

SOTERIOLOGY: The Study of our Salvation

Introduction:

Definition of Salvation:

Biblical use of the word salvation: basic meaning = deliverance

(Hebrew) - Yasha (Joshua, Jesus)

(Greek) - Sodzo; Soteria; Suter (Savior)

A. Physical deliverance

O.T. - Psalm 44:3; 20:6 -- God saves man

1 Samuel 10:27 -- man saves man

N.T. - Philemon 1:19; Mark 3:4; Luke 23:39; James 5:15, 20

B. National deliverance

O.T. - Isaiah 35:4; Jeremiah 30:10

N.T. - Romans 11:26

C. Spiritual deliverance -- centered in God's provision in Christ

O.T. - Isaiah 45:22

N.T. - Matthew 1:21; Acts 16:31; Ephesians 2:5, 8

D. Eternal deliverance -- Hebrews 5:9

Theological usage: this is broader than usage of the word. It expands to the concept of deliverance.

Time	Past	Present	Future
Effect	Deliverance from the penalty of sin	Deliverance from the power of sin	Deliverance from the presence of sin
Theological terms	Justification Romans 5:1 Romans 8:1	Progressive Sanctification 1 Corinthians 1:18 Philippians 2:12, 13	Glorification Romans 13:11; 8:30 1 Peter 1:5

I. The Need of Salvation

A. Man's Original State and Fall

1. His creation in the image of God (Genesis 1)

2. His fall and consequences (Genesis 3, Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15)

Results of the Fall:

- a. Separation: "Where art thou?"(Genesis 3:9)
- b. Guilt: "Hast thou eaten?" (Genesis 3:10, 11)
- c. Condemnation: "Cursed..." (Genesis 3:14-19)
- d. Death: "Thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 3:3)
- e. Depravity: Note contrast in Genesis 5:1-3
God's image to Adam's image

B. Man's Present State of Sin

Involves several considerations but the two foremost are:

1. Guilt - our legal, external standing before God**a. Acts of sin (Romans 3:23)****1) Our personal acts**

Sin is against God -- Psalm 51:4

Sin is against God's law -- Romans 3:19; 1 John 3:4; Galatians 3:19

2) Our progenitor's act (the original sin) Romans 3:23 -- "For all have sinned" (aorist tense) "and are coming short" (present tense)

Romans 5:12 -- "all sinned" (in Adam) C.F. Hebrews 7:9-10 -- Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek in Abraham -- a responsible and determinative act

b. The sin nature (Ephesians 2:1-3)

We are also guilty before God because of what we are.

Ephesians 2:1-3 -- "By nature the children of wrath"

c. Notes on sin's character**1) Our sins should:**

--not be minimized as being natural (made that way)

--not be excused as necessary (on our way to perfection)

--not be out-grown as temporary (education and environment will rectify it)

2) Primarily against God -- Psalm 51:4

His standard -- glory (Romans 3:23)

3) Its exceeding sinfulness

Angelic proof -- angels cast into eternal darkness for their sin

Human proof -- man's degeneracy and depravity

Divine proof -- the cross of Christ necessary to pay for sin

2. Depravity (Romans 3:10-18)

- a. Definition: Man's essential condition since the Fall, characterized by corruption. Man has an evil and perverted nature throughout.

Negative: Man is not as outwardly bad as he could be...he is capable of some social good.

Positive: Man is inwardly, essentially perverted in personal holiness and corrupt before God in every element of his personality. The image of God in man is terribly marred.

b. Extent

- 1) All men are depraved -- Romans 3:10-12
Character -- verse 10
Practice -- verse 11, 12
- 2) All of man is depraved
Speech -- Romans 3:13, 14
Walk -- Romans 3:15-17
Purpose -- Romans 3:18
Intellect is darkened -- Ephesians 4:17-19; 1 Corinthians 2:14
Sensibility is debased -- Ephesians 4:17-19
Will is bent toward evil -- Ephesians 4:17-19; Romans 8:7, 8

c. Results

- 1) General description -- "Dead in trespasses and sins"
Ephesians 2:1-3
- 2) Incapable of pleasing God -- Romans 8:7-8; Galatians 2:16; 5:17;
Romans 3:20
Death involves separation and inability to function in normal realm.
- 3) Under power of sin -- Ephesians 2:1-2 "Fulfilling the desire of the flesh and of the mind."
Romans 6:17 -- servants; bondslaves of the sin nature
John 8:34 -- "Servants of sin"
- 4) Incapable of saving himself, in whole or in part
Isaiah 64:6 -- "All our righteousness are as filthy rags."
Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16 -- "For by the works of the law no flesh will be justified."
Ephesians 2:8, 9 -- we need grace

