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Practical Faith, Part 6

As sinners we tend to view this world as though it revolves around us. When we bring this mentality to the Kingdom of God, it is natural to think of our lives as all important and the Lord as the cosmic cheerleader who exists to promote us and our agenda. With this thinking/mindset, we make plans and expect God to bless them.

Yet God is a Being who knows the end from the beginning, whose plan therefore goes way beyond any individual Christian to encompass His Kingdom, His glory, His honor, and therefore His good! Accordingly, all that occurs in this world is according to this eternal plan/purpose! In this regard, rather than ask God to bless the plans we make, we ought to seek, labor, and

pray that God would lead us in the path that He is blessing. For indeed, there is a specific path that God blesses! David prayed this prayer:

Psalm 25:4-5a, "Make me know Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me..."

David understood that God's Kingdom does NOT revolve around man or this world, BUT that man and this world revolves around God and His eternal plan. As such, his prayer was for God to lead him in that path of blessing! Christ Himself said as much when in His Sermon on the Mount, He said this:

Matthew 5:3a, 4a, 5a, 6a, "Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are those who mourn... Blessed are the gentle... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..."

Christ is here is NOT taking the plans of a depressed Christian and blessing them! Rather, He here is pronouncing His divine blessing on any and all who tread a specific path in life. Included in this "way of blessing" is the eighth and final Beatitude:

Matthew 5:10a, 11, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness... Blessed are you when *men* cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me."

That family of God¹ is what we have learned from the passage. To a severely persecuted people, Peter explained the importance of a tempered faith — a faith that is forced to choose that which it will serve when the chips are down! When the Christian in these low times says with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15), they are travelling a path that is accompanied by God's blessing.

How so? We've already seen that when faith/trust is exercised while in the crucible, the temporal result is this:

- A Deeper Love for God, v. 8a.
- A Life of Rejoicing, v. 8b.

There is a third temporal result mentioned by Peter: Practical faith results in the fulness of salvation!

1 Peter 1:9, "Obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."

Let's begin by talking about the salvation referenced here. Obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls: It is so important we understand what the Bible means by "salvation." For many, the mentioning of "salvation" is a reference simply to the forgiveness of sin. Accordingly, to read that "the outcome of OUR faith is salvation" has led many to the faulty conclusion that faith is that which saves us. They answer the question "*Why are you*

saved?" this way, "Because I believe!" And that is wrong.

First off notice that "salvation" as used in the Bible is much bigger than the forgiveness of sin. As I've shared with you in the past, consider the chart below which details what is meant by salvation in the Scriptures. It begins with God effectually calling us through the new birth/regeneration.

Ordo Salutis (the Order of Salvation)				
Divine Acts	Divine/Human Activity	Divine Acts	Divine/Human Activity	Divine Act
	(3) Repentance Unto Life	(5) Justification	(8) Progressive Sanctification	
(1) Effectual Calling thru (2) Regeneration	(4) Faith in Jesus Christ	(6) Def. Sanctification	(9) Perseverance in Holiness	(10) Glorification
		(7) Adoption		

In this regard, in the Bible "salvation" is used with three different time frames in mind: salvation past, salvation present, salvation future. As to salvation past Paul wrote this:

Romans 8:24a, "For in hope we have been saved..."

This was NOT something Paul longed for here, but that which was an accomplished reality! Speaking of the Philippian jailer, Luke records this:

Acts 16:30-31, "And after he brought them out [after the jailer released Paul and Silas], he said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.'"

These and many other passages speak of salvation as a done deal. Yet that is because the first seven elements of the *Ordo Salutis* are spoken about in the Bible as past realities when it comes to the saved individual! For example, speaking of God's effectual call, Paul wrote this:

2 Thessalonians 2:14a, "And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The calling that relates to the salvation of a lost individual is everywhere in Scripture viewed as a past event. Speaking of our regeneration, Paul said this:

1 Peter 1:23a: "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable..."

So based on this, is "regeneration" something that God is doing or something God has done? It is something that God has done! Speaking of saving faith, Paul wrote this:

Ephesians 1:13, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise."

Once again, this speaks of saving faith as something that happened in the past. Speaking of our adoption, Paul wrote this:

Galatians 4:6-7a, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son..."

