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Introduction.

In the task of finding evidence for this statement I must first clarify that I have no intention or hope that I can bring forth something new on this subject. Thousands of men and women have approached and taught on this subject, better than I can ever hope to do¹. What I can do is to merely repeat their message in the world of today. If we don't repeat the truth it will be forgotten. If we don't repeat the truth it won't become less true, but it will have no impact on lives today. For these reasons I can be confident that I have a reason to write at all. To write merely to get a grade is to fool one self. Since this is the case the reader may find my language a little less academically shaped and a little more suited for the "common" reader.

The subject is, at first sight, enormous to approach. This is one of the eternal messages that the Bible as a whole proclaims. To break it down I've chosen to focus on three approaches.

1. Salvation by mercy (Father, Initiation), justification by faith (Spirit, knowledge and understanding), proclamation/sanctification by deeds (Son, Word and Incarnation) as seen before the fall. (Genesis)
2. Salvation by mercy, justification by faith, proclamation/sanctification by deeds as seen in the Law. (Old Testament)
3. Salvation by mercy, justification by faith, proclamation/sanctification by deeds as seen in Christ. (The Gospels)

I will focus on certain passages in the Scriptures² that exclusively speak about these statements. Since the statements contain information that are "destined for eternity" and therefore beyond total understanding in our current state³ I can only hope that the reader will look upon this work with the glasses of the Spirit. One must not think in terms of hierarchy, either – or, first – last and so on, when reading this work. Rather one should think in terms of equal value, both – and, circular rather than linear.⁴

¹ St Matthew, St Luke, St John, St Mark, St Peter, St Paul, St James St Augustine, St Ignatius amongst others.

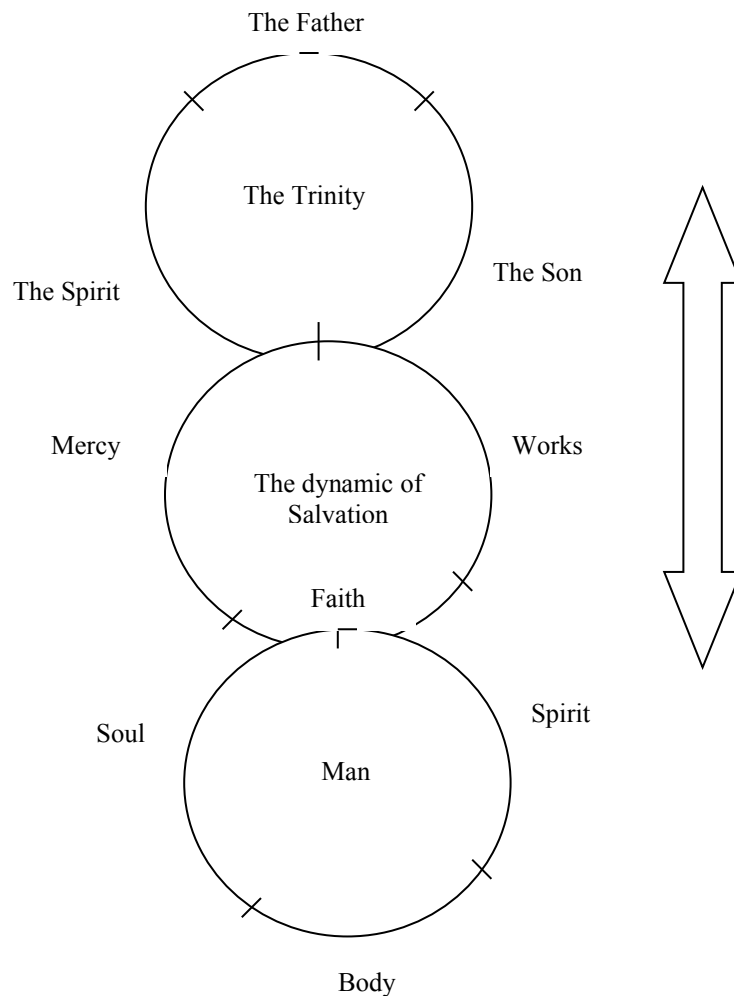
² New King James Version, "The Bible" (in Swedish) official translation of Sweden (only one) and the "Orthodox Study Bible". Worth noting is that I interpret the Bible as the very Word of God as revealed to man by His Holy Spirit. (Spirit breathed). Therefore the Scriptures can bear witness to itself.

³ We are stained by sin.

⁴ Please see attached picture on page 2.

Method of execution.

The method I will use to perform this work is the method of exegesis,⁵ hence that orthodox theology holds that sacred Scriptures are able to validate themselves. The method of exegesis of the Scriptures is one of the most valid methods to use when determining truth concerning my statement above.⁶ However, one person's perception, which in this case, is my own, can be swayed from the path of truth in the research process. It is my hope that in that case the reader, as a fellow Christian, can correct me. Even if I use the method of exegesis in particular, other methods as hermeneutics⁷ and prayer will of course blend into the paper.



