

SOTERIOLOGY (6)

Every human being has a serious legal document which condemns them from which they need to be saved. That document is the Law of God. If we are judged by the Law of God, we will lose. We need someone to save us from being judged by God's Law.

4) Man needs to be saved from eternal damnation.

The Bible is very vivid and clear that the final destiny of an unsaved person will be a place of terrible and eternal torment (Luke 16:23-25; Rev. 20:10-15). Man needs to be saved from the eternal punishment of hell.

We may also observe that from a practical perspective, man needs to be saved from:

A. A meaningless existence.

Abundant life and a meaningful existence can only be found in Jesus Christ (John 10:10). Man can only be saved from a meaningless existence by having Christ in his life.

B. A purposeless existence.

One without Christ will never know what God's will was for his life. He will never know the real purpose for his existence. Determining the real purpose of one's existence is by one's relationship with Christ (Rom. 12:2).

We may conclude, then, that man needs to be saved for positional reasons and practical reasons.

QUESTION #5 – What are the three tenses of salvation?

Salvation, as applied to one who is saved, covers the whole time spectrum of existence:

Tense #1 – The Past Tense.

In the past tense, the Scriptures are clear that the believer was saved forever at the moment he believed (Acts 16:30-31; Eph. 2:8). As Dr. Chafer observed, concerning this past-tense aspect of salvation, "At the moment of believing, the saved one is completely delivered from his lost estate, cleansed, forgiven, justified, born of God, clothed in the merit of Christ, freed from all condemnation and safe forevermore" (Vol. 3, p. 6).

Tense #2 – The Present Tense.

In the present tense, the Scriptures are clear that the believer is being saved from the dominion of sin. The believer is in a present state of righteous development–sanctification (Rom. 6:1-14; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 2:20; 4:19). This present tense of salvation guarantees that believers are continually saved.

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Tense #3 – The Future Tense.

In the future tense, the Scriptures are clear that the believer will be free from the presence of sin and will be presented faultless in glory (Rom. 13:11-12; Heb. 1:14; I Peter 1:3-5).

These three tenses cover the entire scope of life. One who is saved is totally and finally saved forever.

Concerning the tenses of salvation, Dr. Charles Ryrie writes: “The inclusive sweep of salvation is underscored by observing the...tenses of salvation” (*Basic Theology*, p. 277).

When we refer to the tenses of salvation, we refer to the complete time frame of salvation connected to every person classified as saved.

1) The past tense of salvation.

At the moment a person believes on Jesus Christ, he is completely saved and delivered from all the guilt and penalty of sin. Dr. Chafer observes: “This past-tense aspect of it is the essential and unchanging fact of salvation. At the moment of believing, the saved one is completely delivered from his lost estate, cleansed, forgiven, justified, born of God, clothed in the merit of Christ, freed from all condemnation and safe forevermore” (Vol. 3, p. 6).

The aorist (past point of time) concept of salvation is seen over and over again in the Scriptures:

- (1) Luke 7:50 - The verb “hath saved” is perfect tense, meaning at one moment in past time this sinful woman was completely saved and continues to remain completely saved.
- (2) Acts 16:30-31 - The verb “you shall be saved” is future passive which means at the precise moment one believes, God will completely save the individual.
- (3) Ephesians 2:8 - The participle “have been saved” is perfect passive. This means at one moment in past time God saves a person and that salvation continues into the present and on into the future.
- (4) II Timothy 1:9 - The participles “saved,” “called” and “granted” are all aorist, meaning that at one moment in past time we were completely saved.
- (5) Titus 3:5 - The verb “saved” is aorist tense meaning God saved us at one moment in past time.

This past tense of salvation indicates that when a person comes to Christ, he is completely, fully and finally saved.

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2) The present tense of salvation.

The emphasis of this tense is that the believer is presently and continually being saved and delivered from the dominating control and power of sin.

G. Coleman Luck writes: “The one who has believed on Christ is being saved at the present time from the power and control of sin. God does not save us from the penalty of sin and then leave us at the mercy of its power” (*Salvation Through Faith*, p. 7).

This particular phase of salvation really is an issue of sanctification (a term we will discuss later). Several passages point out this present tense concept of salvation:

(1) Romans 6:14 - Dr. Luck says that the first 14 verses of this chapter give the most complete picture of the present tense delivering power of salvation (*Ibid.*, p. 7). It is clear that God expects salvation to have a present tense delivering power, clearly seen in the present tense words like “know” (6:3), “consider” (6:11), “presenting” (6:13) and “obey” (6:12, 16-17). A proper focus on past tense deliverance will lead to a proper present tense appropriation.

(2) Philippians 2:12-13 - It is clear from this text that our past tense salvation is being worked out and is to be worked out in our present tense lives. In fact, God Himself is involved in the process of our present existence.

(3) Galatians 5:16 - It is clear from this verse that our past tense salvation is to be worked out in a present tense walk. Past tense salvation makes present tense victory over the flesh possible.

Every child of God is presently being moved by God to be delivered and saved from sin. This present tense concept of salvation means that no believer has any excuse for being dominated by sin in this present life.

(3) The future tense of salvation.

This tense means that in the future, believers in Christ will be completely delivered from the presence of any sin and will ultimately be delivered into the presence of God. This wonderful concept of our salvation means we will be delivered from our sinful nature, our sinful flesh, this sinful world and presented fully and faultlessly to our God. This is the future deliverance that, in one way or another, in greater or lesser intensity (depending on one’s present relationship to the Lord), all believers yearn for.

Several passages bring out the future tense of salvation:

(1) Romans 13:11 - Paul speaks of a future time of salvation which should promote a present day godliness.