There is no question in Scripture: when God saves an individual, He adopts them into His family. This is a once for all act which makes us part of God's family.² Speaking of our justification, Paul declared:

Romans 5:1, "Therefore having been justified by faith [this is an aorist participle which means the action of the verb happened PRIOR to the main thought of the verse- which is...], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Because each of the first seven elements of a believer's salvation are represented in Scripture as past events, the Bible speaks of salvation as a past reality.

Yet, when one looks at the *Ordo Salutis* again, it also involves present realities: like our growth in holiness as well as our perseverance. Because of this, salvation is also spoken about in Scripture as a present, ongoing reality.

Philippians 2:12, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

1 Peter 2:2, "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."

Again, amongst those who view salvation as nothing more than the forgiveness of sin, passages like these have led some to the faulty conclusion that our forgiveness is something that (1) we participate in, and that (2) it is still future. Yet that is just theological ignorance.³ Because our salvation involves an ongoing perseverance and progression in holiness, the Bible also speaks of salvation as a present reality!

Finally, if you look at the *Ordo Salutis* one more time, you will note the final column which references our future glorification. And as you would guess, because of this, salvation is spoken about in Scripture as a future reality. We already considered this passage; Peter said that all in Christ,

1 Peter 1:5 "...are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to

be revealed in the last time.”

Romans 13:11, “And this *do*, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.”

In this regard, when Paul says that “salvation” is a third, temporal result of practical faith, he is speaking primarily of our present salvation and then secondarily to our future salvation/glorification (as it is that to which our salvation is headed, cf. v. 5). Accordingly, a third, glorious result of a tempered faith is growth in personal holiness, perseverance in Christ all of which end with our glorification!

Yet everything we have seen thus far is a very western way of looking at salvation. Yes, the Bible speaks of “salvation” as a past, present, and future reality when it comes to the Christian. Yes, the Bible speaks of salvation as having ten distinct facets to it. Yet you must see that salvation is much more than the ten elements listed in the *Ordo Salutis*.

In the Bible there are only two types of people: the saved and the lost! John speaking of the final state and so the “ethnicity” (can I use this word?) into which everyone is lumped by God wrote:

Revelation 22:14-15, “Blessed are those who wash their robes [speaking of salvation], that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city [Such is our salvation! Yet notice outside of salvation, what do we have?]. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.”

When God looks at mankind, He doesn’t see male and female, slave or free, Jew or Gentile (cf. Galatians 3:28). Rather, He sees the saved and the lost!

Matthew 25:31-33, “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him [What are nations? People groups which we tend to identify by race and gender; yet such is NOT the case in the Kingdom of God. Notice the distinction God makes...]; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”

Clearly a Biblical mindset lumps the entire world into two categories: the saved and the lost... those who are of God and those who are of the devil! Accordingly, if we are saved, then our citizenship is in heaven and we are the people of God⁴ — everyone else are sons and daughters of perdition! Leland Ryken put it this way:

Whereas the verb *to save* has reference to some physical or spiritual peril, the noun *salvation* pertains to the positive effects of God’s saving action. In general, one is saved from bondage and brought to a state of well-being or blessedness. (Leland Ryken,

1998, p. 753)

That is what the Bible means by salvation! The *New Dictionary of Theology* put it this way:

In the Old Testament the verb 'save' expresses particularly God's actions in delivering his people... [it is] used in a very broad sense of the sum total of the effects of God's goodness on his people (Psalm 53:6). Thus the Old Testament understanding of salvation is quite concrete and often covers more than spiritual blessings.

In the gospels the word-group is used of the mighty works of Jesus in healing people from disease. But the terminology developed a distinctive sense which was based largely on the Old Testament understanding of God and his gracious action towards his people. (David F. Write, 1988, p. 610)

From all of this I want you to see that "salvation" in the Bible ultimately speaks of one's relationship with Christ, our citizenship in the Kingdom of God, our being engrafted into the body of Christ, and so our status as members of God's household.⁵

That is the place we have been brought if we are saved! And that is what practical faith opens our eyes to! It brings us into a relationship with God which will continue throughout eternity! It is this relationship which enables us to grow in holiness and persevere in Christ!

This is so important! For as we work out our salvation, we are going to experience trial, difficulty, unmet expectations, disappointment, and the like. Now if we look within or horizontally, we will become bitter, angry, and disillusioned people who view the world with resentment and God with suspicion! But if we look up to God via His word AND behold His purpose, provision, and ultimate plan (HIS SALVATION), we do NOT shrink back, BUT with boldness, live the life He's called us to live— NOT fearing man, AND all the while loving God!

