



SOTERIOLOGY

SPIRITUAL BIRTH

SYLLABUS

1. Broadening the Lens
 - Defining Terminology
 - Setting Parameters
2. Faith: The Means Of Salvation
 - What It Is
 - What It Is Not
3. Redemption: The Work Of Salvation
 - Atonement & Propitiation
 - Regeneration
 - Justification
 - Ordo Salutis
4. Eternal Security: The Quality Of Salvation
 - Trinitarian Security
 - The "Already But Not Yet"
 - Positional Sanctification
5. Opposing Views
 - Westminster Calvinism
 - Lordship Salvation
 - Deliverance Theology
6. Further Study

BROADENING THE LENS

DEFINING TERMINOLOGY

As we embark on our study of the doctrine of soteriology, we must first take a look at the terms, both in the original Hebrew and Greek, which constitute the topic of “salvation” in the broadest sense of the words. In this regard, we are choosing to focus our study around the original language words that are most frequently used throughout the Bible in discussing the issue of salvation. We feel that this is important if we are to establish a *biblical* theology that is organized around the words and concepts as they appear in the Bible, rather than a *systematic* theology which organizes itself around topics and seeks to have the Bible substantiate the conclusions about those topics.

To properly set our direction in this course, we will look at the most significant words that occur in the Bible regarding “salvation”, and we will briefly touch on their semantic (meaning) range. Understanding the broad scope of meaning of each word will help us understand the overall intent of God as he communicates with us about the topic of salvation.

OLD TESTAMENT HEBREW

Hebrew Root	תְּשׁוּעָה	יִשְׁעַ	יְשׁוּעָה
Transliteration	Teshuah	Tesa	Yesuah
BDB Definition			
Translations	help, deliverance, salvation, victory	help, deliverance, salvation, happiness	help, deliverance, acts of salvation
Occurrences (all contexts)	34x	36x	78x
Occurrences (spiritual contexts)	12x	10x	1x
Examples	Judges 15:18; 2 Chronicles 6:41; Psalm 33:17; Psalm 37:39, 40:10, 16, 71:15, 108:12, 119:41, Proverbs 21:31; Lamentations 3:26;	Psalm 18:2, 18:46, 20:6, 24:5, 50:23, 51:12, 69:13, 85:7, 85:9, 95:1	Psalm 69:29

As we look closer at these three primary Hebrew words for “salvation”, we expectedly find much similarity in terms of meaning. In fact, most of the time the words are essentially interchangeable other than a few slight differences in emphasis that we will address in a moment. First we want to take a look at the overwhelming Hebrew focus of the idea of salvation, which is the concepts of help and deliverance. In this regard, the Hebrew language highlights the doctrinal concept of

redemption. We will look more closely at redemption in the section named after the term, but for our purposes here in this section, it is important to note that the ideas of helpless slavery and the purchasing of the freedom of those slaves, are at the heart of the Hebrew words for “salvation”. In their contextual and linguistic usage in Hebrew, the word “salvation” is vividly portrayed in its “freedom from slavery” meaning.

The Hebrew word, *Teshua*, is the most frequently used word in the Old Testament for the concept of spiritual salvation with relationship to sin and eternity. The unique feature of this word, when compared to the others, is the “victorious” sense that it carries with it. It has a quality to it that focuses on the finality of the work of salvation, the ultimate nature of God’s salvation that he provides for people.

Tesa, which is the second most used word for salvation in the Hebrew bible, brings a lighter perspective on the issue of salvation by emphasizing the emotion of happiness that salvation brings. Depending on the context that it occurs in, this word tends to center the focus not simply on salvation as a concept, but on this emotional experience that one finds in salvation.

It is also interesting to note that the Hebrew word *Yesuah* is the root of the names of Joshua and Jesus, both of which meaning “deliverer”. As is the case in many semitic cultures, names are extremely important as they carry spiritual meaning in some way. Many names are given due to unique spiritual experiences or desired virtues for the child. This is certainly the case when considering Jesus and Joshua. Not only this, but *Yesuah* also focuses the context on the specific act of deliverance that salvation requires. The contexts where this word is used all tend to have a more specific view toward the supernatural intervention of God in human history which has insured the personal salvation of his people.

NEW TESTAMENT GREEK

Greek Root	σωτηρία	σώζω
Transliteration	<i>Soteria</i>	<i>Sozo</i>
BDAG Translation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. deliverance, preservation, with focus on physical aspect: from impending death 2. salvation, with focus on transcendent aspects 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to preserve or rescue from natural dangers and afflictions, save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue 2. to save or preserve from transcendent danger or destruction, save/preserve from eternal death
Meanings	deliverance, salvation, preservation	to save, bring safely, cured, ensure salvation, get, get well, made ... well, made well, preserved, recover, restore, save, saved, saves, saving

Occurrences (all contexts)	48x	97x
Occurrences (spiritual contexts)	25x	23x
References	Luke 1:69, 77; Acts 4:12; Romans 13:11, Ephesians 1:13; Hebrews 2:3, 10; Revelation 12:19, 19:1	Matthew 1:21; Mark 16:16; John 3:17; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:9, 13; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 21; Ephesians 2:5, 8; Titus 3:5

In New Testament Greek, we find two primary word roots that provide the bulk of the occurrences of the word “salvation”. *Soteria* and *Sozo* are the primary words used in the Greek New Testament to convey the concept of salvation. These are Greek root words (lemma), which mean that various forms or constructions of these two words are found in the New Testament, but they are all fundamentally based in these two words.

