



Queensland  
**Churches Together**

# **CHRISTIANS IN DIALOGUE**

## **SALVATION**

### **Fully Free, Fully Human in Christ**

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## CHRISTIANS IN DIALOGUE

Christians in Dialogue is a parish level inter-church small group program designed to help members of different churches share their traditions and pray together. It began in Brisbane in 1985. It is sponsored by the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane, the Lutheran Church of Australia Queensland District, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane and the Uniting Church Synod of Queensland.

**Salvation, Fully Free and Fully Human in Christ** has just been published. Each of the four sessions begin with opening devotions, has quotations from statements made by the different Churches, a set of questions to help start discussion and a closing devotion. The four topics are:

- Salvation: A Biblical Perspective
- Salvation: Faith and Good Works
- Salvation: Justification
- Salvation and the Human Person

This year a Leader's Guide has been included to assist leaders in their role.

This material has been prepared by the Christians in Dialogue Task Force comprising members of the four sponsoring Churches.

### **The Logo of the Ecumenical Movement**

The ark (or the ship) and the cross have been, since ancient times, symbols for the Church. These two symbols were sometimes fused so that the saving wood of the cross became the mast of Peter's barque.

From the Greek word *oikumene* meaning 'the whole of the inhabited world', we get the word **ecumenism** which in modern times means the search for world-wide Christian unity.

This word and symbol are combined in the logo of the ecumenical movement which aims to bring Christians together in a visible unity so that the whole world will believe in Christ.



## Salvation

### EVALUATION FORM

**The group leader invites the participants to complete the Evaluation Form at the end of the fourth study.**

1. What did you appreciate about these studies?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What aspects of these studies did you find difficult?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What was the greatest challenge for you and your Church?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What topics would you like *Christians in Dialogue* to cover in future?

**The Planning Committee invites the leader to respond to the two questions below.**

1. Name of your group, each Church represented, and the number of people present from each denomination.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Generally speaking, how fully did participants enter into the discussion?

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**Thank you for your response.**

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# LEADER'S GUIDE

## 1. Gathering

People coming to a group for the first time will often have some anxiety –

- ◆ Will I know anyone?
- ◆ What will be expected of me?
- ◆ Did I switch off the oven?
- ◆ It is important to help them through this first awkward stage. Have all your preparations done well beforehand so that you are able to greet each person warmly on arrival, introducing them to one another, and perhaps having tea and coffee available.

## 2. Beginning

- A. When all have arrived get the session started by giving them a clear statement of what the group is about - Welcome the group
- ◆ who we are;
  - ◆ why we're here;
  - ◆ when we will finish.

It might go like this: "Welcome to my place, and I'm delighted that each of you has been able to make it. We are a group of people from Churches gathered together to reflect and share our ideas on ... (*name of study*). Tonight we will be looking at Study One .....

- B. Then invite the members to introduce themselves saying:
- ◆ who I am;
  - ◆ why I'm here;
  - ◆ what I hope to get out of the program.

Lead yourself by giving a short response to each of the three areas. Then invite each of the others to do likewise. Don't worry if some respond to only one or two of the areas.

- C. Then distribute copies of the program.

Encourage participants to listen to one another's ideas with respect.

## 3. Opening Devotion

- A. You may wish to play some music quietly in the background and give the group a few moments to reflect on the opening devotion. Then call for volunteers to lead it.
- B. You might like to choose an appropriate song for the group to share

## 4. Reflection on the Topic

Invite a couple of people to read the teaching. Encourage the readers to pause between each section.

## 5. Discussion

Allow a few minutes of quiet time to reflect on the questions. Encourage participants to share responses to each question but there is to be no pressure put on anyone to speak. Be sure to make some response to each speaker if only to say e.g. "Thank you John". This makes sure the participant feels that he / she has been heard.

## 6. Closure

Thank the participants for their participation. Check to ensure venue is right for next session.

## Closing Devotion

### Cuppa

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# **SALVATION: Fully Free, Fully Human in Christ**

## **SESSION 1: SALVATION: A Biblical Perspective**

### **OPENING DEVOTION**

**Leader:**

Come, Lord Jesus,  
You too were tired  
When day was done;  
You met your friends at evening time.

**All:** COME, LORD JESUS.

**Leader:**

Come, Lord Jesus.  
You too enjoyed  
When nights drew on;  
You told your tales at close of day.

**All:** COME, LORD JESUS.

**Leader:**

Come, Lord Jesus.  
You kindled faith  
When lamps were low;  
You opened scriptures, broke the bread  
and shed your light  
As darkness fell.

