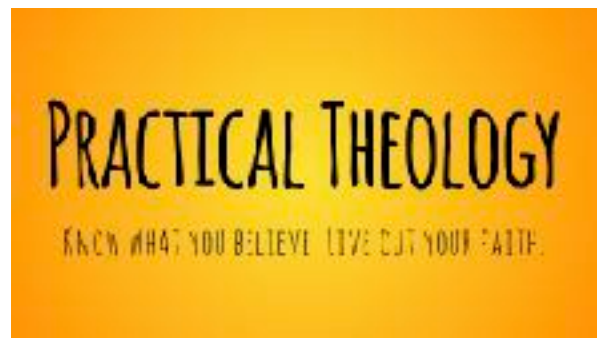


SOTERIOLOGY: Doctrine of Salvation



Salvation is a comprehensive term, including within its scope many aspects. The study of salvation is called Soteriology, derived from the Greek word for "Saviour," *soter*.

I. The Purpose of Salvation

The Cross was not an afterthought with God. Before man's creation, God knew that man would fall into sin and become utterly ruined. And yet, God created man for His own glory and purposed a way of redemption for man (Eph 1:4; Rev 13:8). This salvation is threefold:

A. Justification

The believer has been saved from the penalty of sin. This is the past (one time) occurrence beginning the spiritual life of the believer; he is been given a "new birth" (Rom 8:1).

B. Sanctification

The believer is being saved from the power of sin. This is the present continual growth of the believer as God's Holy Spirit enables him to live godly (1 Cor 6:19-20).

C. Glorification

The believer will be saved from the presence of sin. This is the future conclusion of the believers condition, where he receives a spiritual body to dwell evermore in holiness with God (Rom 8:22-23).

II. The Preparation of Salvation

Scripture suggests that a long time of preparation was needful for God to bring about His Salvation (Gal 4:4-5).

A. To reveal the extent of man's sin.

Consider the various times of depravity in the OT: the Flood, the Tower of Babel, the Wilderness Wanderings, the Judges, the Divided Kingdom, the Captivity. Each was a time when the extent of man's sin became so great and far reaching that it called for divine judgement. As a race, the extent of man's sin is all encompassing.

B. To demonstrate the helplessness of man's condition.

The civilisations of man's history have all risen and fallen; each powerless to preserve themselves from corruption or regain the first state of righteousness (cf. Jn 1:13; Rom 8:8).

C. To illustrate the substitution needed for man's restoration.

From Genesis 3, and throughout the OT, man was presented with the concept of a substitutionary sacrifice for sin; specifically, blood sacrifices. Leviticus 17:11 states this reason: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Hebrews 9:22 agrees with this OT teaching: "without shedding of blood is no remission [deliverance, forgiveness]."

III. The Plan for Salvation

The Bible reveals that God has a definite plan of salvation. He has only one plan—all must be saved in the same way—whether one be uncivilized/civilized, moral/immoral, or living in OT/NT times.

The OT system was fulfilled and replaced by the NT; the first culminating in the latter. With Christ's death initiating the new Testament in His blood, consider what implications this had in the OT:

A. Atonement in the OT

1. Atonement¹ had always been the divine method of dealing with sin; even before the Cross. The elemental meaning of atonement is to cover (see Lev 4:35).²
2. Atonement in the OT conveyed to the participant only the aspect of *covering* of sin, and not the *removal* of sin (Heb 10:4).

¹ ISBE on "Atonement": "The English word 'atonement' does not correspond etymologically with any Hebrew or Greek word which it translates.... [It] is derived from the phrase 'at one,' and signifies, etymologically, harmony of relationship or unity of life, etc."

² This same Hebrew word for "atonement" is also translated "thou shalt pitch" in Genesis 6:14; i.e. Noah was to cover the ark with a water-proofing substance.

3. The OT offering of a blood sacrifice indicated on the part of the sinner acknowledgement of—and identification with—the just penalty of death (Lev 1:1-4).
4. The OT blood sacrifices served only *to cover* sins until the day when Christ would deal in finality with sin of the world (Isa 53:5, 10-11; Jn 1:29; Acts 17:30; 1 Jn 2:2). Christ's death dealt with all sin.

B. Salvation in the OT

Christ's death accomplished the *removal*, or *taking away*, of sin—present, future, and those of the past (Rom 3:25). The sins of the OT saints awaited the NT work of Christ's cross.

1. The atonement of salvation is always founded in Christ's death. As NT believers look backward, OT believers looked forward.
2. The condition salvation is always based on faith. NT believers place their faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ; OT believers placed their faith in revealed word of God—though limited it was (Gen 15:6).

