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Doctrine of Salvation Course Guide

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An Introduction to the Doctrine of Salvation

Thank you for being willing to use your skills and gifts to help other pastors and ministry leaders grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Your task is to teach this material in a way that others can take the printed notes and teach it to others. This may be different than the way you normally teach. Often, when teaching, we work to make the material ours and deliver it in a unique way. Here the goal is to make the material *theirs*, helping them understand the outline well enough so they can explain it to others, using their own words. To that end, please make sure you prepare with these things in mind:

1. Follow the outline. If you stray far from the material, the students will not be able to replicate what you have done. These course notes must be your outline if we are to hope they can take these notes and teach others. Furthermore, be sure to read and review the session introductions before teaching each session.
2. Do not merely read the outline. While following the printed outline is important, you must explain it. Help them see the connections, the flow, and the direction provided in the notes. That will help them retain much more of what you teach to them.
3. Understand the context. Despite your best efforts, if you are not a member of the community in which you are teaching, there will be things that you do not know about the way your students perceive the world, the Bible, God, etc. Do your best to provide illustrations that they will understand. Like the illustrations that Jesus used, think about ways to explain the material in word pictures that your students will understand. Do not hesitate to ask local leaders for help.
4. Watch the clock. This material is divided into three main sessions. And each session is divided into three parts (sections). If you have 12 hours to teach (minimum required), you should allow roughly one hour to cover the material in each section and, thereafter, have about 15 min to cover the review questions and break into groups for discussion (review questions and discussion ideas are at the end of each section).
5. Do not assume you are the smartest person in the room. No matter what questions you may get, never condescend, and do not be surprised if you get questions that are much more complex than you expected. Although your students may not have degrees, they often have been called upon to live their faith in ways that have them already thinking deeply about the things of God.
6. Pray with your students **before each section**. Make sure you cover the following:
 - a. Pray for God to help you (admit your limitations)
 - b. Pray for God's Spirit to illumine your students (trust the Holy Spirit to work).
 - c. Pray for the lost, that your students would see the connection between theology and obedience to the Great Commission.

This course, **The Doctrine of Salvation**, covers some of the most precious teachings the Church has. It is structured so that students work through the essential ideas of this doctrine. Though salvation is simple enough for a child to understand, it is deeper than any theologian can grasp. Your task is to provide a framework for this doctrine that, over time, can continue to grow and blossom in the hearts of your students as they seek to teach others.

Introduction to Session 1

The course begins with the problem of evil and draws heavily on the opening chapters of Genesis. Help your students understand how sin entered the world—it was not a result of God’s good creation. Help them understand the definition of sin and its dire consequences. Show them that even in the moment of humanity’s first rebellion, God was already planning redemption. God’s redemptive work was all pointed toward Jesus, who took our punishment, received the judgement of God for us. The sacrifices in the Old Testament help us understand the nature of the perfect sacrifice on the cross. Do not get off track on the extent of the atonement (more about this later). In the simplest form, help them see that Christ’s blood was enough for everyone who calls on His name. However we understand it, the foundation of such a salvation is grace. Our global experience has made it clear that many Christians lack an understanding of grace. They still see works as either making them fit for salvation or helping them keep their salvation. Your later success in teaching perseverance will depend on how clearly the students understand the depth and breadth of God’s unmerited favor toward us in Jesus Christ.

Session 1.1 – The Nature of Salvation

The Sin of Man and the Justice of God’s Wrath

A. The Problem of Good and Evil:

1. God Alone is Good and He is the Source of all Good:

- a. Mk 10:18, *“No one is good except God alone...”*
- b. De 32:4, *“A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He.”*

2. God is the Source of All Good in Creation:

- a. Ge 1:4-25, esp. 31; *“God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”*
- b. God is the only one who is good by nature, and He is the only source of good.
- c. Since God alone is good in Himself and is the source of goodness, then the works of fallen humans will always be only *“a polluted garment”* (Is 64:6) apart from God working in us. This reality destroys any appeal to purely human works or merit as a source of goodness. There is no place for pride in the Christian life.