C. Man's Present State of Alienation

1. Enmity (inner attitude) -- Romans 8:7-8
2. Separation (external relationships) -- Ephesians 2:11-13
 - a. from life
 - b. from fellowship
 - Psalm 5:4 -- no sin in God
 - Romans 3:17 -- no peace with God
 - Ephesians 4:17-19 -- walk in vanity of their mind
 - 1 John 3:6b -- do not know God
 - 1 Corinthians 2:14 -- cannot know the things of God

D. Man's Present State Under Condemnation -- Romans 3:9-23

1. Condemnation is present -- John 3:17-18
2. Condemnation is pictured by wrath -- Romans 1:18ff
3. Condemnation is pronounced by decree -- Romans 3:9 Galatians 3:10, 22
4. Condemnation is proved by physical death -- Romans 5:12-14

E. Man's Present State Under Control of Darkness -- Ephesians 2:1-3

1. Blinded by the god of this world --2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (can't reason men into salvation).
2. Walking according to the age (spirit of this world system) -- Ephesians 2:2a
3. Walking according to the prince of the authority of the air -- Ephesians 2:2b
4. Satan is now constantly working in the unbeliever -- Ephesians 2:2c
5. Men serve Satan -- 1 Corinthians 12:2; Galatians 4:8

Summary:

- Man cannot be considered a free moral being.
- He cannot be considered on a morally neutral level, ready to shift to either good or evil, to righteousness or to unrighteousness.
- He is pictured as under the power and control of the forces of evil, and as under Satan and this present evil world system.

II. The Provisions for Salvation

A. Source of Salvation: God

Ephesians 2:4-9 "But God"

What is it that prompted God to provide salvation for those in such a helpless and despicable state as previously described?

Note the characteristics of God mentioned in Ephesians 2:4-9.

1. Rich in mercy
2. Great love
3. Grace -- God was not bound to do anything for man. Man could not merit salvation.

B. Scheme of Salvation: Election and the Divine Decree

1. Introduction

a. There are difficulties connected with the matter of Divine election. These are due to:

- 1) Misunderstanding of terms used
- 2) Misguided desire to defend God
- 3) Misinformation due to incomplete Bible study

b. There is definite, clear revelation of the fact of Divine election.

1) God's sovereignty

2 Timothy 1:9	Romans 8:29,33
Ephesians 1:4	John 15:16
Acts 13:48	Matthew 22:14
1 Corinthians 1:27-28	John 6:37,44,64,65

2) Man's need for election

Ephesians 2:1-3 -- dead in sin, not just sick in sin
 Romans 6:20-23 -- slaves to sin
 John 6:65; 8:43 -- cannot understand God's word
 2 Corinthians 4:3,4 -- blind / cannot see truth

2. Plan of Salvation -- Ephesians 1:3-14 and Romans 9

Note the eternal plan of the Triune God to provide salvation.

a. The Father's part -- Ephesians 1:3-6

Summary: planning

Note the actions of the Father:

- 1) Chose us in Him (1:4)
- 2) Predestined us (1:5)
- 3) Graced us (1:6)

Note the attendant features:

- 1) Time: before foundation of world (1:4)
- 2) Basis: good pleasure of His will; riches of His grace (1:5, 7)
- 3) Purpose: to grant us a perfect position (1:4) and to praise His grace (1:6)

b. The Son's part -- Ephesians 1:7-12

Summary: purchased

Note what Christ has gained for us:

- 1) Redemption (1:7)
- 2) Inheritance (1:11)

Note the attendant features:

- 1) Time: at His death (1:7)
- 2) Basis: God's riches of grace and His will (1:7, 9)
- 3) Purpose: to the praise of His glory (1:12)

c. The Spirit's part -- Ephesians 1:13-14

Summary: personalized

Note the action of the Spirit: sealed

Note the attendant features:

- 1) Time: at the time of belief (1:13)
- 2) Instrument: hearing of the Gospel (1:13)
- 3) Result: down payment / the guarantee of future blessings
- 4) Purpose: praise of His glory

3. Terminology

a. Omniscience

God knows things actual and possible, does not determine what will be.

b. Foreknowledge

This word has two usages:

- 1) General and popular usage -- passive foresight

2) Biblically and etymologically

"*prognosko*" - pro = before gnosko = a personal involvement or relationship, contact, activity. Not a passive, neutral foreseeing, but an aggressive bringing about. Closely connected with foreordination when used of God. Used of God's foreknowledge in N.T. five times:

1 Peter 1:2
 1 Peter 1:20
 Romans 8:29
 Romans 11:2
 Acts 2:23

c. Foreordination:

Found only in 1 Peter 1:20 (Greek foreknowledge, as above)

d. Predestine:

1) Etymology -- Greek: *pro-dridzo*, to mark out boundaries or to set limits beforehand.

