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Soteriology I. Introduction

- A. Soteriology comes from the Greek words *soter*, meaning “Savior” and *soteria*, meaning “salvation.” Soteriology deals with the doctrines of salvation including:
1. What must I do to be *saved*?
 2. What is *justification*?
 3. What is the place of *repentance* in salvation?
 4. What is the place of *good works* in salvation?
 5. What is the *first cause* of man’s salvation (man’s faith or God’s grace)?
 6. Does man have *free will*?
 7. What does the Bible teach about *election* and *free will*?
 8. Is election *conditional*; or *unconditional*?
 9. Is grace *resistible*, or *irresistible*?
 10. Once saved, *always saved*?
 11. What is *atonement*?
 12. What is the nature of the *atonement*?
 13. Is the atonement *limited*, or *unlimited*?
- B. The doctrine of soteriology logically follows the doctrine of hamartiology (sin) because we must understand our sinful condition in order to comprehend our need for salvation (this is the order in the Gospel as well). In proclaiming the Gospel; we need to proclaim the sinfulness of man and the wrath of God (Rom 1:18) *before* we proclaim the good news of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
- C. **The priority of faith.** What is the necessary *response* from man in order to be *saved*? As the Philippian jailer asked Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:30, 31). (See also Jn 3:16; Eph 2:8; etc.).
- D. It is practically impossible to *overstate* the importance of faith. But it is possible to *misstate* the meaning of faith or the object of faith.
- “Have faith in your faith.”
 - “God must do what you ask if you have faith” (Kenneth Copeland).
 - Two boys stood on the edge of a frozen lake; one boy stayed on shore; the other ventured out on the thin ice and fell through. Which boy had faith? Faith is not merely an optimistic attitude; faith is always directly connected with its object. *90% of Americans believe that God loves them; will this save them?*
- E. The centrality of faith as that which connects us to God. Faith is the foundational grace or virtue that precedes all other expressions of Christian fruit and character.
- Salvation – Acts 16:31; Eph 2:8, 9; 2 Tim 3:15
 - Justification – Rom 3:28; Rom 5:1
 - Pleasing God – Heb 11:6
 - Eternal life – Jn 3:16; Jn 20:31
 - Effective Prayer – Matt 21:22; James 1:6; 5:15
 - Spiritual Warfare – 1 Tim 1:18, 19; 1 Tim 6:12
- F. Defining faith biblically:
Faith is *certitude* (or full assurance) concerning the things hoped for; and the great

conviction and confidence about the things you cannot see, hold, touch, or prove.

Read Hebrews 11:1, 6.

- Faith is defined as conviction of the reality of the truths and facts which God has revealed; such conviction resting solely upon the testimony of God.
- Faith is not simply the assent of the intellect to revealed truth; it is the practical submission of the entire man to the guidance and control of such truth (Unger's Bible Dictionary). It is impossible to truly *believe* God's truth without being *transformed* by His truth. God-given faith enlists every aspect of our being.

I. Understanding faith:

1. The Protestant Reformers understood faith as having three essential elements:
 - *Notitia* – knowledge of the facts
 - *Assensus* – personal assent to the facts (confidence in the facts)
 - *Fiducia* – trust; entrusting oneself to Christ (*moral trust* –rolling of the whole soul upon Christ, is essential to justifying faith) “closing with Christ”
2. What knowledge (*notitia*) is required for saving faith?
 - The Gospel – 1 Cor 15:3-5
 - Hearing the Word – Romans 10:17
 - Is mere knowledge of the truth enough? -- James 2:19
3. Personal assent (*assensus*) is also required for saving faith.
 - To believe in a *saving* way; there must be assent to the fact that Christ is the only Savior of sinners; and that His salvation is applicable to you personally.
 - One Scriptural example of personal assent is Hebrews 11:6
4. Personal appropriation of the truth (*fiducia*) is also required for saving faith.
 - Faith means *entrusting* oneself to Christ.
 - Faith means casting the entire welfare of the soul upon Christ.
 - Faith renounces self as source of salvation; and looks away from self to Christ.
 - 2 Tim 1:12 – “For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know *whom I have believed* and a I am convinced that He is able to guard what *I have entrusted* to Him until that day.”
 - The Holy Spirit convicts a person sin in preparation for the gift of faith. No one truly believes unless he has been, by the Spirit, ‘morally bankrupted of all merit’.
5. Many religious people would give general assent to the facts of the gospel (*noticia* and *assensus*); but they have never personally trusted Christ as *their* Savior—indeed as their only hope for salvation. If a person is trusting in something else for salvation (good works; orthodoxy; church membership; baptism; a childhood prayer, an experience; etc.) then they are not trusting in Christ alone. Countless individuals take *presumption* for faith. (Define *presumption*) (Note statistics from Paul Washer).
6. “Having faith;” or being “A Person of faith” is an incomplete sentence because faith always has an object (genuine faith cannot exist without a vital connection to its object (Mk 11:22). Faith is the gift of God (Phil 1:29; Eph 2:8, 9).

