

The Gift

By Pastor John Longwell – Revive Church, Rio Rancho, NM – August 12, 2018

SCRIPTURE FROM ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION BIBLE AND NEW INTERNATIONAL BIBLE

We Believe: Salvation is our gift from God and is received by faith through Christ alone.

It is easy to believe that salvation is our gift from God, who doesn't want to receive a gift. Allow me to demonstrate.

Let's recap: Neal told me he had a gift for me. I obviously wanted it because I called him by name and asked for it. Neal then handed it to me and I received it from him.

If Neal had given his mom, Cindy, a gift that would have been nice for Cindy, but I wouldn't really have gained much by it. I'd be happy for Cindy that she had the gift but personally, it wouldn't really change my life. In order for me to benefit, I need to receive my own gift and be conscious when it happens.

Why does this matter? It is important that we know what makes us saved and be aware that it happened. Otherwise, we are simply going through the motions.

We all can learn to do things without conscious awareness of what we are really doing. I did this on a job for nearly four years. (Talk about working at UPS during the nightshift).

We gain muscle memory from mere repetition. When I was in high school, the custodian would have to cut my lock off my locker every year after Christmas break because in two short weeks of not dialing in my combination I would forget it and not be able to open my locker.

Our interaction with God can also become routine. We go to church because our parents took us to church when we were children and we just continue the pattern when we become adults. The scary part of this is we may think we are saved just because we've followed this same pattern for years and years.

Salvation is not a routine; it is a living vibrant relationship with the creator of the universe.

Things that do not save us:

1. Doing good works.

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

2. Being dedicated (or baptized) as a baby.
3. Completing confirmation or catechism classes.
4. Going to church and learning about Jesus.

The mere knowledge of God does not save you. James 2:19 says, "You believe God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder! Salvation is not just believing in the facts about God (this is important as we do need to hear the good news). Salvation involves trusting in God. This is the key to saving faith.

Romans 10:13-15 for, 13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Here are the steps to salvation (see how it mirrors the process that took place when Neal gave me my gift).

1. Neal shares the Gospel message. (*Neal told me he had a gift for me*).
2. I hear the Gospel message (*I find out Neal has a present for me*). **This is still merely knowledge at this point.**

3. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, I believe the truth that I am a sinner and only through Jesus Christ will I be forgiven or saved (*I believe that Neal really has a gift for me*). **This is where saving faith first operates.**
4. I call on the name of the Lord, receive the gift of forgiveness, and am saved (*I reach out to Neal, and receive the gift he hands me. I open the gift and enjoy my Lamborghini Urus.*)

Romans 10:8-10 “But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: 9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”

Now let’s say for a moment, that Neal gave me a real Lamborghini Urus. Well, I would want to drive this vehicle everyday. I mean who wouldn’t? It’s has:

- All Wheel Drive
- Seating for four and luggage
- A 641 HP Engine
- And a top speed of 190 MPH

This, like our salvation is a gift I should enjoy every day of my life until I go home to see Jesus.

Similarly, along the way the gift will require a little maintenance. Not to say that our salvation will break down, but the reality is, we will continue to sin even after we are saved. You see salvation involves getting saved and being saved.

The Holy Spirit continues his work in our lives as we repent and confess our sins (**1 John 1:9** “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”) and believe by faith that we are forgiven. This is the lifelong salvation maintenance we conduct, like changing the oil in my Lamborghini Urus.

So to summarize:

- Salvation is a free gift, and like any gift it is only really meaningful if we are there and are aware of the event (making baby baptism, confirmations, catechisms and good works of no value to save us).
- We become aware of our need for Jesus when we hear the gospel message, but just knowing about God doesn’t mean we are saved.
- Salvation is received by faith through the Holy Spirit when we call upon the name of Jesus and trust in him that we are forgiven. (**Acts 4:12** Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.)
- Salvation is meant to be enjoyed personally by the one who receives it. No one can receive your gift for you (not your parent, child, friend or spouse) only you.
- Salvation, like any special gift, should be cared for, maintained (confess our sins and continue believing we are forgiven).
- Finally, salvation should be enjoyed not endured. (If not, are we depending on works or mere knowledge?)

Although a Lamborghini Urus probably won’t be able to last us our entire lives, if it did, like our salvation, we should enjoy the ride each and every day of our lives, until we see Jesus face to face.

Psalms 51:8-12 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Nehemiah 8:10 “...for the joy of the Lord is our strength.”

We should draw our life power from the fact we are saved. It should fuel us through our hard times and empower us to be the very messenger of good news as we share it with others.