

January 12, 2020

## The Two Sides of Salvation

*“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out **your own** salvation with fear and trembling; for it is **God** who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13),.*

From the preceding Scriptures you will please note that **two** parties are alluded to with regards to the persons addressed therein. Addressing the saints at Philippi, the apostle Paul said *“it is **God** who works in **you**...”* The “*you*” in this verse were the “*saints*” in Philippi (Phil. 1:1), and the One Who was working in them was “*God*.” “*God*” in these verses constitutes the **divine side** of salvation, and the “*you*” denotes the **human side** of salvation. It was not “*God*” alone, nor was it the “*saints*” alone. “The two sides of salvation” are also inferred in Eph. 2:8 wherein, in addressing the saints at Ephesus, the apostle Paul said *“For by **grace** you have been saved through **faith**, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of **God**.”* The “*grace*” herein referred to comes from “*God*,” and the “*faith*” mentioned in this verse was that of the **saints** to whom this epistle was written.

As it relates to “*God*” and “**the divine side** of salvation, it behooves us to go into greater detail. “*God*,” as used in the Bible, is used in a comprehensive sense, to refer to three distinct divine Persons, or it may refer to all three inclusively. For example, in Gen. 1:26 “**God** said, let **Us** make man in **Our** image...” “*God*” in that verse is from the Hebrew *Elohim*, which is “the plural form of *er* or *eloah*, one of the oldest designations for divinity in the word.” The fact of a plurality of divine Beings is inferred in the usage of the word “*Godhead*” as it appears in the KJV in Acts 17:20; Rom 1:20, and Col. 2:9. The “*Godhead*” (KJV), as used in these verses, is translated “*Deity*” in Col. 2:9 in the ESV. It refers to those Persons who possess the qualities of God-hood, or that of Deity or Divinity. Depending on the passage, all three persons of the “*Godhead*” are referred to as “*God*.” Hence, there is “**God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**,” I Peter 1:3. In Heb. 1:8, quoting from Ps. 45:6-7, God the Father speaking to **Jesus Christ** said *“Your throne, **O God** is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.”* And in Acts 5:4, in speaking to Ananias and referring to “**Holy Spirit**” (v. 3), Peter said *“You have not lied to men but **to God**.”* Hence, depending upon the context, all three Persons of “*the Godhead*” (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) are each called “*God*.” Therefore, when we speak about “*the divine side of salvation*,” *we are referring to the actions of “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”* as they are collectively referred to in Matt. 28:19. Viewing it more precisely,

### “The Divine Side of Salvation”

#### Involve the Actions of:

**1. God the Father, Who Planned the scheme of Redemption.** With this in mind, we note I Pet. 1:4, wherein in referring to “*our Lord Jesus Christ*” (v. 3), Peter said He “*gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the **will** of our **God and Father**.”* God, the Father, “*from the foundation of the world*” (Eph. 1:4-5) had a plan or a “*will*” whereby sinners could be saved. Basically, we can say the “*plan of salvation*” was conceived in the mind of God the Father.

**2. Jesus Christ, Who procured our salvation.** Jesus is “*the propitiation for our sins*” (I John 2:2). He is “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Through

the shedding of His blood, Jesus paid our sin debt, thereby enabling a just God to be both “*just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*” (Rom. 3:23-26). Redemption is made possible by “*the precious blood of Christ...*” (I Pet. 1:18). Through His sacrificial death upon the cross, Jesus carried out the “*will*” of God, thereby making it possible for lost sinners to be “*sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ...*” (Heb. 10:9-10). “*In*” Christ, “*we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*” (Eph. 1:7). With this in mind, John 14:6 should be even more meaningful to us, for in that verse Jesus said “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father **except through Me.***”