2) Biblical usage -- In general of the preplanning of the destiny of people though can include things. Limited to the elect persons in biblical usage.

3) Theologically -- To determine all things beforehand.

e. Election:

1) Etymology -- Greek: *ek lego*, to choose out, to pick out, select noun and adjectives of same idea.

2) Biblical usage -- of God's choosing out of a person or people. Used of:

Israel	Isaiah 65:9, 45:4
Church	Romans 8:33, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Colossians 3:11, 1 Peter 5:13
Christ	Isaiah 42:1, 1 Peter 2:6
Believing remnant of Jews in Tribulation	Matthew 24:22
Lady	2 John 1
Angels	1 Timothy 5:21
Individual people	Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:1,2

f. Retribution -- deserved punishment God pays back evil that is due.

g. Preterition -- to pass by. Opposite of election. With the selection of some this makes the passing by of others necessary.

h. Sovereign -- complete full authority and power.

4. Romans 9

a. Context -- This is dealing with a historical problem. Paul deals with national entities, individuals are not primarily in view. But the principles of election apply to individuals.

b. Analysis of the doctrine

God's elective purpose is:

- 1) not related to human birth (9:6-9)
- 2) not related to human merit (9:10-13)
- 3) definitely related to His mercy and righteousness (9:14-18)
- 4) definitely related to His sovereignty (9:19-24)

c. Conclusion

- 1) God's election does not arise out of differences in man.
- 2) God is righteous and merciful.
- 3) We must understand God's salvation in light of His sovereign purpose according to election.
- 4) Grace is extended toward all, but saving grace is found only among the elect.

5. Balanced View of Election (sovereignty and responsibility)

a. Approach

- 1) Note that in the Scriptures neither God's sovereignty nor man's responsibility is neglected or modified for the sake of the other. God sovereignly controls man, yet without violation of human will.
- 2) Though humanly unresolvable, these two truths are divinely revealed. They are an antinomy (which means opposition between two statements, both apparently obtained by correct reasoning).
- 3) They are not contradictions to God -- they are friends -- they are both to be grasped and believed strongly.

b. Scriptural support

Acts 2:23
John 6:37
Daniel 9:26

c. Practical action

- 1) Accept Biblical balance and rest in the revelation -- not in reason
- 2) Recognize our need of dependence on God in evangelism
- 3) Remember God ordains the means as well as the end

d. 2 Peter 3:9 "Not willing..."

The decree must be distinguished from the desire of God. There is a difference. If God had no obligation to Himself, then His desires could all be decreed. But not so. God is the most obligated person in the universe. Obligated by His own nature to be true to His nature. He must choose the way that best glorifies Himself.

- e. The ultimate purpose of decree: God's own glory -- (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14).
God has chosen the best and the most beneficial plan for Himself and man.

6. Final Practical Observation on Sovereignty and Election

a. Puts responsibility where it should be:

We are not the cause -- but the means of bringing a person to salvation.
Our motivation comes from the constraining love of Christ.
(2 Corinthians 5:14).

b. Encouragement to service:

The sovereign call of God should strengthen us to serve (John 15:16;
Galatians 1:15, 16).

c. Comfort:

The faith that God is in control keeps us sane, stimulated and secure
(2 Corinthians 1:9-10).

d. Produces praise to God:

Romans 11:33-36 at the end of a section on sovereignty and election.

e. Obedience to God's revealed will is our great responsibility.

Example: prayer: Luke 18:1, 7
preaching: Romans 10:14, 15

III. The Accomplishments of Salvation

A. The Person of the Savior

1. His titles relative to being the Savior

- a. Seed of woman -- Genesis 3:15
- b. Seed of Abraham -- Galatians 3:8, 16
- c. Savior of Israel -- Matthew 1:21; Romans 11:26
- d. Savior of the world -- John 4:42; 1 John 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:10
- e. Lamb of God -- John 1:29; Isaiah 53; Hebrews 9:12
- f. Mediator -- 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 9:13

