

TREK 201

CORE CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

Lesson 10 – SOTERIOLOGY (STUDY OF SALVATION)

“Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.” Philippians 2:12b (NLT)

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Rockpointe Church

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SOTERIOLOGY—STUDY OF SALVATION

Read the following packet of information carefully, your life (eternal life) may depend on it. This packet will guide you through spiritually oriented questions to intellectually oriented questions, from faith to knowledge. The first four pages deal with what matters most: that YOU know God and can truly experience His salvation. Nothing could be worse than reading and studying about biblical salvation and never having tasted it for yourself. Please read carefully! After we spend some time unpacking what Salvation is, and what God intends to do in your life through salvation, from pages five and following, we dive into a more difficult and controversial understanding of how God saves and who . . . No doubt the latter portion of this study will raise many questions in your mind. Good! Study God's Word for yourself and seek His face to understand better (Acts 17:11). Even though this material may confuse you, discourage you, or at best, stretch your belief and "comfort" zone theologically – what you are embarking upon in this study should make you a better Christian as you "*study to show yourself approved . . . handling accurately God's Word*" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Know that what is presented below is a combination of "sides" between those who embrace more firmly Man's freedom in salvation (known loosely by the namesake "Arminianism") and those who hold more firmly to God's sovereignty in Salvation (known loosely as "Calvinism") – and those who hold to truths somewhere in the middle of those two positions or "camps." Though all these sides will be presented without bias, so that you can make up your mind and seek the Scripture's answers to these many claims, your task is to ask God for wisdom and spiritual insight into His Word that He may give you an enduring peace when you cannot "reconcile" the seeming paradoxes and twin truths of salvation in Scripture which in the end... are still mysteries to the human mind and heart (James 1:5; Phil 4:6-7).

With that said, there will be some conclusions which represent my best effort to merge these seemingly contradictory perspectives. Please note that many of the conclusions which are underlined below represent my perspective (Matthew's), my best educated guess as a professional theologian, and these views do not necessarily represent Rockpointe Church as a whole, the elders, the pastoral staff, or you ☺. Though I present my findings below, the point is that within evangelical Christianity and at Rockpointe there is room enough for us to peaceably, respectably, and lovingly disagree. Truly, it's ok to disagree (Acts 15:36-39). Most important however, is our willingness to focus on those things which are essential to our common faith and wonderful fellowship in Christ Jesus (Gal. 5:22-23). I pray this packet spurs healthy and encouraging discussion.

Embracing God's mystery:

A few weeks ago, we considered the question, "why study theology at all?" Well, here you are ten weeks later—and I pray that you are a more fulfilled believer

for it! When we considered the question of why tackle the study of theology, we appealed to a direct verse in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 29:29: *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may (obey) do all the words of this law.”* We considered two realities from this verse: (1) there are divine mysteries that we –as humans on this earth- will never be privileged to unravel or know in any great depth (Is. 55:8-9; 1 Cor. 13:12; Rom 11:33-35) such as the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, and the mystery of salvation (how and who God saves), employing both God’s perfect sovereignty and man’s free will. These are “mysteries,” realities which are blocked in our limited, finite, and depraved state. Though we will grapple and struggle to understand these theological enigmas fully, on this side of heaven – these deeper realities of God’s nature and action will remain mysteries. Perhaps one day God will fully reveal all these truths in a way that glorified humans can perceive and embrace them in all their glory (1 Cor. 12:13).

(2) Second, in Deut. 29:29, we see that God has also duly revealed certain truths, laws, and divine mysteries which mankind can perceive and “wrestle with” whereby man can establish logical truths and systematic understanding (explanation) from God’s natural and specific revelation given through God’s Word, Jesus’ life, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, what God wants us to know, He has given and made “clear” through His Word which is illuminated through His living Spirit. Therefore, just as there are divine mysteries hidden from us, so there are great biblical truths we as Christians are to embrace, know, and teach our families, churches, and communities. God has not called His children to be ignorant or lazy toward the deeper things of God.

Therefore, rather than being confused with the topic of salvation and rather than “fighting” about the great mysteries of salvation (as many Christians have disagreed over the nuances of how we are saved), I believe God is much more interested in the reality of whether or not YOU have tasted authentic salvation and that you have been truly converted in your soul from death to life!