**3. The Holy Spirit, Who revealed the way of salvation.** Alluding to “*the mystery of Christ,*” the apostle Paul said “*in other ages*” it was not made “*known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by **the Spirit** to His holy apostles and prophets*” (Eph. 3:4-5). In I Cor. 2:7-10, alluding to that same “*mystery*” which God “*prepared for those who love Him,*” the apostle Paul said that “*God has revealed them to us by His **Spirit**. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*” Before departing from this earth, Jesus informed His apostles that He was going to the **Father**, and that “*the Father*” would send “*the Helper, the **Holy Spirit,***” and that He (the Holy Spirit) would “*teach*” them “*all things,*” and bring to their “*remembrance*” “*all*” that He (Jesus) had said to them (John 14:26). Speaking to His apostles, and referring to “*the Spirit of truth,*” Jesus said “*he will guide you into **all truth...***” (John 16:12). Those truths revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles are set forth in “*the New Testament,*” of which Jesus is “*the Mediator*” (Heb. 9:15-17), and wherein God’s plan for saving sinners in this age is revealed.

As is set forth in the preceding paragraphs, it should be evident that “the divine side of salvation” includes the work of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Each of these divine beings is intimately involved in our salvation. In fact, this is necessarily inferred in 2 Cor. 13:14 wherein Paul concluded His second epistle to the saints at Corinth by saying: “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*” And now we come to:

### “The Human Side of Salvation”

That there must be a proper response of human beings to God’s plan for our salvation is necessarily inferred in Phil. 2:12-13. In these verses the apostle Paul addressed the saints at Philippi, saying: “*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out **your own** salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*” Please note that these brethren had “*obeyed,*” and they were further exhorted to “*work out*” their “*own salvation with fear and trembling...*” Properly understood, salvation is **of God**, and it **for men**. Man did not (and could not) devise the scheme of redemption; God did that, Jesus procured it, and the Holy Spirit revealed it, but **man** has to **obey** it! Hence, He is “*the author of eternal salvation to all who **obey Him***” (Heb. 5:9). In that great sermon on the Mount Jesus said “*Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will** of My Father in heaven.*” Yes, **God** has a “*will,*” which **Jesus procured**, which the **Holy Spirit revealed**, and which **man** must obey. It seems that in today’s world man’s part in his own salvation is too often minimized and often even ignored!

With regards to salvation, two items are necessarily involved, namely the “*grace*” of God, and the “*faith*” of man (Eph. 2:8-9). Jesus “*by the grace of God*” tasted “*death for everyone*” (Heb. 2:9), but Jesus saves the obedient (Heb. 5:9). Paul proclaimed “*the gospel of the*

*grace of God*” (Acts 20:24), but the gospel must be obeyed (I Pet. 4:18; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). Jesus is the “*Savior*” (Acts 5:31), but He invites people to “*come*” to Him (Matt. 11:28-30). He does not force us to obey.

Briefly, as it relates to “alien sinners,” to be saved they must *hear* the word of God which produces “*faith*” (Rom. 10:17). They must **believe** in God and in Christ (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24), they must **repent** of their sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30); they must **confess** their faith in Jesus Christ (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10), and they must be “*baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38; 22:16). **Baptism** is the means whereby one contacts the “*death*,” and therefore the blood of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; John 19:34), and it is the culminating part of obedience to the gospel whereby one enters “*into*” and “*puts on*” Christ (Gal. 3:27), and “*in*” Whom is salvation (2 Tim. 2:10). It is also the means whereby one enters into the “*one body*” (I Cor. 12:13), wherein one is reconciled unto God (Eph. 2:16). At this point a person is saved from his alien sins, and he is “*added to the church*” of which Jesus is the “*Savior*” (Eph. 5:23). From this point forward, one must “*walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4); he must present the “*members*” of his body as “*instruments of righteousness unto God*” (Rom. 6:13), regularly assemble with the saints in worship to God (Heb. 10:23-25), striving diligently to be “*faithful unto death*” (Rev. 2:10).

More (much more!) could be said with regards to both the divine and the human sides of salvation, but we have run out of space. Let us be exceedingly thankful for the love, grace, wisdom, mercy, and goodness of those divine Beings who constitute “*the Godhead*,” and let us “*give the more earnest heed*” to those divine instructions which we must obey in order to be saved by the grace of God. **God** has done His part. Will **you** do yours?  
—B. Witherington

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