

Week 15: Biblical Usage of the Terms Sozo (to Save) and Soteria (Salvation)

*Grudem_{ST} **; Grudem_{BD} **; Ryrie 49, Anderson pp.13-35*

- A. Definition of the Word Group (TDNT)
 1. To deliver from a direct threat; to bring safe and sound out of a difficult situation
- B. Biblical Usage of the Word Group (*sozo* – 105 times; *soteria* – 46 times)
 1. Physical salvation
 - a. From illness (Matt. 9:21-22)
 - b. From death (Matt. 8:25; Acts 27:31)
 - c. From enemies (Luke 1:69, 71; Acts 7:25)
 2. Spiritual salvation
 - a. From penalty of sin = justification (Matt. 1:21; Acts 4:12; Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8)
 - b. From power of sin = sanctification (1Cor. 15:2; 2Cor. 2:15; 6:2; 1Pet. 2:2)
 - c. At future judgment (1Cor. 3:15; 5:5)
 - d. To future glory (Rom. 13:11; 2Tim. 2:10; 1Pet. 1:5)
- C. Interpretation Guidelines – Context, Context, Context
 1. Who is the subject? (i.e. the term “brothers” would imply Christians)
 2. What is the subject being “saved” from?
 3. *Biblical theology* – How does the author use the word in the rest of the chapter/Book?
 4. What are the verb tenses? (past (aorist/perfect), present, or future)
 5. Which truth is the author wishing to convey? (Anderson, 193-198)
 - a. Relationship (Justification) vs. Fellowship (Sanctification) truth
 - b. Position (In Christ) vs. Condition (of our walk with Christ) truth
 - c. Eternal vs. Temporal truth
 - d. Salvation vs. Discipleship (inheritance-rewards) truth
- D. James 2:14 Case Study
 1. Text: “*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith **save** him?*” (James 2:14, ESV)
 2. Problem: faith *does* save, and eternal salvation is *not* based on works (Eph. 2:8-9)
 3. Author: James (Jas. 1:1) to dispersed Christians (“brothers” Jas. 1:2; 2:14)
 4. Subject: a hypothetical believer who says he has faith but does not have works
 5. What are they (not) being saved from? Not immediately clear from text, so...
 6. Other uses of *sozo* in James: *biblical theology*
 - a. Jas. 1:21: as born again believers (1:18), the readers would not take this to mean eternal salvation from hell. Rather they are to be saved from the power of sin.
 - b. Jas. 4:12: as the Judge of these believers (4:11), God is able to save or destroy them, at the judgment seat of Christ in the future (2Cor. 5:10); not an eternal saving from hell
 - c. Jas. 5:15: very clearly referring to a physical healing
 - d. Jas. 5:20: the wandering Christian (brother – 5:19) is already eternally saved from hell. He is here brought back and saved from the punishment of physical death (Jas. 1:15)
 7. Conclusions:
 - a. Book is written to believers (“brothers” from the first two to the last two verses of Book)
 - b. Therefore, James does not refer to eternal salvation from hell in any of his other uses
 - c. The salvation in 2:14, then, most likely refers to the salvation from the *power* of sin (sanctification) or the salvation at the future judgment seat of Christ (1Cor. 3:15), and does not refer to the salvation from the *penalty* of sin (justification)
 8. Implications: Martin Luther believed this “salvation” referred to eternal salvation from hell which clearly contradicted Eph. 2:8-9. He thus regarded James as non-canonical (Anderson 22-23).
- E. Other Difficult Uses for Consideration
 1. Matt. 24:13 – is perseverance to the end of one’s life was necessary for eternal salvation?
 2. Rom. 10:9-10 – is confessing “Jesus is Lord” necessary for eternal salvation? Is this a ‘work’?
 3. 2Cor. 7:10 – is godly grief and repentance necessary for eternal salvation?
 4. 1Pet. 3:21 – is baptism necessary for eternal salvation?

It is very important in our study of “salvation” to use our biblical theology to undergird our systematic theology. If we do not, we will be guilty of imposing our theological views upon the text or letting our systematic theology override our biblical theology. In good exegesis, the parts must add up to the whole, and then the whole will help us understand the parts (this is called the hermeneutical circle). But if one part is out of sync with the whole, then our understanding of the whole is faulty. We must be ever ready to adjust our understanding of the whole to correspond and complement our understanding of the parts, not vice-versa. (Anderson, 17)