification more likely.
- e. Just as faith is not a gift, so positive volition is not a gift.
- (1) **Eph 2:8-9** 8 ... By grace (fem.) you have been saved through faith (fem.). And this (τοῦτο, neut.) is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- (a) The “by-grace-through-faith” way of salvation is the gift, not the faith itself.
- f. Principles.
- (1) People who never reach the age of accountability, for whatever reason, will enter heaven because they never reached a point when they could intelligibly seek God.
- (2) At the age of accountability, all human beings have the ability to seek God, if they desire to.
- (3) Positive and negative volition begin very early in life. That’s why childhood and teenage years are so important with respect to one’s eternal destiny.
- (a) **Pr 20:11** 11 Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.
- (4) Children are generally more positive to God than adults. The older one gets, the more difficult it becomes to be positive to God.
- (5) An unbeliever’s refusal to seek God upon the age of accountability leads to unbelief, condemnation, and hell.
- (6) At final judgment, God will ask each unbeliever, “How did you respond to the light I gave you?”
- (a) **Jn 3:19-20** 19 ... This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.
- g. Quotes.
- (1) “Apparently, a man does have the capacity to seek, to grope, and to start down the path of finding God. But he cannot do this [finding God] alone. He needs a guide and an encourager. When one responds to the light he has been given by God, he is given more light. He must decide what to do with this additional light. The Father is at his side to add whatever persuasion might be necessary for him to take the next step. Ultimately, the Father and the elect child come to Christ and a new babe is ushered into the kingdom of God, arm-in-arm with his Divine Enabler.

The entire salvation process is a gift of God that emanates from the grace of God (Eph 2:8-9).”³

5. Positive volition is indicated by:

- a. Fear of God and humility.
 - (1) **Pr 15:33** 33 The fear of Yahweh is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honour.
 - (2) **Pr 22:4** 4 The reward for humility and fear of Yahweh is riches, honour, and life.
 - (3) **Is 66:2** 2 ... This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble, contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.
 - (4) Fear of God.
 - (a) **Ps 115:13** 13 [Yahweh] will bless those who fear Yahweh, both the small and the great.
 - (b) **Ps 145:19** 19 [Yahweh] fulfils the desire of those who fear him. He also hears their cry and saves them.
 - (c) **Ps 147:11** 11 ... Yahweh takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his loyal love.
 - (d) **Ac 10:34-35** 34 ... Truly I [Peter] understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.
 - (5) Humility.
 - (a) **2 Sa 22:28** 28 You save a humble people, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down.
 - (b) **2 Ch 33:12-13** 12 ... When [Manasseh] was in distress, he entreated the favour of Yahweh his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 13 He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty, heard his plea, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Yahweh was God.
 - (c) **Zep 2:3** 3 Seek Yahweh, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands. Seek righteousness. Seek humility. Perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of Yahweh.
 - (d) **Lk 14:21** 21 ... The servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, crippled, blind, and lame.
 - (e) **Jn 9:41** 41 Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say, We see, your guilt remains.
 - (f) **Jas 4:6** 6 God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- b. A desire to do what is just and right as God defines it.
 - (1) **Eze 33:14-16** 14 ... Though I say to the wicked, You shall surely die, yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, 15 if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live. He shall not die. 16 None of the sins that

³ D. Anderson, *Free Grace Soteriology*.

he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right. He shall surely live.

- (2) **Ac 10:34-35** 34 So Peter opened his mouth and said, Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

c. Worldview teachability.

- (1) **Jn 9:39-41** 39 Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind. 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, Are we also blind? 41 Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say, We see, your guilt remains.

- (2) **Ac 2:37-38** 37 ...When [the men of Israel] heard [Peter's message] they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do [positive volition]? 38 And Peter said to them, Change your minds and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- (3) "A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being."⁴

- (4) Example: In today's environment, moving a person from atheism to theism is a huge step in leading that person to Jesus. An atheist who responds positively to the arguments for theism is more likely to believe in Jesus. But he or she hasn't gotten there yet.

6. God can't wait for us to be positive toward him.

a. The Father is seeking true worshippers.

- (1) **Jn 4:23** 23 ...The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

b. If we seek God, he will be found by us.

- (1) **2 Ch 15:4** 4 ...When in their distress [Israel] turned to Yahweh, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them.

c. While we are still a long way off, God sees us and runs and embraces us.

- (1) **Lk 15:20** 20 ...[The son] arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, felt compassion, ran, embraced him, and kissed him.

d. When we turn, the veil is removed.

- (1) **2 Co 3:14-16** 14 ...To this day, when [Jews] read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Messiah is it taken away. 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. 16 But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

e. Quote.

⁴ James W. Sire, *Universe Next Door*.

