

## SOTERIOLOGY (103)

The fact that God saves a person and then begins a work in the life to transform him clearly proves that it is God who promotes holiness.

No one can proudly blame God for man's sin, but we certainly can humbly thank God for man's salvation. Salvation is a gift of God that completely delivers a person from the sin that he himself personally chose to commit. Those who are abandoned by God and left to their sin will ultimately wind up bringing glory to God by demonstrating He has power to stamp out all evil (Prov. 16:4; Rom. 9:22).

**Objection #4** - The pride of man objection.

This objection basically suggests that if God elects certain individuals to salvation, it promotes pride in those who think they are the elect. This view reasons that the elect are puffed up because they are elect.

We may suppose that it is possible for someone to think proudly of his election. Such a person is obviously thinking in a manner contrary to the Word of God. The doctrine of election is a doctrine that promotes humility, not pride. Truth is those who deny election promote pride for they proudly deny a precious doctrine God has revealed.

Any person who truly realizes the Holy God of this universe has saved him is one who is humbled by this reality. Any person who would exalt himself as one of the elect and flaunt this fact in the face of others has, as Dr. Strong suggests, "reason to question their election" (Vol. 3, p. 176).

The words of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer are worth considering:

"The doctrine of election is not without its difficulties—precisely such, indeed, as are normal when the finite mind assays to trace the paths of infinity. Within his own consciousness, man recognizes little outside his own power of determination; however, in the end and regardless of the means by which man has reached his destiny, it will be that destiny which was not only foreseen, but was divinely purposed. Such must be the conviction of every devout soul that contemplates the obvious truth, that the Creator is as resourceful in executing His purposes as He is in originating them" (Vol. 3, pp. 175-176).

**QUESTION #38** – For whom did Christ die?

The fact of election has caused students of the Bible to struggle with another theological issue, namely, for whom did Christ die? Since God reveals that He does elect some to salvation, the debate over the value of Christ's death becomes a legitimate topic of theological study.

The essence of the debate can be broken down into three questions:

## SOTERIOLOGY (104)

- 1) Did Jesus Christ come to die on the cross in order to save the whole world?
- 2) Did Jesus Christ come to die on the cross in order to save the elect?
- 3) Did Jesus Christ come to die on the cross in order to provide salvation for the whole world?

When one admits that God does elect to salvation, this becomes a very complex question to try and answer.

There have been basically three main positions held in regard to this issue:

**Position #1** - The position called Limited Atonement or Redemption.

This is the belief that Jesus Christ died only for the elect. Christ's death, according to this group, was not for the whole world, but only for those predetermined by God, in eternity past, to be saved.

Among those who hold to this position, there are two different schools of thinking:

- 1) The Extreme Limited Redemptionists.

This group is so dogmatic in their belief that Christ died for only the elect that they do not and will not concede that the Gospel should be preached to the whole world. This group contends that it is a distortion of the Word of God to preach salvation to the non-elect.

- 2) The Moderate Limited Redemptionists.

This group concedes that there is a place for worldwide Gospel preaching, even though Christ died specifically for the elect.

**Position #2** - The position called Unlimited Atonement or Redemption.

This is the belief that Jesus Christ died for the whole world. Christ's death, according to this group, was for all men, not just the elect.

As in the case of those who hold the Limited perspective, there are two different positions regarding the Unlimited perspective:

- 1) The Moderate Unlimited Redemptionists.

This group believes Christ died for all men, making all men savable. However, this group acknowledges that in order for man to be saved, God alone must move the individual to be saved. The contention here is that it is not the death of Christ that saves men, God saves men, the death makes them savable. All men are savable through the cross.

## SOTERIOLOGY (105)

### 2) The Extreme Moderate Unlimited Redemptionists.

This group believes that Christ's death was for all men, therefore, all men, in and of themselves, are capable of being saved. This position so stresses the fact that Christ's death was for the whole world that it tends to disregard and eliminate the truth that God must work in the individual's life in order for the individual to be saved. Another name for this group is Armenian.

### **Position #3** - The position called Universal Atonement or Redemption.

This is the belief that Jesus Christ died for the whole world, therefore, the whole world will be saved. This belief system maintains that eventually everybody will be saved. All people will be released from their sin and the penalties for their sin and will be restored to God. It is very clear, based on Scripture, that this totally contradicts the Word of God, which clearly states the majority of people will go to hell (Matt. 7:13-14; II Thess. 1:9).

This view is developed from the idea that since Christ died for the whole world, the whole world must eventually be saved or else Christ's death did not accomplish all it was designed to accomplish.

According to this perspective, since in Adam all were made guilty, in Christ all will be made righteous. One immediate response to this is that eternal life is not applied to the individual by Christ's dying for sins, but by believing on Him (John 3:16, 18).

