

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **Where Are You At? Part 2: Salvation by Faith, Assurance of Salvation**

July 17th, 2022. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Ephesians 2:1-10; John 4:6-24**

1. Salvation by Faith¹

"By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God not the result of works, so that no one may boast" Ephesians 2:8-9 NRSV

The starting point in our spiritual journey in Christ is to obtain salvation by faith. When we become born again, we are saved through our faith in Christ Jesus dying for our sins and being raised from the dead by God's power, and by receiving the grace of God made available to us in Christ. We cannot grow in Christ if we don't get the basics right. Today our focus is on the basics of our faith.

a. **What has Jesus "saved" us from?**

Past sins and failures, guilt, and fear.²

- **Sin**

Sin is human failure to meet God's moral standards. It is NOT a feeling.

"Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness."

1 John 3:4 NIV

The Ten Commandments are an example of God's moral law.

Oxford Dictionary definition:

"An immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law"

- **Results of Sin**

- **Guilt and Feelings of Guilt**

Feelings of guilt arise because we instinctively know when we do wrong. Our conscience tells us. When we keep sinning, we can get to the point where we ignore the voice of our conscience. Our conscience becomes seared. We easily explain away moral wrongdoing.

¹ Key points in this section reference John Wesley's 1738 sermon titled, "Salvation by Faith"

² John Wesley, sermon titled "Salvation by Faith," June 18, 1738

- **Death (spiritual and physical)**

Spiritual death - separation from God, losing the divine glory that was once ours.

- **Fear of Death**

“He (Jesus) shared their (our) humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”

Hebrews 2:15 NIV

In the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:6-24) we see the sins and failures of the past, guilt, and the effect of guilt.

b. **How are we “saved”?**

- **Payment for sin - redemption, by grace**

Our own efforts to pay the price for sin is not enough.

Jesus died in our place - He paid the price for our sins once and for all.

- This price covered our past sins.
- He also made it possible for us to receive forgiveness for all future sins that we own up to (that is, confess).

“In him (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” Ephesians 1:7 NRSV

Redemption is the price to pay to get something back.

e.g., A house owner gets to finally own the house by paying off (redeeming) the loan (mortgage) on the house.

- **By Grace**

- All The blessings we have and will ever receive are given by God. These blessings are bestowed on us by God's grace. God's grace is His favour or bounty.
- We have no claim to God's mercies or favour. It is a gift
- This grace through which He gives us blessings is undeserved.
- God's grace is His power that enables us to overcome our human weaknesses. It is what enables us to become what God wants us to be.

- John Wesley defined grace as “the power of the Holy Ghost enabling us to believe and love and serve God.”³

- **Through faith in Christ.**

God offers us salvation (freedom) from sin, guilt, and fear.

We accept and receive God’s salvation by faith -

simply by believing in what Jesus did and saying so!

“If you **confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved” Romans 10:9-10 NRSV

c. **Nature of this salvation through faith?⁴**

- **It is a present salvation.**

Salvation is attainable now. We don’t have to wait to get to heaven to experience salvation in Christ.

- **We are justified before God through faith**

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” Romans 5:1 NIV

- **We are saved from guilt and condemnation**

“Therefore, **there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,** because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ”Romans 8:1, 2, 14-16 NIV

³ John Wesley, *Instructions for Children*, p.10

⁴ All bullet points from John Wesley’s 1738 sermon titled, “Salvation by Faith” – further explanation added that is not all in Wesley’s sermon.

- **Being saved from guilt, we are freed from fear and its bondage**

"Therefore, my friends, **since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus**, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), **and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**" Hebrew 10:19-22
NRSV

- **We are saved from the power of sin**

"You know that **he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No-one who lives in him keeps on sinning ...**

"No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. " 1 John 3:6, 9 NIV

In Romans 7, Paul explains the nature of a person who is not born of God – such a person has no power over sin. Many Christians use this passage to make excuses for continuing to live in sin. But Paul concludes by saying:

"Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Romans 7:24-25

In Christ, we have power to overcome sin.

- **He/she that, by faith, is born of God sins not**

- by any habitual sin (habitual sin is sin that reigns)
- by any wilful sin (the will hates sin and seeks to live for God)
- by any sinful desire (because one continually desires the holy and perfect will of God)
- by infirmities (i.e. weaknesses - whether in act, word or thought) - because such weaknesses do not agree with his will.

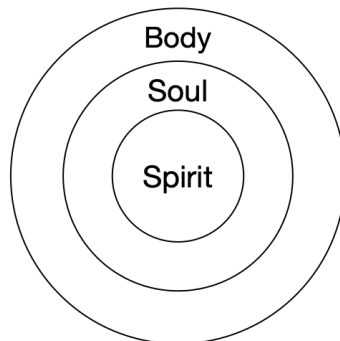
"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:8, 9 NIV

2. Assurance of Salvation - How do we know we are saved or born again?

To understand this, it is important to know the scriptural view of the nature of a human being. We are spirit, soul, and body. St. Paul makes this distinction in his epistles.

"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23 NIV

Peter refers to what is translated as the "inner self" (NIV) or "hidden man of the heart" (KJV) in 1 Peter 3:4. The spirit of a human is also sometimes referred to as the heart.



Crude illustration:
Nature of a human

God is a Spirit Being and is called the "Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9 NRSV).

"God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

John 4:24 NIV

To quote John Wesley:

"How does he 'bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?'

It is hard to find words in the language of men to explain the 'deep things of God.' Indeed, there are none that will adequately express what the children of God

experience. But perhaps one might say, (desiring any who are taught of God, to soften or strengthen the expression,)

The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me, and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.”⁵

God’s Spirit tells us ... more accurately, God’s Spirit tells our spirit ... there is a "handshake". He “bears witness” or “testifies” with our spirit to confirm this. We “know”.

We “know” some things because of this witness of the Spirit.

- a. **“We know** that we have come to know him **if we keep his commands”**
1 John 2:3 NIV

“This is how we know we are in him: whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did” 1 John 2:5-6 NIV

- b. **“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other.** Anyone who does not love remains in death” 1 John 3:14 NIV

- c. **“The one who keeps God’s commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: we know it by the Spirit he gave us”**
1 John 3:24 NIV

⁵ John Wesley, sermon titled “Witness of the Spirit,” 1746