As we look initially at the range of meanings and contexts of these two words for “salvation”, we find the same pattern as their Hebrew equivalents. In Greek, “salvation” carries two primary meanings in all of its contexts; one usage that refers to temporal salvation from a temporal circumstance (battle, oppression, negative consequences because of sinful choices) and eternal salvation from an eternal circumstance. The larger number of occurrences actually speak of the temporal salvation that may nor may not include an eternal component, which seems to clearly indicate that this temporal salvation is equally as important as the eternal.

Soteria is proportionally the more significant Greek term for salvation in the eternal sense. As you look more closely at the contexts where the word occurs, you see that *soteria* has a focus more specifically on salvation from harm or death. When we see it used in reference to eternal life, it is more impactful than *sozo* in explaining the importance of eternal salvation in light of someone’s impending physical death or harm. Even when *soteria* is found in context that refers to temporal salvation, more often than not, the context still includes physical harm/death. This makes *soteria* a more frequently used word to speak of eternal/spiritual salvation because the most pressing reality that drives people to consider eternal life is physical death.

Sozo on the other hand, is a word that has a more broad meaning with relationship to eternal/spiritual salvation. It has more varied translations into the English Bible because of this broader scope of meaning in Greek. *Sozo* communicates the cosmic, if not emotional, view of eternal salvation. It seeks to express the reality of eternal salvation in the timeline of God’s dealing from eternity past into eternity future. It is a “missional” word in terms of its way to focus the reader on the bigger picture of what eternal salvation brings to humanity.

SETTING PARAMETERS

As you have noticed in the previous section, the key word charts take a more focused look at “salvation” with relationship to eternity and mankind’s ultimate right standing before God. This is by design, as we are seeking to build a biblical theology around the specific meaning of “salvation” in this eternal sense.

That being established as the primary focus of this course, we still must acknowledge the fact that the overwhelming usage of these words refer to a much more general meaning of deliverance from a negative earthly circumstance. This is a very important point as we proceed in our specific study of the spiritual meaning of salvation. It is key that we understand that “salvation” in the Bible rightfully includes, if not prefers, this broader usage of the word. Interestingly enough, this broader understanding of salvation is still focused on God and his provision for us. So, although we are going to specifically look at the spiritual meaning of the word, we have to move forward in our study of the Bible with a clear understanding of the vast usage of the word “salvation” in ways that are outside of the spiritual, eternal conversation. Practically this means that we must understand “salvation” from God’s perspective. Based on the larger number of occurrences speaking to temporal salvation, we must understand that God is deeply concerned with our salvation from all things related to sin, not just our eternal destiny. His salvation is complete and He desires to save us unto the life that He always prepared for us; this emphatically includes a temporal reality as well as an eternal one. As we study and apply the Bible to our lives and the lives of others, we must embrace the temporal reality of salvation as much as we embrace the eternal.

This understanding is particularly helpful for us as we interpret the Bible, specifically in those contexts where the word “salvation” occurs. Oftentimes we run into hermeneutic problems because we falsely interpret every instance of the word “salvation” as referring to eternity with God in heaven. According to our earlier analysis of the key words, this conclusion would be extremely careless and potentially dangerous for us. We must interpret the word “salvation” uniquely in each context, knowing that the broad meaning of it includes a majority of occurrences that refer to temporal salvation from a temporal circumstance.

FAITH: THE MEANS OF SALVATION

Romans 4:1-25, John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 11:25-26; 12:44; 20:31; Acts 16:31; 1 John 5:13, Romans 10:9-10, John 8:24, John 20:30-31, John 16:8-11

Repeatedly the Bible makes the claim that salvation is by faith alone. This basic tenet of christian doctrine has been upheld throughout the last 500 years since the dawn of the Protestant Reformation. If this is indeed the case, as we concur, then it is of utmost importance for us to clearly define what the word “faith” actually means in the biblical sense of the word.

Paul makes the case in Romans 4:16-24 that faith is in fact the only way of salvation because faith is the only way that the promise of salvation could be maintained by grace alone. To follow Paul's logic, if salvation were not of faith alone, then it couldn't be of grace, therefore the promise of salvation rests on fallen, already condemned people to earn. In that scenario, the "good news" of salvation just became very bad. This is why it is so important for us to clearly define faith as an important precursor to our discussion of the principles of salvation in the later sections of this course.

