

Introduction to Theology, Part Two: Soteriology

SAMPLE

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Introduction

I. What is theology? *The study of the person and work of God*

II. Is the study of theology relevant and practical for living?

“A fair question!—but there is, I think, a convincing answer to it. The questioner clearly assumes that a study of the nature and character of God will be unpractical and irrelevant for life. In fact, however, it is the most practical project anyone can engage in. Knowing about God is crucially important for the living of our lives. As it would be cruel to an Amazonian tribesman to fly him to London, put him down without explanation in Trafalgar Square and leave him, as one who knew nothing of English or England, to fend for himself, so we are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is and who runs it. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place, and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know about God. Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfold, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul.” Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 14–15.

III. Wrong Approaches to Theology

A. *Intellectualism*: As a series of outlines or intellectual exercises

B. *Mysticism*: Reliance upon improper sources of theology

C. *Utilitarianism and Pragmatism*: “Don’t worry about the details, just get people to heaven.”

Evaluation: Wrong approaches to theology lead to a false gospel, including:

- a misrepresentation of the character of God;
- a misrepresentation of the works of God;
- an accurate presentation of the Gospel with wrong motives;
- burnout and a loss of joy;
- false profession and false security;
- an undue reliance upon technique versus prayer;
- an emphasis upon productivity versus faithfulness;
- dishonor to God in service to God; and
- eternal judgment:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge” (Rom. 10:1–2).

IV. The Proper Approach to Theology: The pursuit of the knowledge of God, unto the love, honor and obedience of God, for the purpose of the glory of God.

“Theologians do not discover or create God. God is. It is God that made us and not we ourselves. This is perhaps the most fundamental point for the practice of theology and the living of life. God is not an object present at hand for our investigation, but the Almighty Creator and Redeemer before whom we bow in fear and adoration. In remembering our creaturely status, that we are finite, we should respond to our Creator in humility and obedience.” (Source: ?)

“Theology faces the difficult task of giving an account of the One to whom we must give account.” (Ibid.)

V. The Doctrines of Theology

- A. *Prolegomena*: Introduction to Theology
- B. *Bibliology*: The Doctrine of the Bible
- C. *Theology Proper*: ...the Person of God
- D. *Angelology*: ...Angels, Demons, Satan
- E. *Anthropology*: ...Man
- F. *Harmartiology*: ...Sin
- G. *Christology*: ...Person and Work of Christ
- H. *Soteriology*: ...Salvation
- I. *Pneumatology*: ...the Holy Spirit
- J. *Ecclesiology*: ...the Church
- K. *Eschatology*: ...Last Things

VI. The Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology) in Relation to Other Doctrines

- A. *Anthropology*: The recipient of salvation is man.
- B. *Harmartiology*: Sin is the ground of condemnation and the need for salvation.
- C. *Christology*: The person and work of Christ are the basis for salvation.
- D. *Pneumatology*: The Holy Spirit is the agent of salvation.
- E. *Ecclesiology*: The result of salvation, the fellowship of the recipients of salvation.
- F. *Eschatology*: The ultimate consummation of salvation
- G. *Theology Proper*: Salvation through the work of Christ is the supreme manifestation of the character of God. *The better we understand the doctrine of salvation, the better we understand the magnificent mercy, grace, love, justice, wrath, holiness, and power of God.

Point: The study of theology is crucial to the Christian life. “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the Lord” (Jer. 9:23–24).

*Parts I-V are covered in part one of this class, Introduction to Theology, Part One: Foundations.

Introduction to Soteriology: The Need for the Atonement

I. Man's Need for Salvation (review)

A. Original Sin

1. Definition: The sinful state and condition into which all are born, including the guilt of sin and the corruption of nature

- a) Original guilt: By imputation of Adam's sin, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men" (Rom. 5:18; see also 3:19 and Eph. 2:3).
- b) Original Corruption: Moral corruption and pollution of all the faculties of the soul (Rom. 1:29–32)

B. Total Depravity

1. Total Depravity does not mean:

- a) That fallen man doesn't have a conscience.
- b) "The virtuousness of an agent does not consist in his having a conscience, but in the conformity of the dispositions and affections of his will to the law of which conscience is the organ." A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, p. 328.
- c) "That unregenerate man, possessing a natural conscience, does not often admire virtuous character and actions of others." *Ibid.*, p. 329.
- d) "That any man is as thoroughly depraved as it is possible for him to become, or that each man has a disposition inclined to every form of sin." *Ibid.*

2. Total Depravity means:

- a) "... every man by nature is totally alienated in his governing disposition from God, and consequently his every act, whether morally indifferent, or conformed to subordinate principles of right, is vitiated [morally corrupted] by the condition of the agent as a rebel." (*Ibid.*)
- b) All our faculties are corrupt.
- c) Apart from a recreative act of God, man can only get worse. (*Ibid.*)

C. Total Inability:

1. Of the Mind: understanding is darkened (Eph. 4:18).
2. Of the Conscience: the conscience is seared (1 Tim. 4:2) and defiled (Tit. 1:15).
3. Of the Heart: “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9).
4. Of the Will: “. . . and you were unwilling to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:40). “There is none who seeks for God . . .” (Rom. 3:11). “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1).
5. Of the Body: “Who will deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:23).

D. The unchanging and strict nature of God’s law

1. The law requires perfect obedience (James 2:10).
2. God must always judge rightly, according to truth (Ex. 23:7).

E. The infinite demerit of sin

1. Adam’s single sin condemned and corrupted the entire world.
2. Sin is against an infinitely holy and glorious God.

F. The sinful nature of our best works (“filthy rags”)

II. OT Background: Anticipation of Christ’s Work of Salvation

- A. Abel’s Animal Sacrifice (Gen. 4:4): Abel knew of the importance of blood sacrifice.
- B. Noah’s Animal Sacrifice (Gen. 8:20–22)
- C. The Passover Lamb (Exod. 12:1–13): The blood of an unblemished lamb saved the Israelites.
- D. Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22:1–14): God provided a substitute sacrifice.
- E. The Sacrificial System of the Mosaic Law
 1. Example: Day of Atonement

- a) All is done by High Priest.
- b) Goat slain—picture of the vindication of God’s holiness by the death of Christ (Rom. 3:24–26).
- c) Live goat—our sins are put away from God’s sight (Heb. 9:26; Rom. 8:33).
- d) High priest enters the Holy of Holies: Christ entered heaven itself with His blood for us (Heb. 9:11–12).

F. The Servant of Isaiah 53:

- v. 4: “Surely our griefs He Himself bore.”
- v. 5: “But he was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities.”
- v. 5: “The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.”
- v. 6: “But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”
- v. 10: “But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering.”
- v. 11: “As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied.”
- v. 11: “My servant will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.”
- v. 12: “Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.”