

SOTERIOLOGY NOTES

STUDIES IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN SALVATION

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IIIA. The Doctrine of Salvation

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I. Introduction

- A. Meaning of Salvation: *Salvation* really means safety, and comes from the Greek word (*sozo*) that means to *deliver*.
- B. Concepts of Salvation
 1. Salvation is always of the Lord; He is the author and finisher of our faith.
 2. Salvation is always from sin. Sin is what puts people into hell. The world has need of a sin-bearer, not just a joy-giver!
 3. Salvation involves bringing a man out of sin and making him safe from sin and Satan.
 4. Salvation deals with the communication of blessing to the sinner who is restored to God's favor and lives in God's presence forever.
 5. Salvation is found only in the person of Jesus Christ.
- C. The Process of Salvation
 1. God the Father purposed, planned, and provided for our salvation.
 2. God the Son procured and secured our salvation.
 3. God the Holy Spirit applied our salvation.
- D. The Divine Motivation in Salvation
 1. To manifest God's love (I Jn. 4:7-12).

2. The Father gave the thing He loved the most: His Son.
4. When the Father gave the Son, it was for eternity. That makeup of the Trinity in its expression of activity that had existed throughout all eternity would never be the same. God had been marred and identified with humanity. There was no way to bring men to Himself except through the Cross. The Father had to send the Son to satisfy His own demands.
5. To provide eternal life (Jn. 3:16).
6. To enable believers to do good works (Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14).
7. To provide a way to show forth God's excellence now (I Pet. 2:9).
8. To provide a way for believers to live with the Lord forever (I Thess. 5:10).
9. To manifest God's grace (Eph. 2:7).

E. The Importance of Salvation

1. That one may come to a full appreciation of his own salvation.
2. That one might know the gospel. If there is a plan of salvation, every person must know it.
3. That the lost may be evangelized. The gospel must be preached if men are to be saved.

F. The Tenses of Salvation

1. Past: From the penalty and guilt of sin (Eph. 2:5, 9; 11 Tim. 1:9; Acts 16:31).
2. Present: From the power of sin in the Christian life; (Phil. 2:12, 13; II Cor. 2:15--being saved; I Cor 15:2--being saved; Phil. 1:6).
3. Future: From the presence of sin, when the Christian will receive the final redemption of his body (I Pet. 1:5; Phil. 3:21).

G. Views of Salvation

1. Man initiates salvation; God must continue it (wrong!)
2. Man both initiates and continues salvation (wrong!)
3. God both initiates and continues salvation (correct!)

II. Theological Systems

- A. Two Basic Schools of Thought: There are two basic ways of approaching the doctrine of salvation. One is to stress the importance of man and his free will to choose for or against Christ. This school of interpretation is called Arminianism, named after James Arminius. The other way of approaching salvation is to stress the importance of God and His sovereign will in bringing men to Himself through Christ. This school of interpretation is called Calvinism, named after John Calvin. It is unfortunate that one must call himself an Arminian or a Calvinist, but for *theological purposes* every Christian is either one or the other. The position one takes has nothing to do with his personal faith in Jesus Christ; it does definitely determine how he views salvation but does not affect the fact of salvation.

It is interesting to quote Charles Simeon's account of his conversation with John Wesley on December 20, 1784 (the date is given in Wesley's Journal):

"Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions ... Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart?"

"Yes," says the veteran, "I do indeed."

"And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?" "Yes, solely through Christ."

"But, Sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?"

"No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last."

"Allowing then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?"

"No."

"What, then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms?" "Yes, altogether."

"And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you into His heavenly kingdom?"

"Yes, I have no hope but in Him."

"Then, Sir, with your leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree."

B. Background of Calvin: John Calvin was born in 1509 in France. His father was a secretary to a bishop in the Roman Catholic Church and thus in a situation to secure the education and the promotion of his son, John. At age twelve Calvin was well indoctrinated in the teachings of the Roman Church, and at age fourteen he went to study classics and philosophy in Paris. At seventeen, he went to study the writings of the ancient Greeks and the Greek New Testament. He became known as one of the most promising lawyers of his time and became a teacher of his teachers. Calvin became more and more absorbed in religious matters, so that he gradually laid aside his law studies and became known as a Bible scholar and theologian. In 1531 he again went to Paris and devoted himself to theological and philosophical pursuits. He was a moral man and had practical ability in organization and administration. He was the greatest theologian since Augustine (A.D. 400).

