



*December 22, 2024*

*“God With You”*

*Love, the Fourth Sunday of Advent.*

*News:*

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Tuesday at 4:30, Everyone is Welcome.

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Hebrew... יְשׁוּעַ הַמָּשִׁיחַ (yā-shü-ä hä-mä-shē-äḥ), which in Greek is, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (ēā-sūs ḫřēs-tōs), which in English is, Jesus the Anointed One.

ADVENT SUNDAY 4... The Fourth Week of Advent (Arrival), The Candle of Love: It is, of course, Agapê. The unconditional, altruistic, and not just selfless, but self-sacrificing Love of God.

In the latter case, the idea is that once a person has been Saved, they are now responsible, to one degree or another, to maintain their Salvation.

They nearly all believe that a Christian can lose their Salvation.

In the first case, the idea is that the Sanctification process and Glorification event are inevitable parts of initial Justification.

They all believe in eternal security for genuine Christians.

But... can a genuine Christian renounce Christ?  
(I Corinthians 10:13, James 1:2-25, II Thessalonians 3:3).

**GALATIANS 3:1-5 ~**

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

Entire Salvation of a person from start to finish is the result of God's work. Even the faith that such a person has to trust God enough to Salvifically believe in the Name of Jesus comes from God. We offer nothing and we provide nothing. And when we think we do, we diminish His Gift to us.

Christianity is not about us, it's about Him and that is one of the many proofs that it is not just another religion invented by man.

- 1) First, where the clergy controls the laity. Legalists are never satisfied with their own performance and so they focus on the performance of others...
- 2) Second, the fear of chaos absent concrete rules...
- 3) Third, the worry of entirely letting go.

Manifesting as the idea that we must at least partially pay for our sins, if not past sins, then surely present and future sins.

What about obedience?

Is it possible that a person could perform well as a Christian purely out of duty and self-preservation, while another Christian does so out of the Love that he or she had first received from the God?

Which Christian would be relating to God as Jesus taught?

Which Christian demonstrates that they have embraced God's Grace, Forgiveness and Love?

Which Christian is acting like a new creation born from above and which is acting like any other self-serving human?

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

ADVENT SUNDAY 4... The Fourth Week of Advent (Arrival), The Candle of Love: It is, of course, Agapê. The unconditional, altruistic, and not just selfless, but self-sacrificing Love of God.

1 John 4:7–19, 7Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 13This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. 14And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. 16And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 17This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this

world we are like Jesus. 18There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 19We love because he first loved us.

His Love freely poured out upon mankind in, though, and by the very Word, really, Message of Almighty God: Hebrew...

ישוע המשיח (yā-shü-ä hä-mä-shē-äḥ), which in Greek is, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (ēā-sūs ḫrēs-tōs), which in English is, Jesus the Anointed One. The Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, all because of God's self-sacrificial Love for you and me.

Christ Crucified is what it's all about. Of course, that wouldn't mean a thing if He wasn't Resurrected, Ascended and Returning. And none of that would be possible, if He hadn't come to earth as one of us.

Today we celebrate the unimaginable, incomparable, marvelous, Love of God, sending us His Message in the form of His Son a helpless baby in a manger.

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Last week we read Paul's proof that his Theology of Justification is True. The primary evidence was the

simple fact that the Galatian Christians were accepted by God as His very own Born Again, Holy Spirit Filled, Children forevermore, strictly through believing in Jesus, without jumping through any other religious hoops at all.

As I said some time ago, most Christians agree with that proposition, if not in actual practice, then at least, when pressed, verbally. Those that disagree with Paul here... do so because they either ignore Paul, don't understand him, or they meld his teaching together with other Biblical teaching to dilute his teaching. All three of those methods of Bible interpretation are invalid – wrong.

Justification for Christians is either seen as a one-time event, or as an ongoing process. In the latter case, the idea is that once a person has been Saved, they are now responsible to maintain their Salvation through the Sanctification process, where a Christian grows and matures in the faith, until their final mortal day on earth. Only successful completion of that process grants them Glorification in Heaven.

