

## SOTERIOLOGY – THE STUDY OF SALVATION

### Salvation:

negatively, deliverance from sin, death, and divine wrath (and even God Himself), and positively, the bestowal of far-ranging spiritual blessings both temporal and eternal. God freely conveys these benefits on the basis of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Mediator. (Bruce Demarest)

### Humankind's Need for Salvation:

All have sinned – Psalm 53:1, Rom. 3:10-12,23

### Sinners Present Condition:

Perishing – John 3:16

Lost – Luke 19:10

Condemned already – John 3:18

Spiritually depraved – Eph. 2:1-2, 4:17-19

Alienated from the life of God - Eph. 2:12

Dwell under the curse of the law – Gal. 3:10

Enslaved by sin, death, and the Devil – Rom 6:16-17, Heb. 2:15, II Tim 2:26

### Sinners Future Condition:

Conscious torment – Matt. 5:22-23

Everlasting duration – Matt. 25:41, 46, Rev. 14:11

### I. The Plan of Salvation:

#### A. Grace

1. We are saved by grace. Eph. 2:8-9, Rom. 5:8

a. While we were yet sinners. Rom. 5:8

b. Grace is woven through every part of salvation.

2. Grace is:

a. a choice God makes; it is not required to be given. Ex. 33:19, Rom. 9:15-16

b. unmerited favor, a gift, not of works. Works nullify grace. Rom. 6:23, 11:2-6

1. If God's grace is not dependent upon our works, upon what is it dependent? Rom. 9:10-16

2. Why does God save us by grace? Eph. 2:8-9, I Cor. 1:26-31, Isa. 42:8

3. When does God's grace end and it start to be dependent on our works? (Never forget this.)

3. What happens to God's grace when those who are in Christ sins? Rom. 5:20

a. Those in Christ cannot out sin God's grace in number or in depth.

b. Because of what we know about God's grace, why is this not only true, but logical?

c. Why doesn't this lead to uncontrolled licentious living for those who are in Christ? Rom. 6:1-14

1. We have died to sin.

a. We have been crucified with Christ. Gal. 2:20

b. Sin now does not have dominion over us.

2. We are alive to God.

3. What does a life without the dominion of sin look like? Rom. 7:15-25

4. Man-centered questions that can distort our understanding of God's grace.

a. Before the questions, Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian views of grace.

b. In order to be fair, doesn't God's grace have to be given to all men?

1. Ex. 33:19, Rom. 9:15-16

2. Why isn't this unfair?

c. Isn't it unfair to hold people accountable for their sins, if they are born in sin and have not been provided the grace to be free of their sin?

1. Rom. 9:16-23

2. What is Paul's answer?

d. Isn't it unfair if God does not provide the same chance for everyone to be saved?

1. Rom. 9:10 -15, Rom. 5:12

2. Why does man need God's grace?

e. By believing it is unfair if the above are true, it results in the view of grace below:

1. God provides His saving grace to all people.

2. Man cooperates with God's grace to complete or effect salvation. (Synergism vs. Monergism)

3. It is man's will that determines his final destiny, not God's choice.

4. Since man got his salvation by what he did, he can also lose his salvation by what he does.

f. Is it God's ultimate will that all be saved? I Tim. 2:4, 2 Pet. 3:9

1. If the answer is yes, why isn't everyone saved?

a. Most would answer that it is because man's will overrides God's will.

b. What does the Bible say - Psa. 115:3, 135:6, Dan. 4:34-35, Isa. 46:9-11, Prov. 21:1, Jam 4:13-15, Acts 9:1-6

2. All are not saved and if God's will is always accomplished, how do we interpret I Tim. 2:4 and 2 Pet. 3:9?

a. I Tim 2:4 has two possible interpretations:

1. The verb "thelei" means "wants", "desires", or "takes pleasure in". God does not determine that all will be saved, but he does not take pleasure in those who are not saved.
2. In the context of vs. 1-3, God desires all types of men to be saved even kings. They were told to pray for even kings, which they probably weren't doing. The king was Nero.

b. 2 Pet. 3:9 needs to be read in context starting in vs. 3.

1. This verb boulomai means "will" or "resolve". It is stronger than "wishing" or "desiring".
2. The "you" in vs. 9 refers back to "those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours" in I Pet. 1:1.
3. In context, Peter is saying that the Lord is delaying His coming in order that all of the elect may come to faith and not be lost.
4. Haven't you ever said, "I wish the Lord would come right now."? I am sure that those in Peter's day thought that too. But if He would have come back then, we would not have been partakers in God's grace.
5. To try to interpret this verse as meaning God wants all men saved, how does God delaying His coming accomplish that?

## B. Election

### 1. Does God elect?

- a. Heb. – elect: bachiyr 13 times, Grk. – election: ekloga 7 times, elect: ekletos 23 times, chosen: eklegomai 19 times
- b. Matt. 22:14, 24:22, 24, 31, Luke 18:7, Rom. 8:33, 9:11, 11:5, 7, 28, Eph. 1:4, I Thes. 1:4, II Tim. 2:10, Titus 1:1, Jam. 2:5, I Pet. 1:1-2, 2:9, II Pet. 1:10, Rev. 17:14
- c. Closely related word – predestinate Grk. – proorizo: 6 times, Acts 4:28, Rom. 8:29-30, I Cor. 2:7, Eph. 1:5, 11
- d. Biblically, there is no question that God elects (chooses) and predetermines the results (before the foundation of the world).

e. The questions that arise are:

1. Is God's election for service equivalent to salvation?
2. Is God's corporate election equivalent to salvation?
3. Upon what does God base His choice?

2. Is God's election for service equivalent to salvation?

a. First, God does choose people for specific service tasks. Moses for leadership Num. 16:5-7, Aaron for priestly duty Ps. 105:26, Saul to be king I Sam. 10:24, Jeremiah for prophetic ministry Jer. 1:10.

b. Jesus chose his twelve disciples to service. John 6:70.

c. Compare Jesus' election above to Jesus' election of His disciples in John 13:18.

d. There is an election to service but it may or may not include an election to life.

e. God's election to service is conditional and can be revoked by disobedience. (Saul, Judas)

f. God's election to life is by Grace and cannot be revoked.

3. Was God's election of Israel to service or to life?

a. God chooses Israel to be His people for privilege and service. Deut. 7:6-8, I Kings 3:8, Ps. 132:13.

b. This election was conditional. Ex. 32:9-10, Ps. 95:11

c. We must make a distinction between ethnic Israel for temporal privileges and the election of a faithful minority within the nation for salvation. I Kings 19:18, Rom. 9:6, Rom. 11:4

d. The Bible teaches that the corporate election of Israel to privilege is not a guarantee of salvation, even though many Jews thought so.