The content of faith in the OT was partial; men did not have full understanding of God's redemptive work (Lk 24:25-27; Jn 8:56; Acts 10:43; 15:11). The content of the believer's faith grew as God revealed more of Himself and His ways. God's final Word was His Son (Heb 1:1-4); all men must now repent towards God and place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 17:30).

C. Examples in the OT

1. Christ's disciples: The disciples were saved before the cross, not understanding the Lord's teaching of the cross (Matt 16:21-23; Lk 9:44-45; 24:3-11).
2. Christ's converts: Those saved under Jesus' own ministry were before the Cross, but were still saved by faith (Lk 7:50; Jn 9:35-36).
3. Abraham: Abraham was saved by believing the "gospel—the good news—of the promise of blessing through his miracle-born son (Gen 15:1-6; Gal 3:8; Rom 4:3-5).
4. Various OT individuals: The OT testifies to individual salvation by faith: Isa 45:22; Hab 2:4; Act 15:11; Gal 3:11; Heb 11.

IV. The Conditions for Salvation

Paul summarized his message of the gospel: "Repentance toward God, and faith toward

our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21; see also Heb 6:1).

While either repentance or faith may be more evident in each conversion, both are required for salvation.

A. Repentance

Repentance is the first aspect of the believer's salvation. It is not "penance,"³ *a work that one performs* for salvation/forgiveness. Repentance unto salvation is not based upon the degree of one's repentance, but in that he is repentant towards God (1 Thes 1:9).

1. The Meaning of Repentance:

Repentance is not merely the conviction of sin (1 Sam 15:24), the confession of sin (Ex 10:16-20; Prov 28:13), or feeling guilty/sorry for sin (Matt 27:3-5; 2 Cor 7:9-11).

To repent means to change one's mind, or *to turn*. In salvation, this speaks of the sinner changing his mind and turning towards God.⁴ Many professions of faith do not "stick" because of the void of godly repentance.

2. The Importance of Repentance:

a. Jesus preached repentance for salvation (Lk 13:3-5), and later sent the Twelve to preach the same (Lk 24:47).

b. John the Baptist began his ministry with the preaching of repentance (Matt 3:1-2; Acts 13:24; 19:4).

c. The Apostles preached repentance (Acts 2:37-38; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 26:20).

3. Repentance involves the three aspects of man's person:

a. An Intellectual change: At Pentecost, when Peter called upon the Jewish people to repent, he called upon them *to change their thinking* regarding the Christ (Acts 2:14-40).

b. An Emotional change: This "godly sorrow" involves a hatred for sin resulting in changed behaviour (2 Cor 7:9-10)—to repent not only because one was caught, but because there is a distaste for the sin. Remorse is *sorrow over the consequences* of sin; repentance is *sorrow over the sin* which brought about the consequences. The Publican of Luke 18:13 "beat upon his breast" in sorrow over

³ "Penance" in various faiths is usually presented as a sacrament, *a means of grace*, involving not only the confession of sin, but also submission to penalties imposed (voluntary suffering or punishment to demonstrate repentance and to earn forgiveness).

⁴ The changing of mind: admitting what God has said about *who* I am (a guilty sinner) and *what* I have done (sin), and embracing what God has said about *Who* Christ is (the Son of God) and *what* Christ has done (provided salvation).

his condition (cf. Ps 97:10).

- c. A Volitional change: This involves a change of the will/the desire for sin—an inward turning of the disposition towards sin. The prodigal son of Luke 15 not only felt sorry for his sin, but he turned his steps in the direction of home (cf. Ezek 14:6). The son's prayer demonstrated 1) confession of sin (Ps 38:18), 2) forsaking of sin (Prov 28:13; Isa 55:7) and, 3) turning towards the father/God (1 Thes 1:9)

4. Repentance is a Divine Gift:

- a. God gives/grants it (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim 2:25).
- b. The Word of God produces it (Acts 2:37-41; Jon 3:5-10).
- c. The goodness of God leads to it (Rom 2:4).
- d. The chastisement of God brings it (Rev 3:19).
- e. The holiness of God stirs one towards it (Job 42:5-6).

B. Faith

Faith is the positive condition for salvation. In repentance, the sinner turns towards God; in faith, he rests in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

There are two Hebrew words for "faith." The first meaning *to prop, to stay, or to support oneself*; the second, *to cast one's self upon* (something or someone). The Greek word for "faith," *pistis*, means *persuasion, moral conviction* (of truth or truthfulness), and *reliance upon* (something or someone).⁵

1. Faith involves the three aspects of man's person:

- a. The Intellect: Involving assent of the mind; a belief in the historical facts of Scripture (Rom 10:17; also see footnote #4).
- b. The Emotion: Involving the response of the heart; a sincere desire for Christ because of a realized need. Although emotion is not the only characteristic of faith, the heart must be convinced of its very real need of Christ (Rom 10:10-11).
- c. The Will: Involving consent of the will; casting one's self upon Christ.

