

FOUNDATIONS: What Christians Should Believe

9 May 2012

SALVATION: How God Makes Rebels His Children

Part 8

Context: In our ongoing study through our church's confession of faith,¹ we are currently discussing the doctrine of salvation.² Thus far we have learned what it means to be saved, how salvation is wholly of grace, how salvation is only and always mediated through Jesus Christ, and how Jesus purchased our salvation through the shedding of his precious blood. Tonight we will begin a discussion of some of the key terms the Bible uses to describe our salvation.

Salvation: *We believe that the salvation of sinners is divinely initiated and wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who, by appointment of the Father, voluntarily took upon Himself our nature, yet without sin, and honored the divine law by His obedience, thus qualifying Himself to be our Savior; that by the shedding of His blood in His death He fully satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God regarding sin; that His sacrifice consisted not in setting us an example by his death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead He is now enthroned in Heaven; He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate and all-sufficient Savior. We believe that faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith.*

Bible Reading: Romans 3:21-26

Discussion:

- I. What is the most significant truth about our salvation that has stood out to you from this series so far?
- II. Does the bloody death of Jesus glorify God? Why or why not?
- III. Consider the following statement: "The Gospel message is simple enough for a young child to understand and believe but profound enough to fascinate a philosopher for his entire life." Do you agree with this statement? How might both parts of the statement be true simultaneously?

Study:

- I. Introduction:
 - A. The Bible uses several different terms to describe what happens in our salvation (e.g., "redemption", "propitiation", "regeneration", etc.). Considering these different keywords is similar to gazing at different facets of a diamond. The more you carefully contemplate the amazing work Jesus did in saving us, the more beautiful Jesus and His salvation appears. If combined with diligent and desperate prayer, such study can fuel our passion and love for our Savior.
 - B. In the following survey,³ we will consider some of these keywords in their historical chronology. We will begin in this lesson with those that refer to what Jesus accomplished on the cross 2,000

¹ For a complete copy of our church's confession of faith, visit our website (www.trinitybaptistmuncie.org) and look under the "We Believe" category. We will attempt to put all the previous notes from this series on the church website in the not too distant future.

² If you would like to go deeper in the study of the doctrine of salvation, we recommend the following resources: For an introductory study, see *What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010); for a more intermediate consideration, consider *The Truth of the Cross* by RC Sproul (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2007); for a challenging yet rewarding study, check out *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* by John Murray (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955).

³By design, this survey will be a brief overview. The goal at this point is to see the big picture of the great work Jesus accomplished for us and our salvation. Lord willing, we will go into greater detail on some of these concepts in future lessons. For further study, see the aforementioned books, especially Murray. See also Leon Morris' classic study *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955).

years ago ("redemption accomplished"). Lord willing, in our next lesson we will move on to those that we experience when we are converted ("redemption applied"). We will also attempt to consider some of the practical implications of these ideas as we go.

II. Some of the Keywords the Bible Uses to Describe Our Salvation:

A. Seven Keywords Referring to What Jesus Accomplished on the Cross:

1. Sacrifice:

- a. As we discovered in a previous lesson,⁴ the Old Testament clearly and repeatedly teaches that sinners must relate to a holy God through a substitutionary sacrifice. God in His absolute purity cannot tolerate rebels; rebels in their guilt stand condemned before God. In the Old Testament, the God-ordained solution to this dilemma was for a sinner to sacrifice an animal in the manner prescribed by God (e.g., Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, the Passover, etc.). Otherwise, sinful humans could only anticipate a fearful expectation of judgment (Hebrews 10:27).
- b. The New Testament powerfully emphasizes that Jesus' death on the cross is the ultimate sacrifice, forever paying for the sins of those who trust in Him. All the previous animal sacrifices were simply foreshadows and types of Jesus' perfect sacrifice:
 - i. John 1:29 - The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"⁵
 - ii. Hebrews 9:26 - He [i.e., Jesus] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 5:7 - Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.
- c. The practical implications of Jesus' death as a sacrifice are countless. While we deserved to die for our sins (Romans 3:23), Jesus died the death we deserved to die (1 Peter 3:18). Since our salvation is accomplished through a substitutionary sacrifice, all glory goes to Jesus and we boast in nothing (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9). Since our salvation was accomplished through Jesus' sacrifice, we should never view our works in any way as making restitution for our sins (even after we are saved). Since Jesus' death is the ultimate sacrifice, we should never view any ceremony, event, act, etc. in Christianity (e.g., the Lord's Supper) as an atoning sacrifice (to do so is to dishonor the once-for-all death of Jesus). Can you think of other practical implications to Jesus' death as a sacrifice?