4. What is God's election to salvation based upon?

a. God's foreknowledge is the subject of much debate concerning God's election. Rom. 8:28-30

1. First we observe that the foundation of the Christian's calling to salvation is God's purpose (resolve or decision). vs. 28, Rom. 9:11, Eph. 1:11, 2 Tim. 1:9

2. What does foreknowledge mean in vs. 29?

- a. Foreknowledge (proginosko) is used five times in the NT.
  - b. When humans are the subject (the one doing the foreknowing), it means to know beforehand. Acts 26:5, 2 Pet. 3:17
  - c. When God is the subject it can mean either to know beforehand or to forelove/foreordain. vs. 29, Rom. 11:2, I Pet. 1:20
1. The base word “to know” yada/ginosko often times means more than to “perceive” or “understand”, but rather means to “set regard upon, or to know with particular interest, delight, affection, and action” Gen. 4:1, 18:19, Ex. 2:25, Ps. 1:6, 144:3, Jer. 1:5, Amos 3:2, Hos.13:5, Matt. 7:23, I Cor. 8:3, Gal. 4:9, 2 Tim. 2:19
  2. Given the strongly relational Hebrew background to the word, the clear use of foreknown in I Pet. 1:20, and the use of foreknowledge (prognosis) in Acts 2:23, I Pet. 1:1-2, the probable conclusion is that foreknowing in vs. 29 means to forelove, to set His choice upon them, not that He knows information about them or their actions.
  3. Vs. 29 continues that those He foreknew He also predestinate. Those on whom God in eternity past set His affection, He sovereignly chose for life.
  4. How does God’s grace require us to interpret foreknowledge? Rom. 11:5-6, Rom. 9:11
- b. The Bible is clear that election precedes belief.
    1. John 10 speaks of the Good Shepherd and His sheep.
      - a. In vs. 26, Jesus tells the unbelieving Jews that they did not believe because they were not His sheep.
      - b. Logically, we might think it should be the other way around, that they were not His sheep because they did not believe.
      - c. The question we have then is how do you become His sheep if it is not by believing?
      - d. In vs. 29, Jesus tells us how. John 17, 2, 6, 9, 24, John 6:35-37
    2. Acts 13:48 states that all who were appointed to eternal life believed. It does not say, all that believed were appointed to eternal life.
    3. God’s books make it clear that our deeds including belief do not get us into heaven. Rev. 17:8, Rev. 20:11-15, Eph. 2:8-9
  - c. Doesn’t this teaching (the Bible) make God unfair?

1. The parable of the workers and the vineyard. Matt. 20:1-16

a. Jesus infers that none get less than what they deserve (justice), while some get more than they deserve (grace).

b. It is not unjust of God to give some more than their due.

2. Jesus also taught that, of old, God favored certain persons with His grace while passing by others.  
Luke 4:23-27

3. Jesus also taught of God's sovereign right to reveal or conceal the significance of Jesus' words. Matt.  
11:25-26

5. Since the Bible teaches that God elects some for salvation, does that mean He elects those for damnation in the same way? Double predestination.

a. Order of God's decree to save men.

1. Supralapsarianism – God decreed to save humans prior to the fall.

2. Infralapsarianism – God decreed to save humans after the fall.

b. Supralapsarianism

1. God decrees men to hell the same way He decrees men to life.

2. It is by God's direct decree that men are damned.

3. This is often referred to as "double predestination."

4. This decree is done before man is viewed as a sinner.

c. Infralapsarianism

1. God views all people as sinners and actively decrees to save some from that group of sinners (grace).

2. God leaves (permits) sinners to remain in their sin and gives them justice.

3. God's decree to life is direct and active, but God is passive towards the damned.

d. Why I believe infralapsarianism reflects the biblical view.

1. The Bible only refers to those who are saved as "the elect." If both the saved and the damned are elected the same way, we would have to ask which group is the Bible talking about.

2. The Bible is clear that people are in hell because of their sin not because they were elected to go there.

3. Rom. 8:29 tells us that God's purpose in predestination was to conform us to the image of His Son. This presumes that we were sinners and needed to be changed.
4. "Supra" can lead people to believe that they have never been lost, but Eph. 2:1-3 explains that God views all of us as either former or current "children of wrath."
5. Matt. 25:41 tells us that hell was not made for man, but for Satan and his angels. So if God would have decreed man to damnation prior to the fall then it would make sense that hell would have been made for man.

6. What does the doctrine of election mean to us who have been saved?

a. Great joy and confidence in being chosen.

1. We are in Christ ONLY because of what God has done, not anything we have done.

2. He will keep us; we can't mess up what we didn't do in the first place.

3. I did nothing for God to choose me, so there is nothing I can do for God to un-choose me. It rests in Him, not me.

b. Encouragement to preaching, prayer, and evangelism.

1. God ordains the means (preaching and witnessing) to salvation as well as the goal of salvation.

2. Acts 18:6-10, Paul was tempted to retreat from Corinth, but God told him that He had many people in this city. Paul could preach with confidence. (Notice: God did not say I have many people in this city, so don't worry about preaching, I will save them without you.)

3. Our praying, preaching, and witnessing are all ordained by God to bring about His desired results.

7. Since God elects those for salvation, does man really need to repent? Won't we be saved because we are elect?

A. The Bible is clear that we must repent, believe, and obey in order to be saved. Luke 3:3, John 3:16, 36, James 2:19-20

B. Preaching and witnessing are the means that God carries out His election. Rom. 1:16, 10:14-15, Luke 14:16-24

8. God is sovereign and people make meaningful choices for which they are accountable.

A. Man's choices are allowed to oppose God's will, while at the same time, God's overruling will is always moving forward. Matt. 23:37, Acts 7:51, Luke 7:30, Dan. 4:35, Isa. 46:9-12

B. When God's will is "A" and man's will is "B", can, in some cases, man's will prevail?

1. What does the Bible say?

2. What does a compatibilist believe?

9. Warnings when dealing with difficult doctrines.

A. "The logical conclusion is ..."

1. The truth of Scripture always trumps human logic. Psalm 50:21

- a. God is sovereign, man is responsible.
  - b. God is one and three.
  - c. Jesus is fully God and fully man.
- d. God made light on day 1, vegetation, plants, and trees day 3, and made the sun and moon day 4.
- e. These all make perfect sense to God. He is infinite; we aren't.
2. Approaching Scripture with a predetermined system instead of letting Scripture determine my beliefs.
- a. We can easily distort or miss entire truths of Scripture because we will not read and believe the text because it interferes with a logical understanding we have already determined.
  - b. We must deal with all verses in Scripture. Certain Scriptures do not override other Scriptures.
  - c. When you read Scripture, always ask, "What does the text of Scripture not say that I might have expected it to say?"
- 1. John 6:44 – No one can come unless he so chooses. Anyone can come, since he is free to choose me or not.
  - 2. I Tim. 2:4 – God has chosen and so desires, that only His elect to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.
  - 3. Rom. 9:11-14 – There is no injustice in God because He looks ahead to see who would choose Him and that is how He chooses them.
  - 3. Matt. 22:14 – Many are invited but few choose to come. God only invites those He has chosen.
  - 4. Acts 27:22,24,30,31 Does God's sovereignty interact with man's actions? God elects; we preach.

