

SOTERIOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

PART 16

KEY TERMS: SAVED, SALVATION, SAVIOR

The word saved, σώζω, means to save, deliver, make whole; it is to preserve safe from danger, loss, or destruction. "The basic sense of σώζω is well-being, wholeness, and health, either physical or spiritual" [Robert N. Wilkin, *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, "1 Timothy," s. v. "4:16"]. In the Soteriological sense it means to cause someone to experience divine salvation. Salvation, σωτηρία, means safety, deliverance, or preservation from danger or destruction. Not only is the idea of rescue in view but it can also refer to restoring back to a former state of safety and well-being. It is obvious these words apply to the secular sense of being saved from some sort of danger or calamity. They took on a Soteriological meaning in the New Testament. We have to always remember that Soteriological salvation has three tenses we call justification, sanctification, and glorification. Context has to be considered in determining what tense of salvation is being discussed in the text and it is vital that these words be understood in context. Most times this word is used in the New Testament it is not used in a justification salvation sense. This has led many people to confuse justification contexts with sanctification contexts. If the word is always interpreted to have implications for justification, then the tendency is to assign works to justification as a mandatory component of gaining eternal life. Let me show you a sanctification application of the word that is frequently credited to justification issues.

1 Timothy 4:16 ¹⁶Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation [σώζω] both for yourself and for those who hear you.

This verse is a sanctification salvation Scripture. Those who believe this to be a justification salvation verse will attach perseverance to justification salvation and claim that those who fail to persevere have "proven" they lack salvation and are lost even though they claim to be saved. The sanctification salvation in view here refers to being saved from temporal discipline now and the loss of rewards in the future. By doing these sanctification types of things the Christian is able to present a credible witness for Christianity to other people. It only takes an unguarded or inappropriate moment to destroy that witness and devastate our walk. Practicing appropriate biblical standards of behavior and developing an ever growing knowledge of sound doctrine leads to an ever increasing level of spiritual growth and maturity. This is a truth applicable to both the pastor and to those in the pew. In the context of this chapter, Paul is warning Timothy against falling prey to false teachers who are "deceitful spirits" teaching

“doctrines of demons.” True born again believers can be diverted from the faith if they are not solidly grounded in sound doctrine. People who are seduced away from the faith are subject to temporal discipline and the loss of rewards that will have lasting, eternal consequences. This verse is relating sanctification truth through adherence to sound doctrine which is the only way to avoid destruction due to temporal discipline and the future loss of rewards.

Many commentators completely misunderstand this verse and believe it refers to justification salvation. “It is not those who merely hear Timothy’s instructions but those who practice them who will be saved” [William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 46, “Pastoral Epistles”]. Examining the inaccurate interpretation Dr. Mounce assigns to this verse brings up an interesting point. In his time, he was one of the premier Greek scholars in academic Christianity. His book *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar* is the text most widely used by Bible colleges and seminaries to teach introductory Greek. My point is proficiency in the languages is a necessary tool for the exegetical study of the Scriptures, but if the output is incorrect, all the competence in the original languages is an exercise in futility. We must use the languages to arrive at the correct, biblically intended meaning. Dr. Mounce allowed his Reformed theology to effect his understanding of the meaning of this verse. In his commentary on 1 Timothy, Calvin wrote, “It is no ordinary spur to excite the thoughtfulness of pastors, when they learn that their own salvation, as well as that of the people, depends on the industry and perseverance with which they devote themselves to their office [Calvin is referring to justification salvation].” “So one more time Paul enjoins, persevere in them, because by so doing Timothy will save both himself, and especially his hearers....the language may not be theologically precise, but the meaning is clear. Salvation involves perseverance; and Timothy’s task in Ephesus is to model and teach the gospel in such a fashion that it will lead the church to perseverance in faith and love and hence to final, eschatological salvation. Thus both paragraphs in this section conclude with the great concern of the gospel—people’s salvation” [Gordon Fee, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series*, “1 & 2 Timothy, Titus”]. Fee is referring to justification and not to sanctification. John MacArthur wrote, “Perseverance in believing the truth always accompanies genuine conversion” [John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, (single volume)].