⁵ From the Greek word *exegesis*, to draw out, narration or explanation. Bakers dictionary of theology p 204

⁶ A general introduction to the Bible. Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix Part One: Inspiration of the Bible p 17 - 124

⁷ The ruling principles of interpretation.

Chapter One

Salvation by mercy, justification by faith, proclamation/sanctification by deeds as seen in “before the fall”.

To travel back to the time that was before the fall is always helpful when determining truth. God’s unstained creation gives us clues on how He intended His creation to be. By returning to that time, which still was beyond time,⁸ we get a glimpse of what heaven or eternity would look like. Since my claim is that the theme of this paper would hold somewhat of a “heavenly value”, I think it is proper to see if the fundamentals on which it is founded existed in the creation before the fall. If we can’t find proof for it in Gods unstained creation it is not worth wasting time on. God created the world very good.⁹ The root word for “good” means “pleasant”.¹⁰ Before the fall, the chapter headline is unnecessary. Everything is already perfect/pleasant. Everything is already in harmony. Everything is already fulfilled and working in that existing principle of the spiritual dynamic which we can not fully understand. How do we recognise these fundamental dynamics in the creation before the fall when the creation is already perfect?

1. The act of creation is an act of love. God is Love in the most severe interpretation of the word¹¹. He didn’t need us to be, but He wanted us to be. He wanted to share His love. The consequence of that desire to share “outside” the dynamic of the Trinity was that He created us into His own likeness. That is, with a free choice. In the creation act He “saves” us from “non existence” to existence by His love and mercy. That is salvation through mercy.¹²
2. As created in Gods image, Adam is already justified just by being what he is. One may wonder why justification is needed if he is already just. The problem is freedom. Adam must have a choice to be able to truly love God. Love without freedom is not love at all. Adam is given the choice of trusting God and to follow the instructions given by Him or to rebel against these instructions (the tree of knowledge/moral/law¹³). He can follow the instructions in faith and continue his already just life or he could choose to trust himself instead and die. His continued decision to trust God in faith makes him justified.
3. By being what he is, a creation in Gods image, Adam is proclaiming Gods glory by every act he does before the fall. It is manifested when he recognises

⁸ Orthodox Theology, Vladimir Lossky p 58-63

⁹ Genesis 1:31

¹⁰ From the Hebrew word “Tob”, Bakers Dictionary of Theology p 252

¹¹ Agape, the giving without expecting anything in return.

¹² Orthodox Theology, Vladimir Lossky p 51-58

¹³ Genesis 2:16-17

the woman as his companion/helper/life mate,¹⁴ and when he names the animals¹⁵. His proclaiming of Gods glory is evident when he does the deeds he was instructed to do.

We can easily see that the three factors mentioned above are evident in the creation before the fall. They are evident and they are as they were supposed to be, because the creation was “very good”. However, the plot is about to change and Adam and Eves knowledge about those dynamics is about to “increase”. Before the fall it was enough for them to trust God with their lives. They didn’t need the “knowledge” about these dynamics, they in fact, lived the knowledge naturally by their very nature created in the image of God. Yet, their free choice ends up in disaster. It ends up in the spiritual death of their hearts.¹⁶ Their salvation is compromised because they don’t recognise God as their source of life anymore. Their justification is compromised because they don’t follow the instructions given by God in faith. Their proclamation or sanctification is compromised because without trusting God they don’t know the right thing to do anymore. By stepping out of the three dynamics, which are the fulfilment of life with God, they gain the *worldly* understanding that the dynamics are actually there. In that knowledge they automatically put the eternal balance of the dynamics out of order. They lean on one of them (different ones in different times) instead of trusting that God keeps the balance for them. Their free choice and their God sustained balance end up in the birth of extremes. Instead of living in balance and in the centre (God), they and all humanity after them¹⁷ tend to put too much emphasis on one or the other of the dynamics (mercy, faith and deeds). This is also known as the birth of sin. Am I saying that these three attributes are sinful? No, but the unbalanced living of them is. Satan doesn’t have any power to create, the only thing he can do is to twist something good into something ugly. He started the “twisting” of the fundamentals of the human experience of community with God. He started by luring man into “independence” of God. Therefore the “biggest” (or first) sin is pride and second in order is ignorance.¹⁸ Once the dynamics were “put out of balance”, God (in His mercy again, because He can not deny Himself¹⁹) puts forth His plan of salvation. He limits the intended eternal life²⁰ so that man can have a chance of coming into community with God again.²¹ God wants the balance back,

¹⁴ Genesis 2:23

¹⁵ Genesis 2:20

¹⁶ Death is understood not mainly as a physical death but as a spiritual separation from God by man’s own choice.