Practical faith opens our eyes to behold all that is ours in Christ, and as such we are strengthened in the inner man to:

- "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12a).
- "Take hold of the eternal to which we have been called" (1 Timothy 6:12b).
- "Flee youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22a).
- "Pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22b).
- NOT to "shrink back to destruction" (Hebrews 10:38), BUT "to persevere" unto the salvation of our soul (Hebrews 10:39).

That is the third temporal result of practical faith! It enables us to live in light of the fulness of salvation!

With that, consider three more truths Peter teaches here regarding salvation; truths designed

further to strengthen our faith. We'll go through them quickly.

The Scope of the Salvation Referenced Here

1 Peter 1:9, "obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."

The word for "soul", ψυχή (*psuchē*), is used in Peter NOT of the immaterial part of our being, BUT of our entire person. In this regard, special emphasis falls on our glorification, with which, after the General Resurrection in which we will be reunited to our bodies, we shall enter into glory.

In this regard, here we have proof that in the final state we NOT ONLY will be whole spiritually and emotionally, BUT ALSO physically! In other words, there will be NO crippled individuals in heaven, NEITHER the diseased, infirmed, the mentally ill, NOR those who are bruised or scarred! In glory we will be completely and totally whole: physically, spiritually, emotionally! Peter Davids wrote this:

In this he is using 'soul' (Gk. *psychē*) not as a contrast to the body nor, as Paul often does, in a negative way for the natural fallen human self as opposed to a spiritual person (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:45), but, as is typical of Hebrew..., for the total person, the self (Gen. 2:7; Matt. 16:25; Romans 13:1; Hebrews 10:39). This usage is characteristic of Peter and Luke (six times in 1 Peter, e.g. 1 Peter 3:20, and 15 times in Acts...). (Davids, 1990, p. 60)

What significance would this have for a persecuted people, many of whom had been traumatized by what they had seen and heard as they or their loved one forfeited hand, arm, foot, leg, their health to the cruel devices of the torturer?! Christianity cost them a lot! Yet, in the words of Rutherford, "They lose nothing who gain Christ!" (Rutherford, 1997, p. Letter 42) For truly, in the regeneration — at the Second Coming — anything and everything of significance lost for Christ on this side of the grave will be restored to the Christian- including the whole man!

The Timing of this Salvation

1 Peter 1:9, "obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."

The word for "outcome" here is variously translated as "goal," "outcome," or "end." Behind the English is the Greek word, τέλος (*telos*), which corresponds to the philosophical use of this term as the ultimate end or purpose of a person, object, or thing.

Accordingly, what is the τέλος (*telos*) of a Christian's faith? The salvation we just spoke about involving our present and future redemption and so the embodying of what it means to be children of God and so Kingdom Citizens! That is the end of saving faith!

As that is the case when, according to this text, does a Christian receive the certainty of this salvation? When they pass through the fire still believing? After a life-time of struggle ending in death yet with their faith intact?

NO!⁶ The Christian receives the certainty of their full-redemption the moment they believe! That is the implication of the language Peter uses here! The telos of saving faith is “the full salvation of your soul [your entire being]”! Commenting on this, Spurgeon wrote this:

If you have believed in Jesus, you have received a present, immediate salvation. There are some who do not understand or realize this; they miss the whole joy of our holy religion. They are always hoping to be saved by-and-by, but those who are in Christ Jesus by a living personal faith receive here and now the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

If we have really believed in Jesus, we have, at this moment, the assurance of the perfect pardon of all our sins. And I will venture to put it as strongly as this, and to say that those white-robed spirits before the eternal throne are not more clear of the guilt of sin before the bar of infallible justice than was the dying thief the very moment that he turned his eye in faith to Christ upon the cross of Calvary, or than you are if you are now trusting to the same Savior, or than I am as now depending alone upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. (Spurgeon, 2014, p. 1 Peter 1:9)

Lastly, that brings us to the absolute certainty of this salvation.

The Absolute Certainty of this Salvation

1 Peter 1:9, “obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

The word for “obtain” comes from the Greek word κομίζω (*komizō*) which means “to receive what is deserved.” Hendriksen wrote this:

Although many translators have chosen the verb *to receive* to convey the meaning of the Greek [as in the NIV], the word means ‘to obtain something that is due to a person.’ (Kistemaker, 1987, p. 50)

(*Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, NTC, p. 50)

Our last point, is Peter’s first point, is the *pièce de résistance* here! The “telos of our faith” — the Kingdom of God and all that it represents/our salvation — is given to us by merit! It is earned!

