

Salvation in Christ

Original Sin and the Fall of Man

- Common understanding in the West about the fall - Augustine
- Augustine taught that human beings inherited the guilt of Adam - original guilt. The Roman Catholic teaching is that baptism removes the guilt of original sin. Calvinism teaches that man is utterly depraved and guilty and that some have been predestined for salvation while others have been predestined for damnation.
- Thus in the West we really have flip sides of the same coin.

What is the Orthodox teaching?

-The Orthodox Church teaches that God created the world good and that God, in the beginning, wanted all of humanity to be in communion with Himself. Mankind was then created in the image and likeness of God.

So, what changed?

-Man sinned and this sin has broken and continues to break that communion with God.

"Sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned." - Romans 5:12

- It is sin that has brought evil into this world. God did NOT create evil.

"That which is evil in the strict sense is not a substance but the absence of good, just as darkness is nothing else than the absence of light." - Evagrius of Pontus

"Failure and weakness introduce evil, doing what is against nature because of the lack of that which in accordance with nature." - St. Maximus the Confessor

Original Sin

"Original sin is not to be interpreted in juridical or quasi-biological terms, as if it were some physical taint of guilt, transmitted through sexual intercourse . . . the doctrine of original sin means rather that we are born into an environment where it is easy to do evil and hard to do good." - Metropolitan Kallistos Ware

- **The Orthodox Church does NOT teach original guilt.**

- Thus, we do not speak of Adam's guilt - it was his alone. This is the primary reason why the Orthodox Church does not teach the doctrine of the immaculate conception for there was NO stain to free Mary from. It is trying to solve a dilemma which does not exist in the first place.

- Death has been overcome in the death and resurrection of Christ. Our baptism is our being joined to Christ in His death and resurrection. It is being restored to communion with God within the life of the Church, the body of Christ.

"Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." -Romans 6:3,4

Quotes

"Sin is not the violation of a strict moral, impersonal code of behavior that produces psychological guilt. It is the active refusal on man's part to be what he truly is: the image and glory, or manifestation, of God." - Christos Yannaras

"We are born into a broken and sinful world, a world severed from the meaning God intended: all of God's creation was meant from the beginning of time to be in communion with God. Christ restores that communion." -Fr. John Garvey

Deification: Our Salvation in Christ - ***THEOSIS***

- If Christ truly restores our communion with God, then what does this communion consist of?
- Salvation in the Orthodox Church consists in becoming a partaker in the Divine Nature - which is being restored to that image and likeness of God.

"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature." - 2 Peter 1:3,4

"The Word became man so that man might become God." -St. Athanasius

- Christ Himself quoting the Psalmist (Ps. 81/82:6) calls people "gods" in John 10:34.
- we find other Scripture that speak of adoption to the likeness of God and the restoration to the image and likeness

of God - (I Jn. 1:12,3:2; Rom. 8:29; I Cor.15:49; II Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10).

"God made us so that we might become partakers of the divine nature and sharers in His eternity, and so that we might come to be like Him through deification by grace. It is through deification that all things are reconstituted and achieve their permanence; and it is for its sake that what is not is brought into being and given existence." - St. Maximus the Confessor

"For as iron united with light becomes light not by nature, but by union with fire and participation, so what is being deified becomes god not by nature, but by participation." -St. John of Damascus

- We are not divine by nature, only God is. We become by grace all that God is by nature and this is given by adoption.

"The deified person, while remaining completely human in nature, both in body and soul, becomes wholly God in both body and soul, through grace and the divine brightness of the beatifying glory that permeates the whole person." - St. Maximus the Confessor

THEOSIS: How on earth is this done?

- Christ has accomplished all things through His birth, passion, resurrection and ascension. Now all mankind has the possibility of this restoration. The problem is with us.

Ascesis

"Through prayer, ascetic practice, and attention to God's presence and God's work in us, God's life in human beings is revealed." -Fr. John Garvey

- These practices purify us. We do not earn our salvation rather we "work out our salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12,13) These works make us capable of receiving this gift of salvation from God.

"Prayer and ascetic struggle are like a work a gardener does in preparing the soil. God gives everything - the seeds, the rain, the sun, even the stamina of the gardener. He demands that we work with Him." - Fr. John Garvey

- We participate in the Life of Christ within the Church. We participate in the uncreated Grace of God, which is Himself.
- We have real union with Him and this is why we speak of the Church as our "life IN Christ."
- Our salvation is much more than securing our eternal place or simply being saved from something. It is rather being saved to something.

"We have been freed from punishment, we have put off all wickedness, and we have been reborn from above, and we have risen again. With the old man buried, we have been redeemed, and we have been sanctified, and we have been given adoption into sonship, and we have been justified and we have been made brothers of the Only Begotten. We have been constituted joint heirs and concorporeal with Him and have been perfected in His flesh, and have been united to Him as a body to its head. All of this Paul calls an 'abundance of grace,' showing that what we have received is not just a medicine to counteract the wound, but even health and comeliness and honor and glory and dignities going far beyond what are natural to us... Christ paid out much more than the debt we owed, as much more as the boundless sea exceeds a little drop." -St. John Chrysostom

Quotes

"Just as the body of the Lord was glorified on the mountain when it was transfigured in the glory of God and in infinite light,

so the bodies of the saints will be glorified and shine like lightning . . ."The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them' (John 17:22) As countless candles are lighted from a single flame, so the bodies of all Christ's members will be what Christ is . . . Our human nature is transformed into the fullness of God; it becomes wholly fire and light." - Psuedo-Macarius

"The fire that is hidden and as it were smothered under the ashes of this world . . .will blaze out and with its divinity burn up the husk of death." -St. Gregory of Nyssa

"Resurrection begins already here below. For the early Church a deeply spiritual man is one who is already 'risen again.' The truest moments of our life have a resurrection flavor. Resurrection begins every time that a person, breaking free from conditionings, transfigures them." -Olivier Clement