¹⁷ Orthodox Theology, an introduction. Vladimir Lossky p 119 - 137

¹⁸ Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:11-19, Worth remembering is that it is always dangerous to grade sins.

¹⁹ The only “limit” to God that in essence, is not a limit because God is not a god of absurdities.

²⁰ Genesis 3:24

²¹ Time is given, which the Bible is the ultimate proof of. The Word of God (as recorded in the Bible) begins the “repair” work according to the plan God had in store. The Law (The Word) is presenting the knowledge of the plan and The Son (The Word) is fulfilling it

the community of His created beings. He doesn't need it but He rejoices in it. Man, now stained by sin, needs to gain understanding of bringing the balance back. God starts this learning process in the historical setting of the Israelites (to become Israelites that is). In giving them the Law (His Word) He gives them the first instructions on how to get back in the balance. How to become "right with Himself" again.

Chapter 2

Salvation by mercy, justification by faith, proclamation/sanctification by deeds as seen in the Law.

When we think about the law, we tend (or at least I) to think that it is something negative. That it is something that was “created” so that we would feel “bad”. I often fool myself to think about the law solemnly as something negative. This is not the case. The law is not negative, sin is. The law is only making us aware that something is wrong, just like pain in our bodies.²² The law would be the “voice” in Adam that made him aware that something wasn’t right after eating of the forbidden fruit. That “voice” is the Word of God and therefore we can put a capital “L” on the Law without risking blasphemy. In the human experience (feeling guilt as an effect of pride) I tend to think it is easier to approach God through the terminology of law. When I am feeling guilty I think I can make it “right” by doing the deeds that I am being instructed to do by the one I have offended. I think I can atone. This narrow view of the law isn’t destined to work. It is only when we realise that The Word of God (His Son) and the Law of God (His Son) have the same purpose, that is, to reveal God the Father to us and to bring us back to Him so that we can grasp the divinity in the Old Testament.²³ It is in the light of this understanding (as shown and recorded in the Gospels, Christ fulfilling the Law in His Passion) that we can deal with the sometimes very hard passages in the Old Testament. I often lean towards thinking that the law is only about deeds and nothing about faith and mercy, but I will show that if we can’t find faith and mercy in the Law then we can’t find it at all. I will go on to exegete a number of passages in the Old Testament (the Law) that will give me evidence of my paper’s statement.

Salvation by mercy as seen in the Law.

As I have said before there is no salvation except the salvation through mercy. The knowledge of good and evil that man had attained now must find its “equivalent” in the knowledge of the Law, what you must and must *not* do. Reading the Old Testament we find pretty quickly that this knowledge is gained by acting out what is instructed by God.²⁴ So we already see in our examining of the Law that it can’t

²² Since the law is making us aware of our sin it is very easy to think that the law is a negative. It hurts to become aware and we don’t like to hurt because we weren’t designed to hurt in the first place.

²³ The law is the written version of the spoken Word, two sides of the same coin. The problem and the blessing with written letters is that they don’t allow for change.

²⁴In the original languages of the Old Testament, God is referred to by many different names. Jahweh (more of a personal “name”) Elohim (power and majesty of a transcendent God), El Elyon (God most high), Melkisedek (Priest of the most high God) These names shows on Gods different ways on revealing Himself to us. Bakers Dictionary of Theology p 238-239

stand on it's own. It must have an origin, that origin is the mercy of God. God wants to reveal Himself to us through the law. He wants to re-open that narrow way to the tree of life, that is merciful. There are a couple of outstanding passages in the Old Testament that displays this mercy and I am going to investigate one of them more thoroughly.

The Noahic covenant²⁵

In the time of Noah, God's creation, ruled by man has decreased to a level so evil that God can not stand it. He is sorry for creating man²⁶. He decides to destroy man, every man except Noah and his family. Noah had found *grace* in the sight of the Lord. In His grace God reveals His saving plan for Noah. God doesn't need to save man (He already has all the company He'll ever need to show forth Love, within the Trinity), but He wants to show grace. It is in His nature. He wants to give man a chance to get back on track. In His mercy, God reveals every single little detail about how Noah is going to be able to avoid the annihilation of man. These included boat instructions, instructions to preserve the animals, how much food to bring, who and what to include on the saving mission and what He intends to do with rest of mankind. God, in His mercy lets Noah in on His plan so that Noah can understand why He has to build this ark. God is creating a relationship with Noah and is giving him a promise. Upon and in this relationship, Noah learns to trust the Lord even more, which is necessary to be able to perform his task. A covenant is made. The covenant must start with God's grace, which will lead to Noah's (and ours) faith in Him. We need to know that God wants to save us before we take that last step of embarking on "building an ark". God gives this promise to Noah. We know how the story unfolds. Every man except Noah and his family dies in the flood. When they are on dry land again, God gives one more sign of this covenant of His, the rainbow. He also promises never to do the same thing again (even though that doesn't stop Him from destroying the world in fire). This is a sign of God's mercy that will be there forever if we seek it. The only thing that can keep us from it is ourselves. The story of Noah holds many other parables and pictures (the threefold sending of the dove²⁷ shows us Christ's two days in darkness and then on the third He is risen, the baptism of the whole world in water, the name ark; the Law was also placed in an ark). But one of the bigger lessons to learn from Noah is that God's mercy can never be deserved, it can only be received. In a covenant between God and man, man can never be the initiator because man is fallen, man will always and has always fallen short in his promises towards God and therefore man can only be the "responder in faith". Man can never be the initiator or upholder. This is also clearly shown in the covenants of

²⁵ Genesis Chapters 8:1-6, 20-22; 9:1-17

²⁶ Genesis 6:6-7

²⁷ Genesis 8:8-12, dove symbol of peace and a offertory animal

Abraham, Moses and David.²⁸ In realising that God's mercy is sufficient for us we do the only thing we need to do and are able to do for our salvation. God, Himself is the only one that can keep a covenant without falling short which is why He "took both sides" of the covenant and became man Himself.

Justification by faith as seen/prophesied in the Law.

After leaving Egypt behind, the Israelites embark on a long journey.²⁹ They face a lot of different obstacles and trials. Eventually their faith declines and they start to complain. Water, food, shelter and boredom become problems that they don't think have a solution (despite that they were saved by walking through a storming sea on dry ground).³⁰ Their faith is failing despite all the miraculous works that God has performed in their midst. In their lack of faith and in their pride, they ignore the very Law that was given to them³¹ for their justification (the understanding and knowledge on how to get right with God). They don't obey the commandments because they lack faith and patience. So God becomes "angry" with them. God sends serpents to kill the non-believers. In their suffering the Israelites once again scream to God for help and He gives them the instruction to put a copper serpent on a pole (the cross).³² Anyone who looks upon that copper serpent will get rid of the poison inflicted upon them by the other serpents. Or: anyone who looks upon Christ in faith will find healing from the power of darkness. Since we can't fully understand the "mercy-part" of God (because we have fallen from our divine, original "status") we need faith as a "mediator" in approaching that "understanding". Mercy shows the side of God that we can't comprehend, mercy doesn't make sense in a fallen, human mind (nothing is given for free, everything has a cost). Justification on the other hand makes a little more sense. Justice makes sense to us. To be justified means that you get your verdict.³³ We understand that kind of reasoning, you get what you deserve. Mercy means that you don't get what you deserve. Justice means that you do. The question we have to ask then is, why have faith if it only leads to our condemnation and our verdict? This question can't be answered fully by the Old Testament writings alone. The Old Testament writings give us the historical background to the One that is to atone for all of our sins. He is the One that we must put our faith in so that He can take upon His shoulders the verdict for our transgressions. The Old Testament gives a lot of pictures, signs and hints of this coming event (the serpent of copper, the Hare Kippur, the royal lineage, the Pesach and so on) but the event has not occurred in the history of humanity yet. It is soon to be revealed

²⁸ Genesis 15:1-21, Exodus 6:1-13, II Samuel 7:12-16, I Chronicles 11-14

²⁹ Exodus

³⁰ Exodus 14:15-31

³¹ Exodus 20

³² Numbers 21:4-9 John 3:14-15

³³ Bakers Dictionary of Theology p 304-305

for all the nations. The people of the Old Testament are shown justification by faith in a more practical and direct manner. When they ask God in faith they are given an answer on the spot. When they keep their communication alive with Jahve, they are safe. They are safe in a more direct meaning (from the Amalekites, Midianites and Amorites³⁴). When they obey the Law in faith they receive the justification they have been searching for. It is the promised land (heaven) in which they can dwell and build a “permanent” dwelling place for their Lord.

Proclamation/Sanctification by deeds as seen in the Law.

To proclaim something is to make something manifest. If we say that we believe in God but don't follow His decrees that belief is not taken seriously. Deeds are faith becoming incarnate. The Law is full of examples of people turning their faith in God into real deeds in real life. And many of them receive their reward, sanctification. **This is the easiest dynamic to recognise within the revelation of the Law.** That is what we have been fostered to believe. If we do something right, we will receive a reward. That is the mentality of the world. To proclaim the love of God or to become sanctified moves beyond this kind of thinking though. We shouldn't have our *need* to make atonement for our sins as our major motivation but our *want or desire* to perform what is good for us and others. Need is in its essence egocentric, giving is the only true Love. However, we can't give something that we don't possess and that is why we must turn to God to be filled before we can perform the works of His will. This makes it harder to identify passages in the Old Testament that show us true sanctification, but below is an example of a major one.