J. Understanding justification and why it is essential to the purity of the gospel:

1. Believers are justified by faith (Rom 3:24, 28).

2. Justification means to declare righteous or to treat, or to regard as righteous.
3. The word has a judicial (or forensic) sense; as in declaring a man “not guilty.”
4. An example is in Luke 18:9-14
5. What about James 2:21-26? James uses a *secondary* sense of the word *justified* meaning to “show a ‘living faith’, or to prove righteous.”
6. Justification *defines* ‘right-standing’ with God (Rom 3:28; 5:1, 9; 8:30; Gal 3:11).
7. Justification is:
 - A **forensic act** (note the parallel forensic act of sin imputed in Romans 5:17-19ff).
 - An **instantaneous act** (by nature of how the words are used; it is impossible to read *a process* into the passages cited).
 - A **once-for-all act** (not repeatable; note the sequence of punctiliar aorist verbs in Romans 8:29, 30. In Romans 5:1 the perfect tense expresses a completed past act with abiding results that continue into the present).

K. *Understanding repentance:*

1. What is repentance? The Greek words *metanoëo* (verb) and *metanoia* (noun) literally mean “to think after,” implying a change of mind.
2. Is the meaning of *metanoëo* nothing more than a *change of mind*. No “turning from sin” is required for salvation; only changing your mind about who Jesus is.
3. In the Scriptures, *metanoëo*, (and in the O.T. the Hebrew word, *shub*) implies a bi-directional turning (180 degrees).
 - A turning *from* sin (Rev 9:21)
 - A turning *from* dead works (Hebrews 6:1; 9:12-14)
 - A turning *from* idols (1 Thess 1:9)
 - A turning *toward* God (Acts 20:21; 26:20)
4. Biblical repentance cannot mean *only* a change of mind: “Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance” (Mt 3:6-8). “But I kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance” (Acts 26:20).
 - See: Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim 2:25; 2 Pet 3:9; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 2 Cor 7:10.
 - Note that repentance “leads to life” (Acts 11:18), and to the “knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim 2:25). Repentance is the opposite of perishing (2 Pet 3:9). These are all expressions of salvation. *Discussion: Is repentance a divine gift? If so, must the sinner ‘do’ the repenting?*
6. Repentance is turning from sin toward God.
 - It is an essential part of salvation (Mark 1:14, 15; Matt 4:17; Luke 5:32).
 - “Repentance is therefore intrinsic to the Gospel narrative. Some have attempted to remove the idea of repentance from the Gospel out of fear it will add a human work to salvation. This has often taken the form of equating faith and repentance as synonymous ideas, or that faith is a work of God and repentance is a work of man. Both of these ideas are false constructs” (Dr. Gregory Behle).

L. *Salvation and good works:*

1. Salvation is by faith and not by works: Eph 2:8, 9; Rom 4:1-5; Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16.
2. How do works demonstrate salvation? See Jas 2:14-26; Mt 7:21-23; 1 Jn 2:3, 4.

M. *Understanding regeneration:*

1. Regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit in which the *spiritually dead* sinner is *made alive* in Jesus Christ and thereby becomes a new creature in Christ.
“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. . .” (Titus 3:5). “. . .present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom 6:13b).
2. Regeneration is sovereignly bestowed, miraculous change in one’s nature:
 - *Palenggenesisia* – regeneration (Titus 3:5)
 - *Avagenao* – born again (1 Peter 1:3, 23)
 - *Apokueo* – bring forth; give birth (James 1:18)
 - *Gennao* – born from above (John 3:3, 7)
 - *Zoopoieisen* – make alive (Colossians 2:13).
3. Justification is forensic action (*a legal declaration in heaven about the believing sinner*); but regeneration implies an actual (ontological) change as one becomes:
 - A new creature in Christ (2 Cor 5:17)
 - A child of God (John 1:12)
 - Alive from the dead (Rom 6:13)
 - A partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4)
 - Born of the Spirit (John 3:8)
4. Regeneration is an instantaneous and complete act; not a process:
“Truly truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (Jn 5:24). “For He delivered us out of the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col 1:13).