Salvation –the process of Salvation, the “order” of salvation, and the design of who is saved, and why they are saved (within the study of salvation) are all mysteries to the human heart. “Salvation,” **defined as the movement of God to rescue the human soul from spiritual death and the ultimate presence of sin and destruction**, is a biblical fact and personal reality to be experienced spiritually and (ultimately) physically –why/how?? **BECAUSE GOD makes it so!** (Eph. 2:4-5). This is what God not only wants YOU to know but to experience, His saving love and gracious giving of eternal life. He wants you to know that HE SAVES and that He is still “in the business” of saving and changing lives (Ps. 68:20).

Ultimately, the only reason why you have been converted from death to life, or converted from being an unbeliever to a Believer, or “saved” (if you are a Baptist ☺) is because *God saved you*. The Bible says that Christians are those now who have been “rescued” from the domain of darkness and placed into God’s kingdom of light and righteousness (Col. 1:13-14). This salvation is from God and is a gift from God who alone is our hope. My prayer is that as you read these very lines you will pause to consider the depths from which God has pulled you and delivered you into light, love, and an eternity with Him. May you reflect on what it means to be truly saved, truly a part of God’s family, to be truly a new creature who ever lives to give God glory and thanks for saving you (2 Cor. 5:17). More than simply knowing the process by which we are saved (the study of salvation), God wants you to know Him personally and *experience salvation* – today!

Have YOU experienced God’s Salvation?

Well, you might say, what’s the big deal with salvation? So what? You may feel that today’s churches place too much emphases on evangelism and calling for people to be saved. You might reason that you are “spiritual” or a very “religious person” or that you are basically a “good person” and will probably make it into heaven based on your “good” life, religious dedication, and God’s good grace. Well, the Bible has an answer for this rationale: (Matthew 7:13-14—“*The gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction (hell), and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to eternal life, and there are few who find it.*”). Jesus says in those days, “*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*” (Matthew 7:21)

**No where in the Bible does God give permission to anyone to be reconciled to Himself (saved) because of their “good” life, good deeds and actions, or because they were faithful in church, were baptized, or have said some prayer(s). None of these things can bring spiritual life (Is. 64:6; Ro. 2:11; Heb. 9:27)

For you and me, as human beings, *God’s salvation is everything*. Without God, without the possibility of salvation, and without the actuality that *you* have been saved – there is no hope (1 Cor. 15:17) and no life. Rather, without God changing our life and rescuing us from our sin, from our sinful natures and choices, and from our selfish sin-wrecked world, our lives amount to little-- a temporary miserable experience in this broken hopeless world. God’s salvation is everything and *you* were created to glorify God through your life and His saving you!

***Have you experienced this life-transforming reality of “salvation?” Have you ever truly asked God into your life to save you, to rescue you? Have you confessed your truest need of God as a Savior, recognizing that you are a sinner and are in need of being spiritually rescued? Jesus Christ died on the cross and took our punishment for all of our sins that **IF** we ask Christ to save us, He will save us and remove from us our sin, our guilt, and our shame; Christ will convert your heart from death to life and give to you eternal life [heaven – as His greatest gift to you] (Rom. 10:13). If you have never asked Christ into your life, if you have never repented of your sins and begged God for mercy, for redemption, then I beg of you. . . do it now! Right now, stop what you are doing and pray “God forgive me, I know I am a sinner and I need to you to save me. Please come into my life, please come into my heart and save my needy soul. Jesus I am sorry for my sinful life and I will turn away from my sinful actions and habits. Lord, help me. Lord save me. I ask that you come into the deepest part of me and change my soul for good. I invite you in. I invite you to take charge of my life. Lord, you are in control of all of me from this day forward. I believe that you are the Savior of the world and that you, as God’s Son, as God in the flesh, did rise from the grave. I believe in you and I trust in you with all of my life. Lord, Jesus, save me. Thank you for saving me.” (After you pray and ask Christ into your life, then email me Matthew@rpcstaff.org or email the leader of this study and tell someone of the greatest decision of your life)

Salvation, if you have experienced the deepest grace of God’s life toward you, then that is enough. Surely, we don’t have to understand it in order to have it. Jesus says unless you become like a child, and have “child-like” faith – then you cannot be saved (Mt. 18:3). In other words, trusting in Christ for salvation is not an intellectual process (even though our Christian Faith is very rational). Rather, trusting in Christ to save us is our deepest heart trusting in the person of God to do what He promised He would do – to save needy sinners who ask by faith (Ro. 10:13).

