

WORKS AND SALVATION

Objective

To understand the role of works in salvation from an Orthodox perspective

References

“The Heresy of Salvation in a Moment” by H.H. Pope Shenouda III

“Salvation in the Orthodox Concept” by H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Scriptural Verse

“And behold, I am coming quickly and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to His work.” Rev 22:12

Lesson Guidelines

A. The blood of Christ is the essence of salvation

- Without the shedding of Christ’s blood we cannot be saved (Hebrews 9:22).

B. There are three conditions that must be fulfilled in order for a believer to be saved

1. Faith
2. Partaking of the saving Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Confession and Eucharist.
3. Good works

C. Faith and Works for Salvation

- Believing in the Lord Christ and His redeeming blood shed on the cross is essential for salvation, John 8:24
- Having this faith leads to repentance from sin as well as an active effort to avoid sin and to do good.
- Such acts depict our faith and are called works of repentance, Acts 26:19-20.
- We can further define works of repentance - Luke 3:8-14. These works include honesty, mercy, contentment, etc.
- Therefore these works are a demonstration of faith, James 2:18.
- Faith is nonexistent without works, James 2:26.
- Why are works essential for salvation?
- God does not need our works but we need them because judgment will be according to works.
- We will be judged according to the quality of our works and our fruits, Luke 3:9, John 5:28-29, Mathew 16:27
- In order for works to have their merit in achieving salvation they must be justifying works, this means that they are not done for the sake of themselves, i.e. going to church, partaking of the Sacraments, fasting, etc., without a repentant heart but with a desire to call attention to oneself and to receive praise.
- The Jews were a perfect example of this and that is why Our Lord referred to them as whitewashed tombs because they had the appearance of piety but they were full of sin from the inside

- Works that are done without faith are also not justifying because they are devoid of any value.
- The Gentiles were a perfect example of this because some of them did great deeds but they did not know Christ, just like Cornelius. That is why St. Paul tells them that the reason for their salvation is not their works but the grace that was given to them in order for them to believe, then their works would have merit.
- Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:4-5.
- Therefore justifying works must be accompanied by faith and a desire to develop a relationship with God through praying, fasting, etc.

D. God's grace enables us to work

- We must understand that we cannot do good works on our own, rather it is God's grace in our lives, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 2:13.

Conclusion

Therefore we see that faith and works are intertwined and that both are necessary for salvation. Abraham demonstrated this beautifully in his life as seen in James 2:21-26.

Discussion Points/Activities

1. Will those who do good works but don't have faith in Christ, receive salvation?
2. Can someone have faith and not do good works?
3. How can we live out our faith?