3. God Withdrew His Goodness from Creation at the Fall.

- a. Because of his sin, God’s goodness was taken away, and Man became evil in himself. *“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”* Ge 3:5
- b. Because of Man’s sin, God withdrew His goodness from the creation. *“Cursed is the ground because of you... thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;”* Ge 3:17-18

4. God is Not the Origin of Evil:

- a. Job 34:10 *“... far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong.”* De 32:4 *“...His work is perfect, and all His ways are just...”*
- b. Everything God created was Good when He created it (Ge 1:31).

- c. Because of sin, God withdrew His goodness from what He created, leaving it in a state of corruption and evil.
- d. Thus, evil is the state or nature of a person or thing in the absence of God's goodness, which was originally present when He created it.
- 5. **The Argument from Evil:** Skeptics have traditionally challenged the existence of God based upon a perceived contradiction in Scripture. Scripture teaches that God is the Creator of all things "*heaven and earth*", but that God is not the creator of evil.
 - a. Skeptics argue that if God did not create evil, then He did not create everything. If He created everything, then He created evil. If either is true, then the Bible is wrong.
 - b. Their fallacy is that evil is not an actual thing. It has no substance, and it lacks the properties of existence. Evil is the word used to refer the state or nature of a person or thing in the absence of God's goodness.
 - c. Cold is the natural state of a thing in the absence of heat. As heat dissipates, cold results. As goodness is taken from a thing God created, evil results.
 - d. For more on the Problem of Evil and how to address it, see the World Hope Bible Institute course on *Christian Apologetics*.
- 6. **Sin Entered Humankind Through Adam and Eve.** (see Ge 3:1-19)
 - a. Ro 5:12 *"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—"*
 - b. Ro 5:16 *"And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification."*
 - c. Sin is always ultimately irrational. Sin does not make sense. In Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they acted irrationally. In rebellion against God, they tried to become "like God". Ironically, they were already created in God's image and perfect, but by their sin, lost both.

B. Definition of Sin:

- 1. **Scripture's Definition:** Ja 4:17 *"So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."*
- 2. **Failure to Conform:** Sin is any failure to conform to God's purpose for us; namely, failure to intentionally and faithfully love and glorify God in all that we are, think, feel or do.
- 3. **Sin is Not a Mistake:**
 - a. "Mistake" is not an appropriate synonym for "sin." Sin is not an accident. One does not set out to do right and simply fail, and thereby sin. One does not have difficulty making a moral choice because the sinful option is unclear. Sin is volitional.
 - b. Referring to sin as a mistake is to be avoided. A "mistake" is an error through innocent lack of knowledge or skill.
 - c. Sin occurs by the willful suppression of the truth and/or by the willful immoral action, with the awareness that one is doing wrong.
 - d. Motives can also be sin and can even taint acts that are normally good.

C. Effects of Sin: Corruption and Depravity

1. **Total Depravity:** Sin affects every part of the human person (reason, will, desires, emotions, spirit, soul, body, etc.). The problem is not that people cannot make spiritually significant choices, as they do so all the time. Rather, people will not make spiritually pure and righteous choices on their own.
 - a. Je 17:9 *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"*
 - b. Ro 8:8 *"...those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*
 - c. Jn 8:34 *"...truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is the slave of sin."*
 - d. Ep 2:1-2 *"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins..."*
 - e. 1Co 2:14 *"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."*
 - f. Ps 51:1-5 *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."*

D. God Condemns Sin and Those Who Commit Sin.

1. God Judges Sin and Sinners.

- a. It has become commonplace among evangelicals to avoid or minimize the idea that God's holiness prompts Him to display wrath against sin, let alone expose actual persons to His judgment and wrath.
- b. Many will say, "God never sends anyone to hell." While it is true that God does not send people to hell apart from their own sin, Scripture clearly teaches that Christ is the eschatological Judge who will say, *"I never knew you, depart from Me..."* (Mt 7:23).
- c. As fallen humans, we have trouble seeing the holiness and love of God together.
- d. In Scripture, the best example of God's judgment on sin and sinners is actually the cross of Christ. Here you see the wrath of God poured out, not on the concept of "sin," but on a person. Yet, this Person is the One who takes our place by the will of God in order to bear the punishment in our place.

