

CF515 SOTERIOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The Course of Soteriology will bring students through an in depth study of salvation. A brief number of theories of the atonement will be given. Many of the theories of the atonement that have been developed contain serious flaws - for example, to attribute fraudulent behavior to God is unworthy of Him. However, what is of permanent value in these theories is that they took seriously the reality and power of the devil and that they proclaimed his decisive defeat at the cross for our liberation. With reference to his three categorizations of atonement theories, Morris (1994, p.114-5) concludes by stating, "Each of the theories has made a particular appeal to people in a particular age." Each theory is of value in that they draw attention to particular aspects of Christ's saving work. Each of them draws attention to something that is true, and not only true but valuable. We need the insight that the atonement is a victory over evil, we need the insight that it is the payment of our penalty, and we need the insight that it is the outpouring of love that inspires us to love in return. The atonement is all of these; we neglect any of them to our impoverishment.

In the unregenerate state, man is separate from Christ. Sin has affected all of man's person. He is without hope and without God (Ephesians 2:12).

As human beings have sinned, they are responsible for their sins and are guilty before God. All have done wrong, by their own fault, and are therefore liable to bear the just penalty of such wrongdoing. This is the argument of the early chapters of Romans – Paul divides the human race into three major sections. He shows how each knows something of their moral duty but have deliberately suppressed its knowledge in order to pursue their own sinful course. As John wrote,

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

Man must be saved, and this by the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12), through repentance and faith in God. Saving faith is principally divine in origin. Jesus said that no-one could come to Christ unless the Father draws them (John 6:44) but one must count the cost of following Christ (Matthew 8:19-22; Luke 14:26-33), believe on Jesus (Acts 16:31) and confess Him as Lord (Romans 10:9).

Lean Morris expresses the consensus of evangelicals in saying that the consistent Biblical view is that the sin of man has incurred the wrath of God. Only Christ's atoning offering averts that wrath. From this standpoint, His saving work is properly called propitiation.

“Reconciliation” sets forth the benefit of the death of Christ for the sinner but propitiation indicates both this and the manner whereby sinners are made friends of God. Christ both propitiates and offers Himself as the propitiation. He is the sacrifice and the High Priest who sacrifices Himself (John 1:29, 36; I Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 10:14; I Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6, 8).

Just as the covering of the Ark in the Tabernacle was the place where God’s forgiving mercy was shown, so now the cross of Christ is the place where His saving mercy has been manifested.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. What God has done in the matter of reconciliation He has done in Christ, and this is based upon the fact that “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf; so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”.

Reconciliation is an act by which men are delivered from a condition of estrangement and restored to fellowship with God. This act is accomplished by the sacrificial death of Christ. On this ground, the command to men is “be reconciled to God” (II Corinthians 5:20-21).

Paul wrote to Titus,

“[God] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior”. Titus 3:5-6

The new birth is entirely from God. It originates from His mercy. Its mediator is Christ. It is effective through the Holy Spirit who has been generously given.

Being born again speaks of a radical transformation. Also described as “the decisive and instantaneous action of the Holy Spirit in which He re-creates the inner nature”.

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.” (II Corinthians 5:17)

The regenerate man is a new man who seeks, finds and follows God in Christ.

Man can do nothing of Himself to be saved, and nor does he deserve the mercy God has bestowed. Yet, without this new birth, unless a man is born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God

The calling originates from the throne and heart of God and expresses His desire for all to be redeemed and to be in a right relationship with Him.

Although not all will respond favorably to this calling, God issues it irrevocably. Although those who receive it have done nothing to merit it, they must live in accordance with its character.

As Paul urged, Christians should press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14).

Christ is identified with the human race in His incarnation, but only true believers are identified with Christ. This identification results in certain aspects of the person and work of Christ being attributed to the believer. This does not extend to possession of the attributes of the Second Person of the Trinity, nor does this erase the personal distinctions between Christ and the believer.

Christian conversion is commitment to Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Savior, and this commitment means reckoning union with Christ to be a fact and living accordingly (Romans 6:1-14; Colossians 2:10-12, 20ff; 3:1ff).

Grace, more than any other idea, binds the two Testaments together into a complete whole for the Bible is the story of the saving work of God - that is, God's grace.

The grace of God is the determining factor in man's turning to God (Acts 2:18; 5:31; 16:14; Hebrews 6:6). Even that faith which is the condition of salvation is due to the grace of God (Ephesians 1:19; Philippians 1:29). Everything from first to last is by grace, whether of redemption (Romans 5:2; I Peter 2:10) or of sanctification (I Thessalonians 5:23f).

Learn more by purchasing the entire course that covers the following topics:

Lesson 1: The Atonement

Lesson 2: Depravity

Lesson 3: Imputation

Lesson 4: Reconciliation

Lesson 5: Regeneration

Lesson 6: Calling

Lesson 7: Union with Christ

Lesson 8: Grace