



OPEN BIBLE SCHOOL

Soteriology Course

Session 1 | Who is the Soter? God's Woven Fabric!

April 6, 2026 | Life Nation, Sango, Ibadan

ANCHOR TEXT

2 Timothy 3:14-16

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness," -- 2 Timothy 3:14-16

Word Study

The word "continue" in verse 14 comes from the Greek word *men*, which means to stay on something, to remain. A helpful rendering would be: Stay on these things. Remain in them.

Verse 15 references the Holy Scriptures. The version closest to the Greek uses the phrase sacred writings -- a deliberate and significant choice by Paul. Paul marks out certain books as sacred and unique. This will matter for our understanding of what he is drawing from.

Also in verse 15, the word wise comes from the Greek *sophizo* -- which is the same Greek variant used for the word subtil to describe the serpent in Genesis 3:1. It also appears in 2 Peter 1:16.

*In other words, the sacred writings are able to produce skill -- a sharpened, refined, navigating capacity -- unto salvation. The word unto is the Greek *eis*, meaning for, to, or that which leads to. The sacred writings lead us to a journey: the journey of faith in Christ.*

WHAT ARE THE SACRED WRITINGS?

By stating "sacred writings," what exactly is Paul referring to? We draw reference here from A Little Guide on How to Use Bible Translations by Bible Study with OBS.

Key Historical Notes

- o Paul's Bible was most likely the Septuagint (LXX) -- the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.
- o Jerome, when translating the Bible into Latin, did not find books like Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, or the Maccabees in the Jewish Bible. He coined the term Apocrypha -- meaning "hidden things" -- to describe them.
- o His argument was that these books could be read for edification, but should not be used to establish doctrine.
- o The Bible was never originally written in chapters and verses. It was not divided into verses until 1560.

This raises an important point for soteriology: our Bible -- God's sacred writings -- is our poem of God's redemptive sacrifice. Not broken by chapters and verses, but our hearts broken by His love, His commitment, and His redemptive justice.

The Hebrew Bible: The Tanak

The Hebrew Bible is known as the Tanak -- made up of three sections:

SECTION	HEBREW NAME	MEANING
T	Torah	The Law (the five books of Moses)
N	Nevi'im	The Prophets
K	Ketuvim	The Writings

The original 1611 King James Version did include the Apocrypha, placing it in a separate section -- consistent with a tradition similar to Luther's. However, in 1826, the British and Foreign Bible Society decided to discontinue printing Bibles that contained the Apocrypha, partly to reduce printing costs and partly because these books were not regarded as inspired within Protestant theology.

In other words, Paul's sacred writings are not the works of Plato or Aristotle -- they are the Tanak, the Old Testament texts. Although Paul did quote extra-biblical materials (Acts 17:28; Titus 2:12), his primary source and authority remained the Old Testament Scriptures.

See also: Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:44-47; Matthew 16:13-21 (Note: Matthew is pointing us here to the fact that our Christology is our Soteriology).

DISCUSSION QUESTION

What does the name Jesus Christ mean?

Take a moment to reflect on this before we proceed. The answer is not merely biographical -- it is soteriological.

Peter also weighs in. In 2 Peter 3:8-9 and verse 15, Peter notes that the patience of our Lord is salvation. He also affirms Paul's writings as credible for our understanding of soteriology.

Notice the three recurring words across the New Testament witness: Salvation. Saviour. The Saved. These three words are the heartbeat of what we are about to study.

WHAT IS SOTERIOLOGY?

Soteriology is the branch of Christian theology that focuses on the doctrine of salvation. It is derived from two Greek words:

GREEK WORD	MEANING
Soterios	Salvation
Logos	Word, Study

The word Soteria appears in the New Testament 43-45 times across the following books:

BOOK	BOOK	BOOK
Luke -- 4	Romans -- 5	Hebrews -- 7
John -- 1	2 Corinthians -- 5	1 Peter -- 3
Acts -- 6	Ephesians -- 1	2 Peter -- 1
	Philippians -- 3	Jude -- 1
	1 Thessalonians -- 2	Revelation -- 3

	2 Thessalonians -- 1	
	2 Timothy -- 1 & 2	

WHAT DOES SOTERIA MEAN?