I. The Right Questions:

So, what have people been fighting about (disagreeing about) when it comes to the topic of salvation? Though we may have experienced salvation personally, many Christians still push the boundaries of God’s mystery in salvation and seek to “understand” all the why’s and how’s of salvation. Ultimately, all we can know is what God has revealed. Thus, when searching out the deeper realities of God’s saving design and purposes for the world, we must begin and end with Scripture. When considering the topic of salvation, seven main questions are typically proposed: Though we cannot in such short space tackle all seven questions with any depth, we will focus on a few basic answers which will help shape the

discussion of soteriology for you and others, giving you the tools to seek Scripture in search of meaningful answers.

- Relevant questions within the study of salvation:

- 1) Is Salvation in some way limited or do all people ever born go to heaven eventually (Universalism).
- 2) Does God have two “wills” or desires or intentions- in that He desires the salvation of the world (mankind – 1 Tim. 2:4), but yet not all are ultimately saved (Mt. 7:13-14)?
- 3) Did Christ die for all people on the Cross (pay for all sins provisionally) or did Christ die only for those who will be saved- that is the elect?
- 4) If God is truly sovereign over ALL things, then how is it possible for mankind to be truly FREE? Aren't sovereignty and freedom incompatible (self-defeating) concepts?
- 5) What is man's responsibility in salvation? Can man truly reject God and God's Spirit?
- 6) For God's own perfect and righteous purpose, will, and redemptive design - does God reprobate some from the beginning of the world (restrict them from salvation), simply “not” choose some for salvation, or just pass over some while positively choosing others?
- 7) If I am truly “saved” or converted, can I ever lose my salvation? (Experience apostasy or reject my faith)?

- Let's Begin: The Limiting of Salvation vs. Universalism (= all will be saved)

Even though God clearly expresses His desire that all men would respond to Him and His gracious offer of an eternal (reconciled) relationship with Him through salvation (Ps. 81:10-13; 2 Pt. 3:9, 1 Tim. 2:4; Mt. 18:14; Ez. 18:23; 33:11), within God's gracious redemptive history plan, salvation is at some point LIMITED –since Not all are saved (vs. universalism) – Mt. 7:13-14; vs. 21

If then, as the Bible demonstrates that salvation is at some point limited, that is, that not every person ever born will eventually be in heaven, on what (how??) is salvation limited / OR conditioned upon? [This is the question which drives Christians and theologians to explore all Scripture and attempt a cohesive and rational answer for HOW GOD SAVES.]

II. How Salvation is limited:

1) A plausible answer to the limitation of salvation is that salvation is limited based entirely upon man's response to God's offer of salvation. That means that God saves men based on God's perfect foreknowledge of man's future free choices. Since man is truly free, man can and might respond to God's offer of salvation. Since man is truly free, then he can also reject God and God's offer of salvation. In eternity past, God knows which way every man will decide (to accept or reject Christ) – and God predestines the future based on man's future response to God's offer. Thus, in this perspective, salvation is limited (i.e. not all are saved) based on man's personal and significant freedom to accept or reject Christ's offer of salvation.

This theological perspective is one of the facets of **Arminianism**:

2) A second plausible answer is that salvation is limited based entirely upon God's desire and own good pleasure. Since God is perfectly just, merciful, gracious, and loving – not to mention sovereign in all things, whatever actions God embraces – these actions reflect His loving and just character. Therefore, since in God's redemptive plan, because of Adam's sin all have a sinful nature and eventually choose sin on their own, all are already condemned – God graciously intervenes and saves some (not all) for His glory and purpose. In God's righteousness, He does not have to save any. God is just to allow men to stand condemned in their own sin and wayward depravity. Yet, in God's mercy, He spares some of their deserved judgment of hell. In God's grace and for His own perfect will and pleasure, God intervenes and rescues some to spend eternity with Him. The rest, God allows to suffer their own just punishment. All of this works out perfectly, the redeemed and the lost, to render God the greatest possible glory within His redemptive purposes for creation.

This theological perspective is one of the facets of **Calvinism**:

3) There are a few other possibilities, such as the "Middle-knowledge" position. In brief, those who adhere to **Molinism** or Middle-knowledge believe that God knowing all the potential worlds which could have been created (counter-factuals), God chose to create the one *actual* world (our present universe) where the most possible people could and would be saved. In this perspective, God retains His sovereignty and man retains his genuinely free will.