2. Atonement:

- a. The concept of atonement refers to the payment of a debt. Synonyms for atonement include "compensation", "reparation", or "recompense." If I atone for something, I make up for that which is lacking (e.g., money, work, etc.) for a positive transaction.
- b. The New Testament teaches that Jesus' death atones for our sins. By virtue of our sins, we incur a debt of death and hell (Romans 6:23). By dying in our place,⁶ Jesus pays the debt we owe in full, forever releasing us from the debt our sins incurred.
 - i. Psalm 65:3 - When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions.

⁴See Part 7 in this series; notes available on our website: www.trinitybaptistmuncie.org.

⁵Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁶It is certainly true that Jesus' atonement involved more than simply His death on the cross. His virgin conception, perfect life of obedience, resurrection, and ongoing intercession are also essential to our salvation. However, for the sake of brevity, we will refer in this lesson to the cross as shorthand for all Jesus did to save us.

- ii. John 19:30 – When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,”⁷ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
 - iii. Romans 6:23 – For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- c. How does the concept of atonement apply to our lives? Here is one implication. People seem to have this innate desire to want to make atonement for the bad things they have done in life. Even decades later, men and women can be haunted by the sins of their youth and continually trying to repay their debt to society through philanthropy, self-imposed affliction, etc. However, no matter how hard we try to atone for our sins, the guilt follows us like a stubborn shadow. Jesus’ atonement forever frees us from such attempts at paying for our sins. In the Gospel we say, “Yes, what I did was evil and inexcusable. But I accept Jesus’ death as payment for what I did. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for me (cf. Romans 8:1).” Embracing Jesus’ full atonement fills the Christian with gratitude and frees him or her for joyful obedience. Can you imagine other ways in which Jesus’ atonement might apply to our lives?
3. Redemption/Ransom:
- a. The redemption/ransom motif for our salvation comes from the slave-market. If an individual was enslaved, another person could come along and redeem that person out of slavery though paying the purchase price (also, an individual could redeem himself if he was able to save enough money to purchase his own freedom). The main point of redemption is that an individual was a slave but now, as the result of a payment paid, the former slave is a freeman. Theologian Alan Cairns defines redemption this way:

“Redemption is the delivery of any one from captivity and misery by the intervention of a price or ransom.”⁸
 - b. The great Old Testament example of redemption is the Exodus. The people of Israel had been enslaved to Pharaoh for 400 years. Pharaoh was a cruel, wicked slave master. Then, of His own sovereign grace,⁹ the Lord raised up Moses. Moses humbles Pharaoh and then leads the people of Israel out of slavery and eventually to the Promised Land. This Exodus/redemption is an earthly picture of the greater Exodus/redemption the Lord Jesus would accomplish.
 - c. The New Testament teaches that all humanity is born enslaved to Satan (John 8:44; Ephesians 2:1-3), sin (John 8:34; 6:16), and death (Hebrews 2:14-15). Adam, our first father, sold the entire human race into this spiritual slavery (Romans 5:12ff.) and nothing we could ever do in ourselves could purchase our freedom. Then, in sovereign grace, God sends Jesus to earth. Through His death, Jesus pays the price for our redemption, forever freeing those who trust in Him from death, sin, and the devil.
 - i. Mark 10:45 – The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many
 - ii. Galatians 4:3-5 – In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God

⁷Interestingly, the Greek word translated ‘It is finished’ may have been a technical term stamped on paid receipts. John MacArthur writes, “The single Greek word here (translated ‘It is finished’) has been found in the papyri being placed on receipts for taxes meaning ‘paid in full’.” John MacArthur, *MSB, ESV* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 1582. If this meaning is implied in John 19:30, we should understand Jesus’ death as paying the entire debt of our sins.