WHAT IT IS

Defining biblical faith/belief is a difficult task. The challenge is to accurately represent the content and meaning of the word used, without adding unnecessary qualifications or stipulations to it. An excellent summary of a central defining qualities of biblical faith is provided by Paul Enns ¹

- **Knowledge.** This involves the intellect and emphasizes that there are certain basic truths that must be understood and believed for salvation. Jesus claimed to be God; belief in His deity became the central issue in salvation (Rom. 10:9–10). Unless a person believed that Jesus was all He claimed to be he would die in his sins (John 8:24). Faith, then, involves believing the basic truths fundamental to man's salvation: man's sinfulness, Christ's atoning sacrifice, and His bodily resurrection. John wrote down the claims of Christ in order that people might believe these truths about Christ to be saved (John 20:30, 31).
- **Conviction.** Conviction involves the emotions. This element emphasizes that the person has not only an intellectual awareness of the truths but that there is an inner conviction (cf. John 16:8–11) of their truthfulness.
- **Trust.** As a result of knowledge about Christ and a conviction that these things are true there must also be a settled trust, *a moving of the will*—a decision must be made as an act of the will. The "heart" frequently denotes the will, and that is Paul's emphasis in the statement, "believe in your heart".

WHAT IT IS NOT

To accurately define a doctrinal concept like faith/belief, it is helpful to also briefly address some of the negative views of faith. We will address the most significant opposing views to the biblical doctrine of soteriology in the last section of this course, but here we are looking only at the challenges to the issue of biblical faith itself. We will do this by addressing the most common *additions* to the faith alone doctrine that compromise the veracity of it.

- **Commitment/Confession.** One of the more common and prevalent redefinitions of faith is the addition of commitments and confessions to faith. This addition is problematic and unbiblical because it focuses faith on the individual exercising the faith and not on the object of the faith. Many doctrinal systems attach personal confession of sin and the commitment to

¹ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook Of Theology*

refrain from sin as key components to the definition of faith. This is in direct contrast to the biblical definition which clearly focuses its attention on Jesus and his work for mankind.

- **Repentance.** Another addition to the definition of faith that some falsely include is the concept of repentance. The challenging aspect of this view is that it is built on a false understanding of repentance. In their view, repentance is a “changing of attitude and behavior” which must coincide with faith if true salvation is to occur. With this false understanding of repentance as their premise, those who hold this view change salvation from a confidence in Jesus’ work alone to an analysis of one’s own spiritual performance as the necessary means of salvation.
- **Baptism.** Due to a misunderstanding of Acts 2:38, many falsely include baptism as the only “genuine demonstration” of faith. Rather than properly understanding the context and language of Acts 2 where baptism is an additional response to faith, some conclude that baptism is a necessary component of it. This clearly changes the nature of faith as an exercise of one’s will to trust in Jesus, and moves it to another form of self effort to insure one’s eternal destiny.

REDEMPTION: THE WORK OF SALVATION

Romans 3:9-31, Ephesians 2:1-10, Romans 4:1-25, John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 11:25-26; 12:44; 20:31; Acts 16:31; 1 John 5:13, Romans 10:9-10, John 8:24, John 20:30-31, John 16:8-11

We will now focus more specifically on the eternal salvation that God provides to people. To be clear, this is not focused on all the various kinds of salvation that God provides, but it will be directed at developing a holistic understanding of personal salvation of people from a life in eternal hell and into an eternal life in God’s presence.

For our purposes, we will use the biblically broad term “redemption” as our focus for the rest of our study. Redemption is a legal concept, drawn from the slave trade of the first century. It was a unique process whereby a slave who sold into the slave market could be purchased back by his/her initial owner. In the biblical sense, God evokes this picture with us his fallen image bearers. We came from him, created by him, and yet because of sin our relationship with him was broken. Biblical redemption then is God paying the necessary price to “buy us back” from the slave market of sin and back into his “house”. This forms a broad understanding of ultimately what personal, eternal salvation is - God’s work, and man’s response to it, of bringing lost people back into a right relationship with Him for all eternity.

ATONEMENT

It is impossible to understand eternal salvation from a biblical perspective without addressing atonement for sin. As has been established earlier in this course, “salvation” has broad meaning

beyond eternal life with God, however when we do focus on eternal life with God, atonement for sin is at the core of what must be understood. This is being challenged today in many theological circles, but it is our firm belief that personal faith must be exercised in the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ on the behalf of the sinner if a person is to be saved eternally.