## 2. The Application of Salvation:

### A. Divine Calling

1. From a logical perspective, the initial step in the application of salvation.

2. Can be defined as that summons from God in time that both invites and draws the unconverted to Christ in a saving relationship.

### 3. Historical Interpretations of Divine Calling:

#### a. Natural ability to answer God's universal call – Pelagians & Liberals

1. Man is not viewed as a sinner but rather a morally neutral being like Adam and Eve prior to the fall.

2. Man has the ability to keep God's laws and come to God apart from any divine assistance.

3. No need for divine calling.

4. This position can be summed as "I came by myself."

#### b. Universally restored ability to obey God's general call – Arminians

1. Believe that there is but a single, general, or universal call from God to sinners to be saved.

2. Most affirm that God issues the call by a general working of the Spirit on the soul (John 1:9, Luke 14:16-17) and by explicit Gospel preaching. Rom. 10:17

2. Maintain that "prevenient grace," a benefit that flows from Christ's death on the cross, neutralizes human depravity and restores to pre-Christians everywhere the ability to heed God's general call to salvation.

3. Prevenient grace and the universal call may either be accepted or rejected. The determining factor is their own free decision.

4. Those who respond positively to God's invitation to salvation are said to be "the called", "the elect."

5. Believe that God draws everyone, but not everyone finds salvation.

6. This position can be summarized as "God started the process and I cooperated."

#### c. A general call that may be resisted and a special call effectual for salvation – Reformed Tradition

1. Believe that, by virtue of original sin and depravity, sinners are spiritually incapable of responding to the Gospel invitation. Rom. 8:7, I Cor. 2:14, Eph. 2:1-2, 4-5, 4:17-18
2. Most view the general call and special call as two aspects of the one summons of God to salvation.
3. The general call to the unsaved comes through the indiscriminate offer of the Gospel through the preaching of the Word. Matt. 11:28, John 7:37-38, Rev. 22:17, Rom. 1:19-21
4. The special call is brought about by the Spirit's secret work on the heart. Rom. 1:6-7, I Cor. 1:9, 26, I Pet. 2:9, Rom. 8:28-30, Matt. 22:14, 2 Pet. 1:10
5. The special call enlightens darkened minds, frees stubborn wills, and inclines contrary affections towards Christ. In other words, it opens sinners' hearts, thereby creating a new desire and hunger to know Christ.
6. The general call meets with a variety of responses in the unconverted, whereas the special (effectual) call effectively draws sinners to Christ. John 6:44-45, 65
7. The preacher's word in the general call is made effective by the Spirit's work in the special call.
8. God does not work against man's will to force him to believe but rather removes the obstacles (blindness) so that he now chooses to believe with the faith that God provides. Phil. 2:13
9. The general call demonstrates that on God's side no obstacle exists to preclude sinners from enjoying the blessings of the Gospel. It shows that failure to respond to God's invitation resides in the sinner's own darkened mind and evil will. Left to their sinful selves, the unconverted render this general call ineffective by their settled opposition to the things of God. To remedy this situation, God graciously issues the special call to the elect. Rom. 8:30, I Cor. 1:22-26, 2 Tim. 1:9
10. This position can be summarized – God brought me to Christ.

## B. Conversion – Repent and Believe

1. Primarily human activities or a divinely enabled human response?
  - a. Arminian theology teaches that humans have been freed from depravity by prevenient grace which is universally applied, therefore, people are now able to choose to repent and believe apart from a direct divine act upon on the sinner. Conversion is primarily a human activity. Individual faith is not a gift from God but rather

something that is completed by the person. God's prevenient grace only provides the possibility of conversion.

b. Reformed theology teaches that because humans are totally depraved and dead in their sins, it requires a direct action of God upon the sinner in order for the sinner to respond in faith. Individual faith is a gift from God. People will choose to repent and believe, but only in response to God's gift. God's gift of faith and repentance will effectually bring about conversion.

2. What is Biblical conversion?

a. By spiritual conversion we mean a person's decisive turning from sin, self, and Satan unto God through Jesus Christ and the power of the Spirit.

b. The Greek verb *epistrepho* literally means a change of direction, but is also used in the NT in the sense of spiritual turning from sin to God with an emphasis on the change in the person's manner of life. Luke 1:16-17, Acts, 11:21, Acts 26:17-20, Acts 9:34-35, 2 Cor. 3:12-16, I Thes. 1:9, Noun- Acts 15:3

c. There is no prototypical model of conversion. God works spiritual reformation in different ways in people's lives.

1. One's conversion may be so dramatic that the time of its occurrence may be recalled (like Paul and the Philippian jailer).

2. One's conversion may be sufficiently gradual as not to be readily identifiable (like Timothy).

3. Number 1 above is more common among those who have no prior knowledge of the Gospel; while number 2 above is more frequent among youth nurtured in a Christian home.

d. Summary, conversion is turning from an evil lifestyle (2 Cor. 12:21) unto the Lord (2 Cor. 3:16) in total submission and obedience.

3. Repentance – Where we have been

A. Repentance literally means to "turn in the opposite direction", "change of mind."

B. In the Pentateuch, God issued frequent warnings to Israel about profaning the sacred covenant. Yet the loving God also specified a path of return from violations thereof.

1. After willfully sinning, Israel must acknowledge their "unfaithfulness" and "hostility." Lev. 26:40

2. Confess it to the Lord. Vs. 40

3. Humbly repent of all known offenses. Vs 41

4. After Israel turned to the Lord, He would renew the covenant and bless them. Vs. 42

C. David's penitent psalm after his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah outlines God's pattern of repentance.

1. David expressed awareness of sins. Psalm 51:1-3

2. He offered heartfelt confession of sins. Vs. 4-5

3. David evidenced a true attitude of contrition. Vs. 17

4. He uttered a prayer of pardon for sins. Vs. 7-9

5. David sought an experience of profound inner renewal. Vs. 10-12

6. Finally, David experienced the joy that comes from deliverance from sin and its consequences. Vs. 12

D. The prophets spoke against mechanical, ritual forms of repentance. Isa. 1:11, 29:13, Hos. 7:13-16

E. True repentance possesses three essential aspects.

1. An intellectual element.

a. One must understand God's holiness, righteousness, and displeasure against sin. Deut. 25:16, I Kings 14:22, Luke 16:15

b. One must be aware of personal sin and guilt. Luke 18:13, Rom. 3:20

c. One must be persuaded of God's readiness to forgive. Matt. 6:14, Eph. 4:32

2. An emotional element.

a. One must abhor sin. Ps. 119:104, Ezek. 20:43

b. One must experience godly sorrow and remorse, not for the pain it has caused us, but for the grief it has caused God and others. Joel 2:12-13, Ps. 51:4, Job 42:6

c. "Godly sorrow" is different than "worldly sorrow" 2 Cor. 7:9-11.