In attempting to form a sound biblical theology, the following facts may be observed:

- 1) The Bible, in certain places, says Christ died for the whole world . John 1:29; 3:16; I Tim. 2:6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; II Pet. 2:1; I John 2:2.
- 2) The Bible, in certain places, says Christ died for the elect . John 10:11, 15; 11:51, 52; Acts 20:28; Rom. 5:8; 8:32-33; Eph. 5:23, 25-27; Titus 2:14; I Pet. 1:18-21; I John 4:10

We would quickly admit that Christ's death does have specific application for the elect, but this does not mean it does not have any application for the non-elect.

- 3) The Bible, in no place, says that everyone will be saved . In fact, the Bible clearly and plainly states that there will be many, the majority, who will burn in everlasting fire. Matt. 7:13-14; John 3:36; Rev. 20:10, 15; II Thess. 1:9

Universalism is a heresy that is dangerous and damning.

- 4) The Bible, in several places, says God is the One who saves . (See pp. 86-87 of notes) i.e. Titus 3:4-7

## SOTERIOLOGY (106)

5) The Bible, in several places, says all people are lost . Isaiah 53:6; Rom. 3:10-12, 19-20, 23

Truth is people are desperately lost—according to the Bible (Eccl. 7:20), according to their sin nature (Psalm 51:5), according to divine imputation (Rom. 5:12-21), according to their own practice (I Pet. 4:3) and according to the power of Satan (II Cor. 4:2-4).

6) The Bible, in certain places, says the Gospel is to be preached to all !  
Matt. 28:19; Acts 17:30; II Tim. 4:5

7) The Bible, in certain places, says only the elect will believe .  
John 6:37, 44; 17:2, 6, 9, 20, 24

Having acknowledged these biblical facts, we may conclude that Christ's death was sufficient for all men, but is efficient for only those who will believe. This student believes that Christ died for the whole world but only the elect will believe.

Three illustrations will perhaps give us understanding of this issue. Two of the illustrations are from Dr. Charles Ryrie on this issue:

The first illustration comes from a historical event in Israel's history. When the Israelites were in Egypt about to be delivered, God demanded that lamb be killed as a sacrifice and that the blood of the lamb be put on the two side posts and upper post of the door (Ex. 12:3-7). When the lamb was killed, theoretically his sins were covered. However, if he didn't put the blood on the doorpost, he would die. The shedding of the blood of the animal was sufficient to prevent the death penalty; however, it was the application of the blood of the lamb that made it practically efficient. So it is with Christ's death and His shed blood; it is sufficient for all but efficient only to those who will believe.

A second illustration comes from Dr. Ryrie's experience as a teacher:

“In one school where I have taught, the student aid was handled this way. People make gifts to the student aid fund. Needy students apply for help from that fund. A committee decides who will receive aid and how much. But when the actual money is distributed, it is done by issuing a check to the student who then is expected to endorse it back to the school which will then place the credit on his account. Let us suppose you gave a gift to cover one student's tuition for one year. You could properly say that his tuition was fully paid. But until the selection is made by the committee, and until the student receives the gift and places it on his account, his tuition is not paid. If he fails to endorse the check, it will never be paid even though it has been paid! The death of Christ pays for all the sins of all people. But not one individual has his own account settled until he believes. If he never believes, then even though the price has been fully paid, his sins will not be forgiven. The death of Christ is like some benefactor paying the tuitions of all students in all schools everywhere. If that were true, what should we be telling students? The good news that their tuitions are paid. Christ died for all. What should we be telling the world? (Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 323).

## SOTERIOLOGY (107)

A third illustration comes from my own pastoral experience in church work:

Every now and then we have a fellowship dinner at the church. Food is prepared for the fellowship and it is announced that we have enough food for everyone. When such an announcement is made, we know full well that some people will not choose to stay and eat with us. In fact, we can even name, at times, those who will not stay. We have food sufficient for all, but only those who stay will actually partake. So even though we have food sufficient for all, it is efficient only for those who choose to stay and eat it.

The death of Christ works much the same way. Christ's death is sufficient for all. His death is sufficient to take care of all the sins of all the people. However, only those who believe on Him will actually have their sins forgiven and only those elected to believe will choose to believe.

**QUESTION #39** – What do we mean by the finished work of Jesus Christ?

By the finished work of Jesus Christ, we mean that Jesus Christ was God's complete and only sacrifice that can make the payment for man's sin (redemption), bring harmony between sinful man and Holy God (reconciliation) and is the only place where Holy God will meet with sinful man (propitiation) to declare him righteous from all his sins (justification).

The essence of all of this is that the finished work of Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. This is God's complete system of salvation. God so wants us to realize this, that He has a special service (communion) just for this purpose and focus (I Cor. 11:23-34).

When Jesus Christ cried "It is finished" (John 19:30), His cry meant that all the demands of God had been fully met in order to save a sinner. Meeting all of the demands of God, which include redemption, reconciliation and propitiation, is what is meant by the finished work of Jesus Christ.