Now if you know the Bible at all, you know that if *OUR* merit is brought into the equation none of us could be saved (cf. Romans 4:13-16⁷)! So how is it that Peter here uses a term which

involves merit? Because while we do NOT and CANNOT obtain salvation on account of *our* merit, nevertheless salvation is obtained on account of the merits of another, specifically that of Christ!⁸ Speaking of the Sacrificial system the Hebrew writer declares:

Hebrews 10:11-14, “And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”

This is so important for it means that if the object of your trust this day is Christ, then you are a part of the body of Christ, a member of God’s household, a citizen of the Kingdom of God... *AND* all ten elements of the *Ordo Salutis* are yours in Christ today! On account of Christ’s merit we possess this day, and for the rest of eternity, salvation!

Accordingly, there ought never to be doubting or a waiting to see what happens here. If Christ is your Savior then your Salvation is yours by right which means you and I — and all in Christ, suffering in this world on account of its sin and misery can STOP worrying about whether or not:

- We are citizens of Christ’s Kingdom, His family, or His body!
- Our service to Christ is sufficient!
- Wondering if in the end we will be saved!

And START living in light of the glorious privilege that accompanies our citizenship, salvation, and communion with the Lord. This is the third and final temporal consequence of practical faith. That is where Peter wanted his persecuted brethren to live as they faced an uncertain future!

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End Note(s)

¹ No doubt because this world has been fashioned and shaped by Satan as it is under His immediate jurisdiction (cf. Lk. 4:6), God's eternal plan is counter-intuitive to the worldly and so our natural thinking. We can't imagine that trial or difficulty could ever be a path that God blesses. Yet it is. In Philippians 1:29, Paul taught, "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." In 1 Peter 2:20b-21a, Peter wrote, "...if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose..." James added this to the conversation, "Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" (Jam. 2:5) This is unbelievable! It is the path of need (a circumstance that goes way beyond money) that God superintends with Kingdom blessing!

² It is interesting that the very theologians who suggest that "justification" is an ongoing process realized at the believer's death have absolutely no problem with the notion that when a person is saved they become a son or daughter of God. Yet think with me on this for a moment: Is it possible that God would adopt into His family one who still had unforgiven sin? It is unthinkable!

³ As you can see, they've merged the Biblical teaching on personal, practical, and present holiness and perseverance with the one time act of justification/the forgiveness of sin.

⁴ Consider Philippians 2:20-21. This is a correction on the part of Paul to a group of Christians whose boast was their Roman citizenship, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

⁵ We understand this as it relates to someone becoming a Citizen of the US. In the old days, when the US was a melting pot of peoples, those who came to America in hopes of becoming a citizen did so with the intended purpose of assimilating to the culture, mindset, and way of America. That is why Italian, Polish, German, Swedish kids- name it- generally speaking were NOT allowed to speak their family's native language even in their households. They had come to America and so were expected to be Americans. Even today people seeking to become citizens of America are required to attend a class where they are instructed/indoctrinated into our way of living.

So how do you feel about people today who want the freedom and prosperity of our land, but are unwilling to become Americans? Peoples who want to bring their culture here, remain distinct, and in fact even despise our way of living? For most Americans, it just doesn't seem right! That is how we must look upon salvation. It is much more than 10 individual elements, but the sum-total of these elements working together as we embody what it means to be Kingdom Citizens! We were saved "from the domain of darkness" and so brought into "kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13)!

⁶ To hold this view is to (1) eviscerate any and all encouragement that Peter here gives to the persecuted Christian, and so (2) turn this text upside down!!!

⁷ Paul wrote, "For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law [in the context, Paul here is arguing that our salvation is not based on the merit of the individual Christian; it is not through 'law keeping' on our part], but through the righteousness of faith [that is, 'the righteousness that comes through faith'] For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise [that salvation is by faith] is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason *it is* by faith, that *it might be* in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."

⁸ Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Salvation occurs as (1) the Savior dies in the place of the sinner and (2) as the sinner receives the merit of Christ, that is "the righteousness of Christ". Without both, no one can be saved.