*From these perspectives, (1) and (2) being the most popular throughout the Church age since the Reformation (1500's), both sides argue biblically that man is

truly free while the other position (2) focuses more on God's sovereignty. Does the Bible teach both? Does the Bible teach both God's Sovereignty and Man's Freedom (free moral agency)

READ John 6:29-70:

In these passages, 7 times Jesus states plainly that man is responsible for his own salvation (i.e. that man must choose Christ or respond in belief for salvation). Further, 7 times, Jesus declares that God alone is the sole author of man's salvation and is the causal agent which enacts salvation on behalf of man.

In short, just in this one passage, the Bible teaches both that man has free will and is responsible for his response to God (per perspective # 1 [Arminianism] AND that God is sovereign in salvation and is responsible for man's salvation. In this passage and many like it, we see *both happening at the same time* (Jn. 6:29, 37, 40). In the Bible, we see that God teaches BOTH that God is sovereign over all things while (at least in this universe – temporally) man' is responsible for his actions and "faith" toward God. Since both God's sovereignty AND man's responsibility (free will) are taught in Scripture, we might call these "Twin Truths."

* Twin Truths are not paradoxes or contradictions. The Bible reveals twin truths of both God's sovereignty and man's freedom and responsibility.

READ these "Both And" verses: Jn. 1:12-13; Acts 17:26-27; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; 2 Thess. 2:13. – what do they all have in common? Can you identify the act of God's sovereignty in these verses? Man's responsibility and action?

- If God is not schizophrenic and He has declared that both Twin Truths of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are biblical ideals and part of our universe (temporal reality), then how could we explain what is happening in salvation?

III. Man's Free will: Libertarian (completely free) vs. Limited freedom -

READ Acts 27:20-34:

As a part of God's perfect and sovereign creation, He enabled man to employ Free moral agency - to be able to choose (morally and rationally) between two or more (given) options; to be able to logically consider, willfully desire, and exercise the power of contrary choice (2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Peter 5:2). The ability for man to freely choose X (choice) communicates his own voluntary (non-compulsive) capacity.

However, basic to man's freedom is the universe in which man is to exercise that freedom. Man is bound by physical laws (i.e. gravity) and just because he feels "free" to defy the laws of gravity does not mean man can fly unaided. Gravity limits man's freedom. Many

other physical laws limits man's freedom and potential. Man cannot create matter from nothing. Man cannot create life from inanimate objects or compounds. Man cannot make atoms and molecules change their natural function, design, or composition though he may try to manipulate them or create compounds. Just as man is limited by the physical universe in which he lives, so man is limited spiritually by the spiritual reality in which he lives.

-After the fall, man's spiritual essence died (Gen. 2:17). Man inherited a sin nature which has corrupted man severely (Ro. 5:12). Man is depraved and corrupted wholly within and without. He lives condemned to an eternity without God or without hope, UNLESS God intervenes (Eph. 2:1, 5).

-Since man is severely depraved, his willful functions, desires, and yearnings are bent toward evil and sin. When man chooses and acts on those desires, man actually sins and has earned eternal punishment (Rom. 3:23; 6:23)

-However, though man is depraved and spiritually lost, and though his mind, will, and emotions are bent toward sin since the fall, man still has the capacity to "freely" or voluntarily (uncoerced) choose between given options.

Axioms of Free will:

- God created a sovereign universe where man is truly a "free" creature
- Freedom is not canceled out by sovereignty, autonomy is!
- Man is truly "free" in all things except for his own sinful nature, the physical environment (i.e. gravity), his own physiology, history, laws of nature, and providence.
- Free choices infer inclination; we choose based on our desire (greatest inclination); we are bound to choose according to our nature (mind & will) = both are marred by sin; in a sinful state, man voluntarily chooses based on highest urge. Man's greatest desire & highest urge are rebellion from God
- God alone is absolutely Free; God alone is Autonomous; God alone is independent (non-contingent) of all things; therefore, man alone enjoys *limited* freedom & voluntarily acts w/in universe.

I want to contest as unbiblical three widely-accepted concepts in terms of man's ability. Libertarian free will holds that:

- 1.) Man is an autonomous creature and can live independently of outside forces, nature, environment, physical laws, including social and emotional laws (pretexts) or supernatural/metaphysical laws of the heart and soul.
- 2.) Man has and can employ libertarian free will, such that man can choose to do whatever and be whatever he decides.
- 3.) Man can choose to or not to respond to God's presence or salvation – at man's prompting or completion.

