

Why the Battle?
Module Three – Soteriology
Sin and Salvation
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Last week we gave you this scenario: you are at a party and someone asks, “What’s all the fuss about in the Anglican-Episcopal Church?” We gave you a two-word response: over...under. If we are **over** Scripture we can re-write it. If we are **under** Scripture, we allow the Scripture to re-write us. It affects everything we do. If we are over Scripture, then for instance, as a recent presiding Bishop said, Jesus is just one of the many ways to salvation. If we are under Scripture, it means we obey Jesus and His word when He says that He is the way the truth and the life - the only way to heaven. Insert any issue.

This is why the foundation stone in the ACNA is clearly spelled out: “We confess the Old and New Testaments to be the final authority and unchangeable standard for Christian faith and life.” The Episcopal church was built on this foundation, but for decades has shown in their decisions and policies they are **over** the authority of the Bible.

In 2003 at the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, a resolution was brought to the Convention floor: “Be it Resolved, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church affirm that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation,” and “That every member of this Church is conscience-bound first to obey the teaching and direction of Our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in Holy Scripture.” The motion was defeated. Every major decision then and since has been built on the foundation of a church that is over the authority of Scripture.

To those Under Scripture, we would be called the orthodox, or the Anglican Church in North America. And those Over Scripture, those we call revisionists, those revising Scripture as they go, which describes the Episcopal Church.

Over = revisionist Under = orthodox.

Which means, just like the game of dominoes, where we are on that over-under concept affects every other issue - from sin, forgiveness, grace, marriage, you name it! Including the identity of Jesus, what we called last week, Christology.

But tonight, we look at soter-i-ology. Soterios comes from the Greek word: to save, and ology means the study of. Therefore, soteriology is the study of the Bible’s science on how a sinner is saved. This is how it works. As Anglicans under the authority of the Bible, we believe that as humans we were created by God in His image, and at creation God declared humanity good. But at the fall of Adam and Eve, we inherited a sinful nature, what we call Original Sin. Which is why Paul writes in Romans 3: All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. If one is under Scripture we realize that sin is a penchant in our nature towards active rebellion. We can’t overcome sin by our attempts to be good or

kind. The result of sin gone unchecked is separation from God forever- undealt with sin is eternal death in hell. Hence our need for a Savior! It's why the Name Jesus means Rescuer, rescuing us from Sin. If we say yes to Jesus, praying "Thank you for dying for me, come and forgive my sin within," then two things happen. First, we are saved once and for all, sin is gone, and we are reconciled to Jesus for eternity. This is what we call Justification. And second, we begin a lifelong process of being transformed into the likeness of Christ. We are changed from the inside out: restored, re-generated, and disciplined into the image of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what we call the lifelong process of Sanctification.

So, justification, or being saved, plus sanctification, or being restored in the image of Jesus, equals soteriology. Let me give you an example of justification from my own life. When I was 15 years old, I gave my life to Christ and repented of my sin. From that moment I was saved for eternity. I now am in a lifelong process of becoming more like Christ, or sanctification.

Now for an example of Sanctification. Growing up in Boston, we had a neighbor and member of our church named Walker Hancock. Walker was an amazing Sculptor, in fact one of his sculptures is in Brook-Green Gardens. But during World War II, he was one of the Monuments Men, who recovered art treasures looted from the Jews by the Nazis. Captain Hancock rescued countless treasures from fire, and from enemy soldiers turned looters. By the time I came around, Walker was sculpting presidents, authors and poets, including Abraham Lincoln, a statue that stands today in the National Cathedral in Washington. Each week or so I would go after school to see the progress. That Abraham Lincoln started as this very bust of plaster, that Walker gave to me and is a treasured possession. Then he went on to sculpt it in granite, chiseling, chiseling, and as he chiseled, a person began to emerge - the very likeness of Lincoln! That chiseling is sanctification! Every time we allow Jesus to be King in our life, through worship, prayer, confession, and study, we are being restored, or sanctified, into the image of Jesus.

Soteriology: saved (justified) and restored (sanctified).

Only in the Bible do we have a Soteriology. No other religion has a soteriology. There are two reasons for this. All other religions imply that heaven or nirvana is something we accomplish by our good deeds. And second, no other religion believes that humans are lost without a Savior. Our need to be saved is unique to Christianity.

And that my friends is the main chasm under the iceberg of Sexuality that divides the Episcopal church from the Anglican Church in North America. The Episcopal Church today by its practices denies we even have a sin problem at all! It's what led Bishop John Spong, retired senior bishop in good standing in the Episcopal Church, and one who is Over Scripture, say: "There never was a time when we were created perfect and fell into sin and needed to be rescued." He went on to say: "Christianity must move past a rescuing Jesus who overcame a fall that never happened, to restore human life to a status it never had."

If one is over Scripture, humans are innately good and therefore only in need of enlightenment and wisdom, not salvation. If one is over Scripture, humans are not born into sin but do require enlightenment to grow into their true selves. If one is over Scripture, people don't necessarily have a sinful nature as much as they make wrong choices. If one is over Scripture, there is no ultimate spiritual condemnation or penalty for sin. Therefore, since man is not by nature **sinful**, salvation is unnecessary. Further, in this world-view, to imply that humanity needs a savior is judgmental and demeaning to humanity.