II. Justification by Grace through Faith

A. THE NEED OF JUSTIFICATION

1. God has given a **pronouncement** about the sinful state of mankind (Rom 3:9, 10ff; 3:23; 5:12).
2. Every unbeliever has a legal standing before God of **condemnation** (Jn3:36; Rom 5:16, 18; Mark 16:16).

B. THE NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION

1. Justification is a **verdict** about the believing sinner (Rom 3:22-28).
2. Justification is a legal **declaration** by God in **heaven** concerning a man, that he stands **righteous** in God’s sight (Rom 5:18-19; 3:26).
3. The righteousness God is looking at when He justifies the believer is resident in **Christ** (Phil 3:9; Rom 4:23-25).
4. Man’s most perplexing need can be framed as a question, “How can sinful man be

just before a holy God?" *CIRCLE* the answers that are false: ***All are false***

- a.) God has lowered the impossible standard of His law since no one is able to keep it perfectly.
 - b.) God now accepts faith instead of perfect obedience.
 - c.) God makes people holy, ethical and good through Christ so that they might be pronounced just and acceptable before Him.
 - d.) Through justification, God makes a person holy on the inside so that they can be accepted by Him.
5. The kind of righteousness a person must have in order to be accepted by God is: (*CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY*)
- a.) sincerely doing one's best.
 - b.) active in good works.
 - c.) practicing self-sacrificing service.
 - d.) ***absolutely perfect righteousness.***
6. The following phrases apply either to justification, or sanctification. Place an "S" by those that refer to sanctification, and a "J" by those referring to justification.
- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| S gradual | S righteousness imparted |
| J instantaneous | J a judicial decision |
| J righteousness imputed | S an internal change |
| S a process | J a legal declaration |
| J a change of status | J not a process |
7. (see Rom 8:1; Heb 10:14.) Justification means that the believer has: (*CIRCLE ANSWER*) a.) no sin in God's sight. **b.) *no legal guilt in God's sight.*** c.) no depraved nature in God's sight. d.) all of the above.
8. (read Rom 4:1-10ff.) Those saved in the Old Testament were saved by keeping the Law, not by justification. True or ***False***

C. THE AGENT OF JUSTIFICATION

1. God justifies us by **Faith** alone (Gal 2:15-21).
2. God justifies the person who looks away from himself and trusts in **Christ alone** (Titus 3:5-7; Rom 4:5-6).
3. Circle the statements that are true of justification by faith:
 - a.) ***God justifies by faith so that we will know that our salvation is for His glory, is by grace alone, and through Christ alone.***
 - b.) ***Faith is the "empty hand" that grasps Christ as Savior.***
 - c.) Faith is so important, it is the very ground and foundation of God's verdict that we are righteous.
 - d.) ***Faith justifies because it concentrates all confidence upon Christ and looks away from self.***

D. THE LEGAL BASIS OF JUSTIFICATION

1. The legal basis for God to justify the sinner is **Christ's finished** work of substitution (2 Cor 5:19-21; Is 53:5-6; Gal 3:13).
2. The ground of justification is not our faith, but is the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:24) which He accomplished by His **propitiation** (Rom 3:25).

3. Justification is a “double imputation” (2 Cor 5:21). If Christ’s righteousness is imputed to the believer, then what was imputed to Christ, or “put on His account?” ***the believer’s sin***
4. To impute is to charge to one’s account. When Christ was crucified, the believer’s sin was **imputed** to His account. He became **officially** guilty of our sin.
5. The requirements of God satisfied by Christ’s “active” obedience was perfect obedience to God’s **Law** (Mt 5:17; Rom 10:1-4; Phil 3:9).
6. Justification involves both the gift of **positive righteousness** , and the gift of **forgiveness** of the guilt of sin (2 Cor 5:21).
7. False gospels deny biblical justification by faith. No man can be right with God (have right standing) unless he receives the righteousness of God by faith (justification). Every false gospel is a refusal to submit to the **righteousness** of God (Rom 10:1-4).
8. Justification could never have taken place without a perfect Substitute who was given by God and accepted by God in our place (read Rom 5:12-20.) According to verse 14, **Adam** was a type of Him (Christ) who was to come. In verses 18-19, Christ is doing the work of a **substitute**.