People holding that view disagree on how much assistance God will provide to a person in their struggle

against the flesh. With a little, or with a lot, of Holy Spirit help, the Christian must not sin and must also jump through some religious hoops, usually baptism and regular church attendance as minimums in order to continue the process towards eventual Glorification.

They must constantly confess, repent, and in some way make amends for minor sins, while completely avoiding larger ones, like those listed in the Ten Commandments. And they must remain faithful, as in, not losing faith, not allowing doubt to creep in as evidenced by things like frustration and depression.

Nearly all such people believe that a fully Saved, Born Again, Spirit-filled, Child of God, can lose their Salvation and have their name erased from the Lamb's Book of Life. Most of them think that those who lose their Salvation can regain it by jumping through some more hoops, while there are others who think that it is impossible to be re-Saved.

There are Biblical proof texts that are used by the people I have just described. To go through every argument in every Passage is far too much for what we're doing here today. While I'll try to give voice to every concern, the simple fact is that we are going

through Galatians right now, not the other Bible Books people use to dismiss Galatians.

Going back to the first case, the idea is that the Sanctification process, where a Christian grows and matures in the faith, as well as the Glorification event, where a Christian enters Heaven, are both part and parcel to the initial Justification event.

In other words, Salvation is entire. The terms we discussed are merely “tenses of Salvation” as in, for the Christian person, the moment of initial Justification is past tense, Sanctification is present tense, and Glorification is future tense of one Salvation verb.

A person whom God transfers into His Kingdom at the point of their initial Justification has already been Glorified in Heaven, they just haven't caught up to that reality in time yet. This is the concept of eternal security, which means that God doesn't make mistakes, nor does He play yo-yo with the souls of His children. The popular saying is that God doesn't use an eraser. Of course, as soon as that is said, someone quotes Revelation 3:5, “The one who overcomes will be clothed the same way, in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will

confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”

The key is that Jesus doesn't say that erasing a name ever actually happens... He's reinforcing that He will not erase a name written if the person overcomes. Who is responsible for making a person overcome?

The principle is that since Salvation comes by the faith of accepting the Gift of Grace offered by the Father, through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and then results in God transferring that person from death into Life by making them a New Creation, that now Born from Above, Holy Spirit indwelt Christian is God's child forever. Then the idea of maintaining one's Salvation until Glorification is nonsensical – Almighty God has Saved that person and nothing and no one can undo what God has done.

Sometimes opponents of this belief will say that surely the person themselves is free to change their mind and throw away their Salvation. That's a very debatable assumption, but let's, for a moment, allow that such a thing is possible. For it to be taken seriously, the person in question would have to be of sound mind and



then with aforethought, intentionally and willfully choose that change of allegiance.

Let's say that a person did that. Is the failure of their faith and the loss of their personal Salvation their fault, or the fault of Almighty God within them? I Corinthians 10:13, "God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." Whom would we rightly blame for a Christian who ends up in the Lake of Fire?

The Bible teaches us that God allows the temptation of our flesh in order to grow our faith in Him. James chapter 1, is all about that... He wrote, "You know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. So, let perseverance finish its work in you so that you may be mature and complete." He wrote, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."

Many of us tend to read that as an either/or conditional proposition, like if you persevere, then you will get the crown, but that's not at all what it says. James was teaching that for those of us who Love God, because

God first Loved us and gave us the ability to Love Him through His Holy Spirit dwelling within us, that we will be tempted in life. We will be tempted to abandon God and run away from Him, but that God will turn that temptation into a test whereby our faith in Him will actually grow and be strengthened.

Now, how will our faith grow through testing? Specifically, by God's faithfulness to us that we experience through our trial. It is His faithfulness, not imagined, but actually experienced, that grows our faith. II Thessalonians 3:3, "the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."

God is ever faithful to His Own and to think otherwise is blasphemy. We will be tested, and we will overcome, and we will be awarded the crown of life, because it is God in us who wins every victory over temptation and sin and death.