The problem for this line of thinking is Timothy and the people in Ephesus were already born again believers. No one who is born again has to do anything to stay born again or to even prove they are born again which is the basis used for the Reformed doctrine of perseverance of the saints. The absence of perseverance does not prove a person lacks the new birth. But we are called to holiness and that Christian walk requires a right life and a solid knowledge of sound doctrine in order to remain steadfast and to glorify the Lord in our individual walk. We also have to remember that for most of us, the

Christian life is not a steady, linear progression in and to holiness but is instead often a series of starts and stops, ups and downs, progress and regress, and so on. Real perseverance is continuing on and progressing in our walk despite the imperfections we display along the way. Perseverance means we never fall into unfaithfulness, disobedience, or even apostasy, but on the other hand it is not about proving our faith either. Perseverance is about being faithful. True born again believers, despite John MacArthur's words above, can fail to persevere but that is not the life believers have been called to live.

Other sanctification salvation verses are more difficult to misinterpret by mistaking them for justification salvation. In other words, they are more clearly seen to be referring to sanctification.

1 Corinthians 1:18 ¹⁸For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved [σώζω] it is the power of God.

It is fairly obvious simply based on the sentence structure that "being saved" refers to the Christian life. The Corinthians were true, born again believers who were living in carnality and absorbed in their own self-interests rather than in the things of God. Paul acknowledged they were already justified and had moved into the sanctification salvation phase of their Christian existence. However, most commentators do not see sanctification in this verse; they simply see a division between the unsaved, those who are perishing, and the justified, those who are being saved. Saved in this verse, σωζόμενοι, is a present passive participle which carries the meaning of a salvation that is present and ongoing. Justification is a Soteriological event that happens in a moment in time; our ongoing salvation after that moment refers to sanctification and that is the meaning in this verse. We are, as believers, being saved from the power of sin based on the fact that in the past we were saved from the penalty of sin by grace through faith in Christ.

How are these words used in a Soteriological sense in the New Testament?

Ephesians 2:8 ⁸For by grace you have been saved [σώζω] through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

Luke 19:9 ⁹And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation [σωτηρία] has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.

Peter used the word to refer to glorification salvation which is an area of Soteriology the Bible doesn't talk about very much.

1 Peter 1:5 ⁵who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation [σωτηρία] ready to be revealed in the last time.

“This salvation is eschatological, not temporal salvation in this life, with the last time referring to the believer’s future destiny in heaven [and, I might add, in addition to not being temporal salvation referred to in this verse it is not justification or sanctification salvation either]” [Gary Derickson, “1 Peter” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, 2:1146]. We won’t understand the full significance of our salvation until it culminates in our glorification and then it will be revealed.

The use of the word to indicate temporal salvation from a catastrophe of life is evident in the New Testament. When the words are used in this way, they carry no Soteriological meaning.

Acts 27:20 ²⁰Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved [σῶζω] was gradually abandoned.

The Septuagint used these same Greek words to translate “saved” and “salvation” in the Old Testament in both temporal and Soteriological senses.

Isaiah 49:6 ⁶He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation [יְשׁוּעָה] [σωτηρία] may reach to the end of the earth.”

The Hebrew word, יְשׁוּעָה, means deliverance, safety, rescue; it is to be in a state of freedom from danger. It can also mean salvation in the sense of deliverance in a religious sense. This sense of salvation is present in the Lord’s name, Jesus. The angel told Joseph that the Son’s name would be Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. Many believers today, particularly Jewish believers, refer to Jesus as Yeshua. In Hebrew Joshua is יהוֹשֻׁעַ which means “the Lord delivers” or “Yahweh delivers.” His name was originally הוֹשֻׁעַ which means deliverance or salvation. Moses changed it to Joshua from Hosea. The name has significance for Joshua who, under the guidance of the Lord, conquered the land for Israel at the end of the Exodus. In Greek, Jesus is the equivalent translation for the Hebrew Joshua. In the Greek, Jesus is Ἰησοῦς. The Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament translation, translated Joshua as Ἰησοῦς. Ἰησοῦς is the Hellenized form of יְשׁוּעַ which in turn is the postexilic short form of יהוֹשֻׁעַ, Joshua. The Hebrew language shortened the name of Joshua from the time of his book in the Old Testament to the time they returned from the Babylonian exile. Yeshua became the Hellenized short form of Joshua in Hebrew and in the Greek it is transliterated as Ἰησοῦς and therefore the two names are equivalent. Since Yeshua became the short form for Joshua in Hebrew and the Greek name for Jesus is equivalent to Joshua, Yeshua became a name that refers to Jesus.