1. Godly sorrow is characterized by a remorse for offending God. (the root of repentance)

2. Worldly sorrow is characterized by self-pity and self-anger. (the root of depression)

3. A volitional element.

a. One must determine to forsake sins and amend their life.

b. Repentance is more than just confessing sin, but rather includes turning from those sins. Prov. 28:13, Job 22:23

F. Repentance as a divine gift.

1. The Old Testament prophets state that the unsaved cannot turn from their sins to the Lord by their own strength.

a. Notice the order of who acts first in repentance. Jer. 31:18, Lam. 5:21

b. Jeremiah tells us that sin is so ingrained; unbelievers (apart from special grace) cannot repent. Jer. 13:22-23

c. Speaking of Israel's pervasive sinfulness, God says their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. Hos. 5:4

d. Thus God must grant them a spirit of prayerful repentance. Zech. 12:10, Lam. 1:13

2. The New Testament also teaches that repentance is divinely initiated.

a. Peter tells us that Jesus grants repentance and forgiveness. Acts 5:31

b. The Jewish leaders, reflecting on the conversion of Cornelius, state that God has granted the Gentiles repentance unto life. Acts 11:18

c. Paul agreed that repentance is a gift and an enablement of God. Rom. 2:4, 2 Tim. 2:25

d. The gift of repentance cannot be understood as the general fruit of prevenient grace, for God's gift in the preceding Scriptures is not the *possibility* of repenting but the actual enabled act.

e. Repentance is thus a divinely enabled human response.

4. Faith – Where we are going.

A. Faith is the means by which we receive justification and salvation. Eph. 2:8-9

B. Abraham is the chief example of faith in the OT.

1. The Lord called and Abraham and promised him posterity and a land. Gen 12:1-3

2. Abraham obediently moved from Haran to Canaan, built an altar and called on the name of the Lord.

3. Later God renewed the covenant and promised Abraham and Sarah a son in their old age. Gen. 15:4

4. Abraham's response was, "He believed the Lord and He credited it to him as righteousness." Gen. 15:6

5. His faith was both mental (he believed God's word of promise) and personal (he committed his soul to God who had revealed himself.)

6. Abraham was justified fourteen years before he was circumcised. Gen. 15:6, 17:10-14

C. The brazen serpent of the OT further illustrates the character of saving faith.

1. God commanded Moses to place a bronze snake on a pole so that “when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze serpent, he lived”. Num. 21:9

2. The bronze serpent represents Christ who took the form of a man and was cursed for us.

3. For healing to occur, no religious work was involved; a person simply looked in faith and lived. John 3:14-15

D. Three essential aspects of saving faith.

1. Knowledge of Christ’s person and saving work. (Jesus and His Gospel)

a. John’s Gospel commends us to have a solid intellectual belief in:

1. Jesus’ preexistent deity. John 8:24

2. Jesus’ supernatural unity with the Father. John 14:11

3. Jesus as the Son of God. John 11:27, I John 4:15

4. Jesus as the promised Messiah. John 6:69, I John 5:1

5. Jesus’ incarnation at the Father’s initiative. John 11:42, 17:8, 21

6. Jesus’ full humanity. I John 4:2

b. Paul also states that saving faith meant correct beliefs about Christ’s person and work. 2 Thess. 2:13, Tit. 1:1, Rom. 10:14, 17, Phil. 1:27, I Tim. 4:6

c. The Book of Acts plainly teaches belief in the person and work of Christ. Acts 14:23, 16:31, 4:4, 6:7

d. Scripture allows for degrees of faith (Rom. 14:1) but the minimum beliefs one must assent to for salvation include:

1. Christ coming in human flesh

2. His atoning death

3. His resurrection from the grave

2. To intellectual knowledge of essential doctrines must be added emotional assent of the heart to the realities they signify.

a. Correct beliefs must be followed by assent to their personal relevance. John 2:22, 4:50, 5:47,

b. Another way of putting it is to say that knowledge of the mind must be followed by knowledge of the heart. Col. 1:2-3, 9-10

3. Finally, saving faith must include wholehearted trust and commitment to Christ, evidenced by obedience and good works.

a. Biblically speaking, there is a great gulf between knowing about a person and knowing the person in a relationship of trust and commitment.

b. Jesus gives us clear imagery of how saving faith is more than just knowledge and assent. John 6:53-56

c. Paul confirms the same. I Cor. 13:2, Gal. 5:6, Rom. 1:5, Tit. 2:14, 3:8

d. James clearly tells us that assent to truths without being validated by good works is useless. James 2:14-26

e. There are some who claim that Paul and James clashed on their views of saving faith. But Paul appeals to Abraham's faith in God's promise given before Isaac was born, while James pointed to the evidence of Abraham's faith shown by his willingness to sacrifice his beloved son.

f. Saving faith will produce good works. Good works do not save us.

g. Faith enables Christians to go beyond present trials to apprehend future and invisible realities promised by God. Heb. 11:1

E. Faith as a divine gift.

1. Although Jesus repeatedly called for faith, He seemed to suggest that

2. Paul reiterates faith as a gift from God. Eph. 2:8-9, I Cor. 12:3, Phil. 1:29, I Tim. 1:14

3. Other NT writers concur. Heb. 12:2, 2 Pet. 1:1

### C. Regeneration

1. The new birth or the creation of new life in those who repent and believe – born again.

2. Some evangelicals place regeneration prior to conversion in the order of salvation. Others state that divine calling is the means of conversion followed by regeneration.

3. Questions that we need to answer concerning regeneration:

a. In light of man's current achievements, does he really need a new birth?

b. What actually happens to the person when God transforms them from spiritual death to spiritual life?

c. Is regeneration a work of God alone (monergism), or whether the individual cooperates in the new birth (synergism)?

d. Does God work regeneration through human instrumentalities such as the sacrament of baptism, membership in a church, or birth to Christian parents in a godly family?

e. Were OT saints such as Adam, Abraham, and David truly reborn by the Spirit of God or must regeneration in some sense awaited the fullness of salvation under the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus?

4. Historical interpretations of regeneration:

a. Self-actualized regeneration – Pelagians and Liberals

1. Liberal authorities maintain that each person born into the world is a child of God and thus is indwelt by the divine principle.

