

## **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 20, Dimensions of Salvation in Luke-Acts**

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on the Theology of Luke-Acts. This is session number 20, Darrell Bock, Dimensions of Salvation in Luke-Acts.

As we come to the end of our course on Luke-Acts Theology, we want to look at some summary conclusions concerning salvation synthesized in Luke-Acts.

Let us pray. Father, thank you for giving Luke to the Church. Thank you for his gifts of the Gospel and the Book of Acts. Stimulate us to read these good books and benefit them more as a result of our time together. Bless us now we ask, our Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray, Amen.

Darrell Bock, in his good A Theology of Luke-Acts, in chapter 11, gives us the many dimensions of salvation in Luke-Acts, a synthesis.

He writes, looking at Luke and salvation in a more synthetic way takes us in many directions. So now we're putting things together, pulling them together, seeing the trends especially as of Luke's doctrine of salvation, his soteriology, especially as they connect and interrelate. Soteriology is a vast field in Luke's writings and some real benefit can be gained from looking at it in this as a synthesis overview.

Proclaiming good news is basic and a key to understanding Luke-Acts. The scope of salvation includes the rich, the poor, the high, the low, men and women, Jew and Gentile. Authentication of the message is complicated. Bock makes a real contribution here, and we'll see his three arguments along those lines.

Fourth, the objective aspect of salvation is what God has done in Christ. Five, the subjective side is our repentance and faith which also is enabled by the Holy Spirit.

And finally, the benefits of salvation for the people of God. Proclaiming good news. In Acts, the word gospel occurs only twice.

Peter notes that the message of the gospel went to the Gentiles through him, Acts 15:7. The good news is about the grace that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. 15, chapter 15, verses 9 to 11. Acts 10:13, 34 through 43 is a good example of the gospel message preached to the Gentiles.

The use of the verb proclaim the good news, euangelizo, occurs more often in Luke-Acts than elsewhere in the New Testament. Many of these uses in Luke come in the text summarizing Jesus' ministry. In Acts, the content of the good news is more specific.

The apostles proclaim the message that Jesus is the Christ and, indeed, he is the focus of the apostolic preaching. The most common expression in Acts is simply to preach the gospel. Most of these uses involve summary declarations.

Acts 10.36 is a representative text on this theme, where Peter reviews the gospel and its Jewish roots. As for the word that he sent to Israel, God did, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all. The word gospel here refers to the apostolic preached message about Jesus and the gospel, that is the word "word," sorry, the word "word."

The gospel message contains an opportunity for peace, a well-being relationship between a person and God, which now seems to express itself in peace between people as well. It's the Old Testament concept of shalom brought into the New Testament as *ereine*. What makes Jesus important is what God is doing through him.

God has brought peace through what Jesus did and this Jesus is described as Lord of all, Acts 2.36. The exalted Jesus is Lord over all people, therefore the gospel can go to all people, including Gentiles such as Cornelius. As is always the case in Acts, God takes the initiative, the message comes from God. Salvation surfaces again as a theme in the ministry of Barnabas and Paul.

In Acts 14:15 they oppose idolatry and address what salvation really brings. They counsel the crowd that they should turn from vain idols to the living creator God. This is classic prophetic Jewish natural theology as in Isaiah chapters 40 and 41.

This also is the first speech here in Acts 14 to purely pagan Gentiles in Acts. It is God as creator who makes his creatures accountable to him. Beyond this there's something new in God's relationship to Gentiles.

In the past, God let nations go their own separate way, but not anymore. Paul declares that God is now more actively engaged with the nations than in years past, Acts 14:16. During past generations he allowed the nations to walk in their own way but this is no longer the case. God gave general revelation through providence, rain, seasons, and plenty of food, showing his goodness to all people.

In such a speech as we found here in Acts 14 the gospel is an invitation to come to the living creator God and to enter into a dependent relationship with him. At the center of the gospel in most of the speeches of Acts stands the person and the work of Christ.

Preaching is our second subhead under the act of proclaiming the good news, the gospel, and now preaching. The noun preaching is rare appearing in Luke's writings only in Luke 11.32. The verb to preach, *keruso*, is more frequent. Jesus preached in

the synagogue about the arrival of the year of the Lord's favor. An appeal to the Old Testament imagery of Jubilee, Luke 4:18 and 19.

In Acts, Christ is the one preached. Acts 10:42.43 gives a significant summary of the apostles preaching. As witnesses they are commissioned to testify that Jesus is the one God quoted, appointed as judge, the one God appointed as judge of the living and the dead, that is of all people.

That Jesus is the judge is what his ascension attests to. The role partially explains why he is called Lord. He's the ultimate eschatological judge possessing full authority over life and death.