The first argument for the absolute necessity of substitutionary atonement is the Old Testament sacrificial code of the Israelites under the Law. Consider Leviticus 16 where we are given a detailed outline of the Day of Atonement, where the priest Aaron carries out a series of events that ceremonially and thematically draw the people of Israel into the concept of substitutionary atonement for sin.²

1. Aaron was to take off his normal priestly garments, wash, and then put on the special garments which were prescribed for the sacrifices which took him into the holy of holies (v. 4).
2. Aaron secured the necessary sacrificial animals: a bull for his own sin offering and two male goats for the people's sin offering; two rams, one for Aaron's and the other for the people's burnt offering (vv. 3, 5).
3. Aaron slaughtered the bull for his own sin offering (vv. 6, 11).
4. Before entering into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the bull, Aaron had to create a "cloud" of incense in the Holy of Holies, covering the mercy seat, to "veil" the glory of God so that he could enter in (vv. 12-13).
5. Aaron then took some of the blood of the bull and sprinkled it 7x on the mercy seat (v. 14).
6. Lots were then cast for the two goats, to determine which would be slaughtered and which would be driven away (vv. 7-8).
7. The goat for slaughter, of the people's sin offering, was sacrificed, and its blood was taken into the Holy of Holies and applied to the mercy seat, as the bull's blood had been (v. 15).
8. Cleansing was then made for the holy place (v. 16), seemingly by the sprinkling of the blood of both the bull and the goat. The atonement of the holy place is done alone, without anyone present to help, or to watch (v. 17).
9. Next, outside the tent, Aaron was to make atonement for the altar of burnt offering, using, it would seem, the blood of both the bull and the goat (vv. 18-19).
10. Now the second goat, the one which was kept alive, had the sins of the nation symbolically laid on its head, and was driven from the camp to a desolate place, from which it must never return (vv. 20-22).
11. Aaron then entered the tent of meeting, removed his linen garments, washed, and put on his normal priestly garments.
12. The burnt offerings of rams, one for Aaron and his family and the other for the people, was now offered (v. 24).

² <https://bible.org/seriespage/10-day-atonement-leviticus-16>

13. The earlier sacrifices of the bull and the goat were completed. The fat of the sin offering was burned on the altar (v. 25), and the remains of the bull and the goat were taken outside the camp, where they were burned (v. 27).
14. Those who had been rendered unclean by handling the animals on which the sins of Aaron or the people were laid were to wash themselves and then return to camp (vv. 26, 28).

These rituals were designed to not only bring atonement into view, but considering the fact that this was considered the most significant of ritual days in the Jewish calendar year, we understand that substitutionary atonement was a vital issue for the Israelites. Remember too, that this directive came from God and was his expressed desire for them if they were to live as his “chosen people”.

In the New Testament, we also have countless examples of substitutionary atonement as the means of salvation. In Ephesians 1:7 for example, we see a case substitutionary atonement when we read that *“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace”*. Clearly the blood of Jesus was the necessary payment for our forgiveness before God. It is impossible to understand this outside of the already established, Old Testament theology of substitutionary atonement through a blood sacrifice.

Romans 3:23-25 reads, *“²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”* In this particular context we get another reference to the that our salvation comes to us freely by grace but effectually through the blood of Jesus. It makes clear to us that eternal salvation is not a general salvation, but rather a specific one that must include the blood sacrifice if it is to be effectual. When we consider the broader context of the first chapters of Romans, then we fully grasp the significance of this doctrinal point in relationship to our discussion. Atonement must be acquired by faith in substitutionary death, and Jesus provided that very thing.

Hebrews 10:11-12 *“¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God”*. Again we see a clear biblical description of the work of Jesus on the cross as a representative, substitutional sacrifice. This context, in particular, gives an overt comparison of the work of Jesus with the work of the Old Testament sacrificial sin offerings. No other evidence is needed to solidify this connection with Jesus as the full and final substitutionary blood sacrifice that atoned for the sins of all people.

A last but important note, that will be expanded on later in our section on Opposing Views, is the issue of the extent of the atonement and propitiation of Jesus’ work on the cross. By “extent”, we simply mean *how many* people this work of Jesus applies to. We find numerous verses in the Bible that clearly tell us that Jesus death and resurrection was intended for and available to, all people who have ever lived. For example, consider 1 John 2:2 where we read that “He is the propitiation for

our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” It is clear that this is the case, however many disagree for broader theological reasons. It is our position that the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus atonement is *sufficient for all* people, but we do also concur that his work *only applies to those who believe*.

PROPITIATION

A second component to this payment for salvation is the response of God the Father to the payment that was made. This is extremely important because of the “Trinitarian Economy” of God. We must understand that Jesus came and served the will of the Father, whereas atonement speaks to the nature and quality of the work of Jesus on the cross, propitiation is the summary conclusion God the Father regarding that work of Jesus.

As is the case with atonement, propitiation is also established in the Old Testament and then realized fully in Jesus. Consider Leviticus 3:5, *“Then Aaron's sons shall offer it up in smoke on the altar on the burnt offering, which is on the wood that is on the fire; it is an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD.”* This odd language is the language of propitiation. The soothing aroma is God’s favorable satisfaction with the offering. It is not to be oddly understood as a sadistic response to death and blood, but rather the approval of God toward his people who have faithfully followed his sacrificial code which would bring restoration to his people. When God’s people have faith in his law (Trinitarian Economy), then people are relationally restored to him, and that brings him great joy.