2. Pelagians and liberals broadly view regeneration as the process of ethical development stimulated by the ideals of Jesus. In other words, a process of self-improvement realized by self-effort and the example of Christ.

3. Liberationists generally explain regeneration as man's self-creation of a new social order that embodies the hopes and dreams of the marginalized and oppressed.

b. Baptismal regeneration – Roman Catholics, Lutherans

1. Although differing in some details, the sacramental traditions agree that baptism confers cleansing of sins, the infusion of regenerating grace, and union with Christ.

2. According to Richard McBrien, a prominent Roman Catholic theologian, "The Church has always taught that Baptism is necessary for salvation."

3. The Council of Trent (1545-63) stated "If anyone . . . denies that the said merit of Jesus Christ is applied, both to adults and to infants, by the sacrament of baptism rightly administered in the form of the Church, let him be anathema" (Sess. V.3).

4. The Second Vatican Council (1963-65) insisted that for Roman Catholics faith and baptism are necessary for salvation, but now claims that all people are saved by the

“baptism of desire.” The baptism of desire is equivalent to the non-specific implicit faith all human beings possess. Gregory Baum states “One may seriously wonder whether baptism of desire is not the way of salvation for the great majority of men in this world, chosen to be saved.”

5. Luther would have rejected the connecting of sacramental grace and meritorious works like the Catholics, but he still held to baptismal regeneration.

#### c. Presumptive and promissory regeneration – Covenant Reformed

1. Covenant theologians, with other evangelicals, define regeneration as that radical change of nature from spiritual death to spiritual life wrought in us by Christ through the power of the Spirit.
2. Regeneration is not a cooperative work between God and sinners (synergism); rather, salvation is God’s work from beginning to end (monergism).
3. Presumptive regeneration asserts that infants of believing parents are baptized not to become regenerated but because in some important sense they already possess the seeds of faith.
4. Promissory regeneration (more common) states baptism is judged a visible sign of God’s covenant promise of new life to believing adults and their children. Proponents insist that baptism does not effect regeneration; rather, it portrays as a sign and confirms as a seal the blessing of redemption. Thus baptism introduces the baptized into the visible church and promises future regeneration.
5. In both theologies above, divine regeneration logically precedes the human responses of faith and repentance. Hence, most theologians in these traditions place regeneration before conversion in the scheme of salvation.

#### d. Synergistic regeneration – Arminian Theologians

1. The order elements in Arminian soteriology is prevenient grace, repentance, faith, the new birth, and continued obedience.
2. The Arminian believes that regeneration occurs through synergism (cooperation) of human willing and divine working.
3. God regenerates when a sinner believes by a free act of the will, which involves ceasing to resist the moral influence of the truth presented to all persons everywhere.

4. This action is said to be possible by means of prevenient grace (that flows from the cross of Christ), which works in all sinners to remove intellectual blindness and willful hardness.
5. Under this view, everyone is born in a state of grace. Since this divine grace can be resisted, ultimately it is the will of the sinner that determines whether or not the person will be reborn.
6. The saved are those who choose to cooperate with God's (resistible) prevenient grace; the unsaved are those who fail to cooperate.
7. Faith is something that man provides in the act of salvation versus God providing it as a gift.
8. Since salvation was obtained by a human choice many Arminians believe that it can be lost by willful sin.

e. Regeneration a work of God in response to faith – Reformed Evangelicals

1. Evangelicals in the Reformation tradition maintain that sinners, afflicted with total depravity, must receive a new spiritual nature in order to gain eternal life.
2. This view upholds the monergistic view of regeneration, that the new birth is entirely a work of God.
3. Advocates claim that the Spirit regenerates not on the basis of the faith of godly sponsors, church membership, or performance of the sacraments (baptism, mass).
4. Rather, God regenerates by virtue of the individual's conscious decision to repent of sins and believe in Jesus Christ.
5. Baptism attests to the conversion of the believer; it is not the cause of regeneration.
6. Each person individually must be born again by God's Spirit through faith.
7. This view holds that conversion and regeneration happen simultaneously.
8. Some theologians view regeneration as logically prior to conversion. Others identify the first wish to please God as the result of effectual calling, and thus place conversion prior to regeneration in the order of salvation. Both sides will agree that temporally (in the sense of time), both conversion and regeneration occur simultaneously.
9. One determining factor for above is whether you believe regeneration is an instantaneous work or a process.

5. The need for regeneration.

- a. Some believe that man does not need to be converted or regenerated.

b. Others believe that man has the capability to choose to be regenerated or can accomplish this by his own means.

c. What does the Bible say about the human condition?

1. The unregenerate are morally evil. Gen. 8:21, Matt. 7:11, John 3:19

2. Man's natural heart is stone. It must be removed and replaced with a heart of flesh. Ezek. 36:26

3. We cannot change ourselves. Jer. 13:23

4. Unsaved live in spiritual darkness. Eph. 5:8

5. Our minds are blind. Rom. 3:11, 1 Cor. 2:14

6. We are spiritually dead. Eph. 2:1, Col. 2:13

7. Incapable of following God's law. Rom. 8:7

8. Cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. John 3:5

9. God's wrath is upon us. John 3:36, Rom. 1:18, Eph. 2:2-3

6. The language and meaning of regeneration.

a. A re-creation – a radical inner change accomplished by God's power whereby one becomes a new spiritual being. 2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15

b. A spiritual resurrection – from death to life by identification with the risen Christ. It is not the addition of a new element to the human nature; it is the making alive of what was dead. Col. 2:13, Eph. 2:4-6

c. A circumcision of the heart – an inner spiritual transformation born out of a repentant faith, not a mere cutting of the flesh. Col. 2:11

d. A washing – signifying the cleansing of sins. 1 Cor. 6:11, Eph. 5:26

e. A new spiritual birth – an instantaneous event whereby believers receive the new nature. John 1:13, 3:3-8

1. The word translated "again" in John 3:3, is "another."

2. "Another" means above and the word "another" is more often translated "from above." John 3:31, 19:11, James 1:17, 3:15, 17.