E. THE FOUR “DIMENSIONS” OF JUSTIFICATION

1. The believer is justified **JUDICIALLY** by **GOD** (Rom 3:26, 30; 8:30, 33).
2. The believer is justified **MERITORIOUSLY** by **CHRIST** (Rom 3:24; 4:23, 25; 5:8, 9, 18; 10:4).
3. The believer is justified **MEDIATELY** by **FAITH** (Rom 1:17; 3:26, 30; Gal 2:16; 3:24).
4. The believer is justified **EVIDENTIALLY** by **WORKS** (James 2:21-25; 1 Jn 2:4, 15, 19; 3:6-10; 4:8, 20).

F. JUSTIFICATION AND THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

1. (read 1 Cor 15:17.) In this passage, Paul connects the resurrection of Christ with the **forgiveness** of our sins. Why would we still be in our sins if He were not raised from the dead? ***Resurrection proves Christ’s work is accepted by God.***
2. Why is Christ said to be *vindicated* or *justified* in 1 Timothy 3:16? How was this *vindication* for the purpose of our justification? (see Rom 4:25.) ***Christ has been exalted to God’s right hand (Phil 2:9; Acts 2:32, 33).***
3. Prior to the Fall, Adam was in a state of innocence in the Garden. But even in innocence, Adam was not confirmed in a state of righteousness. In effect, he was on probation. By contrast, the believer in Christ is more safe and secure than unfallen Adam was because the believer has been **confirmed** in Christ in a state of unchanging favor with God (1 Pet 1:3-5). Union with Christ means that though we

have a race to finish, our **probation** is over (Rom 8:33-34; 2 Tim 1:8-12).

4. (read Phil 2:5-11 & Heb 5:9; 9:28.) Christ's exaltation was based upon His meritorious obedience. His obedience merited **salvation** for all who put their trust in Him. If Christ has always been God, then how, or in what way, was He exalted? *He was exalted in His humanity.*

G. THE REALITY AND RESULT OF JUSTIFICATION

1. (read Eph 5:6 & James 2:17-21.) Is it possible for a person to truly believe upon Christ for salvation, and then to go on living an unchanged life. Why? Or why not? *No; see Jas 2; 2 Cor 5:14; 1 Jn 3:9; Rom 6:1-13ff.; 8:1-13.*
2. The truly justified person will strive after holiness in heart and life. Explain what is meant by the following statement: "Progress in holiness means that our condition spiritually moves ever closer to our position spiritually." *At salvation righteousness is IMPUTED; in progressive sanctification righteousness is IMPARTED.*
3. When a believer becomes presumptuous and careless, he will incur the displeasure of the Heavenly Father. *True* or *False*
4. When God chastises His justified child, it may involve painful correction and the loss of the sense of God's countenance (presence). Explain the difference between correction for sin, and experiencing the just penalty for sin? (note Heb 12.) *God's correction of a believer is not penal but 'parental'.*
5. Explain why justification from the guilt of sin does not encourage sinning. (Use Scripture with your answer.) *See Romans 6; Titus 2; Colossians 3; etc.*
6. James 2 is not dealing with the **ground** of justification, but with the **evidences** of faith. When God tested Abraham, it was for the **demonstration** of Abraham's faith. (see Gen 22:1.)
7. (James 2:22) "Faith" without works is a deception; it is false hope. The foolish and vain described in this verse do not have a commitment to do the **will** of God.
8. (James 2:23) The kind of faith that justifies will always express itself in **action**, in the **works** of faith.
9. (James 2:24-26) True faith must bring forth **fruit** in order to prove (before men) that it is a **living** faith.
10. In James 2, the Apostle cites the need for works, but only as an **evidence** of living faith as opposed to a dead faith that is merely a verbal empty profession.
11. God tests our faith in order to **prove** it, **refine** it, **strengthen** it, and **demonstrate** it. (see 1 Pet 1:4-9.)