In Acts 10:43 all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. Everyone who believes in this forgiveness receives this salvation. Christians are described as those who believe, a key response in Acts.

Both apostolic witness and Old Testament prophetic witness testify to Jesus. Proclaiming the good news involves the gospel, preaching, and also teaching, our third subhead. Jesus is described as one whose teaching brought astonishment because of its authority, Luke 4.32. He taught with sayings, parables, prophetic actions, along with several major discourses in the gospel of Luke.

The topics range from salvation from sin to life with God, from Jesus' current ministry to his return. The Jews who were saved on the day of Pentecost followed in the apostles' teaching, as we saw in Acts 2:42. In Athens, Paul's message of the resurrection, Acts 17:19, was called a new teaching. Like the noun teaching, *didache*, Luke uses the verb *didasko* to teach to summarize Jesus and the apostles' teaching.

Jesus taught in the synagogues on the Sabbath, in public settings as on a boat by the shore as we saw, in towns and in villages, and in the temple. Luke is particularly fond of Jesus' teaching at meals, 5:29, 7:36, 22:14, 24:30, and many verses in between. Luke is concerned to show that teaching takes place in settings where a sense of intimacy with the teacher is established.

In Acts, the emphasis on teaching sometimes looks back at Jesus, the teacher, Acts 1:1. The apostles teach people about the resurrection and the name of Jesus, which annoys the authorities, Acts 4:2, 4:18, 5:21, 5:25, and 28:42. Paul teaches in various locales, including Corinth, Acts 18:11, Ephesus, 18:25. Later he offers the Ephesian elders a summary of his teaching, of repentance toward God and of faith in the Lord Jesus, Acts 20:20. Acts closes with Paul teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ, Acts 28:31. Teaching in Luke-Acts is a broad term encompassing much more than the offer of the gospel, whereas preaching in Luke-Acts tends to be limited to the salvation message. The scope of salvation, our second major head.

This involves the promise for Jews and Gentiles to the poor, sinners, and outcasts. Promise for Jews and Gentiles. Luke emphasizes that what Jesus provides is available to everyone.

This point gradually emerges in the Infancy Narrative's overview of salvation. Zechariah speaks, John the Baptist's father, of Jesus, the horn in David's house, Luke 1:69, as a rising light that will shine on those who sit in darkness and death, Luke 1:78-79. Such activity fulfills God's promises. Those of God's good pleasure, he calls to himself, Acts 2:39. The scope of this provision becomes clearer still in Luke 2:30-32, where Jesus is said to be a light given on the one hand for revelation to the Gentiles, as we've seen many times, on the other for the glory of Israel.

The language is rooted in Isaiah, Isaiah 42:6, 46:13, 49:9. The body of Luke's gospel makes this same point. All people will see God's salvation, Luke 3:6. This universal note also occurs in Luke 24:47, where the message of the new community is the preaching of repentance to all nations. Acts continued this Gentile emphasis by citing Jesus' words that the message is to go to the ends of the earth, Acts 1:8. We saw Peter's speech in Cornelius' house and how God used it to bring Cornelius and his family and friends to a saving knowledge of God through Christ offered in the gospel.

Acts 28:28, the very end of Acts, also makes explicit the fact that the message is for Gentiles. They will accept it, Paul says. This Gentile inclusion is a key theme for Luke.

His point is that Israel's story always looked to include the blessing of the nations, beginning with Israel since that was the promise God made to Abraham, Acts 3:25, 26, and to Isaiah, Luke 2:30-32, Acts 13:47. Numerous texts picture this expansion of the gospel to Gentiles. Luke 7:1-10 describes a Gentile centurion whose faith exceeds anything found in Israel, verse 9. The centurion's faith pictures what occurs in Acts. Gentiles respond to Jesus, while many Jews reject him.

Jesus also ministers on occasion to Gentiles, as his trip to the Decapolis area east of the Jordan River shows. Jesus speaks of people coming from east, west, north, and south to dine at the banquet table in the kingdom to come Luke 13:22-30. Jesus goes so far as to call the current age, quote, the times of the Gentiles, Luke 21:24. Acts continues this emphasis. Acts 9:15 describes the call to Saul to bear Jesus' name before the Gentiles.

Acts 10:11 shows how God directs Peter to Cornelius. God is the one who brings in the Gentiles, as we have seen. Luke's emphasis on the universality of the gospel is an effective apologetic claim against any who think the gospel message in the church has become too broad, too generous, or too gracious.

Not only does the scope involve Gentiles as well as Jews, but we're still on scope; the scope also involves is also to the poor, sinners, and outcasts. Special attention is given to the poor in Luke's gospel. Mary's hymn in Luke 1:46-55 sets this theme.