At the age of twenty-three, Calvin became sympathetic with the Reformation movement in Europe, especially the phases in Germany

and Switzerland. The Reformation was led by those who were protesting the corruption and wrong doctrine in the Roman Church (Protestants). In 1533, as a Roman Catholic, Calvin aided the Reformation and was thrown into prison as an apostate from the faith. In 1534, at age twenty-four, he became a Christian and sought only to follow Christ, and he was condemned by the Roman Church as a heretic. In both speech and writing, Calvin opposed the Roman Catholic Church and its practices, and the great center of his work became Geneva, Switzerland. He became famous for *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* or simply *The Institutes*.

Calvinism produced a learning zeal in its converts, and missionaries were sent out all through France. Thousands of converts were made for Christ, and they were called Huguenots. There was great persecution from the Roman Church against these Huguenots, and on St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24, 1572) from twenty to fifty thousand Huguenots were slaughtered for their faith. This stifled, to a great degree, the Reformation in France. Calvinism also spread to Scotland under the leadership of John Knox, and that country was conquered for Christ. It also spread to the Netherlands, Germany, and Britain, and the persecution was terrific. It has been seen in America primarily in the Puritans, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists.

Calvin's great contribution to theology was his clear statement on the sovereignty of God, grounding the whole of salvation in the will of God, rather than in the will of man. He was a man of the Bible and appealed to the Bible as his final authority on all matters. Calvin presented a God-centered and Christ-centered theology that gave all the glory to God for salvation, and makes man a creature and God the Creator. He placed great emphasis upon sin, election and predestination.

Calvin died in 1563 at the age of 52. He was a humble man who lived and practiced what he preached. He was the greatest Protestant in Europe but lived in a small home with no servants and gave very liberally of his money. Calvin made an imprint on the world that will never be forgotten!

- C. Background of Arminius: James Arminius was a Dutchman, born in Holland in 1560. He was an orphan and left destitute after the death of his father. A family in England heard of Arminius' problem and took him in and raised him until he was fifteen. During this time in England, he was educated in Latin, Greek, and the sciences. Feeling the call to the ministry, he entered the University of Leyden in Amsterdam, Holland. He prepared there until he was twenty-two. He later went to Geneva and Basel, Switzerland and was so noted for his scholarship that the University of Basel wanted to confer a doctor's degree on him. He refused the degree and traveled. When he was twenty-eight, he was ordained by the presbytery and called to pastor a Reformed church in Holland. Here he became an outstanding and well-liked preacher. He was asked to defend the doctrines of predestination, election, and total depravity, but he found that he could not conscientiously do so, and became a secret freewillier. He often clashed with his Calvinistic

brethren. Later Arminius was given a doctor's degree and professorship at Leyden University. To teach at this university, he had to give consent to the Reformed faith. Somehow he convinced his colleagues that he was within the realm of the Reformed orthodox faith, and intellectually Arminius probably felt he was. Finally, he was forced to "show his hand" and came out loud and clear against the orthodox Reformed position of salvation. Arminius died before he could get his system of theology well defined.

Regardless of his publishing of a systematic articulation of his theology, Arminius passed on to his students that:

1. God is sovereign but limited His plan to give man a free will to choose for or against Christ; thus the salvation of men is conditioned on faith
2. Man is depraved but still has a volition that can respond for or against God. Man needs divine enablement but must also exercise choice to be saved
3. Divine grace is the source of all that is good in man, and man cannot do anything without the grace of God, but God's grace works in accordance with man's faith
4. Saints, if really saints, will persevere to the end and demonstrate that they are saints, but a professing saint may fall away
5. Every true believer may be sure of his salvation
6. It is possible for a regenerate man to live without sin

The Arminian cause never had the total effect that Calvinism had in evangelism. Most Christians in the West are Arminian in theology because it is more culturally acceptable and they have never been taught differently.

After the death of Arminius, Simon Episcopus, a follower of Arminius, developed the Arminian system of theology as we have it today. Because Arminius was not the systematic theologian that John Calvin was, he did not clearly define his thinking on salvation. As a result, the followers of Arminius distorted his system with views he did not hold.