⁸*Dictionary of Theological Terms* (NC: Endued to Stand, nd.), 121.

⁹What we mean by this statement is that the children of Israel did not deserve their redemption out of Egypt. From everything we can tell, many of them were as wicked and godless as the Egyptians (contrary to Hollywood depictions). God redeemed Israel not because they were worthy of redemption but because He is gracious and because of His promises to Abraham (e.g., Genesis 15:13-16).

sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

- iii. Ephesians 1:7-8 – In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight.
- d. Something important to consider is how our redemption is not accomplished the moment we believe the Gospel but was accomplished 2,000 years ago when Jesus died on the cross. It is true that this redemption is not applied to us until we believe, but when we think of when and how we were released from slavery to sin and the devil, our minds should go primarily to the cross and not the moment of our conversion. Think of Hebrew children born the generation after the Exodus. When were they redeemed? Not the moment they were born, but prior to their birth, when Moses led Israel out of Egypt. So also the cross is the event whereby we are redeemed; we begin to benefit from that redemption when we believe.
- e. If Christians have been truly redeemed, we should no longer view ourselves or live as slaves to sin. Our old slave master (Satan, sin, death) has been killed and now we belong to a new Master, the Lord Jesus. The ongoing Christian life is now one of putting off the habits and lifestyle of our old master and putting on the habits and lifestyle of our new Master. This is Paul's point in Romans 6:5-11:

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Can you think of additional ways in which the redemption/ransom idea applies to our Christian lives?

4. Propitiation:

- a. Of all the words used to describe what Jesus accomplished in His death, propitiation may be the most infrequently used in contemporary English. Other than the Bible, can you think of any contexts where we commonly use the term "propitiation"?
- b. The term propitiation refers to the "extinguishing of wrath." Other ways to word this idea might include "wrath-absorber" or "anger-satisfier" or "wrath-quencher." Something like the backstop at a firing range might be analogous to a propitiation. Charles Ryrie defines propitiation helpfully this way:

"Propitiation means the turning away of wrath by an offering. In relation to soteriology [e.g., the study of salvation], propitiation means placating or satisfying the wrath of God by the atoning sacrifice of Christ."¹⁰

- c. Because of its obscurity, many modern Bible translations do not use the term propitiation but attempt to substitute synonyms. Instead of "propitiation," some contemporary versions translate the word as "sacrifice of atonement" (NIV), "sacrifice for sin" (NLT), "place of sacrifice where mercy is found" (CEB), or "means by which people's sins are forgiven" (GNB). While the desire to be comprehensible is certainly admirable and a goal

¹⁰ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody, 1982), 294.

of Bible translation, the problem is that none of these synonymous terms and phrases include the concept of wrath in them. We are of the opinion that the term "propitiation" should be retained in modern English, even if only to help us understand this rich biblical concept.

- d. How does the concept of propitiation apply to our lives?
- i. For the Christian: If your hope is in Jesus, you never need fear the wrath of God. All the wrath due your past, present, and future sins was exhausted upon Jesus on the cross. Therefore, on your best day God treats you as if you had lived Jesus life and on your worst day God treats you as if you had lived Jesus life. While certainly our post-salvation sins invite God's Fatherly displeasure and even discipline (cf. Hebrews 12:3ff.), that is something entirely different from punitive retribution. Because of Jesus' propitiatory death, this life is the closest thing to hell the Christian will ever experience.
 - ii. For the non-Christian: If your hope is not currently built entirely on Jesus' death and resurrection, God's anger burns against you constantly. As Psalm 7:11 says, "God is angry with the wicked all the day long" (KJV). In this life, God is showing you incredible patience. Yet, if you do not turn from your sins and put your trust entirely in Jesus, you will become an eternal recipient of God's terrifying wrath for your sins. The question you must consider is, "Will I accept Jesus' death as the propitiation for my sins, or will I absorb God's wrath for my sins forever in hell." Those are our only options.
 - iii. Can you imagine additional ways in which Jesus' propitiation might apply to our lives?
5. Expiation:¹¹
- a. The word "expiation" means cleansing or purification. "The removal of a stain" is the basic idea of the word. The original 1828 Webster's English dictionary defines expiation this way:

"Expiation – [n.]The act of making satisfaction for an offense,by which the guilt is done away, and the obligation of the offended person to punish the crime is canceled; atonement; satisfaction. Among pagans and Jews, expiation was made chiefly by sacrifices, or washings and purification. Among Christians, expiation for the sins of men is usually considered as made only be the obedience and sufferings of Christ."¹²

¹¹Note to those suspicious of Jesus' death as an expiation. While it is true that liberal theologians have attempted to replace the idea of propitiation with expiation (e.g., 1 John 2:2), the Bible teaches that Jesus' death accomplished both. Propitiation is different from expiation but includes the concept of expiation in it. Therefore, we should maintain Jesus' death as both a propitiation and an expiation. Gerry Breshears' answer to this question is helpful:

"[Question:] *I've heard that liberals are the ones who believe in expiation rather than propitiation. Didn't the Revised Standard Version of the Bible distort the Gospel when it translated the word propitiation as expiation?*

"[Answer:] To translate the word propitiation as the word expiation is a serious error that leads to theological problems. For example, there are those who deny propitiation, the satisfaction of God's wrath by the pouring out of that wrath on Jesus. In so doing, they deny an essential part of the gospel and need to be labeled as false teachers. But the Bible is just as clear that, through the cross, Jesus cleanses sin. That is what we mean by expiation.

"Those who deny this aspect, often in a reactionary response to liberal error, also truncate the gospel. When we look at the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, we see that there are two goats. One is the propitiatory sacrifice and the other, the scapegoat, is the expiatory sacrifice. That is the goat that takes the sin and defilement away. For a complete view of atonement, you must have both goats.

"P.T. Forsyth put it this way: 'The blood of Christ stands not simply for the sting of sin on God but the scourge of God on sin, not simply for God's sorrow over sin but for God's wrath on sin.'"

Mark Driscoll & Gerry Breshears, *Death by Love: Letters from the Cross*(Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 159.

¹²Noah Webster, *American Dictionary*, 1828, entry: "expiation."

- b. The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that Jesus' death expiates our guilt and cleanses our souls:
 - i. Jeremiah 33:8—I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.
 - ii. Zechariah 13:1 – On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.
 - iii. 1 John 1:7-9 – If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - c. The practical implications of the expiatory power of Jesus' death are incredible. So many live in constant shame because of things they have done or because of things done to them. They feel as if there is a spiritual stain on their souls which, like Lady Macbeth, try as they may, they cannot remove. Sometimes such people go on for decades viewing themselves as "spiritually unclean" and attempting to cleanse themselves through rigorous rituals, ascetic practices, strange rites, or even self-mutilation. One of the glories of the Gospel is that Jesus' blood cleanses us from all sin. If our hope is in Christ, God views us and treats us as if we are as clean as the driven snow (cf. Isaiah 1:18). If we are Christians, part of the process of Christian growth is to train ourselves to look at ourselves the way God does in Christ – washed in the blood of the lamb. Can you imagine additional ways in which Jesus' expiation might apply to our lives?
6. Reconciliation:
- a. The reconciliation idea refers to the creation of a peace treaty between two parties who were once at war with one another. If two parties who were once at odds, put aside their differences and become friends, they have been reconciled. Synonyms for reconciliation might include "reunion", "appeasement", or even "ceasefire".
 - b. Defined theologically, reconciliation is one of many things accomplished by the cross. We in our sin were enemies of God (Romans 5:10); God in His holiness was opposed to us (Psalm 5:5). By virtue of the shedding of Jesus' blood, a covenant of peace is established between the Holy God and sinful man. Again, Alan Cairns' explanation of reconciliation is helpful:

"In terms of biblical doctrine, reconciliation is the removal of the enmity between God and the sinner, and the establishment of a new relationship of peace and friendship between them, on the ground of the payment by Christ of all that was due to God and His holy law on account of sin. Accordingly, in Scripture, reconciliation is ascribed to the merit of the blood shedding of Christ."¹³
 - c. Biblical support for the reconciliation power of Jesus' death:
 - i. Romans 5:10 – For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
 - ii. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 – All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be

¹³*Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 121.

reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- iii. Colossians 1:20 – ...through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.
- d. In applying the reconciliation motif to our Christian lives, Christians should view themselves as forever at peace with God. Though we did declare war against our Creator, first in the Garden of Eden, and then when we individually sinned, for those who believe, a permanent peace treaty has been brokered. Because of the cross, there can never again be war between the believer and the Lord. Christians should view themselves, as Abraham did, as friends of God. Can you imagine other ways in which this reconciliation concept might apply to our lives?

7. Victory:

- a. The term victory obviously refers to the winning of some sort of competition or battle. Synonyms for victory would include "conquest" or "triumph". For example, in WW2, the Allies achieved victory over the Axis Powers.
- b. In terms of Bible doctrine, the Bible teaches that humanity, through its sin, joined forces with the devil and the powers of darkness. As a result, all humans are born slaves of Satan and citizens of his kingdom. Jesus, however, comes to earth to retake what rightfully belongs to God. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus conquered the devil and delivers believers out of his kingdom into the Kingdom of God.
 - i. Genesis 3:15 – I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.
 - ii. Colossians 1:13 – He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
 - iii. Hebrews 2:14 – Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.
 - iv. 1 John 3:8 – The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.
- c. It is important to carefully consider the manner through which Jesus achieved victory over the devil. Jesus did not engage in any sort of hand-to-hand combat with Satan or interact with him directly. Rather, it was through dying for our sins that He was victorious over Satan. Theologian Peter Bolt carefully explains how Jesus actually defeated the devil:

"Jesus defeated the devil resoundingly and completely but in a sense indirectly. It was not as if there were two equal princes, arrayed against each other, slugging it out. The Son of God was above all that kind of thing. He defeated the devil by removing the problem that had enslaved us to him in the first place. He took away our guilt; he bore our punishment; he dealt with God's anger; he brought justification, that great declaration of innocence before the courtroom of God. And if God has looked at what his dear Son has won for us, and declared us to be 'not guilty', then the devil no longer has any hold over us. He has been defeated once and for all, without the Son of God ever having to stoop to direct confrontation with him at all."¹⁴

¹⁴Peter Bolt, *Living with the Underworld* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2007), 117. This outstanding resource is the best single book on spiritual warfare we are aware of.

- d. Again, the implications of Jesus' victory over Satan at the cross are profound. Christians never need fear Satan taking possession of their souls or doing their souls permanent damage. While Satan can tempt and afflict us externally, and harshly so, we are no longer his possession. We are now citizens of the Kingdom of God and Jesus will protect the citizens of His Kingdom. One day our King will return and condemn Satan to the pit where he will be tormented forever, never again to lead a rebellion against God (Revelation 20:10).¹⁵ Can you imagine other ways in which Jesus' victory might apply to our lives?
- B. Next Lesson: *Seven Keywords Referring to What We Experience When We are Converted* [e.g., regeneration, adoption, etc.]

Application:

- I. In what ways has this lesson enabled you to appreciate our salvation more than you did before?
- II. Do you think that Jesus' sufferings were enough to pay for all your sins? Are you willing to rely entirely on His work to pay for your sins?
- III. If Jesus' death absorbed God's wrath completely, then will God ever turn His wrath against you as a believer? Should we interpret any of the hardships we endure as expressions of God's wrath? If not, why then does God allow suffering into our lives (cf. Romans 5:3ff., Hebrews 12:3-11; James 1:2-4)?
- IV. What point from tonight's lesson most stood out to you and why?

¹⁵ For further reflection on the biblical teaching on and implications of Jesus' victory over the devil, see Pastor Tim's sermon from April 1, 2012 entitled "The Cross is the Defeat of Satan." Download or listen to this message at our website or get a CD copy from the sound booth.