Who's right? Let's ask the Bible about Salvation and our need for a Savior. Starting with the Old Testament, let's stand and read together:

Psalm 62:1 For God alone my soul **waits** in silence; from God comes my salvation.

Isaiah 25:9: Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, that He might save us. This is the Lord. Let us rejoice in His salvation.

From the New Testament:

Acts 2:38 Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

1 John 2:2 Jesus is the propitiation, *or the atoning sacrifice*, for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Titus 3:5 Jesus saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:8 By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

Our final text is a most beautiful image of Soteriology:

Timothy 2:5-7 God is on one side, and all the people on the other side, and Christ Jesus, himself man, is between them to bring them together, by giving his life for all mankind

Just look at that image of two cliffs with a valley in between. This is justification, Lord save me from my sin within. If we don't believe we need a Savior, there is no need for Christianity beyond a social justice movement. At the same time, if we are calling sins from the Bible not a sin, we are leading people astray. In the Episcopal Church today we hear that if you were born a certain way, it must be fine. Yet sin is still sin.

For some of us, our mothers may have been alcoholics and we inherited that gene of addiction. Others may have inherited the gene for anger, lust, greed, envy, or laziness. Others may have inherited a gene for homosexuality. It doesn't matter with what we were born! We still need to call it sin and it still needs to be atoned for! As Jesus said in John 1: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Remember, we are all sinners, there is no hierarchy of sin! Inherited sins are not our fault, unless we act on them. Yet when we do, a sin is a sin.

For instance, the divide we have over marriage is because of our divide under the iceberg. The Bible is clear that marriage is between a man and a woman, yet all over the country gay weddings are being performed in Episcopal Churches. People say that will never happen in Charleston, yet it has! Recently, a wedding between two men was held at Grace Church. How can I call good what the Bible calls sin? People are being led astray.

One of my mentors for 20 years has been The Rev. John Yates, long time Rector of the Falls Church. Six years ago he was invited to speak at a dinner in Washington on the topic of Justification and Sanctification.

John bravely told this large crowd, *“Sin prevents humans from flourishing which is why Satan has convinced so many in the church today that sin doesn’t exist! The church isn’t just for those who can perfectly adhere to Christ’s teaching, the church is actually for those who break God’s commandments, who fail to come up to God’s standards and then repent.*

The church is for sinners who know they need God’s mercy and help.

As an aside, it’s why we always say, the church is not a museum for saints, but a hospital for sinners.

John continues, *“There are two things required, two attitudes required: Humility and Love. Humility: we are ALL sinners and while many would tell us sin doesn’t exist, or certain sins aren’t sins, even then we respond with humility, not arrogance. Everyone of us is born with an innate desire to do what we want to do, when we want to; self control in any form does not come naturally. The other essential attitude is love. Jesus told us to love our neighbor, not just the neighbor who looks like us, but the one who does not look like us. When Jesus comes into our life, he takes up residence, he claims ownership and begins to help us live God’s way. Therefore, Heaven isn’t for those who are good: but for those who realize they are not good enough, and need a savior to help them.*

Years ago at a convention of the Diocese of South Carolina, Bishop Salmon was in charge with the gavel. He was about to wrap up the convention when a man stands up and fires complaint after complaint regarding being homosexual in a diocese that didn’t affirm that lifestyle. The man begins by saying, “My name is so and so and I am a gay man...” Bishop Salmon to our shock stops him right there and says, “No you’re not!” You are a child of the living God before you are anything else. You are a child of God who can transform your life and soul. Which is why Bishop Salmon would say over and over that while our culture believes you cannot love someone unless you affirm them and their lifestyle,

The Gospel says you can simultaneously love, and not affirm. I cannot affirm the lifestyle of an addicted person, but I can still love them! I can love them enough to be a friend, walk with them, invite them to church, and intercede for them! Personally, I need friends who will love me and not affirm my rough edges! DON’T YOU?

Living under the Authority of the Word changes everything. Soteriology is Justification, a life-saving event, and Sanctification, a lifelong process of being molded in the hands of God. We have to call a sin a sin to receive redemption, and to receive the good news. Therefore, as we look at our challenge in the Anglican church, it's not about choosing option a versus option b, ACNA or the Episcopal Church. It's Biblical Christianity here. False Gospel there.

This is what led our Anglican Reformer Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, in the 16th Century to say, "If we are uncertain about God's Word, no man could know whether he had a right faith, and whether he were in the true Church of Christ or in the Synagogue of Satan." My friends, can you be part of a church actively leading people astray from Scripture?

As my favorite Christian Apologist Ravi Zacharias says, "Jesus Christ did not die to make bad people good, but to make dead people alive. We are for Salvation through Jesus Christ. We are for everyone of us becoming a new creation. We are for Biblical marriage. We are for being under the word and not over it. We are for allowing God through Scripture to re-write us.

Let us Pray.