(2) I Cor. 15:51-58 - Paul speaks of a great future expectation to our salvation.

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- (3) I Thess. 5:8 - Paul speaks of a future hope connected to our salvation.
- (4) I Peter 1:3-5 - Peter clearly spoke of a great future aspect of our salvation.
- (5) Hebrews 1:14 - The writer of Hebrews clearly refers to a future time of salvation (Heb. 9:28).
- (6) I John 3:1-3 - John, too, speaks of this future tense of salvation.

It is very clear that for all biblical writers, the future tense of salvation was always an impetus for present tense, godly living. This was not abstract eschatological theory, but concrete, present-day motivation for righteous living.

QUESTION #6 – Who is the author of salvation?

It would seem that this theological question would not even need to be asked or answered because it is so basic. However, this is a very critical question and unless the proper biblical answer is known and believed, the doctrine of salvation will be greatly lacking.

There are many churches, religions and heretical groups who truly believe and teach that salvation is all about what man can do for God. When the Bible is carefully studied, it will be seen that this concept is far from being true for biblical salvation is all about what God has done for man.

The only true source of salvation is God! If God does not choose to provide salvation for man, there will not be, there cannot be and there is not ever any salvation. This reality is easily observed by simply answering the following questions:

- 1) Who has man sinned against?
- 2) Whose holiness has been violated?
- 3) Whose justice for punishing sin is on the line?
- 4) Whose wrath will man face because of sin?
- 5) Whose law has been broken by all men?
- 6) Who is it that sentences a person to eternal damnation?
- 7) Who is it that determines an acceptable sacrifice for sin?
- 8) Who is it that provides a sacrifice for salvation?

Obviously, the only answer to these questions is God. God is the ONLY Person who is in the position to plan, determine, develop, provide and even apply a system of salvation. He is the ONLY Person who is able to determine what will save people who have so rebelled against Him. It is His holiness that has been violated. It is His justice that demands a payment. It is His plan. Salvation is totally God's work in behalf of man.

When we search the Scriptures, we find many clear statements that support this conclusion:

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- 1) Jonah 2:9 says, "Salvation is from the LORD."
- 2) Jeremiah 3:23 says, "Surely, in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel."
- 3) Habakkuk 3:18 says, "I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."
- 4) John 3:16 says, God "gave His only begotten Son."
- 5) Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
- 6) Romans 3:25-26 says, "God demonstrated "His righteousness" and "He" is the "justifier."
- 7) Romans 8:30 says, God "predestines," "calls," "justifies" and "glorifies."

These are just some of the many passages that reveal the truth that salvation is totally and completely the work of God. As Chafer observed, "...it is the testimony of the Scriptures, without exception, that every feature of man's salvation from its inception to the final perfection in heaven is a work of God for man and not a work of man for God" (*Ibid.*, p. 6).

True biblical soteriology is God-centered, not man-centered. Dr. Louis Berkhof accurately observed: "The matter (soteriology) should be studied theologically rather than anthropologically. The work of God rather than the work of man is definitely in the foreground" (*Systematic Theology*, p. 415).

Men make a very serious theological error when they assume that the doctrine of salvation is a doctrine of what they are supposed to do for God. The doctrine of salvation is about what God has done for man. It is true that salvation relates to man, but it is also true that salvation is in no way a work of man. Once men realize salvation is about God, they begin to enter into a proper theology that can make one powerful.

It is the conviction of spiritually-minded individuals that no dynamic, impacting, powerful, God-honoring life will be lived until one comes to terms with the realization that it is all about God and from God. When one realizes that salvation is completely the work of a Holy God for sinful man, it becomes great impetus for loving God and serving Him and living a life that is pleasing to Him. Let us always remember that "Salvation is of the Lord."

QUESTION #7 – Why would God provide salvation for sinful men?

When we consider that all humans have willingly chosen to sin against God, we must pause to consider what would possibly motivate a Holy God to establish a salvation program that could redeem sinners. Dr. Ryrie said, "Why should God want to save sinners? Why should He bear the pain of giving His only begotten Son to die for people who had rebelled against His goodness? What could it possibly mean to God to have a family of human beings?" (*Basic Theology*, p. 277).

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Actually, there are two main motivational directions one may take in considering God's provision of salvation—the legal motivation and the personal motivation. This specific question has more to do with God's personal reasons for providing salvation.

According to the Scriptures, there are some very clear personal reasons why God provided salvation:

Reason #1 - God provided salvation because of His love.

Dr. Chafer said this: "The greatest of all motives which actuates God in the exercise of His saving grace is the satisfying of His own infinite love for those ruined by sin" (Vol. 3, p. 7).

How is it possible for God to demonstrate love to a sinner, when sin cannot have any relationship with God except be the object of His hate and wrath? The answer is the provisionary work of Jesus Christ on Calvary, the provision of salvation. Here is the ultimate fulfillment of divine love in that it makes salvation possible for depraved sinners.

There are several passages that teach us that God's love motivated Him to provide a salvation possibility:

- 1) John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."
- 2) Romans 5:8 - "But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
- 3) Ephesians 2:4-5 - "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."
- 4) I John 3:1 - "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are."
- 5) I John 4:9 - "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him."

God's love was clearly a primary motive for providing salvation. This point is very clear and there is no difficulty seeing it from these verses. The theological difficulty comes when one tries to determine why God loved such an unlovely and ungodly people to such a degree that He was willing to provide a salvation that would cost Him the sacrifice of His only begotten Son.

Since God is the only Sovereign God, He can do whatever He wants. The difficulty is why did His love make such a salvation possible when it demanded the ultimate sacrifice of the life of His only Son? Couldn't an expression of love be much less?