2. Biblical Basis:

- a. Mt 10:28 *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*
- b. Ro 1:18 *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."*
- c. Ep 5:6 *"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."*

E. The Gospel Offers Hope to Sinners.

1. 1Ti 1:15 says that God saves sinners and Mk 2:17 affirms that this means people who know they are sinners. As a result, a presentation of the "Good News" (the Gospel)

- must include a presentation of the “Bad News”. Faith in Christ will result in eternal life, but only because the sinner first confesses and repents of sin, and is forgiven, thereby avoiding God’s wrath.
2. Through the proclamation of the good and bad news, the Holy Spirit convicts people of sin to accept the salvation offered in Christ. God does not save “good people”, only sinners.

F. Session 1.1 Review Questions:

1. **True or False:** Since God created everything, including Lucifer (later Satan), God created evil.
2. **Multiple Choice:** Sin is best defined as:
 - a. Making a mistake.
 - b. Falling short of one’s best.
 - c. Rebellion against God.
 - d. Breaking laws of society.

FOR DISCUSSION: Why is it so important to understand the nature of sin, when discussing the Doctrine of Salvation?

Session 1.2 – The Atonement
The Sufficiency of the Death of Christ

- A. **Definition:** Atonement is the price paid by Christ through His death on the cross to secure our salvation in Himself.
- B. **Christ's Atoning Work – Incarnation and Life:** This presentation of the atonement focuses on the work of Christ at the cross which is the central feature of Christ's atoning work. Christ's incarnation and His obedient, sinless life are part of His atoning work because, without them, the cross would have been meaningless.
- C. **Flawed Models of the Atonement:**
1. **Ransom Theory:** Christ paid a ransom to Satan to release sinners. Problems: Scripture teaches that the payment is due to God, not Satan. Implies Satan's ownership of fallen humanity is legitimate.
 2. **Moral Influence Theory:** Christ died simply to show how much God loves humanity. Problems: Denies that God requires payment/penalty for sin. Ignores the wrath and just judgment of God.
 3. **Example Theory:** Christ died simply to provide an example of selfless service for us to follow. Problem: While Christ's sacrifice does set an example of selfless service for us to follow, such example does not explain the atonement. This theory denies that God requires payment of the penalty for sin, and it ignores the just judgment and wrath of God.
 - a. Despite the flaws in the Example Theory of the atonement, it is the case that Christ set the supreme example of sacrifice and service for Christians (Mk 10:41-45). Christ served fallen humanity through the cross, even though we were created by Him and were yet His enemies.
 - b. The model of serving others contrasts with pagans who use their power to serve themselves. Service to others, who may even be undeserving and/or subordinates, grounds the Christian visions of:
 - Political Service: Serves the needs of constituents.
 - Business Commerce: Serves the needs of customers.
 4. **Governmental Theory:** Christ died to demonstrate the principle that God is the Divine Lawgiver, and His laws cannot be violated without consequence. God did not have to require payment of a penalty. Problems: Makes God's requirement of a penalty arbitrary, and thus the death of Christ becomes a cosmic version of child abuse.
- D. **Sacrifice:**
1. **Key OT Types:**
 - a. **Exile from Eden:** Ge 3:21 God offered the first sacrifice.
 - b. **Abraham & Isaac:** Ge 22 God freely offered his first-born son.
 - c. **Passover:** Ex 12 The Shedding of blood will preserve life.
 2. **Vicarious:** For me (for my benefit).
 - a. Ro 5:7-8 *"For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.."*
 - b. 1Co 11:24 *"This is My body, which is for you;"*

