**BIBLE QUESTIONS: SESSION 27**

**Questions: *What is universalism and fatalism? What is and why is semi-pelagianism prevalent in church teaching today?***

1. **What is universalism and fatalism?**
   1. Universalism is the unbiblical theological doctrine that in the end, all people will be saved and go to heaven.
      1. This is clearly contradicted by innumerable bible passages, including Jesus own words.
         1. Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16). Dividing of the sheep and goats (Matt.26). Et. al.
         2. Some teach a functional or implicit universalism by only preaching and talking about how Jesus died for all people and paid for all of their sins, without ever teaching the fact that the bible teaches some, (indeed many) will be eternally condemned to hell. They may teach that hell has been conquered by Jesus, without clarifying that it remains for those who reject him.
   2. Fatalism is the philosophical doctrine that all things happen because they were fated (preordained) to happen. It is often contrasted with Free Will, which is the idea that nothing is “written in the stars” and we are masters of our own fate.
      1. The bible has elements of fatalism (providence, predestination) and elements of free will (Adam chose to eat the fruit, those who chose to reject Christ). However, the bible never directly teaches or answers this purely philosophical dilemma.
      2. Philosophical dilemmas (“antinomies”) are real problems in human thinking that cannot be resolved by any worldview because they are necessary yet contradictory presuppositions about reality. For the Christian, these are mysteries that are not for us to answer beyond the confines of scripture, but for us to humble ourselves and acknowledge the limits of our intellect in comparison to the unfathomable knowledge and power of the true God.
2. **What is semi-pelagianism?**
   1. Semi-pelagianism is a form of moderated pelagianism.
      1. Pelagianism is that a person’s salvation and acceptance before God is entirely accomplished by his own resolve. God’s grace contributes nothing to salvation.
      2. Semi-Pelagianism argues that God begins the process of salvation through prevenient grace (a free and unearned gift) to do good works. Those good works, then, merit salvation, so that salvation depends upon God’s grace, but not entirely. Man’s resolve to make use of that grace contributes also.
   2. Semi-Pelagianism was roundly condemned by Martin Luther in his book “Bondage of the Will”. Roman Catholics teach semi-pelagianism, though without the name. Most protestants reject semi-pelagianism, arguing that God saves a person by grace, through faith alone apart from Good Works, which contribute nothing to salvation.
3. **Why is semi-pelagianism prevalent in church teaching today?**
   1. Theologically, semi-pelagianism has always been a prevalent enemy of the true doctrine of scripture. Theologians attribute this to the “*opinio legis”* of man (opinion of the law). This means that natural man has a fettish and predisposition towards self-justification. This is both because he wants to take credit for his salvation, and also because he wants to explain away his sins.
   2. Another attractive aspect of SP is that it lays blame on man for his damnation in a way that is in harmony with human reason. We can both thank God if we end up in heaven, because he began our salvation with free grace; AND if a man ends up in hell, he can be blamed for not doing enough.
   3. Syncretism is a close “Protestant” cousin of Semi-pelagianism. However, rather than saying God’s grace begins salvation, and man’s will completes it, Syncretism says that Man’s will begins salvation by making a free and wilfull decision to accept Jesus Christ, only then does God supply the requisite Grace to complete salvation. Here, man contributes “faith” to his salvation.
   4. Over against any teaching that makes salvation dependent in any aspect upon man; the bible teaches that salvation, grace, and faith are all 100% God’s doing alone, and the will, strength or resolve of the natural unregenerate man contribute nothing to it. According to human reason, this leads us to the logical conclusion that God must be to blame for those who do not receive salvation. The bible clearly says otherwise, so we believe God saves monergistically (by Himself without our help); but God condemns synergistically (despite his help, because of man’s resistance to His Grace).