(1) “General revelation is sufficient to alert a man to his need of God and to condemn him if he rejects what he can learn through nature, but only faith in Christ is sufficient to save (Ac 4:12). If this does not seem fair, look at it this way: Suppose you knew of a student who needed \$400 to pay his school bill, and you gave him \$3 to help pay that debt (the \$3 being more than you could really afford). If he returned it to you, asking sarcastically what good that little bit would do toward a \$400 debt, would you feel any obligation at all to give him \$100 the next day if you received a large gift in the mail? Undoubtedly not. But if he gratefully took the \$3 you offered, you would be anxious to help him further as soon as you were able. Just so, God’s general revelation if rejected brings just condemnation; but if accepted, then He will bring the further necessary message of the gospel in order that that man might be saved (Ac 10:3-6).”⁵

7. God draws to Jesus those who display sufficient positivity to him.

- a. **Song 1:4** 4 Draw (ἄγω; ἔλκω) me after you. Let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers. We will exult and rejoice in you. We will extol your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you.
- b. **Hos 11:4** 4 I led (ἄγω; ἐκτείνω) them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.
- c. **Jer 31:3** 3 ...Yahweh appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love, Therefore I have drawn (ἄγω; ἔλκω) you with loyal love (ἠγάπη).
- d. **Jn 6:44** 44 No one (οὐδεὶς) is able to come to me unless the Father who sent me draws (ἐλκύω, aor. subj.)⁶ him. And I will raise him up on the last day.
- e. God doesn’t force us to believe in Jesus. He draws and woos us based on our positive volition.

8. God’s foreknowledge of our positive volition is the basis of our election.

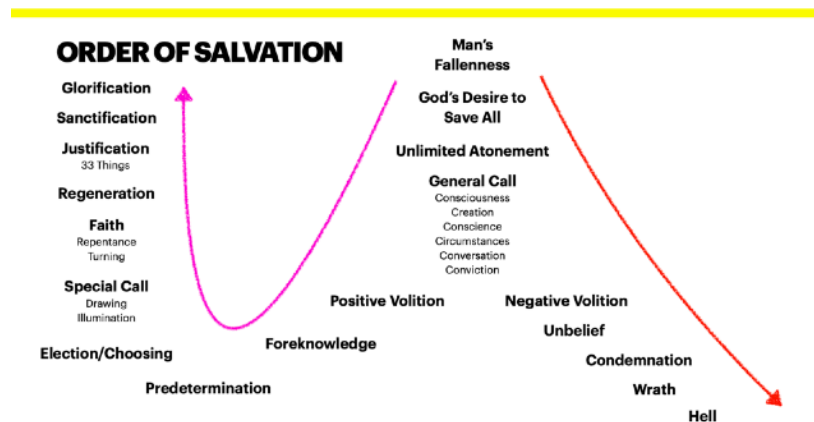
- a. The Father gives to Jesus those whom he knows to be sufficiently positive.
(1) **Jn 6:37** 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.
- b. The Father draws to Jesus those whom he knows to be sufficiently positive.
(1) **Jn 6:44** 44 No one (οὐδεὶς) is able to come to me unless the Father who sent me draws (ἐλκύω, aor. subj.)⁷ him. And I will raise him up on the last day.
- c. The Father grants those with sufficient positive volition to come to Jesus.

⁵ C. C. Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, Kindle ed. (Moody, []), 37-38.

⁶ “[T]o move an object from one area to another in a pulling motion, *draw*, with implication that the object being moved is incapable of propelling itself or in the case of pers. is unwilling to do so voluntarily, in either case with implication of exertion on the part of the mover...to draw a pers. in the direction of values for inner life, *draw*, *attract*, an extended fig. use of mng. 1...to appear to be pulled in a certain direction, *flow* an ext. fig. use intr. *flow along* of a river” (BDAG, 318).

⁷ “[T]o move an object from one area to another in a pulling motion, *draw*, with implication that the object being moved is incapable of propelling itself or in the case of pers. is unwilling to do so voluntarily, in either case with implication of exertion on the part of the mover...to draw a pers. in the direction of values for inner life, *draw*, *attract*, an extended fig. use of mng. 1...to appear to be pulled in a certain direction, *flow* an ext. fig. use intr. *flow along* of a river” (BDAG, 318).

- (1) **Jn 6:65** 65 ... This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.
- d. Sustained positive volition results in one's election and special call to faith in Jesus.



9. Seekers responding positively to God's general call deserve our special attention.

- a. **Mt 10:11-13** 11 ... Whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. 12 As you enter the house, greet it. 13 And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.
- (1) We are to find out who is worthy and let our peace come upon them.
- b. **Ac 13:42-44** 42 As [Paul and Barnabas] went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. 43 And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.
- (1) We are to speak with seekers and urge them to continue in the grace of God.
- c. Follow up with those who are positive to God and the things of God!
- (1) See *Evangelism Follow-Up*.

10. The unbeliever's life is like a dance with God.

- a. Sometime the unbeliever steps toward God. Other times he or she steps away. Sometimes God steps toward the unbeliever. Sometimes he steps away. But as long as the unbeliever is alive, the song's still playing. The dance isn't over.
- (1) "It takes two to tango."
- b. However, at physical death the dance is over. At that point, eternal destiny in heaven or hell is irrevocably decided.
- c. We must not flirt with God. A "no decision" is a decision against Jesus.