2. His unique qualifications for the work of salvation

- a. One of Godhead Three -- John 1:1-3; Colossians 2:9
- b. One of humility -- Luke 1:35; Galatians 4:4
- c. Perfect character -- Hebrews 4:15; 7:26
- d. Perfect obedience -- Hebrews 5:9; John 8:29
- e. Perfect sacrifice -- Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19
- f. Only resurrected Lord of Glory -- Romans 1:4; Hebrews 1:3; Acts 2:32-33; Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 1:21

B. The Passion of the Savior

1. Accomplishments

a. Substitution

1) Two prepositions that teach substitution

anti -- means "in place of"

huper -- no doubt about **anti**, but problem enters in that **huper** has another meaning

a) anti :	Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45
b) huper :	"for benefit of" 1 Timothy 2:1 "in place of" -- in context not of death of Christ Philemon 13 clearly not "for your benefit" but "in your place". So huper can mean "in place of" Now see use in 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 3:18

2) Substitution taught clearly by general language of Scripture -- 1 Peter 2:24; Galatians 3:13; Isaiah 53:6

- 3) Substitution seen in laying on of hands in O.T. sacrifices -- exchange of life principle

b. Redemption -- 1 Peter 1:18-19

- 1) Definition: the act of God whereby He Himself paid as a ransom the price of human sin and purchased sinners to Himself through the death of Christ.

N.T. words:

AGARAZO = market place (paid for)

EXAGARAZO = means to buy out of the market place

LUTROO = to set free (word used for "ransom")

- 2) Extent:

a) to redeemed (1 Peter 1)

b) to unredeemed (2 Peter 2:1) they are paid for

"It would seem best to understand the biblical term "ransom" as a figure of speech indicating that our redemption is costly." Horne. This would be similar to a mother who is said to pay the price for raising children, yet, she has not paid anyone anything.

c. Propitiation -- Romans 3:25, 26; See 1 John 2:2 & 4:10

- 1) Definition:

a) Basic meaning of word = satisfaction

b) Theological usage = the act of God in Christ whereby His sacrifice satisfied the righteousness of God. Related to the cross and the wrath of God.

- 2) Extent: the whole world provision

Worldwide application: limit to faith

- 3) Purpose: God is angry at mankind because of sin. That anger had to be appeased.

d. Reconciliation -- 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

- 1) Meaning: O.T. = covering

Definition: once apart from God / now with God

- 2) Extent

Universal provision

Personal application -- Man is changed, God is not

e. End of the law system as a rule of life -- Galatians 3:19 - 4:7

Law as a system is done away:

Hebrews 7:11, 12 -- priesthood

2 Corinthians 3:7ff -- tablets

Galatians 3:19 - 4:7 -- rule

"The Mosaic Law was one of several codes which God has given throughout history, and as a code it is finished. The code under which the believer lives today is called the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2) or the Law of the Spirit of Life (Romans 8:2)." Ryrie

f. Judgment of believer's sin nature -- Romans 6

1) Purpose: for our practical holiness -- Romans 6:1, 15
Victory over sin in Christian life.

2) Provision

a) Judgment of sin nature -- Romans 6:1-13

Co-death with Christ

A real judicial death to sin nature

Not cessation of sin in the believer, yet believer is dead to sin

Death is separation

Cross broke the absolute domination of the sin nature

b) Presence of Holy Spirit -- Romans 8:1-4

Romans 7 -- self dependence

Romans 8 -- new power -- Holy Spirit

3) Practice -- Romans 6:11-13

"Know" -- recognize fact

"Reckon" -- reckon it true ("consider" NASB)

"Yield" -- present yourself decisively to God

g. It is the ground for the believers cleansing from sin -- 1 John 1:5 - 2:2

1) Character of sin (1:5, 8, 10)

2) Case of Satan (1 John 2:12; Revelation 12:10; Job 1)

3) Confession of the saint (1 John 1:9)

4) Case of the Savior (1 John 2:1, 2) -- Advocate

5) Cleansing from sin

"To forgive" -- family forgiveness for fellowship

"To cleanse" -- removal of personal defilement

2. Benefits of Salvation

a. Justification: "To declare one righteous" -- Romans 3:24

b. New position:

Membership in a holy and royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9)

Citizenship in Heaven (Philippians 3:20)

Membership in the family of God (Ephesians 2:19) by spiritual birth (John 3:5), marriage (Revelation 19:7) and adoption (Galatians 4:5)

"It was God's aim not simply to release slaves but to make sons." Horne

c. An inheritance:

Complete in Christ (Colossians 2:9, 10)

Possessing every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3)

Assurance of Heaven (1 Peter 1:4)

d. Strength to live the Christian life:

Freedom from sin (Romans 6:14)

Freedom from law (2 Corinthians 3:6-13)

Indwelt by Godhead (Ephesians 4:6; Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 6:19)

e. Sanctification = "To set apart"

Three aspects:

1) Positional sanctification

It means being set apart as a member of the household of God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

2) Experiential sanctification

Because we have been set apart we are to be increasingly set apart in our daily lives (1 Peter 1:16).