Point: It must be said however, that the followers of Arminius simply carried the viewpoint of limited sovereignty of God to its logical conclusion.

After the death of Arminius, his followers set forth *The Remonstrance*, which expounds the classical Arminian position. The Calvinist then set forth their *Contra-Remonstrance*, which explained the **Five Points of Calvinism**. At the Synod of Dort (1681), it was concluded that Arminius and his followers were teaching heresy, and they were put out of the presbytery. The Arminians were persecuted for five years and then given protection and freedom by the government to establish their own churches and schools.

III. The Four Basic Protestant Systems Of Christian Salvation

The theological presuppositions for Arminianism are, first of all, that the Bible regards faith as a free and responsible human act. It cannot be caused of God, but is exercised independently of Him. Second, Divine sovereignty is incompatible with free will and therefore God's sovereignty must be limited. Finally, the Bible regards faith as obligatory on the part of all who hear the gospel; therefore ability to believe must be universal, for God would not be fair to make an offer of salvation if man could not believe it.

A. Pure Arminianism (*The Remonstrance*)

1. Sin: Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe in the gospel when it is put before him (Jn. 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 1:14). Through the death of Christ, God now enlightens every man (Jn. 1:9) and shows mercy on all men (Rom. 11:32) by giving all men a free will and a chance to accept or reject light.
2. Resistible Grace: Man is never so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject the gospel (Acts 7:51; Mt. 23:37).
3. Limited Sovereignty: God's election of those who shall be saved is prompted by His foreseeing that they will, of their own accord, believe (I Pet. 1:2). God limited His sovereignty to give man a free will. Men are only elected in Christ (Eph. 1:4) and a person cannot be in Christ until after he has trusted in Christ.
4. Unlimited Atonement: In his death, Christ paid for the sins of the whole world and now all men are rendered savable if they will believe (Jn. 3:16; 1:29; 1 Jn. 2:1, 2 ; 11 Cor. 5:14).
5. Conditional Salvation: It rests with believers to keep themselves saved by keeping up their faith; those who fail to do so fall away and are lost (Heb. 6:1-4; Gal. 5:4; 1 Pet. 1:5; Jn. 15:6).

B. Modified Arminianism (*Post-Remonstrance*)

1. This group accepts the first four points of Arminianism but denies the fifth. They believe in the doctrine of eternal security (Jn. 6:37; 10:28; 11 Tim. 2:13).
2. Once a man has believed, then God is obligated to keep this person saved.
3. This was probably the view of Arminius, but we cannot be sure.

C. Pure Calvinism (*Five Points of Calvinism of the Contra-Remonstrance*)

The theological basis for Calvinism is, first, God is the first cause of salvation. Second, men are sinners, in a hopeless and helpless condition, and can never be brought out of this state apart from divine enablement. Finally, Salvation is supernatural because God truly initiates it.

1. Total Depravity: Fallen man in his natural state lacks all power to believe the gospel without supernatural enablement (I Cor. 2:14; Rom 3:10, 11; Eph. 2:1-3).
2. Unconditional Election: God's election is a free, sovereign, unconditional choice of sinners as sinners, to be redeemed by Christ,

- given faith, and brought to glory (Jn. 6:37, 39, 40; 1:13; 10:27; Eph. 1:4; 11 Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 1:9; Rom 8:29, 30; 9:23).
3. Limited Atonement: The redeeming work of Christ has as its goal the salvation of the elect, not the world (Mt. 1:21; Jn. 10:11, 14; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25; Rom. 5:8, 9; 8:32; 11 Cor. 5:21; Titus 3:5, 6; Isa. 53:5, 6; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Mt. 26:28).
 4. Irresistible Grace: The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing men to faith and salvation never fails to achieve its objective (Rom. 8:29, 30; 11 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 4:4).
 5. Perseverance of the Saints: Believers are kept in faith and grace by the unconquerable power of God until they come to glory. The elect will persevere in faith (I Pet. 1:5; Jn. 10:27-29).

D. Modified Calvinism (*Began late 17th century by Moise Amyraut*)

This group accepts all the points of Calvinism except limited atonement. It believes that Christ died for the sins of the world to secure forgiveness specifically for the elect.