

# SALVATION

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Have you ever been asked the question "are you saved"? What was your answer? They may have followed up with; "have you accepted Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior?" How did you respond to that one? That particular language is nowhere to be found in the bible, by the way, but may be construed from Romans 10:9; "for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved". So what does this verse mean? Is it referring to a one time confession? Simply an assent of the mind and a profession of faith? Notice the language "you will be saved". Taken together with many other passages which refer to our salvation, some of which we will examine, we will come to realize that this passage is describing much more than just a one-time assent or confession of faith. It really speaks to a process and a way of life, a continuing profession expressed by everything we say and do. There are many passages in scripture that, when taken individually, can give us a skewed perspective of salvation. That's why it's so important to look at scripture as a whole, knowing that the many aspects of God's Word will always come together and make sense. In speaking of salvation, we will find verses that use all of the tenses, present, past and future. If we see salvation as a process, then all of these tenses can apply. For instance, the verse we have already mentioned, Romans 10:9, states that we "*will be saved*". In 1Cor1:18, Paul tells us that we are "*being saved*". In Romans 10:10 he says that one "*is saved*". Ephesians 2:8 explains that we have "*been saved*". How do these all fit together into the one picture of salvation? Let's begin with a passage from Peter's first letter that really gives us a

starting point. In the third chapter he describes the time of Noah and the building of the ark and explains; "...a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now" (1Pet3:21) That's pretty straightforward. Our baptism saves us *now*. It is an unmerited and underserved gift of grace, totally the work of God, which saves us. Jesus himself tells us in the final chapter of Mark; "...Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved..." (Mark 16:16) And St. Paul explains to the Ephesians: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God..." (Eph 2:8) But that's not the end of the story. Unfortunately, we can, of our own free will and actions, enter into "deadly sin" and reject this salvation we have freely received. That brings us to the reality that our salvation is also a process. A process of living out our baptism throughout our lives. Of repenting of the sin that threatens that salvation and of living the belief that we profess. St. Paul tells the Phillipians to "*work out your salvation with fear and trembling*" (Phillipians 2:12) and he tells the Galatians that "...only faith *working through love*" counts for anything. (Gal 5:6) Jesus himself explains that "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." (Matt 7:21) St. Paul cautions the Jewish Christians not to rely on works of the law but explains to the Romans that there are works of faith which are necessary: "By your stubbornness and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself for the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will repay everyone according to his works: eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and

immortality through perseverance in good works, but wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness." (Rom 2:5-8) In considering all of these passages of scripture, we can see that salvation is not by "faith alone" or by "works alone", but by a faith that is lived out in a love for God and one another. As St. James explains, a *faith* that must be completed by our *works*: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works. Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called 'the friend of God.' See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." (James 2:21-24) By the grace of God, we have been given the truly amazing gift of eternal life with our Lord in heaven. But we must continue to accept that gift by living a life of faith that works in love. We must repent of and confess any "deadly sin" that can cut us off from that gift and from the vine that gives us life. (1 John 5:16-17, John 15:1-4) So, the next time we are asked the question "are you saved?", we might answer: By the grace of God, I was saved at my baptism; I am being saved as I strive to live a life of faith working in love; and I will be saved if I persevere in this life of faith till the end of my days on this earth! Thanks be to God for the amazing gift of our salvation and eternal life!

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## SACRED SCRIPTURE



“There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, ‘Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘What is written in the law? How do you read it?’ He said in reply, ‘You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. He replied to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.’” (Luke 10:25-28)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.” (John 3:36)

“He said to them, ‘Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.’” (Mark 16:15-16)

“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1Cor1:18)

“In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now.” (1Peter :19-21)

“So then, my beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.” (Philippians 2:12)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” (Matt 7:21)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast. For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.” (Eph 2:8-10)

“You will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.” (Mark 13:13)

## SACRED TRADITION

“Justification has been *merited for us by the Passion of Christ* who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life:...” (CCC 1992)

“Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life...” (CCC 2010)

## THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS

- **Do we understand the path God has ordained to eternal life in heaven?**
- **If we died today, would we be on that path to heaven? Why or why not?**
- **Could we explain to someone else the Church’s understanding of the means of our salvation?**