In the New Testament we see the same conclusion of God the Father with respect to his view of the work of Jesus on the cross. Ephesians 5:2 says, *“and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”* This clearly connects the work of Jesus to those sacrificial offerings in the Old Testament and also renders the same conclusion from the Father. It was (OT) and is (NT) eternally vital that God the Father be satisfied with the eternal salvation offering made to him on behalf of his people. This is precisely why faith is the only means of salvation. Man cannot offer anything other than that which will be accepted by the Father or else eternal salvation will be lost. Man must believe in what has said regarding this sacrifice or else they will remain outside of the Trinitarian Economy. This was the lesson Cain learned in the most difficult of ways (Genesis 4:1-7).

Paul Enns provides a clear and succinct summary of atonement and propitiation when he writes, ³*“The foundational meaning of the death of Christ is its substitutionary nature. He died in place of sinners that He might purchase their freedom, reconcile them to God, and thereby satisfy the righteous demands of a holy God.”*

³ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook Of Theology*

JUSTIFICATION

Another vital component to eternal salvation (the redeeming work of God) is justification. It is appropriate for us to begin with a clear definition of justification. Many false variations of the term have been presented and with these false definitions have come various false understandings.

The word justification comes from the Greek root word δικαιώω | dikaioō. This word has plenty of biblical and extra-biblical occurrences to provide us a simple definition that is historically accurate. It is a legal term, used to convey the declaration of judge upon someone who has been proven to be innocent of his/her charges. The definition is “to declare righteous”. It is a spoken declaration about the legal position of an individual.

Of the false definitions that exist, two are the most troublesome. We should briefly address these here as a means of informing us of these misunderstandings and their potential negative ramifications.

1. **“To make righteous”** - although this appears close the actual definition, it is actually quite different. Rather than adopting the accepted usage of the day, this definition seeks to convey a broader and much more spiritually significant effect of justification. The “make righteous” conveys the idea that some type of spiritual transformation has taken place within the person. It certainly communicates then, an expectation of moral change as well. This problematic in the grammatical and doctrinal sense. The true definition conveys the idea that we are *declared* to be righteous in our standing before God, but this definition implies more. In reality we are not spiritually changed in justification, we are simply legally restored. Are their changes to us spiritually? Yes, but not to the extent that we have been *made* righteous. In justification we are legally restored to God which enables us to be reborn into a new position in Jesus and spiritually empowered by the Holy Spirit to pursue holiness before God. We will not be *made righteous* until our bodies are glorified and we are fully restored to all that God originally intended for us.

**This is the preferred translation used in the New Living Translation of the Bible.*

2. **“Just as if I never sinned”**. This is a somewhat older phrase used to describe the word justification, but it also has serious doctrinal problems. To be justified by God is not to have him rescind his character of omniscience and forget our past sins. We will never be those who have never sinned, we will live eternally as those who remember our Savior’s sacrifice that covered our past sins. We will forever be those who live in the grace of God that saved us from our sins. Consider the future picture of Jesus at the start of Tribulation period where we read of the throne room of God and the predicament of no one being able to enact final purification of the earth (Revelation 5:1-10). In that context, Jesus is seen as the only one who is worthy because of his sacrificial death for sins. Also consider Revelation 22:1-2 where we read of the Tree of Life in the eternal Jerusalem providing healing to the nations, a healing which could presumably be only of the memory of past sins. Justification is the grace of God

declaring true of us that we would will never be able to attain. It is not an acquiring of a new *innocent* position that this confusing definition provides.

Justification then, is the important legal declaration of God which is done *for* us and *to* us by the the sacrificial death of Jesus. This declaration affords us the legal position of right standing with God. This legal standing is a absolute requirement, in the Trinitarian Economy, for us to be restored to a right relationship with God.

REGENERATION

The concept of regeneration is simply translated in plain language as “to be born again”. The idea behind this is the doctrine of spiritual new birth. It summarized the idea of the new life and spiritual transformation of the person who places their faith in the substitutionary work of Jesus on their behalf. Jesus himself spoke of this truth when he told Nicodemus in John 3:3-8 where he said, “*unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” Jesus was speaking about the necessity of personal spiritual transformation that was necessary for every person to undergo. Forgiveness through faith in Jesus was necessary and impacting, yet a restored positional relationship with God would require a spiritual transformation of the person. Later in this passage, Jesus reiterates the necessity of a spiritual transformation when he said to Nicodemus, “⁶ *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* ⁷ *Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’*”

This new birth is a logical necessity when we consider the Trinitarian Economy. Looking into the Trinity itself and the original design of God’s image bearers, we clearly understand that spiritual holiness is a necessity for relational oneness with God. To be one with God, one must be like God in holiness. With this as our starting point of *theology* (“theo” = God, the study of God Himself), we comprehend the importance of spiritual rebirth as the culmination of the redemptive work of God in salvation. For God to truly redeem us back to a relational oneness with him, he had to rebirth us into a spiritual state that makes it possible.