The hospitality of Abram.³⁵

Unaware of the dignity of his guests Abram invites them to a feast. He washes their feet, he prepares the meal and he entertains them with conversation. He even shares his burdens in life with them. He is humble, honest, kind and loving towards them, with no strings attached. And that is the key. He doesn't expect anything in return from his guests. They are guests in his house, how can they give anything back? The attitude that Abram is displaying is the attitude of hospitality. That attitude doesn't come over night. Abram was prepared to receive guests at any time. He welcomed guests, he enjoyed their company and insights, he was ready to give. He probably had received hundreds of guests in likewise manner. He had made his deeds of good a routine, faithfully performing them because he had set his eyes on a bigger goal, God. He had made a commitment. We know

³⁴ Judges 6:1-10

³⁵ Genesis 18:1-19

what happens. Abram is rewarded for his faithfulness in his works. The guests are Gods messengers (a common opinion is that one of the angels is Christ Himself), and they bring a message of joy. Abram will be given a son late in life. But, Abram is given a reward just by performing the acts of a servant, the reward of eternal life. This of course is manifested in the flesh by his son Isaac, whose birth is miraculous. By committing himself to perform good deeds regardless of what he might gain from it he gains God's approval and he is shown that any deed (even "impossible" ones) can be performed by the one who believes. Miracles will rarely produce enduring faith but faith will produce miracles, faith is a miracle in itself. He is sanctified, that is, saved from eternal death.³⁶ Abram makes it through the test of this world. He uses his years here wisely. He gives them away freely in performing the deeds of God, without even knowing it sometimes. We will never know when we will have our own angel³⁷ as a guest in our house, which is why we should perform the deeds of God unceasingly.

³⁶ James 2:23

³⁷ We don't know when we will be visited by the "angel of death" or when we will die, which is why we should be prepared at all times.

Chapter 3

Salvation by mercy, justification by faith,
proclamation/sanctification by deeds as seen in Christ.

To make sense of the Creation and the Law we must start with Christ. We must also end with Him. He is both beginning and end. There wouldn't be a Creation at all if He wouldn't have spoken it; there wouldn't be a Law at all if he wouldn't have written it. God creates us and gives us free will so that we can truly love. We fail in doing that trusting only ourselves. God has ever since tried to get us back, first through the individual commitment of one man (Noah), second through the establishment of a tribe/culture/country and their history in which He reveals His will, the Law. Thirdly, through the rather blissful and harsh speeches of the prophets and fourthly by the greatness of creation (maybe this should have been in the first place.) But it doesn't work. Finally He is tries to get us back by the only way that remain, that is, by becoming man Himself. He atones for the human fall Himself. He can only do this by sharing our humanity. By doing this He hopes that we can trust that He loves us. God is risking everything for us. In Christ, Divinity becomes humanity (while staying Divine) so that we, who can do nothing to bridge the gap in between, once more can become divine and live in true communion with God. Christ makes this possible and that is why we have to look into how He fulfils all the three of the dynamics in Himself.

Salvation by mercy as seen in Christ.³⁸

In John 3:16, probably the most famous verse in the whole Bible, Jesus sums up the reason for our continued existence. *“For God (The Father) so loved the world (that had become wicked by it's actions) that He gave His only begotten Son (Christ), that whoever believes (with the Faith of the Spirit which will be confirmed by the works of the Spirit) in Him (The Father) shall not perish (into nothingness, nothing can exist without God sustaining it which is why the devil only can have the power that God and humans through free will allows him, he is indeed the nothingness or eternal death) but have everlasting life (or fullness, how we were intended to be, God is the source of life and He loves diversity, diversity is the one condition for true unity) ”* This verse is one of the verses that in one sentence explains the whole Bible. If one can start to grasp the divine meaning of this verse and implement it in one's life, studying theology would only be the means of affirming the truth that you already know in your heart. The verse says what mercy is all about. It says that mercy is Love (giving unconditionally) and it also says that mercy is mystery (we can not grasp the full insight of mercy until we have seen the life that is waiting for us after death). Another way to describe

³⁸ John 3:16; 13; 3-14

mercy is to say that it is the eternal forgiveness offered from God and displayed to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit. We are always welcome to come back to Him.³⁹