2. Faith is a Divine Gift:

⁵ In John 2:24, Jesus did not "commit himself" (*pisteuo*) unto certain persons because He knew their hearts; He did not have faith in them.

Ephesians 2:8-9 records that both the grace and faith of salvation are “the gift of God.” The Father (Rom 12:3), the Son (Heb 12:2), and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:9) are each involved.

V. The Elements of Salvation

A. Regeneration

One is “admitted” into the family of God by regeneration (Jn 1:12). The word is derived from two Greek words meaning *birth* and *again*; thus, to be “born again”—a spiritual birth brought about by the Word of God and the Spirit of God (Jn 3:1-5; 1 Pet 1:23).

1. Negatively considered:

- a. It is not Baptism. Some incorrectly interpret the phrase “born of water” (Jn 3:5) to teach Baptismal Regeneration. This phrase refers to the natural birth, which is by water (cf. Jn 15:3; Eph 5:26); thus, explaining the previous verse and the necessity of two births—physical and spiritual.
- b. It is not Reformation. Regeneration is not a natural growth in man’s development—gradually becoming a Christian. It is a supernatural, instantaneous act of God (Jn 1:12-13).
- c. It is not confirmation. Many churches that have this practice claim that the person receives the Holy Spirit at this point. The teaching has no Scriptural foundation, either by example or by instruction.
- d. It is not church membership. Becoming part of a church cannot effect a “spiritual birth,” or a changed heart.

2. Positively considered:

- a. Regeneration is a spiritual quickening. By his very nature, man is spiritually “dead” (Eph 2:1). Regeneration speaks of one who “is passed from death unto life” (Jn 5:24).
- b. Regeneration is the imparting of a new nature. The believer is made partaker of God’s divine nature, and thus possesses two natures (Gal 5:16-17; 1 Jn 3:9). The Holy Spirit now lives within the believer (1 Cor 6:19-20) enabling him to live for God (2 Cor 5:17; 2 Pet 1:4).

B. Justification

Justification is the judicial act of God whereby those who put faith in Christ are declared righteous _____ in God's eyes, and free from guilt and punishment.

"To justify" means *to set forth as righteous, to declare righteous* in a legal sense. It does not deal with character or conduct, but with one's standing and position before God (2 Pet 2:7).

1. The Method of Justification:

- a. Provided by of God's grace (Rom 3:24).
- b. Authorized by Christ's shed blood (Rom 5:9).
- c. Received by faith, and not works (Rom 5:1).
- d. Proved by the resurrection (Rom 4:25).
- e. Demonstrated by good works (Jas 2:21).

2. The Scope of Justification:

- a. Mercy – the forgiveness of one's sin, with removal of its guilt and all punishment due (Acts 13:38-39).
- b. Grace – the imputation of Christ's righteousness and restoration to God's favour (2 Cor 5:21).

C. Sanctification

Justification deals with our standing before God; Sanctification deals primarily with our character and conduct. Justification is what God does *for us*, declaring us righteous; Sanctification is what God does *in us*, making us righteous.

1. The Meaning of Sanctification:

"To sanctify"⁶ means *to set apart, or the state of being set apart* (unto holiness). The Hebrew and Greek words for "holy," "sanctify," and "saint," all have the this same root meaning.

Believers are called "saints" 62 x's in Scripture; never referring to their own quality of daily life, but to the fact of their being set apart unto holiness (Jn 17:17-19; 1 Cor 1:2). Not only does this involve the separation *from* evil (2 Chr 29:5-8), but it also involves the separation *unto* God (Lev 27:14-16).

⁶ In its various forms used 106 x's in the OT and 31 x's in the NT.

2. The Scope of Sanctification:

- a. Past Sanctification: Instantly at salvation, the believer is *set apart* unto God (1 Cor 6:11; Heb 10:10, 14)
- b. Present Sanctification: Progressively in the daily life of the believer, he *grows* in the grace of God (2 Cor 7:1).
- c. Future Sanctification: Complete and entire, when Christ comes for his people, their sinful natures done away with and they receive a spiritual body (Rom 8:22-23; 1 Cor 15:42-44; 1 Thes 5:23; 3:13).

D. Adoption

The word means *to place as an adult son*, thus receiving all privileges and rights due the position. Believers are given the authority "to become the sons of God" (Jn 1:12; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5), and enjoy the full privileges of being God's child.