In summary: I (Matthew) hold that only God is truly autonomous. Man is not. Only God is truly (entirely) free as in libertarian free. Man is limited in this universe by both natural (physical) and spiritual laws. Worse still, man is depraved and has the scourge of moral depravity in his life because of Adam's original sin (Ro. 5:12). Thus, even though man retains the marred image of God within himself after the fall of Adam, man's ever desire is to continually sin against God and rebel (Gen. 6:5; Ps. 53:1-3; Jer. 17:9; Ro. 3:10-12)

IV. How God Can be both Sovereign in salvation while allowing Man's responsibility:

Thus, in a basic, healthy, internally consistent soteriology (study of salvation), one needs to be able to answer all relevant data and questions with a consistent biblical hermeneutic (Bible interpretation) and in light of **all** of the biblical data revealed. In other words, if we are to attempt an answer of how we are saved in light of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, we must include ALL the biblical data. We cannot ignore those verses which we do not like or which may not seem to make sense. We must incorporate all the relevant Scripture into our understanding in order to have a most accurate attempt of understanding how God saves.

- **How are we saved?**

A. In the Present Temporal Reality:

(Earth in present day), as the Gospel is preached (Rom. 10:17ff), the Word of God delivered, The Holy Spirit working and drawing (Jn. 6:44; 63), and Christ's genuine offer of salvation made plainly available to the world (mankind) [Ephesians 1:13] - man "feels" God's prompting and must come to terms with the

- A. Light – he has been given (Acts 8; Ethiopian Eunuch; 10 Roman, Cornelius)
- B. The Natural Revelation (Rom. 1:16ff) of God's reality and complex/design of creation (God's sovereignty and providence)
- C. Special Revelation (Jn. 3:16-20) – (Jesus is only way to heaven: John 14:6; Acts 4:12)

And through his perceived (libertarian) free will [moral agency], man then

1. Thinks about God (Ro.1:18-23)
2. Desires to know more about "God" (Acts 8 –Ethiopian Eunuch; Acts 10 Cornelius)
3. Responds to the light given about God (John 14:12-14; Mk. 11:24)
4. Embraces more truth given about God (Ro. 10:17; Eph. 1:13)

5. Experiences conviction in his spirit/soul that he is sinner and needs a savior (Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Jn. 1:9)
6. Responds by belief that he needs to repent of sins in order to be saved (Acts 2:38; 3:19; Heb. 11:6)
7. (Chooses Christ), “faiths” and believes on Christ to save him (Jn. 3:16; 3:36; Mk. 16:16; Rom. 10:9, 13; 1 Jn. 5:1; Rev. 22:17)

*The Bible teaches that man is responsible for himself to respond to the gospel, inferring that he can and should: (Mt. 11:28; Lk. 5:31-32; 13:3; Acts 2:40; 3:19; 13:38-39; 17:30; Jn. 5:24; 8:24;

B. Man’s Problem: The Bible **also** teaches that in man’s rebellious and sinful nature, he naturally and willfully (acting upon one’s own deepest desire) rejects God and cannot rightly respond to God or “be” good. (Mt. 23:37; Lk. 7:30; Heb. 12:15). Thus, man in his spiritually dead state do what all dead men do. . . nothing. In other words, the rest of the biblical data reveal that man does not initiate his salvation nor can he truly rightly respond to God since (before God works in man’s heart to regenerate life in it – Titus 3:5) he is spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1, 5). Man is not basically good and cannot “save” himself nor do enough “good” deeds to be saved or work with God to complete his salvation (Ro. 3:10-12). In short, man is lost, and damned, and condemned, and worse dead . . . UNTIL God shows up and makes man alive – (Eph. 2:4-5).

THEREFORE,

C. In Spiritual Reality (Non-temporal/eternal):

Before the foundation of the world, God knew you, loved you, and chose you In HIM before He ever created you (Eph. 1:4; Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

- Thus, Salvation is from the Lord: Jonah 2:9.