Matthew 1:21 ²¹“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus [Ἰησοῦς], for He will save [σώζω] His people from their sins.”

Hebrews 4:8 ⁸For if Joshua [Ἰησοῦς] had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that.

Acts 7:45 ⁴⁵“And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua [Ἰησοῦς] upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David.

Numbers 13:16 ¹⁶These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land; but Moses called Hoshea [הושע] [Aύσίη] the son of Nun, Joshua [יהושוע] [Ἰησοῦς].

Genesis 47:25 ²⁵So they said, “You have saved [היה] [σώζω] our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s slaves.” [The Egyptian people are speaking here and offering to be Pharaoh’s slaves in gratitude for providing food for them during the famine.]

This word, היה, means to live, to be alive, or to save or spare a life. The words in both Hebrew and Greek may refer to saving a life in a temporal sense or in a Soteriological sense depending on context.

In terms of Soteriology, when we say we have been “saved,” we mean that we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin and we have received the Free Grace gift of eternal life. We also refer to this as salvation. This is predicated on the fact that we have a Savior.

Savior. In Hebrew, Savior, יָשַׁע, means to save, help, deliver, or defend. “The underlying idea of this verb is bringing to a place of safety or broad pasture as opposed to a narrow strait, symbolic of distress and danger” [Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, s. v. “יָשַׁע”]. The word expresses assistance and protection of all kinds: aggressive assistance, protection against attack, victory, and prosperity [Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, s. v. “Savior”]. “To move from distress to safety requires deliverance. Generally the deliverance must come from somewhere outside the party oppressed. In the OT the kinds of distress, both national and individual, include enemies, natural catastrophes, such as plague or famine, and sickness. The one who brings deliverance is known as the ‘savior.’ The word may be used, however in everyday life free of theological overtones...But generally in the OT the word has strong religious meaning, for it was Yahweh who wrought the deliverance. Thus he is known as the ‘God of our salvation’...Although salvation could

come through a human agent, it was only because God empowered the agent. In the NT the idea of salvation primarily means forgiveness of sin, deliverance from its power and defeat of Satan. Although the OT begins to point in this direction, the majority of references to salvation speak of Yahweh granting deliverance from real enemies and out of real catastrophes" [Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s. v. "יָשַׁע"].

Isaiah 43:3³ "For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior [יָשַׁע]; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place.

People other than God were referred to as a savior in the Old Testament and in the cultures of the time but those references were obviously not made in a Soteriological sense. These other people could be mighty men, rulers, or ancient gods.

Judges 3:9⁹ "And when the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah, Jehovah raised up a savior [יָשַׁע] to the children of Israel, who saved them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. [ASV 1901]. [I used the ASV here because other versions translate this word as "deliverer." The only commentator I could find who even referenced the fact that the word can mean savior was Dr. Unger. Dr. Constable quoted an early commentator who used the word savior. The Septuagint uses the word σωτήρ in this verse which the New Testament consistently translates as savior. I think perhaps modern translators and commentators have a reluctance to use the word savior in situations like this in the Old Testament for fear of confusing modern Christian people who would automatically picture Jesus when they hear the word, but having said that, "deliverer" is a perfectly acceptable translation. Obviously, the translators of the ASV version thought "savior" was the more appropriate translation.

In Greek, the word for Savior, σωτήρ, means one who delivers or saves; it refers to a deliverer, rescuer, or savior. In the New Testament, the word never refers to anyone other than God the Father or God the Son; it could, it just doesn't.

1 John 4:14¹⁴ "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior [σωτήρ] of the world.

1 Timothy 4:10¹⁰ "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior [σωτήρ] of all men, especially of believers.

It is obvious that for Christians, Christ is the preeminent Savior and when we use the word, it is universally understood as a reference to Him.

KEY TERMS: ADOPTION

This word describes another common secular concept that Paul applied to theological use. There is no record of Israelite adoption of children, however, that may be the idea behind making the son of a slave woman who was fathered by the patriarch of the family an heir in that family. That was the issue when Sarah wanted Abraham to drive away Ishmael and his mother. Adoption was codified in other nations contemporary with Israel. There was no word in the Hebrew language for adoption and the Greek word for it was not used in Septuagint. All of that's not to say some sort of provision wasn't made in Israelite society for adoption but it wasn't an official societal norm. In Jewish thought, inheritance was a sonship issue; all sons, as well as daughters on occasion when the circumstances demanded it, received an inheritance and that is a sonship issue which is related to the New Testament doctrine of adoption. Christians also receive an inheritance as members of the family of God.

