

Clothed with Power from On High

What does salvation mean?

Reading: Matthew 25: 14-30 Be Ready and Invest Your Talents

Tonight

- Prayer
- RECAP: What Christ did to save us AND how we receive it via the Holy Spirit.
- Grace, faith, and actions
- 3 tenses of salvation: how we are being saved.
- How merit fits in this.

We looked at two aspects of salvation

Atonement/
Salvation/
Redemption

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graph LR; A((Atonement/Salvation/Redemption)) --> B(1 Jesus' objective act that righted our relationship with God: the Cross and Resurrection establishing a new covenant); A --> C(2 How this is received by us: through grace in the gift of faith- Via the Holy Spirit)
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1 Jesus' objective act that righted our relationship with God: the Cross and Resurrection establishing a new covenant

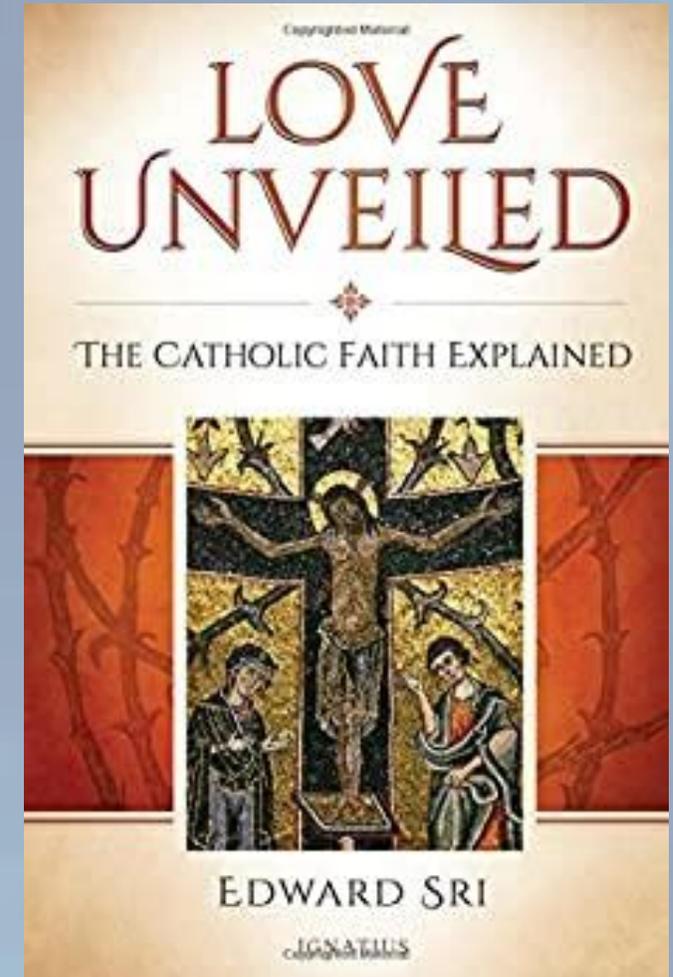
2 How this is received by us: through grace in the gift of faith- Via the Holy Spirit

Closer look today at #2: How do we receive the gift Jesus won for us via the Holy Spirit?



Lets look at our text book.....

- Ch 6 of the Text talks about the one FROM WHOM we receive this
- The Holy Spirit!
- God's Spirit of Sonship given to us
- Begins at Pentecost, and is spread by the Church
- Take a look at text: begin on p 102...



1. Saved by God's grace

1 We are saved by grace (God's inner life) of the Holy Spirit in us

- This grace does 2 things:
- A) heals our sins/ reforms the image of God in us damaged by sin (redemption)
- B) unites us to God's inner life (sanctification)

When do we receive it?

- God's grace is always at work on us....
- God's grace prepares the way: we call this preparatory grace or *Prevenient*.
- When we accept this gift, we are invited into baptism, where we are given the full gift of God's inner life, this is sanctifying grace.
- Sancta just means "holy". In **baptism** we become holy humans, with God's Holy Spirit living in us.
- We become fully initiated when we receive the spiritual nourishment of **Confirmation**.
- Read Acts 8: 14 ff

2 Received in the gift of Faith

- God's life is called grace (see pg 103)
- In us is engenders three powerful gifts: Faith, hope and love.
- **Faith** is a gift that takes our natural ability to trust and elevates it into a knowledge that rests in trust in God's revelation
- We accept faith freely- it's a choice and a gift
- So the **act of faith** is a free acceptance of a divine indwelling
- This produces gifts (Is 11:1-3)

The 2 aspects of faith

- Faith can be understood as both the ACT of BELIEVING
 - And
- THE BELIEF ITSELF (WHAT we believe and WHO we believe in)
- So it is a verb and a content
- And a supernatural trust in the person of Jesus
- Only possible when the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

3. Lived out in Decisions

- This gift heals our sin and unites us to God- and can be lost
- With God in us, we now are invited to share in God's loving work in the world.
- Our actions are now God's working in and through us. They are meritorious because of the Holy Spirit in us, uniting us to Christ.
- This in turn gives glory to God, the source of all goodness.

We are invited to be
the hands of Christ.
“It is no longer I who
live, but Christ who
lives within me”



So is salvation a one-time deal?

- We have already seen that it is not-
- But let's take a closer look at the biblical teaching on it
- ALL of the biblical teaching.

Some say..

- Luther's teaching 400 years ago was that of sola Fides
- This means faith alone
- He thought: If you firmly believe it, then you are saved
- However: His understanding of salvation does not change you actually
- Luther thought it is a legal change of your status only
- God no longer will punish you for your sins
- But you are still in the grips of evil and depraved- but God will now ignore this. Your change is in status only.
- Nothing else is necessary, everything else is just a nice extra- like doing good things.

The problem is....

- The difficulty with this is...
- The bible sees it more organically.
- There is an initial salvation- a total gift
- An ongoing growth in love as we live in the love of God
- And a judgement at the end to see if we stuck with it
- All of this is clearly put out in the Bible.
 - **Simple fact: the bible nowhere says we are saved by faith alone.**
 - **It just is not in there.**

The 3 Tenses of Salvation: When is salvation?

The NT speaks of it in three tenses:

Past
Present
Future



Past tense: justification

- **Justification** (being made just) is something already occurred in the life of the believer by God's grace in Baptism:

- 1 Cor 6:11

“And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

Present Tense: Cooperation

We are being saved

- 1 Peter 3:21

“and baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”

Future Tense

Matt 12:36-7 “you **will be** justified”

Romans 2:13 “**will be** justified”

Heb 9:27-8 Christ will appear a second time “to save those eagerly waiting for him.”

Why is this important?

- Because we can lose our salvation.
- This is why faith and lived-out works are both strongly emphasized in the New Testament.
- Works do not just signal our salvation with nice actions, rather putting your faith into work is **required** for salvation.

Faith and works

Recap:

1. When we come to faith and receive Baptism we get a totally underserved gift of grace- God's life in us.

- It heals us from sin AND unites us to God.
- It redeems (saves us-pays the price- heals the wound etc.) and elevates us into family relationship with our creator.
- This second aspect we call sanctification or divinization.

2. Once received, we begin to participate with the faith, hope and love in us.

- This participation allows us to merit salvation, this does not mean we earn anything on our own! Rather we become participants in the gift.
- We become true children of God, not just slaves.

Merit

- When Catholics use the term merit, as in “we merit salvation” we are speaking of works done in the love of Christ through us, which we freely and willingly cooperate with.
- We never mean “stuff we do on our own that gets us into heaven.”
- But we have to take the grace and use it. Or else our faith has no true reality in us.
- Why do we know this?
- The Bible tells us so...

James 2: 17

- James tells us that

• **“So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”**

- Looking at the case of Abraham, who was saved by his faith He explains
- “ Was not Abraham justified along by His works, and faith was completed by works.”
- James concludes “For as the body apart from the Spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.”

The only time....

- The only time in the bible that the words faith and works come together it clearly says that works are an essential part (not just a result of) of faith.
- Somehow the God of the universe is not threatened or diminished by allowing us to cooperate with His gift.
- It is a free gift AND we must actively work in this gift.
- As Paul tells us we must “We must run the race to win.” 1 Cor 9: 24
- It can be lost! Assuming something we do not actually have or control is known as presumption. Even at the end it remains a free gift from God, who is the God of love AND justice. (Matt 25 this coming Sunday!)

It is all about the Holy Spirit

- It is the power of the Spirit in us that allows us to participate in God;s great work.
- The HS is the main protagonist in the Acts of the Apostles, the follow up to Luke’s Gospel.
- This is why it is sometimes called the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.
- Your next assignment is to read the Acts of the Apostles, where we will meet some very interesting characters as the Church begins to spread.
- It is in the fruits of the Spirit in the Church that we see God;s grace at work.



Discussion Questions

- 1 How has God worked in my life to move me towards faith? What were the voices and/or persons that spoke to me or moved me to consider Christ?**
- 2 What is an incorrect understanding of merit? Can I by myself earn salvation?**
- 3 What is the relationship between faith and works, biblically understood?**
- 4 How should the Holy Spirit now play a part in my life, if I choose to be Jesus' disciple?**
- 5 How will being a disciple of Jesus change various parts of my life? How I spend my time? What I do with my kids? How I use my money? Etc.**
- 6 What are the obstacles in my life to accepting faith? What obstacles remain today?**