- God saved us **not** based on our “faith” (works) (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; 2 Tim. 1:9)

In saving us, the Holy Spirit then:

1. Initiated the concept and need for salvation in your life (John 15:26; 16:8-11)
2. Drew you to God and showed you your guilt (Jn. 6:44; 65; Eph. 1:18; 1 Cor. 2:14)
3. Called you to salvation and life (Ti. 2:11)
4. Provided you with saving faith as a grace gift of God (Eph. 2:9; 1 Th. 1:9; 2 Cor. 7:7:10)
5. Enabled your belief (Ez. 36:26)

6. Regenerated your heart from death to life (Jn. 6:63; Titus 3:5; 1 Pt. 1:2; 2 Th. 2:13-14; 2 Cor. 3:6)
7. Filled you permanently with life (Ro. 8:10)

Thus, when we were DEAD spiritually, Christ alone made us alive (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13; 1 Pt. 1:3)

Salvation then is **based solely in GOD**, for God's glory and by His good will and pleasure.

- He elected and chose us BEFORE the foundation of the world (Mt. 42:22; 1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:4; Jn. 15:16; 2 Th. 2:13; Rev. 17:14)
- He Predestined us to salvation (Ro. 8:29; Acts 13:48)
- God grants repentant hearts (2 Tim. 2:25) & The Lord opens hearts (Acts 16:14)
- God can and does close the heart and "seal" one's fate (2 Th. 2:10-12)

Thus, in my (Matthew's) estimation, Salvation is **NOT** based on:

-Man's choice of God; Man's future belief or choice in God; God's foreknowledge of man's future free acts/choices. Arminianism is wrong because it gives too much weight to man's apparent libertarian free will.

-Middle Knowledge (Molinism) of the perfect potential world where as many as possible will believe in Christ. Again, I believe that Molinism is attempting to uphold man's libertarian free will and accommodate both God's sovereignty and man's significantly free will. I don't see the Bible making the same distinction. God is all sovereign. Man does have freedom, but it is limited in many ways.

-Consider then this verse from Jesus' own mouth: "**Who then can be saved? But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'**" (Mt. 19:25-26)

Remember Again: Though God is completely sovereign in election and predestination over all who are saved throughout eternity, based in God's justice – **All** of mankind are already damned, and justly condemned to Hell (Rom. 3:23; 5:12; 5:18; 6:23; Jn. 3:18). The reality that ANY are at all saved = God's Mercy and Grace. Since spiritually dead men cannot will themselves to "do good" or truly "respond to faith" they don't possess within themselves, all men are 100% dependent on God to intervene, to initiate salvation, to regenerate the soul, and provide the gift of faith (Eph. 2:9), enabling man to rightly respond to God as God moves in man's life.

Review:

1-God is Holy; Righteous; Just; and Love; (Ps. 77:13; 2 Thess. 1:6ff; 1 Jn. 4:8)

2-God has provided for the salvation (atonement) of the whole world (1Jn. 2:2) via Jesus. The atonement is sufficient for all sins, all people. Though only applied to some.

3-Heaven and eternity with God is a reality and a possibility for those who are saved (Jn. 3:16) This is God's promise and God's reward. God's heart is reconciliation & relationship.

4-Likewise, Hell (the eternal separation from God's presence) is real and exists to demonstrate God's utter Love and Justice within mankind in that God *forces no one* into heaven (Matthew 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 12:6; 16:23).

5-The Bible teaches that though God is love, heaven is real, and salvation is possible for the entire world, that STILL... the majority of humanity will spend an eternity in Hell. (Mt. 7:13- 14) So, WHY? Because of man or God?

6-Thus, God created this universe where in eternity past (spiritually) & in time (temporally) *simultaneously* God both Hands over [Rom. 1:24ff; 2 Thess. 2:11-12 (passes over) the non-elect/LOST while the non-elect simultaneously choose to reject God and seek their own way. Their hearts are bent away from God and He simply allows them to have (satisfy) the desires of their own heart/will = separation from God (His holiness).

7-God is just that awesome that he is able to create a universe where simultaneously He is sovereignly directing the paths and eternity of men (Pr. 21:1; Ezra 1:1; Dan. 1:9), while men, *temporally*, are choosing and responding to God by faith. He initiates as the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2)...to God be the glory –not man (Eph. 2:8-9).

Therefore, in temporal reality, founded in God's justice, mercy, and enduring love

1. God forces Himself on no one (none who would/will resist/reject Him); He does not force His will on those who do not want to be saved. (i.e. 2 Cor. 8:16-17)
2. God does no violence to our free moral agency as human beings in salvation
3. None who are saved, wanted or truly desired to reject God or were passionate to resist God's saving grace.
4. Conversely, none of the reprobate ever earned any grace and all who are damned and condemned are each guilty of original and active sin. They actively reject God!