**All:** COME, LORD JESUS, MEET US HERE.

**A Hymn** (seated or standing)

**Leader:**

Let us pray.  
You broke down the barriers  
When you crept in beside us.  
For in Jesus... the smiling Jesus,  
the story—telling Jesus,  
the controversial Jesus,  
the annoying Jesus,  
the loving and forgiving Jesus,  
Your hands touched all,  
And touched us,  
Showing how in Christ there is  
neither Jew nor Gentile,  
neither male nor female:

**All:** ALL ARE ONE IN JESUS CHRIST,  
AND FOR THIS WE PRAISE YOU.

(Pause for silent prayer)

**Prayers of Intercession:**

**Prayer for Intercession based on Colossians 1: 15—20**

**Leader:**

O Christ, your cross speaks both to us and to our world.  
In your dying for us you accepted the pain and hurt of the whole of creation.  
The arms of your cross stretch out across the broken world in reconciliation.  
You have made peace with us.  
Help us to make peace with you by sharing in your reconciling work.  
May we recognise your spirit disturbing and challenging us to care for creation and for the  
poor who most feel the effects of its abuse.  
O Christ, the whole of creation groans, set us free and make us whole.

**All:** CHRIST HAS DIED, CHRIST IS RISEN, CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN.

**Leader:**

We pray for your church throughout the world  
that the things it should no longer cling to  
may be left behind;  
that love of self preservation may be set aside;  
that the deaths you demand of it may be embraced joyfully;  
and that, in the end, it may be the means by which all might discover

**All:** CHRIST HAS DIED, CHRIST IS RISEN, CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN.

**Leader:**

Now in silence,  
We give ourselves and all that we count important  
To your will and your purpose.

(Pause for silent prayer)

We cannot expect the Church to be sacrificial  
If we will not be.  
Nor can we expect to gather the Kingdom's harvest  
If we do not sow the Kingdom's seed.  
So, in us and through us  
May your Spirit proclaim

**All:** CHRIST HAS DIED, CHRIST IS RISEN, CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN.

**Leader:**

We offer our prayers and ourselves to you in Jesus' name.

**All:** AMEN.

*from "A Wee Worship Book" (Wild Goose Worship Group, 1988)  
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## **REFLECTION ON THE TOPIC - A Biblical Perspective**

“In order to describe Salvation in all its fullness, the New Testament employs a wide variety of language. Some terms are of more fundamental importance than others but there is no controlling term or concept: they complement one another. The concept of Salvation has the all-embracing meaning of the deliverance of human beings from evil and their establishment of that fullness of life which is God’s will for them e.g.

‘To give God’s people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins;’  
Luke 1:77)

‘Yes, God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.’ (John 3:16-17)

‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.’ (John 10:10)

The idea of reconciliation and forgiveness stresses the restoration of broken relationships e.g.

‘All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us, So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making His appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God.’ (2 Cor.5:18ff)

‘But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, in His flesh He has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall’ (Eph.2:13 ff)

The language of expiation drawn from the context of sacrifice, denotes the putting away from sin and the reestablishment of right relationship with God. e.g.

‘For there is no distinction since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by God’s grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by His blood, effective through faith.’ (Rom 4:22-25)

‘and Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.’ (1st letter of John. 2v2).

‘In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also, ought to love one another.’ (1st letter John 4v10).

To speak of redemption or liberation is to talk of rescue from bondage so as to become God’s own possession, and of freedom bought for a price.

‘For the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’ (Mk 10v45).

‘In Jesus Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the richness of His grace, that He lavished on us.’ (Eph. 1 v7).

‘You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb, without blemish or defect.’ (1 Peter. 1 v8ff)

The notion of adoption refers to our new identity as children of God. e.g.

‘For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption. When we cry ‘Abba Father’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our Spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ — if, in fact we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.’ (Rom 8 v15- 17)

‘but when the fullness of time had come, God sent His son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.’ (Gal. 4v4)

Terms like regeneration, rebirth and new creation speak of God’s work of re-creation and the beginning of new life e.g.

‘For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.’ (Rom.8 v 19-23)

‘so if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!’ (2 Cor: 5v17)

‘You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter I v23)

The theme of sanctification underlies the fact that God has made us His own and calls us to holiness of life e.g.

‘I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.’ (John 17v15ff)

‘so then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours for we are members of one another.’ (Eph. 4v25ff)

‘God who is holy called you to be holy; be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ (1 Peter 1v15ff)

The concept of justification relates to the removal of condemnation and to a new standing in the eyes of God e.g. Rom. 4 v 5ff.