The focus on the poor is reinforced in three representative presentations of Jesus' preaching, Luke 4:18, Luke 6:20-23, and Luke 7:22. In these passages, salvation is offered specifically to the poor. Sinners also received a special mention in Luke. Jesus' opponents frequently complain about Jesus making himself available to such people.

Luke 5:27-32, all the way to Luke 19 and verse 7 and many places in between. Luke 15 with the parables of lost sheep, lost coin, lost son shows God's initiative to recapture the lost, that motivates the direction of Jesus' ministry. Another group of rejected people are the tax collectors, regarded in that culture as social outcasts and traitors.

Consider the prayer of the public in Luke 18:9-14 and the salvation coming to Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10. These passages show that the gospel penetrates the hearts of those living on the fringe of humanity. Whether rich in sin, tax collector, or poor in life, the gospel can transform the lives of those who respond to it. The authentication of the gospel, three levels.

Authentication of the message, three levels of authentication. Along with the message comes authentication. By what authority does Jesus perform his works and proclaim his message? Jesus is authenticated, one, through his fulfillment of promises given in the scriptures; two, through miracles, often called signs and wonders; and three, through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

One, the subject of scriptural fulfillment is frequently mentioned in Luke. The key passage for this theme is Luke 4:18-21, in which Jesus publicly proclaims the scriptures attest to his ministry. In Isaiah 61:1 and 2. Two, Jesus' work and message are authenticated through miracles.

When John the Baptist asks whether Jesus is the coming one, Jesus answers by pointing to the miracles of his ministry, Luke 7:18-23. Jesus notes his miracles mean a fall for Satan, whose formerly secure abode had been overrun. Satan has been overpowered, Luke 11:22.

The picture of authority over Satan as a picture of victory and salvation appears in a number of places in the gospel of Luke, including 9, 1 and 2. Similar authority exists through the apostles and others in the early church. God performed miracles through a number of individuals, apostles Peter and John, Stephen, Philip, and Paul and Barnabas. Third, a third authentication of the gospel message is the presence of power from on high, that is, the Holy Spirit.

Luke 21:18-21. Acts 24:49. Acts 1:8. Acts 2:14-22, Acts 10:38 and Acts 11:15, and 16. The objective aspect of salvation, words for salvation, words for salvation.

Savior, to save, are words of salvation. Luke 2:11, Jesus is the promised Savior. To save speaks of God rescuing people, delivering them from calamity, especially the demon possessed man, Luke 8:36.

Jairus' daughter, 8:50. Samaritan leper, 17:19. Blind beggar, 18:42.

These miracles are audio visuals of God's power and authority. The sinful woman who anoints Jesus' feet is saved because of the attitude reflected in her action. Luke 7:50.

In Acts, the use of the term save, sozo, for physical deliverance occurs in Acts 27, 20, and 31, but most uses of the term are summary descriptions that occur along with acts of healing or preaching. Acts 2:47. Acts 4:12.

Acts 11:14, and on and on it goes. This Lord to whom one calls, Peter explains, is Jesus, Acts 2:36. He saves by providing forgiveness, sparing from wrath, and giving the Holy Spirit, Acts 2, 38-40.

Another key summary occurs in Acts 16, 30, and 31. To the Philippian jailer, Paul says, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll be saved, you and your household, Acts 16:31. The meaning of the nouns for salvation, soterion, soteria, differs little from that of the verb sozo, to save.

Without doubt, salvation is a key concept in Luke. Salvation is centered in Jesus. It possesses spiritual qualities, but eventually it'll impact the human structures on earth because it changes the way people live, Luke 1:68-79.

It is offered to all races, Acts chapters 10 and 11. Only those who respond to Jesus possess it. It is at the center of the apostolic message, and in it is everlasting life.

The subjective side of salvation, repentance, turning, and faith. The subjective aspect of salvation refers to the personal appropriation of salvation. Luke uses a concept to express this fundamental response.

Luke wishes to show the multidimensional character of a true response to the message, with each term highlighting an ingredient within that response. The three terms, as we have said, are repentance, turning, and faith. A key concept for Luke is repentance, whether expressed by the noun repentance, metanoia, or the verb to repent, metanoieo.

Luke is a theologian of repentance since his 11 uses of the noun comprise half of the uses in the New Testament. Repentance is a reorientation, a total shift of perspective from where one was before repenting. John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, Luke 3: 3. A central passage picturing repentance is Luke 5, 30-32.

Here Jesus describes his mission as calling sick sinners to repentance. Repentance is turning to Jesus for spiritual healing. The term Jesus uses in his great commission to the disciples about their future message is repentance, Acts 24:47.

Acts reinforces this point. Repentance is offered to Jews and Greeks through Jesus, Acts 20:21. Acts 26:20 is a key verse about what Paul asked for when he preached.