3) Ultimate sanctification

Ephesians 5:26, 27; Jude 24, 25; 1 John 3:1-3

"All whom God chose in eternity, He sanctifies in time; those who are a chosen generation become a holy people." Horne

IV The Application of Salvation

A. Calling of God

1. General call: a call which urges sinners to accept salvation.

a. Through nature: Romans 1:18ff

Enough to give some light -- but not enough to save.

b. Through gospel

Acts 17:30 -- He hath commanded all men everywhere to repent.
Romans 10:16-21

2. Effectual call -- Romans 8:30

This call assures responses because it creates a positive response in the heart of man. It is a call limited to the elect that enables them to believe. This is the only way a sinner dead in trespasses and sins is able to believe. It is efficacious, that is, it always results in salvation.

a. Fact

Call comes between foreknown & justified
Romans 8:30; 1 Thessalonians 2:12-13; 1 Corinthians 1:23, 24;
2 Timothy 1:9

b. Necessity

John 6:44 -- draw -- necessity -- No man can (is able to) come to Me except the Father draw him.

c. Efficacy

"Shall come"
John 6:37; Romans 8:30; 1 Thessalonians 2:12-13

B. Content of the Gospel Message

Irreducible minimum of three elements properly presented

1. Sin
2. Substitute Savior
3. Faith -- required response on man's part to apply the provision of the Savior. --
Ephesians 2:8-9

"Faith is never the ground of justification, but only its means or channel." Horne.

"Faith is man's positive answer to God's justifying grace." Horne.

C. Conviction by the Holy Spirit -- John 16:7-11

1. Of sin

Meaning: convicts of sin (its guilt)
Reason: because they don't believe

2. Of righteousness

Meaning: opposite of sin; convicts of man's lack of righteousness

3. Of judgment

Meaning: it will come because Satan has been judged

D. The Condition of Salvation

1. The proper approach -- faith alone: Romans 1:16-17; 3:25-28; 4:2-5; 5:1.
150 times faith alone is said to be the condition of salvation in the N.T.;
12 times other terms are linked or associated.

2. The improper approaches

- a. Faith + works (Roman Catholic view)
- b. Baptismal regeneration

3. Problem passages:

Titus 3:5, 6: "Washing": taken to mean baptism

Answer:

- 1) Water is not specifically mentioned
- 2) Washing means cleansing
- 3) Washing and renewing are both acts of the Spirit
- 4) Verse five would not contradict itself -- "Not by works of righteousness"

Acts 2:38

Answer: May be translated "Be baptized *because* of the remission of sins"

E. Regeneration

1. The word "regeneration" is used only once in the context of soteriology (Titus 3:5), but the concept is taught through the terms, "Born from above" (John 3) and "Born again" (1 Peter 1)
2. Definition: Regeneration denotes the act of God whereby spiritually dead people are quickened (made alive) through the spirit (Horne).

The First Birth	The Second	Scripture
Of sinful parents	Of God	1 Peter 1:3
Of corruptible seed	Of incorruptible seed	1 Peter 1:3
Of the flesh	Of the Spirit	Titus 3:5
Satan's slave	Christ's free man	Galatians 5:1,13
Object of divine wrath	Object of divine love	Romans 1:18; 5:8

3. Teachings concerning regeneration as found in 1 Peter 1:3

- a. Motivated by the mercy of God
- b. Is the giving of new life

- c. Brings a living hope
- d. Based upon Christ's death and resurrection

4. Regeneration results in two basic changes in the one regenerated:

- We become "new creatures" (2 Corinthians 5:17). While we are still living in these bodies we are prone to sin, nevertheless, our inner selves, our inner nature, is changed. We have become new creations.
- We become the children of God (John 3). We are born again into His family.

F. Conversion

"Conversion" means basically "to turn." In the world of religious thought denotes a change of outlook and a new direction in life and action (Acts 26:20; 9:35; 11:21; 15:19; 1 Peter 2:25).

- Positively: Means turning toward something or someone in what may be called faith. In the soteriological dimension it is a turning toward God.
- Negatively: Means turning away from something or someone in what may be called repentance. The biblical terms for repentance suggest a change of mind, of judgment, purpose, and conduct.

