

## Orthodoxy - Saved by Grace

New City Catechism Q.29: How can we be saved?

Answer: Only by faith in Jesus Christ and in his substitutionary atoning death on the cross; so even though we are guilty of having disobeyed God and are still inclined to all evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of our own but only by pure grace, imputes to us the perfect righteousness of Christ when we repent and believe in him.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. - Ephesians 2:8-9

This is the most important of all questions - How can I be saved? It is a question asked in one of my favorite stories in Scripture.

The apostle Paul had traveled to Macedonia with his co-worker Silas and other followers of Jesus. They had preached the gospel to some women gathered at a river and Lydia, a merchant from Thyatira, believed in what they spoke and was rescued from death and hell. Paul and Silas also met a slave woman who was a teller of fortunes. She was enslaved by men who made a lot of money off her spiritual work. Paul cast a demon out of her and ruined their business and their hope of happiness through wealth. These disturbed business men incited a riot against Paul and Silas and they were beaten, thrown in prison, and bound with chains. It was while they were in prison that we hear this important question asked.

Paul and Silas were up past midnight praying and singing hymns in the company of the other prisoners. It was a dark and dingy prison where everyone was bound, but the hearts and souls of Paul and Saul prayed and sang freely. This praying and singing was interrupted by an earthquake. The earthquake shook the foundations of the prison opening the the prison doors and freeing the prisoners from their shackles. During their imprisonment the jailer had fallen asleep but he was awoken by the quaking earth. When he rose up opening his eyes it was revealed that the prison doors were open. Being a man of honor in a culture of shame he drew his sword preparing to kill himself. Without any investigation of the matter he assumed all the prisoners had gone free, and he knew their freedom meant his death. Maybe it was the peaceful night that had been brought about by the praying and singing in the prison that had allowed him to drift off to sleep. But now all peace was gone and he felt nothing but shame and a certain judgment. However, in the midst of this horrid scene of a man ready to take his own life, Paul cries out to save him, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." With this cry the jailer's hope is stirred. He calls for others to bring light so that they can see the men who have remained after the quaking earth had subsided. At the sights of Paul and Silas hope turned to fear and he fell before them. They had saved his life, or better than that he recognized that God had spared his life. He must of heard about their God and his salvation in their earlier prayers and the hymns they were singing because as he brought them out of the prison he commanded them to tell him, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer came from the apostle and his co-worker - "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." Paul and Silas then spoke God's word to him and his family, telling them all that God had done for them in his love through Jesus Christ. That very night the jailer cared for Paul and Silas, nursing their wounds, washing them, and showing them hospitality feeding them. And Paul and Silas baptized the believing jailer and his household, and they all rejoiced together as they shared faith together in God's salvation through Jesus Christ. (Acts 16:25-34).

In the middle of the night the jailer in Philippi came to know how he could be saved. He believed that Jesus had become sin for him, dying in his place, so that he might become the righteousness of God (2Cor.5:21). He believed that Jesus took his sin, shame, and guilt when he died in his place on the cross. He believed that Jesus was raised up from the dead for his own justification and life. He turned from a life of sin in rebellion to God, to a

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life by faith in all that God had done for him in Jesus Christ. That night the Philippian jailer and his household could say,

Nothing in my hand I bring  
Simply to Thy cross I cling  
Naked, come to Thee for dress  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace  
Vile, I to the fountain fly  
Wash me, savior, or I die

## **Ministry Together - Global Missions - Missions Sunday**

Sunday March 29th is Missions Sunday. Join your church family in worship together as we welcome Scott Andes of Reformed University Fellowship International as our guest speaker. Rev. Andes ministers the gospel to international students on the campus of USC. Prior to his service at USC he and his wife served as career missionaries in Eastern Europe.

## **Freedom from Fear**

The March edition of Table Talk magazine covers the topic of fear. Ligonier Ministries has made all the articles available for free and you can read them by [following this link](#). Burk Parsons, Table Talk editor, introduces the matter of fear in the below article.

The world is a dangerous place, full of perilous things and unsafe people. Dangers, toils, and snares lurk around every corner because evil is real. As Christians, we understand this because we know how sin and its consequences entered the world.

Many nonreligious or atheistic people do not want to admit that evil exists or that men are sinful. Yet, when terrorists strike or calamity happens, they are quick to speak of “acts of evil” or “evil people.” They have no words of their own to account for the miseries and tragedies in this world; therefore, they must borrow from our biblical worldview. Only Scripture provides a coherent explanation for evil, and God’s Word alone tells us why we are naturally afraid.

We are born with fear, coming into this world crying out for help. Even unborn babies experience intense fear when abortionists tear them apart in the once safe, protected wombs of their mothers. Young children are afraid of the dark and want a nightlight to comfort them. We are afraid not only of the worst catastrophes befalling us and those around us, but we are also afraid of all the comparatively smaller tragedies and hardships that we might experience.

Fear is a primal emotion so powerful that it can wreak havoc on our hearts. The question is, What do we do with our fears? Do we wallow in the mire of fear, act as if we have no fear, attempt to hide our fear, or try to face our fears with sheer tenacity? Or do we turn to the Lord? Only when we turn to the Lord do we hear Him say, “Do not fear.” However, the Lord commands us not to fear not so that we might ignore our fears or overcome them by sheer willpower but because He has promised, “I am with you.” Because the Lord is with us, He has taught us to fear Him alone. All other fears begin to fade away only when we fear the Lord.

Knowing that we are united to Christ by faith alone and indwelt by the Spirit is the difference between being afraid of God and fearing God. It is the difference between being afraid of every possible danger and trusting our sovereign God who will never leave us or forsake us. The Holy Spirit, our Comforter, liberates us to walk in freedom from fear because we have been rescued by the One who holds us in the palm of His hand. That is why we can sing with John Newton, “’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved,” and with Martin Luther, “And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.”