‘But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.’ (1 Rom 3: 22ff)

‘But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.’ Rom 4v5ff)

‘Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have attained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.’ (Rom. 5v1ff)

‘By this Jesus, everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.’ (Acts 13v39)

Salvation in all these aspects comes to each believer as he or she is incorporated into the believing community.”

(Information Service No.63 1987 (I) Salvation and the church Art.13)

## **QUESTIONS for DISCUSSION**

1. What do you perceive is the emphasis coming across in your Church in relation to these biblical concepts of Salvation?
2. To which one are you drawn personally?
3. From your reflection, how is God leading the Christian Churches to richer insights into Salvation today?

## **CLOSING DEVOTION**

### **All:**

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the way of peace. Come into the brokenness of our lives and our land with your healing love. Help us to be willing to bow before you in true repentance, and to bow to one another in real forgiveness.

By the fire of your Holy Spirit, melt our hard hearts and consume the pride and prejudice which separate us. Fill us, O Lord, with your perfect love which casts out fear and bind us together in that unity which you share with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

*Emerging out of the movement of charismatic renewal,  
this prayer is used in both the Republic and Northern Ireland.  
Unity, the newsletter of the Irish School of Ecumenics.*

### **Blessing:**

### **Leader:**

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ bless all ecumenical initiatives and all occasions which bring together Christians of different traditions. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**SALVATION: Fully Free, Fully Human in Christ**  
**SESSION 2: SALVATION: Faith and Good Works**

**OPENING DEVOTION**

**SONG or REFLECTIVE MUSIC**

**Leader:**

O God we live in constant need. To whom shall we go but to you.  
Open our hearts and ears and our minds and enable us to be attentive to  
Your Word within us and around us. In Jesus' name we pray.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:**

God says:

'When Israel was a boy, I loved him. I called my children out of Egypt, But the more I called,  
the further they went from me.

I was the one who taught them to walk;

I was the one who had taken them in my arms;

But they did not remember

That I had looked after them,

That I had led them in bonds of love,

That I had lifted them like a little child to my cheek,

That I had bent down to feed them.

(A Silence....during which we remember how we forget God)

**Cantor:** Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us.

**All:** JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD HAVE MERCY UPON US.

**Leader:**

If we have forgotten you,

Forgotten that you made, feed and love us,

**All:** JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY UPON US, (sung or spoken)

**Leader:**

If we have forgotten you,

And in your place imagined a god made in our own image,

**All:** JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY UPON US.

**Leader:**

If we have forgotten that you smile

And thought only that you frown,

**All:** JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY UPON US.

(Pause)

**R.S.**

O Lord our God,  
How glorious is your name in all the earth;  
Your majesty is praised above the heavens.  
On the lips of children and babes  
You have found praise to foil your enemy,  
To silence the foe and the rebel.

**L.S.**

When I see the heavens, the work of your hand,  
The moon and stars which you arranged,  
What are human beings that you should be mindful of them,  
Mere mortals that you should care for them?

**R.S.**

You have made them, in the image of yourself,  
And crowned them with glory and honour;  
You gave them rule over the works of your hand  
And put all things under their dominion;

**L.S.**

All of them, sheep and cattle,  
Yes, even the savage beasts,  
Birds of the air, and fish  
That make their way through the waters.

**All:**

O Lord our God,  
How glorious is your name in all the earth!

**Leader:**

May the God who never leaves us help us to be  
more aware of His presence, through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

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## **REFLECTION ON THE TOPIC: Faith and Good Works**

Since New Testament times the doctrine of salvation has constantly been in danger of being misunderstood.

Controversies about grace in the fifth century forced theologians to look more closely into the doctrine of salvation. Pelagius, a monk from Britain, gave his name to the heretical teaching that is called Pelagianism. He taught that people have the ability to take the initial step towards salvation by their own efforts, apart from special grace. Pelagius had great confidence in the power of the unaided human will to achieve whatever a person really wanted. Grace, which Paul had thought of as the effective love of God which completely transformed the conditions of human activity, was interpreted by Pelagius as merely the good example given

by Jesus Christ. Pelagius was opposed by Augustine, and his teachings were eventually condemned by church councils. (Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, 833).

This did not, however, settle for all time all questions or differences of opinion in the matter of the relationship between faith and works. At the time of the Reformation, there was a lot of misunderstanding. Catholics thought Protestants were denying all worth to human actions in the sight of God. Protestants suspected that Catholics were compromising the sovereignty and freedom of God's grace. (See ARCIC II, M.6). Nevertheless, in recent times significant steps have been taken in mutual understanding. Through dialogue, the Churches have come to a consensus about some of the issues.