3. Being "born from above" would compare to John 1:13 of being "born of God."

4. Also compares to John 3:6, where Jesus explains “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”
5. Our spiritual birth is from above, of God, by the Spirit; it is not by flesh. It is a monergistic birth not a synergistic birth.
6. Jesus goes on to explain that our spiritual birth is both of water and the Spirit. John 3:7
  - a. What does the water mean?
    1. Several interpretations: symbol of purification, the water of John’s baptism, the water of Christian baptism, a synonym for the Spirit, as a symbol for the Word of God, or the water that accompanies the physical birth.
    2. The first interpretation is the preferred for the following reasons:
      - a. As a studious Jew, Nicodemus was familiar with the OT use of water as a symbol for purification from the defilement of sin. Lev. 14:8-9, 2 Kings 5:10, Ps. 51:2-3, Zech. 13:1
      - b. The purifying function of water and the regenerating power of the Spirit are set side by side in the prophecy of the new covenant in Ezek. 36:25-27
    3. By “water and Spirit” Jesus most likely meant that in order to enter God’s kingdom Nicodemus must be purified from sin and be spiritually renewed.
      - b. Along with this passage and Mark 16:16 some will say that baptism by water is required in order to be regenerated.
        1. The emphasis in Mark 16:11-16 is on believing or not believing. Baptism is secondary.
        2. Vs. 15 speaks of preaching the Gospel to everyone. What was the Gospel that was preached?
          - a. Repent and believe. Mark 1:15, 6:12, John 1:12, 3:16
          - b. Thief on the cross was never baptized but was promised to be with Christ in Paradise.
  3. Baptism often times (and should) followed conversion immediately, but Scripture states they were already saved. Acts 10:33-48, 16:32-34
  4. F.F. Bruce concluded, “baptism in water continued to be the external sign by which individuals who believed the gospel message, repented of their sins, and acknowledged Jesus as Lord, were publically incorporated into the Spirit-baptized fellowship of the new people of God. It is against the whole genius of Biblical religion to suppose that the outward rite had

any value except in so far as it was accompanied by true repentance within.”

5. What changes the heart is the powerful, inner work of the Spirit, not a humanly administered ceremony or even the Spirit AND the religious ceremony.

7. The results and “New Nature” of regeneration.

- a. The effects of regeneration are, in brief, breaking the paralyzing bonds of depravity and radically renewing the sinner’s heart, mind, and soul into the image of Christ. While in some people the visible evidences come to light soon after regeneration; in other lives time is required for their manifestation, but in the end “every good tree bears good fruit . . . a good tree cannot bear bad fruit. Matt. 7:17-18

b. Consider the results of regeneration:

1. Intellectually – regeneration enables minds of sinners once blind and ignorant of spiritual truths to comprehend the things of God. I Cor. 2:12, 14-16; 2 Cor. 4:4, 6; Col. 3:10
2. Volitionally – the new birth liberates believers’ wills from moral bondage enabling them to affirm and pursue kingdom values. We now have a passion to glorify the King of Kings. Rom. 6:13; Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 3:5
3. Emotionally – regeneration initiates the reordering of affections and feelings which enables twice-born persons to be more capable of showing love, empathy, compassion, etc. Rom. 8:15; 2 Tim. 1:7
4. Morally and ethically – regenerate believers are freed from depravity and enslaving passions and indeed progressively become like Christ in thought, word, and deed. Gal. 5:22-23
6. Relationally – the new birth establishes genuine fellowship with the triune God (I Cor. 1:9; Eph. 2:22, I John 1:3) and meaningful relationships with other believers. Rom. 12:5; Eph. 2:14-15; 19-20

c. The “new nature”

1. Because of regeneration we can “participate in the divine nature.” 2 Pet. 1:4
2. Prior to regeneration we possessed only an “earthly nature” Col. 3:5, a “sinful nature” Rom. 7:5, 18; 8:3-5, 8-9, 12-13, Gal. 5:13, 16-17, or an “old self” Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22-24

- 3.” Regeneration does not add to, or subtract from, the number of man’s intellectual, emotional, or voluntary faculties. But regeneration is the giving of a new direction or tendency to powers of affection which man possessed before.” Strong
4. 2 Peter 1:4 does not say that we participate in the divine being.
- a. Rather we become partakers of God’s grace, mercy, holiness, etc., not in God’s essence. Compare Paul’s take in Rom. 8:9 and the Hebrews writer in Heb. 3:14, 6:4, and 12:10.
- b. No NT writer suggested that the new birth alters the sinner’s essential constitution. Evidence is lacking to support the view that by the new birth dichotomous (body and soul) sinners become trichotomous (body, soul, and spirit) saints.
- c. Neither did Peter imply that Christians in any sense become divine. The human and divine personalities remain forever distinct.
5. The formation of the “new self” or new nature through regeneration does not totally eradicate or cancel the old nature. Rom. 7

7. Were old testament believers regenerated?

a. The OT refers to the phenomenon of spiritual circumcision.

1. Often God is the one who circumcises. Deut. 30:6
2. In other instances the people were to circumcise their own hearts. Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4
3. Spiritual circumcision is a figure signifying the opening of the heart to God.
4. This event undoubtedly includes repentance and communion with God, but we will see that it falls short of regeneration in the full Christian sense.

b. The OT prophets expressed the hope of future spiritual rebirth.

1. God would give them a new heart. Jer. 24:7
2. The Lord stated he would make a new covenant in the coming days that would be far superior to the old covenant. Jer. 31:31-34
  - a. The old covenant instituted at Mt. Sinai was:
    1. a national covenant (with Israel) vs 31
    2. an external covenant inscribed on stone or parchments

3. a conditional covenant that Israel repeatedly broke vs 32
4. sealed by circumcision, the old covenant could not give life Gal. 3:21
- b. In this prophecy, God promised that the new covenant would transform the heart as the old covenant could not. vs 33
  1. This is realized only in regeneration and union with Christ in the new age of the Spirit.
  2. This transformation implies the new birth set forth in the gospel.
  3. Ezekiel 36:25-27 extends a further promise of *future*, spiritual transformation.
    - a. Complete purification of sins vs 25
    - b. Promise of a radically new nature vs 26
  - c. A permanent granting of the Spirit in the Gospel era vs 27 (John 14:17, Acts 2:1-4, 2 Cor. 3:6)
  - d. The promised outcome of the Spirit's ministry is instinctive obedience to the law in a God-honoring life vs 27b (Eph. 2:10)
  - e. In Ezekiel 36:24-30 the phrase "I will" with God as the subject occurs a dozen times which indicates that this new covenant including regeneration will be completed by divine activity.
- c. In John 3:3-8 Jesus explained to Nicodemus the necessity of new birth by water and Spirit.
  1. Nicodemus, a Jewish scholar, was totally ignorant and bewildered of a personal, spiritual regeneration.
  2. Judaism acknowledged the coming of the messianic kingdom, which they defined as a new creation or "regeneration" Matt. 19:28
  3. It would suggest that Spirit regeneration was not a conscious feature of Jewish spiritual life under the old covenant.
  4. Tenny states, "In Old Testament teaching, the Spirit came upon the prophets or other specially chosen men for unusual reasons, but nowhere in Judaism was taught the coming of the Spirit upon all men for their personal regeneration."
- d. Jesus made a distinction between the Spirit's occasional ministry prior to Pentecost and His permanent, transformational ministry thereafter.
  1. In John 14:17 Jesus instructs the disciples that prior to Pentecost the Spirit was "with" or "beside" the disciples and Old Testament saints as a variable influence, but after

Pentecost the Spirit would be “in” them permanently as a transforming and indwelling presence.

