

BASIC DOCTRINE – THE FUNDAMENTALS

PART 8: SALVATION—THE ATONEMENT

WE NEED A SAVIOR

As we saw on the doctrine of sin we are all born under the curse of death and deserve eternal punishment. As King David lamented: *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. (Ps 51:5)*

This terrible effect and all of its consequences was inherited from our first parents and reaches all of mankind regardless of color, creed or sex.

In the end we all have to come to the dreadful conclusion that we cannot save ourselves for no human being has that kind of power, for we are all, as Paul says, *dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1)*, helpless to rescue ourselves from this lost sinful condition. But God in His mercy provided a path back to Him, by way of the atonement through the work found in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

SALVATION A GIFT FROM GOD BY FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE

To understand salvation one must first realize that it is a gift from God given by grace alone, obtained by faith alone and not earned or rewarded by works of any kind.

Faith is the instrument, and the only instrument, by which this wonderful gift of salvation comes. And this faith is not a faith in a philosophical idea, political opinion, psychological advice or an economical movement, but faith in a person.

..for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. (2 Tim 1:12)

That is, the object of our faith is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Paul summed it up when he wrote: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."* (Rom 1:16-17)

Our salvation is first based on a personal conviction of sin and follow by surrender to God in trust that He and He alone can save.

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth

confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame. (Rom 10:8-11).

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SALVATION?

The Greek word for salvation is “*soteria*” which Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words denotes as "deliverance, preservation, salvation."

As previously discussed sin is defined as: “Lawlessness (1 John 3:4) or transgression of God's will, either by omitting to do what God's law requires or by doing what it forbids.

When we sin, we as much as declare that God’s rule is not something we wish to obey. We would rather obey our own sinful inclinations than abide by God’s decree. All sin is a matter of choosing ourselves over God, a matter of saying we would rather rule over ourselves instead of allowing God to rule over us.

As noted theologian R. C. Sproul once famously commented: “Sin is cosmic treason. Sin is treason against a perfectly pure Sovereign. It is an act of supreme ingratitude toward the One to whom we owe everything, to the One who has given us life itself. Have you ever considered the deeper implications of the slightest sin, of the most minute peccadillo? What are we saying to our Creator when we disobey Him at the slightest point? We are saying no to the

righteousness of God. We are saying, “God, Your law is not good. My judgement is better than Yours. Your authority does not apply to me. I am above and beyond Your jurisdiction. I have the right to do what I want to do, not what You command me to do.””

Because sin is treachery against God, it requires more than just a simple act of forgiveness and leaving it at that; it requires death.

Paul makes it clear that forgiveness flows through the blood of Christ (that is the sacrifice of Christ) and by no other means. In other words, God’s justice is satisfied by the death of Christ.

The idea of sacrifice for sin was first pictured in the Old Testament. Throughout Israel’s history restitution by sacrifice, or atonement, was required in order to appease any offence against God. The sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed to the kind of death Jesus would undergo for His people. The writer of Hebrews says: *Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb 9:12-14)*

The Son of God, who by His sinless life, ministry, death and resurrection achieved all that is necessary for our salvation. Paul, when speaking of Jesus' great work of mercy toward us, says: *we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. (Eph 1:7)*

At the cross Jesus accomplished our redemption by cancelling out man's debt to God in two ways. First, by being a man who lives a sinless life in order to meet the requirements of God's law. Second, by agreeing to pay the penalty for all the sins of His people so that they may call on Him as Lord and Savior even though He personally was guiltless of any sin.

As Paul remarked in Col 2:14: *having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*

Christ then rose from dead. By the resurrection He not only assured eternal life for all believers but proved that He was God in the Flesh and that all who believed on Him would be resurrected on the last day.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:11)

THE BENEFITS OF SALVATION

The benefits inherited in this salvation cannot be exaggerated. They are more than can be written about here but here we summarize the most notable.

1. Justification

We are justified by our faith in Christ.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. (Rom 5:9)

It has been said that the term justified can best be understood as just-as-if-I'd never sinned. By the act of justification we are now freed from all guilt and shame and are made acceptable to God no longer under the wrath of the judgment of God.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life". (John 5:24)

The Christian idea of justification means that our ultimate salvation has been settled once and for all by the atonement and accrued to us not by works but by faith.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Eph 2:8-9)

2. A New Life

We have been given new life. This is known as being regenerated or born again.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

Paul characterizes the old life as being *dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1)*.

The new life is the real life, which is why Jesus proclaimed: *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)*

This new life brings with it a new heart and spirit.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ezek 36:26-27)

3. Members of a New Kingdom

We are taken out of the kingdom of evil put into the kingdom of God. Satan no longer has a claim over us. Though never being completely free of sin in this life, we are no longer slaves to it. We now have a will to do good and avoid evil. We want to fight the good fight of faith, and we get better and better at this fight as we progress in godliness.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, (Col 1:13)

4. Adopted Into a New Family

We have been adopted by God. Paul writes that, “*having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will*” (Eph 1:5). We are part of God’s family. Every child of God is our brother or sister, even more so than our natural family members. We are no longer part of Satan’s family, and in a sense, our natural family is no longer our main family.

This doesn't mean we are no longer to care for our natural family members, but it does mean that our natural family is no longer the center of our existence. No, it is God and His family who takes the place as the center of our lives.

5. Interceded for by Christ

Christ continually intercedes for us, Himself being our High Priest who understands our weaknesses and failures.

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb 7:25)