Negatively, this rebirth does not mean total and complete spiritual transformation. This total rebirth only comes when our bodies themselves are also reborn into new spiritual bodies that can “house” wholly redeemed spirits. This is the Kingdom promise first to Israel in Jeremiah 31:33 and 32:39-40 (“*I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever*”). The prophet Ezekiel also broadened the scope of this total Kingdom transformation to all its inhabitants in Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26-27 (“*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*”). These are full and final realities that will occur in the Kingdom era.

Positively speaking, our present state of rebirth is one of spiritual redemption to God through our *position* in Christ’s resurrected body, and spiritual *aliveness* to God through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

It is not final yet, but it is still a spiritual reality for us to experience and grow in. It is, as is often doctrinally spoken, in the realm of the “already but not yet”. One day it will be final when we are given resurrected bodies in the Kingdom, but until that day it is a powerful truth that we *grow into* through faithful following of the Holy Spirit and transformation of our minds through the Bible.

ORDO SALUTIS

Although these concepts appear here in the curriculum as separate, if not disconnected, theological ideas, they are in fact have a close and causal relationship. As the early catholic (not Roman, but universal) church began to deal with the heresies of it’s day, one of the most significant issues that was discussed was the “*Ordo Salutis*” or “order of salvation” in Latin. Because so many heresies developed around the issue of salvation, the early church fathers deemed it necessary to develop a formalized doctrine of salvation in terms of the issues central to it and its progression. They, along with us today, recognized the importance of understanding the flow of doctrinal concepts in our understanding of salvation.

We believe that it is easier to identify the sequence of some of these spiritual actions over others. The ones that are easy to identify are the ones that have specific cause and effect relationships with each other, while other ones are less defined and do not have those clear cause and effect relationships. The most significant issue though, in this discussion on the order of salvation, is the position of faith in the order. We believe that the spiritual transformation from God comes by *virtue of* personal faith, not *prior to* personal faith. The contrasting view to this, called Monergism, believes that a person must first be spiritually transformed in order to exercise faith in Jesus. We will address this specifically in the upcoming section “Opposing Views”.

With these considerations in mind, Here is our doctrinal view of the “Ordo Salutis”.

	DOCTRINE	DESCRIPTION
1	Atonement	Substitutionary death of Jesus as a perfect, sacrificial offering for the sins of individual people.
2	Propitiation	God the Father’s approval of/satisfaction with, the sacrificial and substitutionary death of Jesus.
3	Faith	Individual people’s free exercise of trust in the substitutionary death of Jesus on their behalf.
4-5	Justification	God the Father's declaration of a new righteous position in Jesus for the person who has faith in Jesus’ work on their behalf.
	Regeneration	God the Father gives new spiritual life, enabling him/her to live an eternally significant life in fellowship with God through the empowering and indwelling Holy Spirit.

ETERNAL SECURITY: THE QUALITY OF SALVATION

John 3:16-17, 10:29, 1 John 5:13, Romans 3:21-26, 8:31-19, Ephesians 1:13-14, 1 Peter 1:5

Eternal security is an important topic to consider in our discussion of eternal salvation. As we have sought to understand the redemption that is our's through the work of God in Jesus for us, it is also significant that we briefly address the finality of that work. There are countless doctrinal implications to eternal security, but the most significant is what eternal security communicates to us about the nature of God Himself.

TRINITARIAN SECURITY

It is important to consider this issue of eternal security from the starting point of the Trinity and therefore, the Trinitarian Economy. How we understand the triune God's spiritual economy and the individual perspective of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will ultimately give us the most comprehensive understanding of the eternal security of a believer's salvation.

THE FATHER

Romans 5 informs us that the love fo the Father rests on all believers. Romans 8:28-30, clearly states that no one can separate us from that love. Not only this, but Ephesians 1:5 tells us that our faith in Jesus brings a promise of sonship from the Father. This familial promise of eternal love secures the believer forever. If this were not the case, God the Father would somehow have to fail in his promised love for us.

THE SON

Jesus' role in eternal security is broad in that he provides a sure salvation through his own death, and he also guarantees it through the position that he provides to all redeemed believers in himself. In Ephesians 1:7 we read that he redeems all believers. Romans 3-5 tells us that both justifies and removes the wrath of God from all believers. Colossians 2:13 tells us that he also forgives all believers. These things cement the work of eternal salvation to his own work on the cross. To question eternal security then, is to question the work of Jesus himself. 1 John 2 and Hebrews 7 both tell su that Jesus is our eternal advocate before the Father. If eternal salvation could be lost, then it would imply that Jesus' work as our advocate somehow failed.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ephesians 4:30 tells us that the Holy Spirit seals the believer for the future day of redemption. John 14:17 also tell us that believers are indwelt forever with the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13 confirms this truth, but further amplifies it by stating that the Holy Spirit is a downpayment of our future inheritance. In precisely the same way as the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit insures future eternal salvation on the merits of his own character and life in us. To lose salvation would mean that he too had somehow failed in his promise to believers.