2. vs. 20, “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you.”

3. While Jesus was with His disciples, they did not fully possess the Spirit. John 14:26; 16:7, 13

4. It wasn't until after Jesus was glorified that the transforming ministry of Spirit would take place. John 7:38-39

e. Although it may be best to not be dogmatic on this issue, the following conclusion may be proposed based upon the biblical evidence.

1. In OT times God set believing men and women in a right relationship with himself.

a. Their sins were forgiven. Ps. 32:1-2; 85:2

b. They communed with the Lord, and they anticipated the blessings of heaven. Heb. 11:13-16, 39

2. Before the completion of Christ's work and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, OT believers did not possess the Spirit in a permanent endowment (Ps. 51:11) nor were they completely transformed. A principal benefit of the new covenant is the qualitatively different ministry of the Holy Spirit – including a radical, spiritual transformation that the NT identifies as the new birth.

3. There are not two ways of salvation. Salvation in the OT and NT is by faith in God's faithful word of promise.

a. But salvation under the new covenant is a fuller, richer reality than experienced under the old covenant.

b. Otherwise, it would have been unnecessary for Christ to enter this world, suffer, die a cruel death, and rise victoriously.

4. It is interesting when Paul states the chain of salvation in Rom. 8:30, he uses predestined, called, justified, and glorified. Regenerated is not specifically listed.

8. Are children who die in infancy saved?

a. Different theological views

1.. Liberal theologian view – Since all infants are born into the world free from sin, God accepts all of His children into heaven.

2.. Traditional Roman Catholics

a. Maintain that infants inherit sin from their parents

- b. Children who receive a legitimate baptism are united with Christ and inherit heaven's glory.
- c. Infants not baptized will endure a just penalty in the netherworld.

### 3. Arminians

- a. Accept the reality of original sin, depravity, and punishment
- b. But through the benefit of prevenient grace, guilt and punishment are said to be removed, such that no infant is condemned eternally.
- c. Blessed by universal grace, all children who die in infancy are welcomed into heaven

### 4. Covenant Reformed (High Calvinists)

- a. Likewise view infant defiled by original sin.
- b. But is said to secretly work regeneration in those infants who are elect.
- c. John Owen and many others would identify infants born into a Christian family and so blessed by the covenant of grace as among God's elect.
- d. The Westminster Catechism of Faith states that "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth."

### 5. Moderately Reformed

- a. Also hold to infants being born with original sin.
- b. Many, such as Charles Hodge, A.A Hodge, and A.H. Strong, recall that infants have not deliberately flaunted God's will for their lives.
- c. Thus by the virtue of the absence of premeditation, naiveté', and trustfulness in children prior to the "age of moral accountability," God applies to them the benefits of Christ's saving work at their death.
  - d. Thus all little ones who die in infancy, as well as adults who are mentally incompetent, are regenerated and saved by Christ
- b. Biblically there is no explicit answer to this question, but implicit biblical statements, however, lead us to the probable conclusion that the Moderately Reformed view may be the most viable.
- 1. When God pronounced that the evil generation of people in the wilderness would not enter into the promised land, the children were exempt from this penalty. Deut. 1:23-39; Num. 14:27-31

2. When God caused the first child of David and Bathsheba to become ill and die, David was encouraged in his spirit at the prospect of seeing his child in heaven one day. 2 Sam. 12:15-23
3. Jesus' attitude toward little children is instructive.
  - a. Jesus used a child as a teaching illustration. Matt. 18:2-14
  - b. When the disciples rebuked those who brought little children to Jesus for blessing and prayer, Jesus accorded special worth and status in the kingdom to children by virtue of their dependence, humility, and lack of pretension. Matt. 19:14
4. The most convincing explanation of this problem is that children incapable of committing willful and responsible violations of God's law may receive a special application of Christ's universal atonement. In other words, children who die in infancy prior to becoming responsible moral agents prove to be among God's elect.

#### D. Justification

1. How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of a woman be pure? Job 25:2-4
  - a. Man was created pure, innocent, blameless, and good. He was disobedient and became a sinner. Once you fail, how can you become pure, innocent, and blameless again? Jer. 2:22
  - b. What is the standard that we must be in order to be with God? Lev. 11:44-45, I Pet. 1:15-16
  - c. God will not and cannot just ignore the guilty. Ex. 23:7
  - d. Luther stated, "Here is a problem God must solve." (That is only if He chooses to do so. There already is a solution. (Hell))
2. Justification is a crucial article of Christianity, upon which the Gospel absolutely stands or falls. It is also the chief point of difference separating Protestantism and Catholicism. So what are some of the different views concerning justification.
  - a. Catholicism – infusion of righteousness
    1. View justification as a process, not an instantaneous event.

- a. Justification in Catholic theology is a comprehensive term that includes, among other things, what Protestants understand by regeneration and sanctification.
- b. For Catholics justification is a lifelong process of becoming righteous.
- c. Catholicism speaks of the inception of justification.
  - 1. God through Christ's merits and via the sacrament of baptism remits past sins and infuses into the soul new habits of grace.
  - 2. Teach that this first stage of justification makes persons inherently righteous, "concupiscence" (desire that is the seed-bed of sin but not sin itself) remains in Christians.
  - 3. Do not believe that God would accept into His family those who remain contaminated by sin.
    - d. The second part of justification is the increase of justification.
      - 1. Teach that the baptized work for eternal life by means of love-inspired virtues that are the fruit of the grace infused into the soul.
      - 2. Catholic theology upholds the "merits of worthiness" which is the merit earned by free moral acts performed in this state of grace.
      - 3. Justification is not a once-for-all event, righteousness increases or decreases proportional to the person's faith and works.
      - 4. Surplus merits earned by Christ and other exceptional saints can be transferred to ordinary Christians.
      - 5. Mary, in particular, contributes to the justification of the faithful in several ways.
        - a. By her holy life and good works on earth, Mary earned excess merit that can be credited to others.
        - b. Mary shared in the pain and suffering of her Son on the cross, and so possesses additional merit that can be shared with those with a deficit.
        - c. Mary, as "Mother of God," effectively pleads with Father in heaven.
- e. Justifying grace, defined as the infusion of righteousness into the soul, can be forfeited by mortal sin but may be restored by the sacrament of penance (involving confession, satisfaction, and absolution).
- f. If the process of justification (the attainment of righteousness or transformation) is not completed in this life, the individual must endure the purifying sufferings of purgatory. The stay can be shortened by prayers, masses, and the superabundant merits of saints.