V. Eternal Security of the Believer

A. Security of the Believer -- Romans 8

1. Definition: by "security" we mean that genuine believers persevere until the Lord glorifies us

Perseverance of the saints: God preserves all the elect and causes them to persevere in faith and obedience to the end. None are continually backslidden or finally lost

2. Support:

- a. Sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit -- Ephesians 1:13; 4:30
- b. God's purpose is to keep us in spite of everything -- John 10:28- 30; 31:1 -- and ultimately to present us faultless in His own presence -- Jude 24
- c. Romans 8:29-39
- d. Romans 8:29 -- God's foreknowledge
No matter what view you have of God's foreknowledge, whoever He foreknew, He also glorified; none are lost -- Romans 8:38, 39

- e. Romans 8:1-- There is no condemnation for those in Christ.
Ephesians 1:4 -- God chose us, before the foundation of the world.
- f. John 3:5, 6 -- We are born again.
- g. John 10:28 -- We have eternal life.
- h. John 6:37-40 -- Christians cannot be cast out.
- i. 1 Peter 1:4 -- We have a new nature.
- j. 1 Corinthians 6:19 -- We are the temple of God.
Note: This was written to a sinful church, and in the context of sexual sin.
- k. Ephesians 4:30 -- We are sealed by the Holy Spirit.
- l. Ephesians 2:5, 6 -- In God's sight every Christian is now in Heaven.
- m. Ephesians 2:8, 9 -- We are saved by grace.
If we did not do anything to merit our salvation, how can we lose it through sin?
- n. Ephesians 5:30 -- We are members of the body of Christ
- o. 1 Peter 1:23 -- The Christian is born of incorruptible seed.
- p. Philippians 1:6 -- Christ will finish the work He has begun.
- q. God does the keeping:

2 Timothy 1:12	Matthew 7:23	Hebrews 13:5
Jude 24	Romans 5:1-11	1 John 5:18
Romans 11:29	Romans 8:31-39	1 Peter 1:4

“The greatness of the Father, not the flock is the ground of the safety of the flock. (An excellent book on this subject is *Shall Never Perish*, by J.F. Strombeck.)

3. Some problem passages:

Hebrews 6:1-8

Four major views:

(1) One can lose his salvation

Oppose: If so, then repentance following is impossible

Losing salvation contradicts the rest of Scripture.

(2) Christians will lose rewards because they have apostatized.

Oppose: The whole thrust of the book of Hebrews is that a true believer will not apostatize.

(3) Warning to unbelievers that to turn from Christ, after being exposed to Him is to forfeit future opportunity.

Oppose: The words "tasted," "partaker," "enlightened" are used elsewhere as descriptions of true Christians.

(4) Apostasy proves lack of conversion. If a so-called Christian apostatizes it would prove they were never saved. This view fits the context best.

James 2:14-16 -- not saving faith

2 Peter 2:13-22

B. Assurance of Salvation -- 1 John 5:13; John 6:39-40; 10:27-30; 17:11; 1 John 3:9; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 5:10

By assurance we mean the confidence that genuine believers may possess that they are in right relationship to God through Christ Jesus.

THE LORDSHIP SALVATION ISSUE:

Few things have rocked the Bible believing community in recent years like the "Lordship Salvation" controversy. This has been true for several reasons. The discussion strikes at the very heart of Christianity. Not many things are more important than the issue of how we become Christians. Also, those who are drawing up the battle lines are all godly men, who love the Word, and are careful students of it. Each of the principle players have a high view of Scripture, and each would support their views from their study of the Bible alone. Yet, these men of God have come to different conclusions on this most vital of doctrines.

The purpose of this study is to identify the principle players, clearly spell out the issues involved, attempt to analyze those issues, and suggest a solution that has biblical balance.

ISSUES INVOLVED

We must start with what is not being said. No one is espousing a works salvation, although some have been accused of doing so. No one is denying that salvation is by grace through faith alone. However, this vital question is raised, "What is saving faith?"

James 2:14 reads, "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" We will admit that this is a highly controversial passage, but it would seem clear that James is implying that there is such a thing as a kind of faith that does not save. That is, there appears to be a pseudo faith, a faith that has the appearance of saving trust in the finished work of Christ, but that falls short, leaving the individual still in their sins.

The whole "Lordship" controversy is wrapped around the solving of this problem. In other words, no one (in our circle) denies that salvation is through faith, but what is saving faith? In addition there is a corollary issue: if I have saving faith, how will I know it? What gives assurance of salvation? Is my assurance based upon my initial act of faith, or upon subsequent fruit, or upon some mystical feeling from the Holy Spirit? These are big and important issues that must be faced by every believer.