In the Greco-Roman world, soteria carried a much broader, more pragmatic, and often political meaning than the strictly religious or spiritual definition used in modern theology. In antiquity, it primarily meant safety, preservation, deliverance, or well-being in a physical and immediate sense.

#	CONTEXT	MEANING
1	Physical Safety	Being kept safe from tangible harm -- surviving a shipwreck, returning from war, recovering from a life-threatening illness. A physician could be called soter (savior) because they brought soteria (bodily health) to the patient.
2	Political Context	In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, soteria was tied to the Imperial Cult. A king who saved a city from famine or invasion was hailed as Soter. Inscriptions credit the Emperor with the soteria of the whole world (oikoumene). Note: An inscription at Priene regarding Augustus Caesar speaks of his birth as the beginning of good news (euangelion) because he brought soteria to a chaotic world.
3	Philosophical	For Greek philosophers, soteria meant the preservation of the soul or city-state. Plato used it to describe the salvation of a city through its laws. The Stoics viewed it as the preservation of one's inner character against the storms of fate.
4	Mystery Religions	The Mystery Cults (Isis, Mithras, Cybele) shifted soteria toward a more personal, afterlife-focused meaning -- being rescued from the power of Fate or death through secret rituals and union with a deity.

When the early Christians began using this word to describe Jesus, it was a radical reclamation. They were essentially saying: true safety and well-being do not come from Caesar's armies or the Greek gods -- they come from Christ.

WHAT SOTERIOLOGY IS NOT

Before we define what soteriology is, we must clear the ground of what it is not. Many misunderstandings cloud this doctrine, and clearing them helps us receive the truth more clearly.

1 It is NOT "Escapology"

Correction: While soteriology includes the concept of an afterlife, it is not merely a ticket to heaven or a way to escape the physical world. Biblical soteriology involves the restoration of the world and the body, not just the soul departing the earth. It is about "Thy kingdom come on earth" -- not just "us going to the sky."

2 It is NOT "Ethics" or "Moralism"

Correction: Soteriology is often confused with being a good person or following a moral code. Ethics deals with how one should act; soteriology deals with how one is rescued and transformed. In most Christian frameworks, good works are the result of salvation, not the cause of it. You do not do soteriology -- you receive it.

3 It is NOT "Universalism"

Correction: Soteriology is not synonymous with the belief that everyone will eventually be saved. It is the study of the process and means of salvation. Most historical soteriological frameworks include exclusivity -- the idea that salvation is found through a specific means: Christ.

4 It is NOT "Anthropology"

Correction: Anthropology is the study of humanity; soteriology is the study of God's rescue of humanity. While they are linked -- you must understand the fall of man to understand the need for salvation -- soteriology is fundamentally Christocentric. It focuses on the Mediator, not merely on the state of the human being.

5 It is NOT "Psychology"

Correction: In modern usage, salvation is often reduced to self-actualization, inner peace, or mental wholeness. While soteriology may result in peace of mind, it is historically defined as an objective change in a person's status before God (Justification) and their ontological nature (Regeneration) -- not merely a subjective shift in feelings or personality.

6 It is NOT "Sociology"

Correction: While Liberation Theology looks at saving society from oppressive structures, this is a subset -- not the whole of soteriology. Traditional soteriology focuses on the reconciliation of the individual and humanity to God.

KEY THEMES OF SOTERIOLOGY

As we go deeper in subsequent sessions, these are the key themes we will be tracing through Scripture:

Sin -- The condition from which humanity needs rescue.
Death -- The consequence of sin -- spiritual and physical.
Life -- The gift that soteriology makes possible in Christ.
Justification -- Being declared righteous before God through faith.
Atonement -- The means by which the penalty of sin is satisfied.
Grace -- The undeserved favour through which salvation is given.
Sanctification -- The ongoing work of God making us holy.
Election & Predestination -- God's sovereign purpose in salvation.

CLOSING STATEMENT

Our Christology is our Soteriology.

To know who Christ is, is to know what salvation means. They cannot be separated.



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