Genesis 21:10 ¹⁰Therefore she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac."

Deuteronomy 21:15–17 ¹⁵"If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him sons, if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved, ¹⁶then it shall be in the day he wills what he has to his sons, he cannot make the son of the loved the firstborn before the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn. ¹⁷"But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn.

Numbers 36:8 ⁸"Every daughter who comes into possession of an inheritance of any tribe of the sons of Israel shall be wife to one of the family of the tribe of her father, so that the sons of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers.

The Greeks and the Romans did practice adoption; it was generally limited to already free citizens and not to the adoption of slaves. Adoption was simply the placing into the family someone who was formerly outside the family as a legal member of the family unit in contrast with the sons born naturally into it. Adoption not only entailed new privileges and responsibilities in the new family unit but it included the loss of all previous rights and is divested of all the previous duties of his former family relationship [A. H. Leitch, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s. v. "Adoption"].

"In Gr. practice the adoptive father, because of a lack of natural offspring and desiring to perpetuate his family, or because of deep affection for one whom he had come to know in other relationships, or perhaps for religious reasons, could in his lifetime or by his will extend to a son of another family the privileges of his own family in perpetuity. There was a condition, however, that the person adopted accept the legal obligations and

religious duties of the new father. In Rom. practice the relationship between the father and son was more severe and more binding because of their understanding of paternal authority (*patria potestas*). The emphasis was on the father's power, and the son's relationship was almost that of a slave. Thus in adoption the person adopted was transferred from his natural father's power to the power and control of the adoptive father" [A. H. Leitch, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia*, s. v. "Adoption"]. "Adoption, when thus legally performed, put a man in every respect in the position of a son by birth to him who had adopted him, so that he possessed the same rights and owed the same obligations" [Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, s. v. "υιοθεσία"].

This is not the concept found in the biblical doctrine of adoption. Adoption as we know it in a Christian sense is about position and not about relationship; we come into relationship with the Father through the Son first and then we are adopted into the family of God. "The believer's *relation* to God as a child results from the new birth (John 1:12, 13); whereas *adoption* is the act of God by which one *already* a child is placed in the position of an *adult* son....one of the distinctive differences between the ages of law and grace is that in the latter the believer becomes, in the moment of receiving Christ, not only a child by the new birth, but also an adult son by adoption. This position, made effectual in the believer's experience by the Holy Spirit, includes both privileges and responsibilities....The believer as a son can come directly into his Father's presence, claiming the guidance and empowering of the Holy Spirit. It is his responsibility actually to live in a way befitting his new position" [C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Bible Correspondence Course*, p. 5:1062-1064].

Adoption, υιοθεσία, is used figuratively to refer to the state of those whom God through Christ adopts as His sons and thus makes heirs of His salvation. The Louw Nida lexicon defines it as "to formally and legally declare that someone who is not one's own child is henceforth to be treated and cared for as one's own child, including complete rights of inheritance." That definition obviously refers to the legal, secular definition of adoption. The BDAG lexicon notes that Paul uses the word as a "transcendent filial relationship between God and humans (with the legal aspect, not gender specificity, as a major semantic component)." In other words, Paul is not placing men into a superior position over women in the family of God even though he uses male terminology and the adoption system of the time was more specifically applied to male children. Theologically, "Being a υἱός, a son, involves the conformity of the child that has the life of God in him to the image, purposes, and interests of God and that spiritual family into which he is born. In eternity there will be a revelation by God which will indicate the measure of this conformity to God (Rom. 8:19)" [Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, s. v. "υιοθεσία"]. "Adoption, however, is not entirely a past event. The legal declaration may have been made and the Spirit may

have been given as a down payment, but the consummation of the adoption awaits the future, for adoption includes 'the redemption of our bodies' ([Rom.] (8:23). Thus adoption is something hoped for as well as something already possessed. Adoption, then, is deliverance from the past (similar to regeneration and justification), a status and way of life in the present (walking by the Spirit, sanctification), and a hope for the future (salvation, resurrection [glorification]). It describes the process of becoming a child of God (cf. John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-2) and receiving an inheritance from God (cf. Col. 3:24)" [P. H. Davids, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2^d ed., s. v. "Adoption"]. The concept of adoption has aspects of all three tenses of salvation; it is both experiential truth and positional truth.