Although there have been many books and articles written on this subject, there remain three key men who have staked out opposing positions. At the two extremes are Zane Hodges and John MacArthur. Hodges supports what some have termed the "radical no-lordship" view. That is, Hodges says that saving faith is believing in the facts of the gospel. When we believe in the facts about Christ as expressed in the Scriptures, we become the children of God. To add anything such as repentance, commitment to Christ, salvation resulting in a changed life, or fruit that follows conversion, is to add works to salvation. Hodges, at least in theory, believes that a person can have a momentary flash of faith that results in him being born again. Then that person can live the rest of his life without faith, yet be saved.

John MacArthur would represent what has become known as the "Lordship" position. MacArthur believes that saving faith includes repentance, a commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Master (hence the "Lordship" handle). The "Lordship" position believes that the true child of God will persevere -- while there may be periods of sins and doubt throughout life, the believer will never totally apostasize. Thus, every born again individual will experience a changed life with resulting fruit. Oswald Chambers says, "We must never confuse our desire for people to accept the Gospel with creating a Gospel that is acceptable to people."

Charles Ryrie would be the spokesman for a more moderate, middle of the road position, simply known as "no-lordship." Ryrie believes in repentance, but defines it as a change of mind about Christ. Repentance from sin (or a lifestyle of sin) is not essential. While salvation should change a person, Ryrie believes that it is possible to become and remain a carnal Christian for one's whole life. At the same time he believes that at least some fruit is inevitable if one is truly born again. However, only those who have made a post-conversion act of dedication will see real growth in grace.

These men have written much on this subject, but my comments will be based principally on the following: *The Gospel Under Siege* by Hodges; *Balancing the Christian Life and So Great Salvation* by Ryrie, and *The Gospel According to Jesus and Faith Works* by MacArthur. It should be mentioned at this point that I do not find myself in total agreement with any of these men. My position would lie somewhere between MacArthur and Ryrie. I would recommend for your study the pamphlet, *Salvation by Grace through Faith*.

Hodges is so concerned that the "Lordship" view is distorting the gospel message that he has aligned himself with the Grace Evangelical Society. Proponents of this group call their position "Free Grace." The "Free Grace" people are concerned that nothing be added to grace as a means of salvation. They even go so far as to say that it is unnecessary to sorrow over, or turn from one's sins in order to be saved i.e. repentance is not part of the gospel. Hodges says, "The marvelous truth of justification by faith, apart from works, recedes into shadows not unlike those which darkened the days before the Reformation. What replaces this doctrine is a kind of faith/works synthesis which differs only insignificantly from official Roman Catholic dogma." (*Absolutely Free*, p. 20) Strong words!!

MacArthur, on the other hand, is equally strong when he says, "The gospel in vogue today holds forth a false hope to sinners. It promises them they can have eternal life yet continue to live in rebellion against God." (*Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 16)

I believe both men overstate their case, and misunderstand the other's position. It must be understood that both sides are reacting to what they view as extremes. For example, the "Free Grace" people accuse MacArthur of adding faithfulness to faith. They claim that MacArthur teaches that in order to be saved we must not only have faith, we must consistently obey and always remain faithful. To this the "Free Grace" people cry, "works salvation!" It must be admitted that at times MacArthur seems to be saying exactly this. At other times he vehemently denies such views. I believe that at the heart of this

misunderstanding is the subject of sanctification, more than the content of the gospel. As mentioned earlier, both sides agree that salvation is by grace through faith alone. It seems to me that the real fuss comes over what regeneration produces -- and that difference is transferred back to what is the gospel message. The "Lordship" position says that regeneration should result not only in eternal life, but in a changed life now. "The Bible teaches clearly that the evidence of God's work in a life is the inevitable fruit of transformed behavior" (e.g. 1 John 3:10) (*Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 73). The "Free Grace" people believe that regeneration may or may not change the present life of the child of God. That is, the one who has been saved from his sins, and transformed into a new creation, may very well remain in those sins. Hodges stretches his interpretation of James and 1 John to new limits (see *Gospel Under Siege*), in his attempt to prove that salvation does not have to result in fruit. His view of James 2 is so novel that one Bible scholar claims, "To the best of my knowledge not one significant interpreter of Scripture in the entire history of the church has held to Hodges interpretation of the passages he treats."

With the weight of much Scripture that teaches the fruitfulness of the true believer, and with the backing of Bible scholars of the past (especially the Reformed theologians, such as Calvin, who taught the perseverance of the saints), MacArthur asks, "Is a faith that produces no life truly saving faith?" Yet Hodges says that to impose fruitfulness as a test of salvation is to add works to faith, thus destroying free grace.