5. None of the reprobate ever wanted or truly desired God, or saving faith, but only continually desired own free choice to reject God, resist God, and cut off all means of Truth and Christ as only way to Salvation. In essence, God does not reject and damn any that ever wanted Christ and truly desired salvation in Him.
6. Though man can seemingly resist the Holy Spirit, the elect (those who will be saved) don't resist the Spirit.
7. God does know who desires, who would desire, who will desire to be saved – though He does not based salvation on their future free act of desiring to be saved.

V. Christ's Atonement on the Cross:

Atonement: "Sufficient for all; efficient for the elect."

1. Concerning the intentionality of the Cross, God's design and intention: (in perfect agreement with the Trinitarian purpose (God's glory), design (Christ's death & resurrection), and plan (Christ's perfect execution and the Spirit's application),

-God accepted Christ's atonement before it occurs temporally (in time) on earth. Thus, the intended purpose and result of the atonement is for God to be able to judge (declare guilty and punish) ALL sin and death, and to be able to cover all of sin's effects, and to eradicate all of sin's power and enslavement, sin's destruction and ultimately all death – with the eternal reality that sin will be eradicated ultimately in glory. (Mt. 25:34; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8; Acts 2:23)

-Thus, in the atonement, the intention is to eradicate all consequences and real presence of sin, once for all, for any and all who have sinned, and for any and all sin (potential, actual, and future) and cover for all who could/would be redeemed by God that they would receive forgiveness in Christ (who paid for them the just/due penalty by Christ's sinless and perfect atonement for God's just wrath and judgment on sin). (Is. 53:6; Mt. 26:28; 1 Jn. 1:7-9; 1 Pt. 3:18-20)

-Jesus's blood covers all sin, every sin, once for all – Yet that gift of atoning blood still remains to be applied to every soul on the earth and is conditioned (limited) to those who receive Christ by faith. His work is paid for; yet, man is required to claim and apply His blood and payment to their individual lives, and individual's sin.

2. Concerning the Application of the atonement on the cross: There is a dualism to the atonement, in that just as the atonement is universal (paid for every sin and every man), the atoning blood is only effectually applied to believers – by their faith in Christ (1. God’s choice vs. Man’s choice). Thus, though there is universal atonement, there is also particular election – of those who will actually receive the benefits of the atonement.

The Atonement, therefore:

A. Intended for all; perfectly given to all; (Ti. 2:11; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:14; Ro. 6:10; Col. 1:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:19)

B. Yet, actually only applied to some. The atonement was only effectual for the elect (1 Tim. 4:10).

Just as God’s revelation of Himself was given to all, though many rejected this knowledge (Truth) –(Rom. 1:18-32). Similarly, the offer of the gospel is given to all (Lk. 2:10-11), though not all will receive it. Just as the “rain falls upon the just and the unjust” (Mt. 5:45), and as God does wonders and heals many, though only a few recognize it is God and thank Him (Lk. 17: 17), so God perfectly provides for the world’s needs while many outright reject His provision.

Christ’s death, payment, substitution, propitiation (covering), forgiveness – was perfectly accomplished –provisionally- for all humanity

Yet, ultimately Christ’s provision was not applied (equally applied) to all. Thus, some, will still have to pay for their own sins and experience God’s wrath as punishment due to their own sinful natures and willful transgressions against God’s nature and presence. Most will have to pay with their lives and eternity to satisfy God’s wrath (since these have actively rejected Jesus who was their only hope as a substitute and propitiated sacrifice). The lost willfully reject their only means of salvation in Christ Jesus and for these God does not intervene so as to save and render the gift of the Holy Spirit (salvation).

Summary, for the study of salvation:

In the end, the Bible makes no excuses that God alone is the author and finisher (completer) of our faith. The Bible does not try and hide that all are not saved. Salvation is limited. The Bible plainly teaches that eternal hell and torment wait for the lost masses. Why? Because God does not force himself on any. Men actively reject God. Yet, the Bible makes clear that God could –If He so wanted- have redeemed the whole world since He is sovereign. The fact that He does not leads us biblically to contend with the difficult reality that God does not choose to save all, and those who are saved, He chose purposely. If I am saved, it is solely due to God’s grace, not my action. Even those who are lost & damned – can glorify God in their life and death as they play out their purpose in life & eternity as a testimony to the Church – cf. Romans 9:22-24.