THE “ALREADY BUT NOT YET”

We have mentioned earlier in this course about the doctrinal concept of the “already but not yet”. What we mean by this, and what is doctrinally communicated through this phrase, is the idea that eternal salvation is, at the same time, a present tense reality and guarantee for believers, and a future tense complete realization. Although this is an odd proposition to consider, it is doctrinally accurate and helpful. Eternal salvation is a truth and reality for all believers, and it has present tense impact on our lives today. However it is also a promise and hope which will come to fruition in the future. This hope also impacts us today in a motivating way. This simple phrase then, “the already but not yet” is a helpful reminder for christian living and it also gives guidance as we interpret the Bible when it speaks of eternal salvation.

POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION

1 Corinthians 1:2 introduces an interesting use of the word “sanctification”, which is used almost exclusively in the New Testament as a word for spiritual growth and transformation and not for eternal salvation. We will comment briefly upon this here, simply to provide clarification. In the aforementioned passage, Paul states that believers are those who are “*sanctified in Christ Jesus...*” In this sense, Paul is not speaking of spiritual growth here, but he is referring to a corporate reality of all believers who have received eternal salvation through Jesus.

The word “sanctification” simply means to be “set apart”. So in this way, Paul means that eternal salvation through Jesus, sets the church apart as belonging to God. It does not mean that it is a guarantee that all believers will live sanctified lives, but rather that all believers in the church are set apart *from unbelievers* as those who are members of God’s family in Christ.

OPPOSING VIEWS

WESTMINSTER CALVINISM

The first and most prominent opposing view to eternal salvation is traditional, Westminster Calvinism. Historically speaking, this system of doctrine was developed by the followers of the early protestant reformed theologian John Calvin. Many of these formalized views actually diverge from his positions, but they still bear his name. The position of Calvinism has been formalized around the acrostic *T.U.L.I.P.* We will provide favorable quotes from a prominent Calvinistic teacher for each point⁴, followed by our critique based on our understanding of biblical redemption outlined above.

⁴ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-we-believe-about-the-five-points-of-calvinism#Depravity>

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

FOR: "Our sinful corruption is so deep and so strong as to make us slaves of sin and morally unable to overcome our own rebellion and blindness. This inability to save ourselves from ourselves is total. We are utterly dependent on God's grace to overcome our rebellion, give us eyes to see, and effectively draw us to the Savior."

CRITIQUE: In this simplistic definition of depravity, we largely agree with the Calvinist. We do however disagree with the scope of its meaning when we see the conclusion of the Calvinist that total depravity infers total *inability*. To be fully mired by sin, affected by sin at our core as humans, is certainly biblical, but not to the degree that it hampers personal faith in the promise of God. We see this as being a crucial disagreement with this point of Calvinism. We are indeed sinners, bound for hell, and yet we are fundamentally image bearers of God with freedom to choose to entrust our faith in whatever proposition we like: personal glory and works for salvation, or substitutionary work of Jesus on our behalf.

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

FOR: "God's election is an unconditional act of free grace that was given through his Son Jesus before the world began. By this act, God chose, before the foundation of the world, those who would be delivered from bondage to sin and brought to repentance and saving faith in Jesus."

CRITIQUE: We believe that the Bible presents salvation as an offer to people. The very concept of grace, of which eternal salvation is contingent on, is a "gift" or free offer to people. We do not believe that faith is gifted by God to those whom he chooses to believe, but that faith is intrinsic to us as God's image bearers and is our's to exercise. Because of this, we believe that salvation is a free offer to all people, and it can be believed in by any person who so chooses.

LIMITED ATONEMENT

FOR: "The atonement of Christ is sufficient for all humans and effective for those who trust him. It is not limited in its worth or sufficiency to save all who believe. But the full, saving effectiveness of the atonement that Jesus accomplished is limited to those for whom that saving effect was prepared. The availability of the total sufficiency of the atonement is for all people. Whosoever will — whoever believes — will be covered by the blood of Christ. And there is a divine design in the death of Christ to accomplish the promises of the new covenant for the chosen bride of Christ. Thus Christ died for all people, but not for all in the same way."

CRITIQUE: This is one of the most problematic components of Calvinism. It seeks to redefine the atonement based on the *recipients* of it, rather than on the *giver* of it. To, in any way, limit the atonement to only those who receive it, fundamentally challenges the work of Jesus and what the Bible explicitly claims about it. Countless passages in the Bible (2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Timothy

2:6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 3:9) speak to the universal and holistic atonement of Jesus for every individual in the world and we hold to this view. It is our belief that other points in the Calvinistic system (election, irresistible grace), lead them to make this unbiblical conclusion about the atonement of Jesus.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

FOR: "This means that the resistance that all human beings exert against God every day (Romans 3:10–12; Acts 7:51) is wonderfully overcome at the proper time by God's saving grace for undeserving rebels whom he chooses freely to save."