## 2. Augustine (d. 430) helped to shape the Roman view.

- a. Augustine was the first post-biblical theologian to explore in depth the concept of justification with his debates against the Pelagians.
- b. Prior to this time, early church fathers were occupied with pressing Christology and Trinitarian controversies. Their discussions of salvation focused on forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.
- c. Augustine, not well versed in Greek, interpreted “dikaioo” as to “make righteous” rather than to “pronounce righteous.”
- d. He stressed that God infuses the principle of righteousness into a soul at baptism making them righteous by renewing their inner beings and infusing their hearts with love for God.
- e. As a result of this infusion of divine grace and love, believers can avoid sinning, work righteousness, and fulfill the law and added that God views these righteous deeds as meritorious, yet still of grace because the inspiration to will and do came from God.
- f. He also taught the idea of purgatory if the process was not completed in this lifetime.
- g. Augustine included regeneration and sanctification with justification.
  1. Augustine’s order of salvation was predestination, calling, justification, and glorification.
  2. He included sanctification with justification instead of glorification.
- h. In sum, whereas the Protestants have followed Augustine in his doctrines of sin and grace, Roman Catholic theology expanded upon his notion that justification is the process that actually makes a person righteous.
- i. The Council of Trent (1546-47) states that since justification can be lost, the Christian possesses no certainty of present and future pardon. The realistic attitude of the pious person is hope mixed with “fear and apprehension.”
- j. The Council in responding to the Reformers also pronounces the following curses:
  1. “If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification ... let him be anathema.
  2. “If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits

and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema.

3. Canon 32 added an anathema against the Reformers who denied that a person's good works merit eternal life.

b. Remonstrants and Many Arminians – restoration of the moral order of the universe.

1. Explain justification as forgiveness of sins that enhances God's wise governance of the universe.

2. They do not accept the penal substitutionary view where the sinner's sin is paid by Christ and Christ's righteousness is imputed to the sinner.

3. Christ's death was necessary for God justice as a perfect ruler of the universe. It was not necessary to appease His wrath or to grant righteousness.

4. Under this view, the claim that God regards persons as holy when they are not actually holy encourages antinomianism (lawlessness).

5. John Wesley held that justification signifies:

a. God's acceptance of believers as free from sin and guilt.

b. The renovation of their moral character.

c. Like Roman Catholic theology, he assimilates justification with sanctification.

d. The idea of a Christian is at once both righteous and a sinner was firmly rejected by Wesley.

6. Many Arminians further assert that faith is not merely the instrument of justification but rather the ground on which justification rests.

7. This view generally believes that the obstacles to reconciliation reside on the side of sinners rather than on the side of God. God is always disposed to restore fellowship with sinners.

8. Charles Finney went as far as making justification dependent on the believer being sanctified and persevering in perfect obedience. The opposite of the reformed view.

c. Reformers and Many Evangelicals – God's legal declaration of righteousness

1. View justification as an instantaneous event rather than a lifelong process of moral and spiritual renewal.

a. Claiming to recapture the NT emphasis, the Reformation interpreted justification as God's judicial declaration whereby, for the sake of Christ, He freely pardons

sins and reckons believers as righteous and worthy of eternal life.

- b. Viewed justification as distinct from sanctification. Justification involves a change in the believer's ***standing*** before God rather than a change of ***nature***.
  - c. The ground of justification is Christ's righteousness imputed to the believer, while the means or instrument of justification is God-given faith in the Redeemer.
  - d. Most believed that the obstacles to reconciliation exist on the side of God and sinners.
  - e. Those who trust in Christ's finished work can be assured that they have passed from a state of condemnation to life and favor.
2. Martin Luther (d. 1546), a pious Augustinian monk, helped develop the judicial or forensic view of justification.
- a. Luther sought peace with God through good works and monastic disciplines, but in spite of earnest striving his troubled soul found no peace.
  - b. Luther searched the epistles of Paul for the answer to the question of, "How can I find a gracious God?"
  - c. Luther formerly understood the phrase "the righteousness of God" in Rom. 1:17 actively as that quality in God that punishes unrighteous sinners (i.e., punitive justice).
  - d. After prayer and study, Luther came to understand "the righteousness of God" passively as the great gift God imputes to sinners through faith in the crucified Christ.
  - e. He concluded that the noble intentions and "good works" of sinners are of no value in God's eyes.
  - f. A figure derived from the law courts, justification means to "declare righteous or blameless", not to actually make righteous.
  - g. Luther further states that justification is that imputation, whereby for the sake of Christ "God reckons imperfect righteousness as perfect righteousness and sin as not sin, even though it really is sin." Rom. 4:1-8
  - h. Essential to Luther's view of justification is his contention that the justified believer is "righteous and a sinner at the same time."
1. In their position or standing believers are righteous even though they are not wholly perfect in themselves, but God accounts them righteous and forgives them because of their faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

2. In their practice they are sinful – although the remnants of sin are not charged to their account.
  - i. Although good works contribute nothing to justification, they serve as a litmus test as to whether people truly have been justified by faith.
3. John Calvin (d. 1564), in writing against Rome’s infusion view of justification, further develops the forensic view of justification.
  - a. According to Calvin “to be justified means something different from being made righteous.”
  - b. Yet sensitive to the Roman charge that the Reformation view of justification denigrated good works, Calvin held together the operations of justification and sanctification.
    1. From I Cor. 1:30, Calvin reasoned that you cannot possess Christ without being made a partaker in His sanctification.
    2. He further states that “in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness.
    3. Calvin further concluded that God justifies the sinner; but he also justifies the works of the justified.
      - a. Because Christians remain sinners by nature, their works are defiled.
      - b. God, however, adorns Christians’ works with Christ’s righteousness, covering any unrighteousness in them, so that both they and their works are both pleasing and acceptable to Him.
      - c. No sinner is justified by works; but God justifies believers’ works – which works demonstrate obedience to God and accumulate rewards in heaven.
3. J. I. Packer offers a concise summary of the Reformation-evangelical view of justification.
  - a. The problem posed by justification is how the unchangeable just Lawgiver and Judge can remain righteous in Himself and acquit sinners. Rom. 3:21-26
  - b. Packer states that the Gospel communicates that “the claims of God’s law upon them have been fully satisfied. The law has not been abated, or suspended, or flouted for their justification, but fulfilled – by Jesus Christ acting in their name.
  - c. Thus on the ground of Christ’s perfect satisfaction of the law, God does not impute sin; rather, He imputes righteousness to all who believe.
  - d. God “reckons righteousness to them [i.e., sinners], not because He accounts them to have kept His law personally (which would be a false judgement), but because

He accounts them to be united to the One who kept it representatively (and that is a true judgment).”

e. It is “the outstretched empty hand which receives righteousness by receiving Christ.”

3.