Into this quagmire comes Ryrie with a statement that I believe offers some real balance. "The Bible offers two grounds for assurance. The objective ground is that God's Word declares that I am saved through faith. Therefore, I believe Him and His Word and am assured that what He says is true (John 5:24; 1 John 5:1). The subjective ground relates to my experiences. Certain changes do accompany salvation, and when I see some of those changes, then I can be assured that I have received the new life....It goes without saying that I will never keep all His commandments....But the fact that these experiences have come into my life, whereas they were absent before, gives assurance that the new life is present (2 Corinthians 5:1)." (*So Great Salvation*, p. 143)

THE NEED FOR REPENTANCE

Repentance, it seems to me, is an important component in this argument. Yet, on this issue our three men differ greatly. Hodges says, that "Repentance is not essential to the saving transaction...it is in no sense a condition for that transaction" (*Absolutely Free*, p. 146). Ryrie claims that "repentance is a changing of our minds about Jesus of Nazareth. Repentance from sin is unnecessary (*So Great Salvation*, p. 96)." I believe that these men have left the conviction of sin and guilt out of the gospel.

When we speak of being saved we must recognize that we are being saved from something and to something. When we become believers we are saved to Christ and to eternal life -- all would agree on this point. But we are also saved from something. I believe that we are *saved, not only from hell but from sin --its penalty, its power, and ultimately its presence*. How can an individual be saved from sin, and yet have no desire

to turn from sin? Repentance, in my understanding is part of saving faith. It is the recognition that one is a sinner, bound for hell. By faith that individual turns from his sin and to Christ for His saving grace. If one does not understand the issue of sin, he cannot understand the gospel. For Christ died on the cross for our sins, He died in the place of sinners. He died to set us free from the grip of sin. Therefore, it is my understanding that salvation is not possible without repentance.

THE TEACHINGS OF CALVINISM:

In 1610 the followers of James Arminius presented the five points of Arminianism. They are:

1. **Free will, or human ability.** Man, although affected by the Fall, was not totally incapable of choosing spiritual good, and was able to exercise faith in God in order to receive the gospel and thus bring himself into possession of salvation.
2. **Conditional election.** God laid His hands upon those individuals who, He knew -- or foresaw -- would respond to the gospel. God elected those that He saw would want to be saved of their own free will and in their natural fallen state -- which was, of course, according to the first point of Arminianism, not completely fallen anyway.
3. **Universal redemption, or general atonement.** Christ died to save all men; but only in a potential fashion. Christ's death enabled God to pardon sinners, but only on condition that they believed.
4. **The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration limited by the human will.** The Holy Spirit, as He began to work to bring a person to Christ, could be effectually resisted and His purposes frustrated. He could not impart life unless the sinner was willing to have this life imparted.
5. **Falling from grace.** A saved man could fall finally from salvation. It is, of course, the logical and natural outcome of the system. If man must take the initiative in his salvation, he must retain responsibility for the final outcome.

In 1618, at the Council of Dort, the Protestant Church opposed the Arminians and reaffirmed its former position. In reply to the five points of Arminianism the Council came up with what is known as the Five Points of Calvinism. These are sometimes set forth in the form of an acrostic on the word '**TULIP**', as follows:

- T** Total Depravity (i.e. Total Inability)
- U** Unconditional Election
- L** Limited Atonement (i.e. Particular Redemption)
- I** Irresistible Grace
- P** Perseverance of the Saints

As can be readily seen, the TULIP set itself in complete opposition to the Five Points of Arminianism. Man is totally unable to save himself because the Fall in the Garden of Eden was a *total* fall.

If unable to save himself, then God must save.

If God must save, then God must be free to save whom He will.

If God has decreed to save whom He will, then it is for them that Christ made atonement on the Cross.

If Christ died for them, then the Holy Spirit will effectually call them into that salvation.

If salvation then from the beginning has been of God, the end will also be of God and the saints will persevere to eternal joy.

While we believe that the above system, known as Calvinism is biblical, we would take exception with point three: *limited atonement*. While some believe that limited atonement is a logical necessity of the other points, we do not believe the case can be made biblically. Scripture teaches that Christ died for the world (John 3:16). Many passages teach this (e.g. 1 John 2: 1, 2). Only by arbitrarily defining the "world" (*kosmos*) to mean only the elect, can one prove limited atonement from Scripture. Therefore, we take the position that Christ died for the sins of all mankind, but only those who place their faith in Him, will be pardoned from sin.

Updated May 2006