He asked the same from both Jews and Gentiles that they repent and turn. These responses can also be called faith directed toward Jesus. In Acts, the verb to repent is used in summary calls that invite one to enter into forgiveness.

Turning, another key term in Luke pertaining to the response to salvation is turning. John the Baptist's ministry was to turn Israel to God, Luke 1, 17. Turning is the reversing of estrangement as one recognizes and accepts that he or she has done wrong.

In this sense, it's similar to repentance, but it's a more vivid term since it portrays a reversal of direction. The word turn is used in Acts. The New Testament uses a variety of terms to describe properly responding to Jesus' message.

Forgiveness is the result, Acts 3:19. The most important passage on turning to God is Acts 26:18-20. Paul relates the Lord's call for him to turn the Gentiles from Satan to God.

The passage is important in that all the terms mentioned thus far appear together here. Repentance for Luke is to express itself concretely and visibly in the life of the responder. Faith.

Repentance, turning, faith. This is expressed by faith, *pistis*, and to believe, *pisteuo*. All occurrences suggest a reliance on another to provide something one cannot provide for himself.

Peter's faith failed as Jesus had predicted, Luke 22:32. The use of the noun faith in Acts is similar. At times, the Christian movement was actually called the faith, Acts 6:7, Acts 16:5. Faith's object is Christ, Acts 20:21, and 24:24.

In Luke's gospel, the verb to believe is similar in force. Most uses of the verb *pisteuo*, to believe in Acts, are summaries of people's response of belief, Acts 2:44, Acts 4:32,

and so forth. Belief justifies Acts 13:39, but those who do not believe will perish, verse 41.

All those whom God has ordained to eternal life believe, verse Acts 13:48. Believing comes by God's grace, 15:11, 18:27. Lastly, the benefits of salvation.

Dimensions of salvation in Luke, Acts. Proclaiming good news, the scope of salvation, authentication of the message, objective and subjective sides of salvation, and the benefits of salvation. Forgiveness of sins, Luke 3, 3. Luke 4, 18, Jesus' ministry.

Life. Another key benefit of salvation is life. Life does not consist in one's possessions, Luke 12:15.

In Acts, life is viewed as a result of resurrection, Acts 2:27 to 28. What Jesus provides allows him to be called the author of life, Acts 3:15. When the Jews fail to respond to the message in Acts 13, Paul says they do not consider themselves worthy of eternal life, Acts 13:46.

Gift. A number of times Luke refers to the gift, gift, by which he means primarily what the Holy Spirit supplies, Acts 2:38, 8:20, 10:45, 11:17. Peace.

Another benefit of salvation is peace. That is, Jesus makes possible a reconciled relationship between God and humanity. Jesus, as Savior, Christ, and Lord brings peace to those on whom his favor rests, Luke 2:14.

Peter says his message was the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, Acts 10:36. Grace or favor, *xaris*, is another salvation benefit. The notion of finding faith or grace with God is a Semitism.

Genesis 6:8, Judges 6:17, 1 Samuel 1:18. In Luke's writings, it is an expression of divine working. Favor signifies God's gracious choice of someone through whom God does something special.

In Acts, God's grace rests on people and communities. Acts 4:33, grace rests on all believers. The most common use of grace in Acts is a description of salvation or its message.

Acts 11:23, 13:43, 14:3, 15:11, 20:24, and 32. Justify. There's one text where the word justify appears in a non-technical sense but illustrates how Luke uses a key component of the term.

In the scene from Luke 18, Jesus notes the tax collector walks away from his prayer. When he does, he is justified, the Pharisee and the tax collector. The commendation is for the humility of the tax collector in contrast to the Pharisee who is proud.



The Pharisee distorts a praise psalm by thanking God for all his own work. God commends the humility of a tax collector for he senses his need for God's mercy without any sense of entitlement. Thus, the appeal for God's mercy and turning in repentance are what justifies for one merely seeks mercy and understands there is no entitlement.

Salvation conclusion. Salvation is virtually on every page of Luke-Acts. God is at work completing his promise, working through Jesus, bringing the spirit, and forgiving sin.

Salvation means reestablishing a lost relationship with God and finding peace with him. In repenting, turning to or believing in Jesus, the person receives the benefit of forgiveness, the spirit, and life. That presence of grace through faith leads to a changed life.

So now the call is to love God fully and love one's neighbor as a reflection of God's own work. In gratitude for the grace tied to salvation, one will love deeply. So, we turn now to look, so we turn now to give thanks to God for his gifts to us of the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

Father, thank you for your grace given us in Christ Jesus. Thank you for your sending your Spirit into our heart. Bless us, we pray. We thank you for Luke's gospel and the message of the book of Acts. Bless us and our families, we pray, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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