Galatians 3:1–5, 1 You morally foolish Galatians, who has blinded your eyes with witchcraft, eyes that once saw clearly the Jesus Christ Who was publicly portrayed as crucified – as sacrificed for sin? 2 I really want to know what you're thinking, I want you to tell me: did you receive the Holy Spirit by works of the Law,

by who you are, what you did, or what you avoided, or did you receive the Holy Spirit by hearing about Jesus with faith in Him? 3Are you so morally foolish that you think having begun by the Holy Spirit, you can now perfect yourself before God by works of the flesh – by your personal performance? 4Did you suffer so many things by accepting Christ Crucified in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5So then, does He who provides you with the Holy Spirit and works miracles among you, do it because you earn it through works of the Law, or because you heard about Jesus with faith?

In summary of this passage let me clearly say that the entire Salvation of a person from start to finish is the result of God's work. Even the faith that such a person has to trust God enough to Salvifically believe in the Name of Jesus comes from God. We offer nothing and we provide nothing to the process. And when we think we do, we diminish His Gift to us.

Christianity is not about us, it's about Him and that is one of the many proofs that it is not just another religion invented by man. When we invent religion, we create God in our image... When God reveals the Truth, it is that He created us in His image.

Now, there are three (3) main reasons that some people hate what I just said. 1) First, there are the people involved in institutions and organizations where the clergy controls the laity (where the religious leaders control the religious people). They object because the rich and powerful want to maintain control to bring them more wealth and authority. They want Christianity to be about your performance knowing that you will fail and then need them to constantly fix things between God and you.

The laity within the system object either because they don't know any better, or they like thinking someone else shares responsibility for their relationship with God, or they just like the concrete rules and regulations of legalism.

This is nothing more than bondage that merely replaces trust in Jesus with trust in the Church or some other human entity. Paul addressed a form of this in his summary, Galatians 6:13, "those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they want to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh."

Legalists are never satisfied with their own performance and so they focus on the performance of others thinking that they will earn points with God for being His religious policemen.

2) Second, many people think that madness, licentiousness, and pandemonium, within Christianity will erupt and spread if people think that their performance isn't tied to their Salvation. They think that the fear of losing one's Salvation and being rejected by God is the only thing that will keep people on the straight and narrow.

While worrying over sinfulness running amuck is understandable, it's stupid. It's the same fear-driven absurd thinking that gives us gun control to stop murder.

3) Third, many others worry about letting go of their Salvation by trusting Jesus with it entirely. They fear that by doing so they might not do enough good to actually be Saved.

Whether we voice it or not, whether we are even consciously aware of it or not, we humans have a very hard time letting go of our illusion of control.

Let me unpack what I just said. Many people claiming to be Christians (and I'm not judging whether they are or are not) object to the doctrine that Jesus died on their behalf as a substitute Who atoned fully for their sins.

They believe that His death on the Cross merely enables them to atone for their sins themselves through His example or in conjunction with His help.

They believe that it is at the very least a cooperative effort whereby they at least partially pay for their own sins, if not past sins, then certainly present and future sins.

Most such folks will focus on sins committed after the initial Salvation or their Baptism accepting that sins up to that point are forgiven, but those after must be redressed, must be made right. From the Confessional, Penance, and Purgatory of Roman Catholicism to the on again, off again, Salvation of many Pentecostals, sin committed as a Christian must be erased by them in some way other than free Grace.

It stems from the need to control things and the fear that not doing so will allow things to spin out of control. It is a fear of the dark, a fear of the turmoil of the unknown, that manifests itself as the person taking the reins of their existence and working to keep the black dragon of chaos contained.

That human tendency makes it so incredibly uncomfortable for us to put all of our eggs in the single basket of trust in Jesus alone, that it becomes nearly impossible to do so. Some sneeringly say a Grace that is not earned is a cheap Grace, but it is actually far harder to simply trust, than it is to busily jump through a bunch of man-made religious hoops.

The most difficult thing is to let go.  
TRUST / FALL VIDEO...

Trust, that's what it is all about and while it is incredibly difficult to actually do, it is what God asks. So, what about obedience? The fear is that if our performance isn't tied to our acceptance by God, then Christians won't behave like Christians.