The foot washing⁴⁰

Right before Jesus identifies His betrayer⁴¹, Jesus *mercifully* performs an act that puzzles the apostles. He washes their feet. This action was seen as the most unworthy duty of all. If a slave were Jewish he actually didn't have to obey his master if his master asked him to perform this duty. The streets of Jerusalem were filthy. People threw their garbage out through the windows. Basically it was the job of the lowest of the low. Just before Jesus is washes the apostles feet the Bible gives us this information: "*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself*"⁴² Do we appreciate the greatness in this? After being fully "aware" that He had all possible power in His hand, what does Jesus do? He performs the most lowly, disgusting duty known in the culture. Why? To set an example on how mercy works. Mercy puts an end to the spiral of revenge. Jesus had all the right to use His power because He hadn't broken any of the commandments in the Law, but He chose not to. He is not after revenge, He is after our hearts. Therefore He gives us time to repent. It is a paradox and a mystery. We can not fully grasp the significance of this deed. Jesus has the right to judge but He doesn't. He has the right to be proud but He isn't. But He is merciful, that is, full of mercy and Love. He can not force Himself on our will⁴³. Forcing oneself upon another person is not love, it is dictatorship. Love must spring from the fountain of freedom. So the thing Jesus does is to set an example for us on how to show on mercy and love. He wants us to

³⁹ The theologians have different opinions about the eternal forgiveness of God but logically it should be eternal because God doesn't change and forgiveness is offered to us "now". However, the ability to see one's own sins and to repent becomes more and more difficult as time goes by. It is a spiral down probably to the extent of passing a "point of no return". Looking at this we realize that we are the judges of our selves to some degree. Christ will judge the world in the second coming but we don't know when that is. Maybe the second coming is the point in time when a person "dead or alive" chooses to neither eternally renounce God's forgiveness or to repent (planting the mustard seed). Maybe it is just as literal as the Bible says (even though some people do see lightening, fire and horror) at the point of their conversion or judgement. Only God knows, but we know He is full of Grace and logically it isn't gracefull to put a limit on Love. See Origen's and C.S Lewis writings for further thoughts on this subject.

⁴⁰ John 13:1-17

⁴¹ John 13:18

⁴² John 13:3-4

⁴³ God can not seize to be God. That is the only thing God "can not do" which has given some philosophers an argument that there is no God because god, if He is God must be able to do anything, even terminate Himself. This is also called non sense because it assumes the point it wants to prove.

do the same. He wants us to spread the light and to end the dark circle of revenge and hatred. He sets the example hoping that we will follow, just like the apostles eventually did, all but one⁴⁴. He picks up the shame and form of a servant. He acts like a servant and He dies like a criminal.⁴⁵ He knows that He can not change our heart from above (the Law, we will always fail because we are human and need close relations to understand). He can only hope that we, by looking and following His example start to desire in our hearts to become more like Him. Instead from a Law written in stone, through Grace, the Law is written on our hearts. Becoming a servant doesn't make sense to us. But deep in our hearts (if we have a repentant attitude) we realise slowly but sourly that by becoming the servant of our neighbour we let Jesus atone for our fall. By His grace we are saved.

Justification through faith as seen in Christ.

In revealing the Truth about the true nature of God for mankind, Christ uses faith as the only way to access the understanding of divinity. *"I am the way, the truth and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through me"*⁴⁶ If mercy is the actual salvation, faith is the tool you must use to know that there is a salvation. Jesus, by His very descending from heaven⁴⁷ shows us that He fully trusts His Father that He has faith. His every action is a display of faith because He doesn't take any credit for Himself but gives glory to the Father which in return glorifies His Son. *"Now, the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately."*⁴⁸ Even if the life of faith fully is displayed in everything Jesus does there are a couple of occasions⁴⁹ where Jesus shows astounding faith, endurance and dependence on His Father, in particular on the following occasion.

The prayer in the garden of Gethsemane.⁵⁰

When the hour had come for the Son of Man to give up His life for the world His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even to death."⁵¹ Even the Son of God couldn't escape the feeling of total abandonment. He knew what was about to happen; He knew the routine of the crucifixion. He also knew every sin that He had to carry on His shoulders. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus probably had something like a slideshow of the worst sins that mankind had committed, were committing and

⁴⁴ Judas

⁴⁵ In the eyes of the world crucifixion was an execution method meant only for the most sever crimes against the state of Rome.