### **Quotations to think about**

From *Salvation and the Church — An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*, ARCIC II. London: Church House, 1987:

As Justification and sanctification are aspects of the same divine act, so also living faith and love are inseparable in the believer. Faith is no merely private and interior disposition, but by its very nature is acted out: good works necessarily spring from a living faith (Jas. 2. 17 ff). They are truly good because, as the fruit of the Spirit, they are done in God, in dependence on God's grace.

The person and work of Christ are central to any understanding of the relation between salvation and good works. God has brought into being in the person of his Son a renewed humanity, the humanity of Jesus Christ himself, the 'last Adam' or 'second man' (cf. 1 Cor. 15.45,47). He is the first—born of all creation, the prototype and source of our new humanity. Salvation involves participating in that humanity, so as to live the human life now as God has refashioned it in Christ (cf.Col.3.10). This understanding of our humanity as made new in Christ by God's transforming power throws light on the New Testament affirmation that, while we are not saved because of works, we are created in Christ for good works (Eph.2.8 if). 'Not because of works': nothing even of our best achievement or good will can give us any claim to God's gift of renewed humanity. God's recreating deed originates in himself and nowhere else. 'For good works; good works are the fruit of the freedom God has given us in his Son. In restoring us to his likeness, God confers freedom on fallen humanity. This is not the natural freedom to choose between alternatives, but the freedom to do his will: 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us' (Rom.8.2,4). We are freed and enabled to keep the commandments of God by the power Of the Holy Spirit, to live faithfully as God's people and to grow in love within the discipline of the community, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit. (ARCIC II, Art.19)

The language of merit and good works...when properly understood, in no way implies that human beings, once justified, are able to put God in their debt. Still less does it imply that justification itself is anything but a totally unmerited gift. Even the very first movements which lead to justification, such as repentance, and the desire for forgiveness, and even faith itself, are the work of God as he touches our hearts by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. (ARCIC II, Art. 24)

From *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Roman Catholics in Dialogue VII*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985: (Although this dialogue took place between the US Roman Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the Lutheran World Federation USA National Committee, Australian Lutherans may find it helpful)

Both Catholics and Lutherans hold that the justified can, and must, do good works. However, while Lutherans speak about good works being necessary they deny that they are necessary

for salvation. The Lutheran Confessions state that the good works of the justified are meritorious “not for the forgiveness of sins, grace, and justification (for we obtain those only by faith) but for other spiritual and physical rewards in this life and in that which is to come (Apology 4: 194, 365-9). Lutherans avoid the use of the word merit (which can lead to legalism) when speaking of rewards, or new obedience. Catholics admit that merit has often been preached in a self righteous way bordering on legalism, but deny that the abuse of the doctrine invalidates the doctrine itself. (108, 110-11).

Catholics, convinced that justification removes whatever is hateful to God in the justified, hold that the good works of the righteous give a title to salvation itself in the sense that God has covenanted to save those who, prompted by his grace, obey his will...Works have merit because the Holy Spirit is present and alive in those who do such works. (109)

Differences in language between the Catholic doctrine of merit and the Lutheran doctrine of promise, reflect differences in concern. Lutherans are primarily intent on stressing the saving and unconditional character of God’s promise. Catholic preoccupation is with making sure that the full range of God’s gifts is acknowledged.

Both concerns reflect aspects of the gospel, but a tension remains. (112)

From *The Augsburg Confession*, 1530:

Good works should and must be done, not that we are to rely on them to earn grace but that we may do God’s will and glorify him. It is always faith alone that apprehends grace and forgiveness of sin. When through faith the Holy Spirit is given, the heart is moved to do good works.

From *The Word of God - Justification by faith, an interim statement to the Commission on Theology and Inter- Church Relations (Lutheran) and the Assembly Commission on Ecumenical Affairs (Uniting Church)*, 1981:

Justification takes place apart from works (Flom.3:28). Only sinners are justified, and it is in their state as sinners that they are justified. God is not moved in his act of justification by any human activity, neither by acts of whatever kind preceding justification nor by acts consequent upon justification. What leads God to justify the sinner is his inherent gracious favour, his saving, benevolent purpose towards sinful, undeserving mankind. (Section II).

## **QUESTIONS for DISCUSSION**

1. How do you react to the presentations of the relationship between faith and good works given in the above statements?
2. “Significant steps have been taken towards mutual understanding”. How do the quotes given above show this to be so?
3. St Paul said (Gal.5:6) that the only thing that counts for the person who is “in Christ” is “faith working through love.” How do you personally interpret that saying?

