**Living Theology Friends1404**

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**“Salvation 1”**

**Past issues of these letters (~400 so far) may be read at** [**http://livingtheology.com/letters.htm**](http://livingtheology.com/letters.htm) **and I encourage you to catch up with them if you have not received earlier letters. Other writings of mine (48 articles and 30 commentaries) are at** [**http://LivingTheology.com**](http://LivingTheology.com) **and I pray they will be helpful. The author is solely responsible for the content of these letters and they do not represent any particular denomination.**

After a hard-drive crash, I have finally put back together most of the over 300 email addresses of people who receive these letters. Many of the recipients are those who have found my web site and asked to get the letters, so many of you I have not met. Some recipients are from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Sweden, South Africa, and other countries as well as many states in the U.S.A. I pray that if I have inadvertently left someone off the list they will wonder why the letters ceased and ask again. I want everyone who is seeking guidance to walk as a Christian in a pagan world to receive that help from God and perhaps even through these letters.

This week let’s begin to think about what we mean when we use the words “saved” or “salvation”. As Christians we must use the Word of God to determine our understanding. Exactly from what are saved? That question is easy to answer from John’s Gospel: *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”* (John 3:36)

We see from this verse that only those who obey Jesus are saved from the wrath of God. Also please note that if someone does not believe and obey Jesus then the wrath of God **ABIDES** on him. Since God says that His wrath abides on him, the wrath was there from physical birth and continues forever. Righteousness is a fundamental aspect of the moral law of the universe that cannot be ignored any more than one can ignore the physical laws of the universe. The retribution of God to those who disobey His moral law will be forever. For those who believe in Jesus the wrath of God was suddenly and forever removed. Of course we are also saved from being servants of sin and from other consequences of living a life apart from God. All the other aspects of being saved flow from the removal of God’s wrath. John 3:36 is the only place in this gospel that the word “wrath” appears and it is not a sudden burst of temper but the divine reaction of righteousness to unrighteousness that abides on those who refuse to accept the gift of grace. It is an eternal reaction to those who refuse the light of the Word (Jesus: John 1:4-5).

Learning that we are saved from the wrath of God by obeying Jesus could lead one to an improper understanding of salvation. So let us examine this verse further. At first reading one could infer that all one has to do to escape the wrath of God is to believe in Jesus and obey Him. As a youth, I thought that I believed in Jesus and that my works as judged by God would determine my salvation. But as I walked in the world and continued to disobey God’s law I knew that I could not earn my salvation. Paul makes it clear that the doers of the law **can** be justified (Rom 2:13), but **nobody can obey the law perfectly** (Rom 3:9-20). The only person who obeyed God completely was Jesus Christ. It was not until I was 32 years old that I was born again and given faith so that I then really believed in Jesus. Faith is a gracious gift of God that results in the ability to believe in Jesus, trust Him, and obey Him. Please read my article on faith to better understand this gift of God: <http://livingtheology.com/Faith.htm>. We are now led to three questions: What is the role of the Mosaic Law in salvation? What does it mean to believe in the Son, and how is that belief linked to obeying of Him?

We can learn more about the place of the Law by reading Romans 4:13-17:

*For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise 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, (as it is written, “A father of many nations have I made you”) in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.*

As Paul states, if God had never given the Law, no one would have ever been in violation of the Law. This does not mean that without the Law there is no sin as Paul explains in: *“for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”* (Rom 5:13) The Law turns general sinfulness into specific transgressions of God’s revealed commandments. Every person is “under sin” apart from Jesus (Rom 3:9-20) so everyone is guilty of sin. But God did indeed give the Law to mankind, and everyone has violated all aspects of it, so God’s wrath is against everyone. There are three purposes of The Law:

1. To reveal sin to the world and therefore to somewhat control the actions of the world. We can call this the “primordial conscience” that is given to everyone.

2. To bring people to the understanding that they cannot obey the Law within themselves, and that the only way they can be righteous before God is through God’s provision with Jesus.

3. To help God’s people walk a path with full knowledge of sin and to reinforce a continual need for God’s help to walk in this world (an aid to sanctification).

The gift of faith from God is the cause of people having the ability to believe, trust, and obey the Son of God and to receive entrance into the KOG for life forever with God. To believe in Jesus means to believe every revealed aspect of Him: His total righteousness, His divine and human nature, His virgin birth, His resurrection, and His ascension to heaven to sit in a ruling position in heaven. This belief is linked to obedience by Jesus*: "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."* (John 14:21) Because we love Jesus we then have a driving desire to obey Him even though such obedience will be incomplete. Only those who believe the truth of the work of Jesus Christ have received the righteousness of Jesus Christ and thus are righteous before God. This process is called double imputation as our sins are placed on Jesus so that He receives the just wrath of the Father, and the righteousness of Jesus before God is given to us (2Cor 5:21) so that we are children of God (John 1:12).

We will discuss further the details of salvation in more letters on this topic as the Lord leads.