When we speak of the "finished work of Jesus Christ," this is what we mean.

**QUESTION #40** – Why is the finished work of Jesus Christ so important?

Dr. John Walvoord, in editing *Chafer's Theology*, really captures the answer to this question: "Because in all heathen religions salvation is by works. ...As men in their limited understanding tend toward legalism and seek to find some ground by which God can accept them on the basis of their own works, the Word of God clarifies the fact that the work of Christ on the cross is finished. ...Since Christ's work is finished, it should be clear that salvation is not a work of man for God" (Vol. 2, pp. 121-122).

Our salvation rests completely and totally in Jesus Christ. He is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). The ability of God to justify a sinner and the ability to give to the sinner everlasting life rests in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

## SOTERIOLOGY (108)

Any person, who relies upon Jesus Christ for salvation and does not rely upon their own works for salvation, is one who is eternally saved. There is no other way of salvation except through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ has accomplished everything necessary to save sinful men. Any person who rejects Jesus Christ and chooses to rely on his own method of salvation is one who rejects God's way, and the one who does that will be and deserves to be eternally damned.

**QUESTION #41** – How is salvation appropriated to an individual?

Now that we have examined the accomplishments of Christ in providing salvation, it becomes our responsibility to study the appropriation of the salvation which has been provided. In other words, it is important to biblically decipher the way in which a person may appropriate this great salvation which the work of Jesus Christ provided. To state the point simply, this study is interested in answering the question “how is a person saved?”

One theological label for this particular phase of theological study is “ordosalutis” meaning the way of salvation. The attempt to systemize biblical information regarding individual salvation is not so much an ability to put down a precise order as much as an ability to understand the various ministries involved. We will probably never know, for example, when conviction begins, but we can know that conviction is necessary for true salvation. So this study is more of a study of the various parts involved in the appropriation of salvation, rather than the chronological order.

We begin with this premise, in order for anyone to appropriate salvation, the Bible is very clear that the ministry of the Spirit of God must be present. Without the Spirit of God, there is no salvation.

The Bible does not teach that man, by himself, without God's Spirit, can or will come to faith in Christ. The Bible teaches that in order for a man to come to Christ, the Holy Spirit must be actively involved.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer does an excellent job of systematizing and analyzing the Spirit's work by breaking it down into three main parts:

- 1) The need of the Spirit's work.
- 2) The fact of the Spirit's work.
- 3) The result of the Spirit's work.

The Spirit of God, as Dr. Chafer says, “...precedes salvation and...makes salvation possible” (Vol. 3, p. 211).

## SOTERIOLOGY (109)

### 1. The need of the Spirit's work.

Dr. Walvoord's comments are very precise and accurate on this point: "In order for an unsaved man to come to faith in Christ, it is necessary that he be the object of the...work of the Holy Spirit. Man in his natural mind cannot comprehend the mystery of the death of Christ for the sins of the whole world and how this truth applies to him personally" (Vol. 2, p. 124).

There are many passages of Scripture that clearly demonstrate the need of the Spirit's work in bringing a person to salvation:

1) Romans 3:10-18 – This passage is clear that an unregenerate person, left to himself, will not choose God. This N.T. concept was also evidenced in the O.T. – Psalm 14:1-3. No man, in and of himself, was good or righteous. Clearly this information establishes the need of the Spirit's work in salvation.

2) I Cor. 2:14 – An unsaved person has no capacity for the things of God. Now of course the logical question that comes from this truth is "How do people who have no capacity for the things of God ever become saved?" The answer is that the Spirit of God must work and bring them to salvation.

3) Romans 8:7-9 – A lost person's mind is in hostile war against God. Again, how does a mind against God change into becoming a mind submissive and obedient to God? The answer of course is the Holy Spirit of God.

4) II Cor. 4:3-4 – It is clear from this text that the mind of an unsaved person is "blinded by Satan" to the extent that the Gospel is not able to reach them. An unsaved person is impressed with various issues of morality, education or philosophy, but he is not impressed with the Gospel message. As Dr. Chafer says, "...as all experienced soul-winners must recognize, the unsaved remain unimpressed with the way of salvation until they are awakened by the Spirit, and when awakened, their response and enthusiasm is a marvel to behold" (Vol. 3, p. 214).

Obviously this concept demonstrates a great need for the ministry of the Spirit of God, for without it, sinful men have minds that have been satanically blinded.

5) Eph. 2:1-3 – This passage is clear that all believers were once spiritually dead. Now the ability to give life to one dead is a special prerogative of God. Only God has the power to create life.

The obvious question is if the entire world is dead spiritually, what is needed to make a person alive spiritually? The answer of course is the Spirit of God!

6) John 3:3 – Implied in the context of this verse is the inability of a very religious and faithful man to do anything capable of meriting the Kingdom of God.