⁴⁶ John 14:6

⁴⁷ Luke 2:1-7

⁴⁸ John 13: 31-32

⁴⁹ Matt 27:45-46; Mark 15:33-41; Luke 23:44-49; John 19:28-30

⁵⁰ Matt 26: 36-46

⁵¹ Matt 26:38

would commit. He saw the dread of the Holocaust, My-Lai, tribal child sacrifices and Roman oppression. This slide show is only a speculation of mine but if the Son of God is going to be troubled to the core, this (or something similar) is probably what was going on in Jesus mind. He was so “down” that He asked His Father to remove the task from Him. If it was possible, He asked His Father to spare Him from this horrible event. But not according to His own will but according to His Father’s will. Here lies the secret of faith. Faith is when you trust someone else with your own life. You can’t see how it’s going to work out, it is way too dark. You don’t have any light around you but still you trust your life to God. There is no logical reason or logic in trusting a good God because your suffering is too great, but you still do it. You reach out to God in faith. When we do this, just like Jesus in the garden, we become justified. When we have reached the state of justification we gain the knowledge that there is mercy. To be justified is to gain the knowledge of your own verdict. The verdict is that you are doomed on your own. It is to realise that the only way to gain eternal life is to accept it as a free gift of mercy. Jesus, once again, gives us the picture on how much we should trust the Father. We should trust Him with our lives. It is only when we do this that we can start to grasp the Divine Grace of Salvation. God will and wants to save us if we let ourselves go and this we can only do if we have faith in Him.

Sanctification by works as seen in Christ.

Sanctification is the final destination for the Christian. It is final because there is nowhere else to go. There is also no need to go “further”. The need to go further disappears because in becoming sanctified or holy, we become whole again. At the same time in becoming holy we gain the understanding that we will always strive further, towards God. This is a holy paradox, we are home but always moving, always working, always performing the deeds of sanctification. We become what we were intended for in the beginning. We become like we were before the fall. So as well as the holy life being our goal it is also our beginning. Everything in between that does not lead towards this goal is contradictory to God’s will and therefore sin, missing the mark, missing the goal. God, through, and in, His Son gives us the original picture of how a sanctified life is supposed to be lived. He gives us the perfect example on what living according to Gods will leads to in this stained world. It will lead us to sacrifice and death, or rather through death from this world into His Kingdom of life. There, the true, full, sanctified life can be lived. In this world, we can never achieve the true, final sanctification. We can taste it, by letting Christ, through the Holy Spirit work within us but as long as we are here we can’t reach the full stature of a holy life. The only one that could do this was God Himself because He is the Creator of all things and therefore He sets the rules. So the question then becomes, Why should I even bother doing good

deeds my whole life if I can just ask forgiveness on my death - bed? The question sounds cheap but it has a very expensive and serious answer. Since we are living beings, we change, like it or not. We don't have a permanent state of feelings, values or mindset. If a man starts to do evil things instead of good deeds, that man will have an easier time doing evil things rather than a good deed the next time around. And after a life time of doing more evil than good, that man won't even reflect on what he did wrong because he thought that doing wrong was the normal thing to do. The man has slowly, but steadily dulled his sense of moral. He won't even bother asking forgiveness because he thinks that there is nothing to forgive. Who sees a doctor when you think you are not sick? Because of this we must always try to perform good deeds so we don't give the devil a chance to "take us down" with him by dulling our sense of right and wrong. If we perform good deeds we will keep the moral on guard so we recognise when we do sin and can repent from that. If we do this we will become more inclined to sanctification instead of damnation. If we do this, we can bring a little bit of heaven down to earth and spread the light on the things that hide in the darkness. In the presence of light, darkness must vanish, by fleeing to another place or by transforming into light.⁵² That is exactly what happened when the Son of God descended from heaven to earth.

The miracle of feeding the five thousand.⁵³

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand men holds a lot of significant symbolical (and literal) meaning (the number of baskets remaining, the breaking of bread, fish and bread, the geographical place⁵⁴). What I am going to focus on is *how* Jesus performs the miracle. The order of the procedure is this: 1. There is a need. People are hungry because they left their opportunity to eat when they followed Jesus to be able to hear His teaching. 2. The disciples encourage people to go home and eat because they don't see any possibility for the people to be fed at the current location. They are probably a little concerned about what they are going to eat themselves. 3. Jesus asks what kind of resources they have (He asks what He can "work with" so to speak). 4. Jesus thanks His Father for the (limited) gifts He has received and He offers them back to the Father. 5. The Father blesses the offering. 6. The offering, after being blessed and thanked for, is sufficient to feed 5000 men. Not included in the number are the woman and the children. 7. There is food left over.

⁵² John 1:1-5

⁵³ Matt 14:13-21

⁵⁴ Excerps from The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew explained by the Blessed Theophylact explains the meaning of these symbols a lot better then I can do.