3. **Substitutionary:** In my place (on my behalf).
 - a. Le 1:4 *"He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him."*
 - b. 2Co 5:21 *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*
4. **Propitiatory:** To calm, appease, soothe wrath.
 - a. 1Sa 2:25 *"If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him"*
 - b. Ro 3:25 *"...whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins."*
 - c. Not only did the Son appease the wrath of the Father, but the Father is the one who sent the Son to be our propitiation.
5. **Conquering:**
 - a. He 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..."*
 - b. What seemed like Satan's greatest victory, the crucifixion of Christ, was actually his greatest defeat. For at the cross, Christ conquered Satan, sin, death and the rebellious heart of each believer. 1Jn 3:8 *"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."*

E. Extent of the Atonement

1. **Key Concept:** "Sufficient for all; efficient only for believers (the elect)"
2. **All /All Men:** 2Co 5:14, Ro 4:15, 8:32, Ti 2:11, He 2:9-10
3. **The World:** Jn 1:29, 4:42, 2Co 5:19, 1Jn 2:2, 1Jn 4:14
4. **The Many:** Is 53:12, Mk 10:45, 14:24, Ro 5:15, He 9:28
5. **The Many and The One:**
 - a. Most texts used to support limited atonement fit comfortably in an unlimited atonement view ("The Church, My sheep, etc." are a sub-set of "The World, All Men, etc.").
 - b. The limited atonement interpretation is right, however, about one kind of text; "the Many" does not mean "All men." However, the contrast with "the Many" is "the One" (Christ). Christ means to exclude Himself from "the Many." He excludes Himself as someone for whom He needed to die to secure atonement.
6. **Freely Offered:** The Atonement is offered freely without Universalism, or potential or wasted atonement. This course presents a view of the atonement, which holds that Christ's work is offered freely to all. This is a view also affirmed by both those who hold to Limited Atonement and Unlimited Atonement.
 - a. **Limited Atonement:** holds that all humanity benefits from the non-salvific blessings secured by Christ, but Christ intended to atone for the sins of only the elect. Both views hold that Christ's death was sufficient for all, but efficient only for believers (the elect).
 - b. **Unlimited Atonement:** There are two keys to an orthodox view of unlimited atonement:

- First, Christ's securing of salvation must be distinguished from the application of salvation (so as to avoid universalism).
 - Second, Christ must be understood to secure salvation in Himself (see below), so that Christ actually accomplished something on the cross (secured salvation) and leaves no "unused atonement."
- F. **Union with Christ:** The distinction between the saved and the lost comes at the point of faith and union with Christ. God's intent was to secure salvation through Christ's substitutionary atonement on the cross. All the benefits of salvation are secured in Christ, so that He is our salvation. The death of Christ makes Him the Savior of the world and our salvation. Yet as long as a person is separated from Christ by unbelief, Christ is not yet his Savior. Through faith and faith alone, a person is united with Christ and shares in the benefits of His death.
- G. **Evangelism:** Despite various views among students, all students are challenged to evangelize. No view of salvation that undermines obedience to the Great Commission can be healthy.
- H. **Session 1.2 Review Questions:**
1. **Multiple Choice:** Christ's atoning sacrifice was:
 - a. The ransom paid to the devil.
 - b. Sufficient if we do good works.
 - c. Only a moral example for us to follow.
 - d. Substitutionary in our place.
 2. **True or False:** Christ's atonement is sufficient for all, but efficient only for believers (the elect).

FOR DISCUSSION: No matter how we understand the extent of the Atonement, we should present the Gospel to everyone. Why?