Let me tell you a story. I was the Marine Corps Senior Drill Instructor for a special detachment running a boot

camp for the Naval Sea Cadet Corps. It was quite a program. These were older teenaged cadets who, by completing the course, could enter the United States Navy as E-4s, instead of the typical E-1, or E-2.

My company had about 120 of these cadets, broken into four platoons, three male platoons, each led by a drill instructor, and a female platoon led by a female drill instructor.

As you can imagine there were some gung-ho teenagers in the program who wanted to serve, others who just wanted to get a taste of military life, and still others who were miscreants. The last group were delinquents who were forced to join as a last-ditch effort to turn them around.

The worst offender in my company was a 17-, or 18-year-old terrorist who thought he was a lot tougher than he was and who made it his mission to cause havoc everywhere he could. He had smuggled in drugs and a weapon. He talked back, refused to perform, bullied the other guys, and sexually harassed the girls in the female platoon, to include my female drill instructor.



I did everything that I could think of to get this guy to behave, and nothing worked. I even had the military police fake arrest him and take him to the brig where they slapped him in leg irons in an attempt to scare him straight. It didn't. At one point I pulled him into a room along with the biggest kid in the company and ordered the bigger kid to beat the tar out of the felonious kid. That didn't work either.

Finally, I assembled the whole company in formation to march to dinner in their dress uniforms. I called the troublemaker out to stand in front of them and told them that we no longer had to put up with him. That he was being booted out of boot camp. His crimes had reached a level that he could not be overcome, at least not by him.

I said, "if you are okay with getting rid of this nuisance, remain at attention as they pick him up and take him away, and we will march to the chow hall. If you want him to stay, you will have to pay for his sins. If you want him to stay, instead of going to dinner, you will all do "bends and thrusts" exercises in place until you are covered with sweat and sand, and don't have the energy to march to chow."

Every single kid without exception immediately began exercising in place, now to the commands of their respective drill instructors with dirt, sand, and sweat flying they continued to exhaustion and the villainous kid tried to stop it, he whined and complained, he tried to join in, but I was having none of it... He just had to stand there and watch all those kids intentionally suffer for him even though he had been horrible to them.

Before long, the company was a disheveled and fatigued mess, and my problem child was shaking with emotion as a river of tears ran down his face. It was a truly amazing thing. That kid became one of the very best cadets in the company and graduated from our little program with honors.

Let me finish with a hypothetical... Imagine a Christian man who, because of the Love and Forgiveness poured out to him and in him, decides to Love his wife like Jesus Loves His church. This man, through words and his actual behavior demonstrates that his wife can do nothing to diminish his Love for her. No matter how badly she acts, no matter how many mistakes she makes, no matter the gravity of her misdeeds, this man continues to Love her unconditionally.

Now, the fear is that she will take advantage of this good man and completely abuse his Love. That's debatable, but if she reacted that way it would actually prove beyond any doubt at all that she had not ever received his Love. See what I mean? Only a wife who responded to her husband's unconditional Love by attempting to return his Love would be a wife who had actually accepted his Love in the first place.

Imagine another husband, a man who tells his wife five times a day that if she doesn't toe the line and perform up to his standards, he will divorce her.

It is possible that both wives would perform well for their respective husbands, one purely out of duty and self-preservation, the other out of the Love that she had first received from him.

The Bible tells us that we Love God because He first Loved us and what I'm telling you is that you cannot Love God unless you fully embrace the Love that He has first showered upon you. I'm also telling you that it is impossible to fully embrace His Love if you are still trying to earn it.

It is Jesus and Jesus alone as the atonement for sin. Do you know what the word atonement means? It is literally the state of being “at one with.” We are at one with God because Christ paid it all. Embrace free Grace, embrace full forgiveness, embrace unconditional Love, and act out of that new condition... Act out of the new you, born from above.

That’s why we celebrate Christmas... The Love of God was poured out upon mankind in the arrival of His Christ... Christmas celebration songs...

I John 4:7, Beloved, let’s love one another; for love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.