CRITIQUE: We disagree with this because of its connection with the Calvinistic view of sovereign election. In their view, if God elects someone to be saved, they are incapable of resisting his sovereign choice. Since we do not hold to the belief of God's sovereign election of some to salvation, then the promise of Irresistible Grace is also inconsistent.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

FOR: "We believe that all who are justified will win the fight of faith. They will persevere in faith and will not surrender finally to the enemy of their souls. This perseverance is the promise of the new covenant, obtained by the blood of Christ, and worked in us by God himself, yet not so as to diminish, but only to empower and encourage, our vigilance; so that we may say in the end, I have fought the good fight, but it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me"

CRITIQUE: Rather than choosing to emphasize the *promise* of eternal life that God gives to believers, Calvinism rather shifts its focus to the *spiritual performance* of believer. In the broader sense, we concur that believers will "persevere" in Christ until the final day of salvation, but we would argue that the perseverance is not in *our* works, but in *his* work. Our future hope is in the finality of his words, "It is finished" and not in the wishful words "Well done good and faithful servant". It is our view that Calvinism dangerously misinterprets these "rewards" passages as salvation passages; thereby completely confusing the believer and, in an odd twist, removing security and bringing the opposite.

LORDSHIP SALVATION

Another opposing view to our proposed view of eternal salvation is Lordship Salvation. Historically speaking, this particular view was introduced by the modern teacher/theologian John MacArthur. MacArthur's view's were presented initially in his seminal book, "The Gospel According To Jesus" and later affirmed in the follow up book, "Hard To Believe". Motivation for this theology is outlined in the first work of MacArthur where he recounts his frustration as a young pastor with the amount of apathetic believers in his congregation. His conclusion as to the cause of this predicament was that they were not true believers because they had "believed in Jesus as their Lord" by committing to live

in holiness. MacArthur's fundamental conclusion was these people were actually confessing apostates, and needed to commit to faithful change if they were to actually be eternally saved.

In many ways, MacArthur's conclusion is a repackaging of Calvinism with a particular emphasis on the "P" of Calvinism's TULIP. In the Lordship view, one must "persevere" by believing in the Lordship of Jesus over one's life and prove it continually until one's death or else they were not saved to begin with.

The unique nature of Lordship Salvation is essentially in two primary areas: 1) a redefinition of faith, and 2) a redefinition of what it means to accept Jesus as "Lord".

1. Lordship Salvation designates two kinds of faith: general faith and saving faith. In their view saving faith, or faith required for eternal salvation, is a faith that proves itself by good works. If good works are not present, then it was merely "general faith" that had been exercised. In our critique, there no such distinction of faith in the Bible. Scripture simply states that we must believe in the gospel to be saved. If one believes in the gospel for their salvation, they are redeemed. We believe that the primary issue in eternal salvation is the *object* of faith, not a specific *kind* of faith.
2. Lordship Salvation also emphasizes the Lordship position of Jesus in a way that is not Biblical. They seek to present the gospel as an offer for a new life under the direction of Jesus, rather than a substitutionary sacrifice on one's behalf. Rather than seeing belief in the gospel alone as the means for eternal salvation, Lordship proponents choose to add a faithful life in Christian conduct as the necessary proof of authentic faith and salvation. We strongly disagree with this premise, believing that it then becomes a version of the Galatian heresy of adding works as a requirement for salvation.

DELIVERANCE THEOLOGY

The last opposing view that we will address is Deliverance Theology. With all due respect to its adherents, Deliverance Theology does come out of a doctrinally robust tradition that would provide a broad biblical support for its propositions. This form of theology is pentecostal in its roots and largely focuses on the experience of the believer in the life of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, this misunderstanding regarding the Holy Spirit leads to a very confusing view of eternal salvation as well.

One of the central tenants of Deliverance Theology is the need for a second encounter with the Holy Spirit. To be fair, they teach that one receives the Holy Spirit at salvation, but they still promote the idea that a believer must also receive a second blessing/empowering of the Holy Spirit by an additional exercise of faith. The problem with this then, is that if people do not experience this second blessing, which is unavailable to them according to the Bible, then they are questioned as to whether they even received the Holy Spirit the first time at salvation. This "second blessing" then becomes a functional necessity for eternal salvation.

FURTHER STUDY

1. The Moody Handbook Of Theology, *Paul Enns*
2. The Nature Of The Atonement, *James Beilby & Paul Eddy*
3. Justification Reconsidered, *Stephen Westerholm*
4. So Great Salvation, *Charles Ryrie*
5. Salvation From What, *Bob Wilkin*
6. D.M. Thesis on Lordship Salvation, *Charlie Bing*