Session 1.3 – The Grace of God (Part 1)
The Gift of Salvation

A. Works and the Law:

1. One must be perfect as God is perfect. Mt 5:48
2. No one measures up to God's righteousness. Ro 3:9-18, 23
3. Attempting to keep God's law will not save someone. Ro 3:20, Ga 2:16, 3:10
4. All one's righteous deeds are like filthy rags. Is 64:6
5. The law demonstrates our sinfulness, and leads us to Christ. Ga 3:22-24

B. God is Gracious Towards Sinners in Salvation.

1. Ro 3:23-24 *"..., for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."*
2. Ro 6:14 *"For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."*
3. Ep 2:8-9 *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*
4. 2Ti 1:9 *"...who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began."*

C. Pride and the Humility of Grace:

1. **Pride is the Root of All Sin** – Pride is the most destructive of all human vices. While it is true that the love of mammon (money/material things) is the root of all kinds of evil (Mt 6:24), it is not the root of all evil. The core of human sin is pride (Ps 10:4, Ja 5:6). God does not save us in a way that affirms pride, but rather affirms humility. Otherwise, He would affirm the core of sin.
2. **Grace Brings about Humility** – Grace forces us to admit we are sinners worthy of God's judgment and wrath. Grace makes us admit that we cannot save ourselves. Grace brings us into submission to a lowly, first-century Galilean carpenter (the Son of God) as our Savior and Lord. Grace drives us to accept that we cannot do anything to earn or merit our salvation. *"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* Ja 4:6. Fortunately, by His grace, God humbles proud sinners so that they can receive His salvation.

D. God's Grace:

1. Definition

- a. Grace is God's lovingkindness and favor toward a person, which God offers apart from human qualifications, merit, or actions (good or bad, mental or physical).
- b. The value of God's grace is measured in the vast disparity between the value of what was given to purchase it (Jesus' blood) and the one for whom it was given (a meritless sinner).
- c. Grace does not depend on anything in the person, even faith, which it provides.
- d. There is no factor external to God which prompts Him to give grace.
- e. The reason God elects to bestow grace on any person lies within Him.

- f. Defining grace merely as *God giving us what we don't deserve* falls short, because it can lead to the fallacy that God's grace is only available in exchange for something worthless. By this definition, the concept of merit is not eliminated, just shifted. Instead of the value being found in God's provision, it is found in the fact that the recipient (the sinner) has secured the one thing that God required (lack of merit).

2. Key Factors:

a. **God has No Obligation to Offer Grace:**

- Grace is always a gift, not a debt: Ro 4:4, 16
- Grace is always unmerited, not based on good works: Ro 11:6, Jn 1:17
- God owes grace to no one. Ro 9:15

b. **God has No Obstacles to Giving Grace:**

- Grace makes unworthiness irrelevant.
- There is no factor external to God which prevents Him from giving grace.
- The reason God withholds grace from any person lies within Him.
- Our enmity cannot prevent God's grace. Ro 5:1-2, 5-8
- Our spiritual deadness cannot prevent God's grace. Ep 2:1-10

3. Summary: Grace is given freely.

- a. God shows favor apart from external constraints or motivations.
- b. God is under no obligation to show favor to anyone.
- c. Grace is not related to human action in any way, either good or evil.
- d. Motivation for God's grace comes from within Himself, not human action or inaction.
- e. Grace corrects our prideful assumption that we earn the good we receive. Mt 20:1-16

E. Grace and Evangelism:

1. Salvation by grace means that there is no sinner so far gone that God cannot save him or her.
2. We sometimes assume that a person is so evil that the person just "will not" be saved, and we use the assumption as an excuse for not sharing the Gospel. In effect, this is a denial of God's grace in salvation. No one is so sinful that God cannot give the person His grace.
3. Taking the Gospel to those who have hurt you or are your enemies is the best display of God's grace. If God could save Paul, then He can save anyone (1Ti 1:12-18).

F. Session 1.3 Review Questions:

1. **True or False:** The root of all sin is pride.
2. **True or False:** Salvation is completely unmerited and is possible only because God chooses to be gracious.

FOR DISCUSSION: Why is the meaning of grace so important to understand salvation?