We tend to think that miracles are the abnormal thing to happen. They are out of the ordinary. Indeed, that is the very meaning of the word.⁵⁵ We can't explain it. However, from a spiritual view, from God's view it is probably the opposite. The miracle is standard and the rest of the world is out of tune. When Jesus heals the sick and feeds the hungry, He restores them to wholeness (in a smaller way), He gives them a notion on how it was supposed to be. How they were supposed to be. We weren't supposed to be hungry, sick or dying. In our fallen state we can not see that it is the miracle that is the norm in the "big scheme of things" and that the sin is the anomaly. Sanctification is normal, not abnormal. Sanctification is the manifestation of salvation. Jesus knows this and therefore it is only natural that He does whatever His Father wants Him to do. The Father wants us to be full, to be healthy and finally to be holy. He wants to "hang out" with us. Jesus thanks His Father for this goodness and the Father blesses the offering with the automatic consequence that His will is done. His will in this case was for the people to be fed, not so much for the bread in itself but from the Word of His Son. Jesus does nothing without His Father's consent. They are One. He lives in the Father and the Father lives in Him, in a mystery. We must follow this example. We must ask, where is there a need to be filled? Where are my help and gifts needed? What do we have to work with, two fishes, five breads or is it a gift of singing or maybe hospitality? Then we must ask God to bless those gifts for His purposes. Without His blessing nothing good can come forth from our gifts. Indeed, we see if our gifts are blessed if they bring forth good fruit, good fruit beyond belief (12 baskets over). If we give the glory back to the Father we will be blessed beyond belief, maybe not in this world but in the next. This is sanctification. When we give what we are able, thanking God for it, He gives back more than we thought were possible. He gives us back our wholeness, He gives us peace.

Jesus, by doing His Father's will becomes/remains sanctified⁵⁶. By doing the works of humbleness He "gains/manifests" divinity. The radiance of His obedience to His Father shines through to the extent that people are healed and fed. The people can actually see with their own eyes that Jesus is sanctified by the works He performs according to the will of His Father.

⁵⁵ From Greek "Dynamis". Supernatural source, divine power present in a act or situation. Bakers dictionary of Theology p 356.

⁵⁶ Of course Jesus already is sanctified but for the sake of mankind He picks up the role of a servant, slave and outcast. It looks to the human eye that He is everything but sanctified. The paradox is that it is in His work of becoming man, giving up everything that He "gains" the "right" to sit on the throne of glory. The mystery of becoming something that you already are is indeed a mystery that we can not comprehend until we reach sanctification ourselves. What we know is that God is a living God and that we, being in the likeness of Him will always grow closer and closer to Him, in this life and the next. Everything that is alive grows.

Conclusion.

In approaching the subjects of salvation, justification and sanctification one quickly realises that they are not subjects that can be approached one at the time. Martin Luther was both right and wrong when he said that we are “saved by faith alone”. He was right because the three transcend each other, he was wrong because in using language like that he simplified the mystery of salvation. What one comes to realise is that salvation is not a matter of one event that happened “when I was saved” long ago. It is not a matter of being baptised as a child or to say that “I have found Jesus”. Salvation is a matter of growing, and like anything that grows it hurts. It is a matter of struggle, pain and suffering. But it is also a matter of love, hope and joy. It is a matter of a dynamic work throughout our whole life. Indeed, it is life itself. It is the very reason for us to be alive. To use the words of Bp Kallistos Ware; “We are not saved, we are being saved.”⁵⁷ To explain the nature of our salvation one can not stand on mercy, faith or works separated from each other. This conclusion then forces me to say that my statement in the beginning was wrong. In it I stated that we are saved by mercy. I am both right and wrong. We can’t separate them, yet to understand the dynamic better we must “separate them”. Just like the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is interactive, living and loving towards each other and yet, they remain the same. Just like ourselves being body, soul and spirit still remaining one nature.

If mercy, (The Father, **the soul**) is the initiator of the works of salvation and therefore the statement; “Salvation by mercy” is true, then justification by faith (The Spirit, **the spirit**) must be the path on which one has to walk to become aware that there actually is a salvation, that there is mercy at all. Sanctification (The Son, **the body**) will then be the fulfilment and the final destination of that path. In returning to the source (offering ourselves back to God), we ourselves become what we were meant to be, that is full of mercy which is the same as compassion, which is the same as love. When we return to the source of our existence we no longer perform the works of holiness because we have to but because we want to. We are in communion with God with our freedom intact. It has become our nature to give ourselves to others so they too can find the path to. The three dynamics give themselves to depend on each other. On their own they can not perform the full work of salvation.

We are saved by mercy, we become aware of that mercy by faith and by remaining in faith we fulfil that mercy by the works of holiness. We become full of mercy and love by doing the works of holiness. It is circular and like any circle, it never ends. It is a dynamic destined and designed for eternity. It is a dynamic that creates

⁵⁷ How we are saved. Bp Kallistos Ware

and sustains life. It is life in itself. Just like we are images of the Trinity, the dynamic of salvation is a picture of the same Trinity. Writing this paper I realise that it is actually the Trinity working in me and sustaining me that makes it possible to write at all.

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Salvation by Grace?
Justification by Faith?
Sanctification by Works?

IV-401 – IV-411

A research paper submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor.

Submitted to St. Elias School of Orthodox Theology

By

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TH-CO176
14/01/2008