

June 2010: SD Website

THE PLAN OF SALVATION AND SERENITY

Fellow Pilgrims:

What is the plan of salvation presented in the Bible? First, comes the bad news of the Gospel: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We are all sinners, all of us. I John 1: 8-10 says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His Word has no place in our lives." What is the good news of the Gospel?

In Romans 5:8, we read, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God loves us more than we can imagine. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." (John 3:16-17) Can anything separate us from God's love? No. "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8: 38-39)

By confessing that Jesus is our Lord and being baptized, we say *yes* to God's love and accept the free gift of God's grace. "We were therefore buried with Him [Jesus] through baptism." (Romans 6:4) "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." (Psalm 51: 7) Our saying *yes* and being baptized is called justification. We are now in right relationship with God and are saved. What about the rest of our lives?

The rest of our lives are concerned with sanctification. Sanctification is the process of being conformed to Christ, that is, becoming more Christ-like in our mind, body, actions, speech, thoughts, soul, and spirit. We become increasingly sensitive to sin and evil around us. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18) "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2: 10) However, being human, we will fail, pick ourselves up, and continue (See Romans 7: 7-8: 17). C.S. Lewis says it this way; "No amount of falls will really undo us if we keep picking ourselves up each time. We shall of course be very muddy and tattered children by the time we reach home . . . The only fatal thing is to lose one's temper and give it up. It is when we notice the dirt that God is most present; it is the very sign of His presence."

As you contemplate your justification and sanctification, I want to leave you with one of my favorite prayers. It is Reinhold Niebuhr's serenity prayer.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.

Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;

Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His will;

That I may be reasonable happy in this life,
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.”

Amen.

In Christ's love,
Chuck Ellenbaum ><+
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