

Theology Matters

FALL SEMESTER 2025

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6. Salvation – Part 1 (Work of Christ)

*“Christ’s death is the center of the gospel; without it there is no good news.” —
John Stott*

Big Idea: We all have a problem that we cannot be the solution to fix.

Aim: Through our original creation and by defining sin, we are in desperate need of a savior to give our lives to so that we may have an abundant life.

Intro: Read Psalm 8 in your groups. Pay special attention to verses 3-8. Think about the unique role of human beings written here. How is this role described? What is the writer’s response to this reality?

Doctrine of Man

1. **Human beings are created in God’s image and likeness, male and female.**

“imago Dei” includes our moral, spiritual, and relational capacities—setting us apart from animals. The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is capable of having characteristics of God and represents God.

- *Genesis 1:27:* “So God created man in his own image... male and female he created them.”
- *Psalms 8:5:* “Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings...”

2. **Man’s original purpose was to glorify God and enjoy His fellowship.**

We were created for relationship, worship, and stewardship; responsibilities were damaged but not lost after the Fall. Even more, God did not need us, but we were created for His Glory.

- *Isaiah 43:7:* “Everyone who is called by my name, whom I formed and made”

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- *Ephesians 1:11-12*: "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory."
3. **The Fall fundamentally damaged the image of God in man.**
Though not erased, the divine image is distorted, resulting in alienation, shame, and spiritual death.
- *Genesis 3:17*: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it..."
 - *Romans 8:7*: "The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God..."
4. **Despite sin, humanity retains God's image.**
The image persists (though tarnished), which is why human life remains valuable and God can restore us by grace. After the fall, we are still in God's image, we are still able to hold similar characteristics of God, and we still represent God, but the image of God in us is distorted. We are less fully like God than we were before the entrance of sin.
- *James 3:9*: "...people who are made in the likeness of God."
 - *Genesis 9:6*: "...for God made man in his own image."
5. **Humans cannot achieve righteousness on their own.**
Our best efforts are tainted and inadequate—salvation cannot be earned.
- *Isaiah 64:6*: "All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment."
 - *Romans 10:3*: "...seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness."
6. **Man's heart is naturally opposed to God.**
Apart from regeneration, people neither seek nor desire God, but are hostile to Him. Creation itself points to the existence of God, so therefore all are guilty unless they are saved by grace through Faith.
- *Romans 3:11*: "No one seeks for God."
 - *Romans 8:8*: "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Doctrine of Sin

1. **Sin is any failure to conform to God's moral law, in act, attitude, or nature.**
Our sinful condition is not only about our outward actions but includes wrongful desires and inner rebellion. The essence of sin is the falling short of God's character at every level.
- *Romans 3:23*: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
 - *1 John 3:4*: "Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness."
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2. **Sin originated with Adam's first act of disobedience and is transmitted to all his descendants.**

Adam's sin brought both guilt and a sinful nature to the whole human race.

- *Romans 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."
- *Genesis 3:6*: "She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband... and he ate."

3. **All humans inherit a sinful nature.**

We receive from Adam not only a guilty standing but also an inner moral corruption, so we begin life already predisposed toward sin.

- *Psalms 51:5*: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."
- *Ephesians 2:3*: "...by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

4. **Sin affects every aspect of our being—mind, emotion, will, and body.**

"Total depravity" is used to express how no part of our humanity is untouched by sin.

- *Jeremiah 17:9*: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"
- *Romans 3:10–12*: "None is righteous, no, not one... no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside..."

5. **Sin enslaves the sinner.**

Left unchecked, sin becomes a master—habitually controlling and shaping one's life and decisions.

- *John 8:34*: "Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."
- *2 Peter 2:19*: "...for whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved."

6. **Sin leads to both physical and spiritual death.**

Death is a result and penalty of sin, both in physical mortality and spiritual separation from God.

- *Romans 6:23*: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- *James 1:15*: "...sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

7. **Sin is ultimately rebellion against God.**

Every sin, whether seemingly minor or major, is a declaration of independence from the Creator, placing self above divine authority.

- *Isaiah 53:6*: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."
 - *1 John 3:4*: "Sin is lawlessness."
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8. **Sin deceives and blinds the sinner.**

Sin's character is to twist, rationalize, or minimize evil, hardening the heart to God's truth.

- *Hebrews 3:13*: "...that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."
- *Genesis 4:7*: "Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."

Depravity of Man

1. **Total depravity means the internal corruption of every part of man.**

Sin's reach is thorough—not that all are as bad as possible, but nothing is untouched by the Fall.

- *Romans 3:12*: "All have turned aside... no one does good, not even one."
- *Ephesians 4:18*: "...darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God."

2. **Even the "good" things done by sinful people are tainted by sin.**

The root motives, if disconnected from faith in God, make even right actions ultimately displeasing apart from grace.

- *Proverbs 21:4*: "...the lamp of the wicked, are sin."
- *Romans 14:23*: "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."

3. **Man cannot come to God without divine initiative.**

Salvation is possible only because God first acts to draw the sinner, since the natural person spiritually resists.

- *John 6:44*: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."
- *1 Corinthians 2:14*: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God..."

4. **The gospel exposes man's inability and need for grace.**

Grace is unearned and uncaused by anything within us; God gets all the glory in salvation.

- *Titus 3:5*: "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy..."
 - *Ephesians 2:8–9*: "By grace you have been saved through faith..."
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5. **God's law reveals the reality and depth of sin.**

The Law diagnoses the human condition and shows us our desperation for a Savior.

- *Romans 7:13*: "...in order that sin might be shown to be sin..."
- *Galatians 3:24*: "The law was our guardian until Christ came..."

6. **Restoration is only possible in Christ, who begins to restore God's image and character in believers.**

Justification, sanctification, and ultimately glorification renew what was lost, moving believers toward God's original purpose for humanity.

- *2 Corinthians 5:21*: "...in him we might become the righteousness of God."
- *Romans 8:1*: "...no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Sin affects the human condition, how desperately fallen people need divine rescue, and why the gospel alone brings hope and renewal. Each point, paired with Scripture, connects robust doctrine and the living Word for transformational study.

Homework:
