

The Triumph of the Cross

What does salvation mean?

Main questions we will look at

- What do we mean by salvation?
 - Saved from what?
 - Saved for what?
- How do we get and participate in this gift?



I Saved by Grace

Salvation: clarification

- God's saving work comes in various forms throughout salvation history (Noah and the flood, Moses and Egypt)
- We will be focusing here on the fullness of salvation won by Christ

Terminology: **The Paschal Mystery**

- Scripture tells us that our salvation was won by Christ through His passion, death, and resurrection.
- Collectively these events, including the Last Supper, is known as the **Paschal Mystery**.
- The term paschal comes from the Hebrew word for 15th, for on the 15th day of the month of Nisan they would celebrate the Passover. Jesus died on the Passover, transforming the significance of delivery from Egypt to mean delivery from death itself.
- This is why Jesus began our redemption with a Passover meal- known now as the Last Supper.

Passover Sacrifice

- Jesus replaced the sacrifice of a lamb with Himself
- A sacrifice is a holy gift given as a representation of love to God
 - It involves three things:
 - **Offering** (by a priest- a rep of the people)
 - **Immolation** (of the gift given that represents our love and commitment)
 - **Acceptance of the gift** (by the covenant recipient)

Passover Sacrifice

- So Jesus put his gift of self to God for us into the context of the Passover
- Everything He did as our high priest (our rep) was done in a covenant ceremony- thus making it into a big liturgical action- a ceremonial rite.
- He was the priest, the victim gift, and His Father was the recipient.
- **Because Jesus was both God and Man**, He could represent us perfectly
- **And because He was God**, He could give the perfect gift: His total divine love and obedience

Perfect Sacrifice

- **Offering:** His perfect obedient love (sinless)
- **Immolation:** the Cross
- **Acceptance:** Shown us in the resurrection

What did this give us?

- Redemption and Salvation
 - What do these and similar terms mean?
(Justification, atonement, sanctification, etc.)

1st what they are not:
Salvation is not self-help

- According to St. Paul in order to be saved we must die to ourselves and conform ourselves to Christ (Romans 8:29)
- This is not just difficult....
 - It is impossible!

Salvation

- So when we talk about salvation,
- we are talking about something we are completely incapable of.
- But luckily what is impossible for us:
- “is possible to God” (Luke 18:29)

Salvation: a total Gift

- So how then can we be saved? Is salvation something we earn?
- It is given by Christ, never deserved or earned!
- What is the gift? Grace
- Ephesians 2:8 lays down the big picture here:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—”

What is grace?

- Grace is **a share in God's divine life!** It is adoption into God's very Trinitarian life!
- It is so powerful and so transformative, that it changes us into new beings.
- Christ is united to us, to our very souls.
- We become "children of God!"

- 1 John 3: 1-2

"See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is."

Grace is a gift

- This gift was given through Christ to us humans who do not deserve it
 - How did we get this gift?
 - Through the historical, once for all, actions of Christ
 - in His passion, death and resurrection.
 - As received in **Baptism!**

Through Christ in Baptism

- So now through Christ, in Baptism, we are united to the Father.
- We become united to this self-giving love through our baptism
- Our baptism makes us into “little Christs”

John 3: 5-6

“Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.’”

Another way of looking at it

- Only one human makes it into heaven: Jesus
- In our baptism we become spiritually united to that one same Christ.
- This is why we say that the Church is “one body” in Christ!
- We refer to Christ as the head and ourselves (and all baptized Christians) as the body of Christ.
- When we receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism, Christ’s spirit now dwells in us.

Christ in us

- When we receive the gift of grace, we become recipients of God's love (charity), God's truth (in faith) and hope of fulfillment in heaven (Hope)
- This is why faith, hope and love are called the three theological virtues
- We begin to receive these on our journeys, and they are implanted in us at our baptism.

When is salvation?

- The NT speaks of it in three tenses: past present and future

Past tense: justification

- Justification, being made just, is something already occurred in the life of the believer

- 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

- 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.”

Christ both saved us from
and saved us for
something as well

“Salvation is nothing less than union with the triune
God in Christ”

-M Barber

Again it is a free gift, undeserved, of God's grace in us.

The Catholic Church has always taught that we are saved by grace

Trent in 16 century:

- “We are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification. For if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise, as the Apostle says, grace is no more grace (Rom 11:6)
(-session 6, ch 8)

II The Issue of “works”

But the controversial question is:

How does this grace work in us?

- The Protestant view is that we do nothing and continue to do nothing with this grace in any way to merit any part of our salvation.
- Their concern here is to preserve the power of God and the radical ontological (what we are) split between God and man.
- Calvin and many others felt that to have any participation in this gift of grace would elevate man into an idolatrous position and undermine God's authority and power.

The Catholic understanding...

- The difficulty with this position is that Scripture very clearly says that good works (participating with the free undeserved gift) is a criteria for salvation.

Matt 16:27: “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what he has done.”

Rom 2:6: “For he will repay according to each one’s deeds.”

2 Cor 5:10: “For all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.”

More verses to drive home the point...

- **1 Peter 1:17:** “If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile.”
- **Revelation 2:23:** “And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.”
- **Revelation 20:12:** “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books.”
- **Rev 22:12:** “See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work.”

But...

- Scripture clearly says that grace is a gift
 - And that we can do nothing on our own without God's help
- But is there something that involves our PARTICIPATION with God's grace? Not us alone, but God AND us?

Jesus clearly taught that the essential criteria on the last day for judgment is **works**

- Matt 25: 34-46

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” ...

Then he will say to those at his left hand, “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.”

....And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

The problem...

- So on one hand we have grace, received in faith, as a free undeserved gift
- AND
- We have a very clear need to act on it- so important that the fulfillment of our salvation (past, ongoing, and in the future) is completely dependent on it
- Does it undermine God's power and gift to us when we say that we become participants in the gift?

Both... And...

- Its both- sort of ! Not just one (faith alone) or just the other (human participation in God's gift).
- Behind it all is grace, that transforms our works into Christ's works.
- If Christ is in us, If we are His children, then our actions of love are HIS actions of love.
- This is how intimately grace dwells in us!
- The "works" we do are not merely human works anymore.
- They are God's gift working through us- we are no longer slaves, but Children of God.

So how does this fit together?

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

- It heals us from sin AND unites us to God

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 fo 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

Discussion Questions

- How did Jesus transform the events of the Jewish Passover into something more?
- What was the gift Jesus gave the Father in order to heal the relationship with God?
- How is salvation a free gift? How do we get this gift?
- What are the three tenses of salvation?
- What does salvation do to us?
- What is the relationship between faith and works, biblically understood?