

# Lecture II: The Scope of Salvation

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Is 5:20)

# Universalism: “All will be saved”

- According to this view, all people (**good & bad**) and **Satan will be saved.**
- To reject dualism is to reject the idea that God and Satan rule over their respective Kingdoms for eternity.
- It therefore follows, on the basis of this ‘restorationist’ soteriology

# Refuting Universalism:

- Hell is not Satan's Kingdom; it is the place where he and his angels will suffer forever.
  - St. John said, “The devil ... was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be **tormented day and night forever and ever**” (Rev 20:10)
  - Our Lord will say to those on His left, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the **everlasting fire** prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41)

# Limited Atonement: “Only the Elect will be saved”.

- The basis of this view lies in the Protestant heresy of salvation by grace alone
- Calvinists believe in what they call ‘**Irresistible Grace**’.
- They fell into the heresy of ‘**Limited Atonement and Predestination**’.
- **Then** they fell into the heresy of ‘**Eternal Security**’.

# Refuting Saved by Grace

- We are dealing with three related heresies:
  1. Salvation by grace alone.
  2. Predestination and Limited Atonement.
  3. Eternal Security
- The principle of predestination and election implies injustice and partiality

# Refuting Saved by Grace

- This view leaves many questions unanswered.
- Why is there a need for commandments? Why would the devil toil in the elect if they will certainly be saved?
- On what basis would reward be given to the elect if they had no choice in their destiny? Why would God punish a person predestined to perdition?

# Pluralism:

- Pluralists argue that if God wishes everyone to be saved, it is inconceivable that the divine self-revelation should be effected in such a way that only a small portion of humanity could be saved.

# Refuting Pluralism

- Holy Scripture testifies that the will of God is for the entire world to be saved.
- God in His love and justice offers salvation to everyone.
- Holy Scripture also testifies that there is no salvation except through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- In other words, unbelievers (non-Christians) will not be saved (i.e. will go to hell)
- Holy Scripture affirms that God gave people a free will and that He doesn't force anybody to be good or to believe.

- Truth can be disturbing at times, therefore, truth as recorded in Holy Scripture **and not what makes us comfortable should be our quest.**
- Another disturbing truth is the fact that **only a few will escape that fire!**

# Q & A

**Q.1 St. Peter said, “God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34-35). Does this mean that non-Christians would be saved?**

**A. No. ☐ St. Peter is referring to the universal saving will of God; Cornelius was from the Gentiles and yet was invited to believe by an angel in a vision (Acts 10:3-6)**

# Q & A

**Q.2 St. Paul said, “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves” (Rom 2:14). Does this mean that non-believers would be saved?**

**A. No. □ Let us consider the words of St. Paul in Romans 2:12-16**

# Q & A

**Q.3 What is the fault of the people who lived before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ or those who did not hear the message of the Holy Gospel? They didn't know!**

- **First of all, St. Paul answered this in Romans 1:19-20.**
- **Secondly, our Lord said about the people who rejected the message of the Holy Gospel, "Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Mt 10:15).**

# Lecture III: The Pelagian Controversy

You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” (Gal 5:4)

# The Pelagian controversy

- The Pelagian controversy, which erupted in the early fifth century, brought a cluster of questions concerning human nature, sin, and grace into sharp focus.
- Up to this point, there had been relatively little controversy within the church over human nature.
- The controversy centered upon two individuals: **St. Augustine of Hippo** and **Pelagius**

# The Freedom Of The Will

## FOR ST. AUGUSTINE

- St. Augustine's basic ideas can be summarized as follows.
  - First, natural human freedom is affirmed: we do not do things out of any necessity, but as a matter of freedom.
  - Second, human free will has been weakened and incapacitated – but not eliminated or destroyed – through sin.

# The Freedom Of The Will

## FOR ST. AUGUSTINE

- In order for that human will to be restored and healed, it requires the operation of divine grace.
- Free will really does exist; it is, however, distorted by sin.
- Consider the Pair of Scales analogy of St. Augustine.

# The Freedom Of The Will

## FOR PELAGIUS

- Humanity possessed total freedom of the will, and was totally responsible for its own sins.
- The Pelagians argued that the human free will was like a pair of balanced pans in perfect equilibrium, and not subject to any bias whatsoever.
- It is no excuse to argue that human frailty prevents these commands from being fulfilled.

# The Freedom Of The Will

- God has made humanity, and knows precisely what it is capable of doing. Hence all the commands given to us are capable of being obeyed, and are meant to be obeyed.

# The Nature of Sin

## For St. Augustine:

- Humanity is universally affected by sin as a consequence of the fall.
- The human mind has become darkened and weakened by sin
- The essential point that Augustine makes is that we have no control over our sinfulness.
- In other words, sin causes sins: The state of sinfulness causes individual acts of sin.

# The Nature of Sin

## For Pelagius:

- For Pelagius, the human power of self-improvement could not be thought of as being compromised.
- Sin was to be understood as an act committed willfully against God.
- Humanity is born sinless, and sins only through deliberate actions.

# The Nature of Sin

- Pelagius said that only those who were morally upright could be allowed to enter the church – whereas Augustine, with his concept of fallen human nature, was happy to regard the church as a hospital where fallen humanity could recover and grow gradually in holiness through grace.

# The Nature of Grace

## For St. Augustine:

- We are totally dependent upon God for our salvation, from the beginning to the end of our lives
- “Apart from me you can do nothing” (**Jn 15:5**).
- Grace, according to Augustine, is God’s generous and quite unmerited attention to humanity, by which this process of healing may begin.

# The Nature of Grace

## For Pelagius:

The term 'grace' is used in a very different way.

- First, grace is to be understood as the natural human faculties.
- Second, Pelagius understood grace to be external enlightenment provided for humanity by God.

# The Nature of Grace

## **For St. Augustine:**

- The New Testament, according to St. Augustine, envisaged grace as divine assistance to humanity, rather than just moral guidance.

## **For Pelagius:**

- Grace was something external and passive, something outside us.

# The Nature of Grace

## **For Pelagius:**

- God created humanity, and provided information concerning what is right and what is wrong – and then ceased to take any interest in humanity

## **For St. Augustine:**

- Humanity was created good by God, and then fell away from Him – and God, in an act of grace, came to rescue fallen humanity from its predicament.

# The Nature of Grace

## **For Pelagius:**

- Humanity needed to be shown what to do, and could then be left to achieve it unaided.

## **For St. Augustine:**

- Humanity needs to be shown what to do, and then gently aided at every point, if this objective was even to be approached, let alone fulfilled.

# The Basis of Salvation

## **For St. Augustine:**

- Humanity is justified as an act of grace: Even human good works are the result of God working within fallen human nature.

## **For Pelagius:**

- Humanity is justified on the basis of its merits: Human good works are the result of the exercise of the totally autonomous human free will, in fulfillment of an obligation laid down by God.

# The Basis of Salvation

- It will thus be clear that Pelagianism and Augustinianism represent two radically different outlooks, with sharply divergent understandings of the *manner in which God and humanity relate to one another*.
- The Council of Carthage (418) decided for St. Augustine's views on grace and sin, and condemned Pelagianism in uncompromising terms.