



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Lesson 7.1 – The Doctrine of the Way of Salvation (Soteriology)

Introduction

After studying the person, the office, and the work of the Christ, we now discuss the doctrine of the way of salvation. Central to this study is the doctrine of justification. This is the doctrine which, above all, separated Martin Luther and his adherents from the Roman church of his time. In this chapter we shall see that the teaching of “justification by faith alone”, as confessed by Lutherans, is the clear teaching of the Bible itself.

It is customary to consider the doctrine of justification together with a number of related teachings under the general heading of *soteriology*. The word “soteriology” comes from the Greek word *soteria* (σωτηρία), which means “salvation”. It is the study of what the Bible teaches about the way of salvation. In this chapter we shall consider not only justification, but also conversion and faith. As always, it is important that we ask God the Holy Spirit to enlighten us by means of the Scriptures so that what we say agrees fully with the Bible and that we not go beyond what the Bible says.

It is a fact of history that the early Christians did not long continue in the pure teaching of the way of salvation. Already in the first century the doctrine of justification was obscured and adulterated. The people did not fully understand that our salvation was fully accomplished by the work of Christ on the cross, and that forgiveness of sins was won thereby for the whole world. Faith does not add anything to our salvation, but it is simply trusting in what Christ has already accomplished. Gradually the early Christians lost sight of this pure Gospel and began to teach and believe that justification by faith alone was not enough. They thought that works were needed in addition to faith in order for our sins to be forgiven.

Questions

1. Why is it so important that we know what God says about justification?
2. What is meant by the term “soteriology”?
3. What happened already in the early centuries of church history?
4. What is faith?
5. Why doesn't faith add anything to our salvation?