## CLOSING DEVOTION

(Quiet Music)

### TRUST

#### Readers:

I worry too much. Autumn trees ask me not to worry.  
They, like Jesus, suggest trust rather than worry.  
So often in Autumn I want to go lean my head against  
a tree and ask what it feels like to lose so much,  
to be so empty, so detached.  
Then simply to stand and wait for God's refilling.  
It sounds so simple, so easy. But it isn't easy.  
It's hard! But possible!

I think I've met one person in my lifetime who was,  
perhaps, that empty. I didn't ask her what it felt  
like, but I remember that she looked free and acted uncluttered.

We Autumn strugglers must try hard not to wear discouragement  
as a cloak if we can't wear enough emptiness to make us free.  
It takes a long time to get as far as even wanting to be empty.

It is the sacrament of letting go that our hearts are hungering for.  
And once we've discovered that we already possess enough grace to  
**let go**, trust begins to form in the centre of who we are.  
Then we can take off our shoes and stand empty and vulnerable,  
eager to receive God's next gift.

And let us pray for one another; for emptying is painful and the Body of Christ that we are  
demands that we support each other in this Autumn effort.  
The Body of Christ also stands, stripped, crucified,  
waiting for the new life that you can bring to it.

Blessed Jesus, lifting up holy hands perpetually for all humankind;  
breathe by thy Spirit such love into the prayers that we offer,  
that they may be taken into thine, and prevail with thine. Amen

**SALVATION: FULLY FREE, FULLY HUMAN IN CHRIST**  
**SESSION 3: SALVATION: JUSTIFICATION**

**OPENING DEVOTION**

Leader: O God who created the heavens and stretched them out,

All: WE PRAISE YOU!

Leader: You fashioned the earth and all that lives there,

All: WE PRAISE YOU!

Leader: You give breath to the people upon it,  
And Spirit to those who walk on it.

All: WE PRAISE AND THANK YOU, O God!

Leader: That the eyes of the blind be opened,  
The broken hearted be healed,  
The poor hear the good news,  
The captives be brought out of darkness,

All: YOUR KINGDOM COME, O LORD.  
YOUR WILL BE DONE.

Leader: So shall we sing a new song, O Lord.

All: AND PRAISE YOUR NAME FOREVER.

**A Reading from Romans Ch. 5 v 1-11**

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Jesus, Saviour,  
Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,

All: We come to you for you alone can make us whole.

Leader: Jesus, Saviour,  
Wounded for our transgressions,  
Bruised for our iniquities,

All: We come to you for you alone can make us whole.

Leader: Jesus, Saviour,  
We come as a church broken by factions,  
Weak in our mission,  
Wavering in our faith.

All: We come to you for you alone can make us whole.

Leader: Jesus, Saviour,  
We come as people of the world,  
Torn by war,  
Ruined by greed,  
Spoilt by selfishness.

All: We come to you for you alone can make us whole.

Leader: Jesus, Saviour,  
We come as members of a family,  
Insensitive to each other,  
Blind to tears and deaf to cries.

All: We come to you for you alone can make us whole.

Leader: Jesus Saviour,  
We come recognising you come in mercy,  
and forgiveness.  
Open our hearts to the gifts of salvation.

All: We come to you for you alone can make us whole.

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## **REFLECTION ON THE TOPIC - JUSTIFICATION**

In the history of theology the meaning of salvation has primarily been considered in regard to the person and work of Jesus Christ. There have been three fundamental types of interpretation:

1. Christ frees human beings from the power of death and sin. Salvation means being restored in the image and likeness of God.
2. Through the death of Jesus, God's honour, offended by human sin, is satisfied, thus making reconciliation, justification, and forgiveness possible.
3. Salvation means being embraced in Jesus' basic religious attitude, sharing in his self—surrender to God and following him.

The Reformation in the sixteenth century produced opposing views of the appropriation of salvation. Central to the controversy was the teaching on justification inherited from Paul: HOW do human beings profit from the salvation available in Christ?

Is justification a supernatural pardoning of the sinner, implying his or her recreation as a person who has been dedicated to God in faith, love and hope, and has been freed in principle from the dominion of original sin?

Or is justification the sinner's acquittal by grace, an acquittal received in trusting faith, which results in good works, so that the sinner exists in a tension between the sin which remains and the righteousness which results from the acquittal (simul justus et peccator — simultaneously saint and sinner)?

### **Quotations To Think About**

Justification is to be understood in a forensic sense, which means the one who is justified is put right with God, God judges him to be righteous, the status of pardon is conferred on the sinner. Justification takes place apart from works (Rom. 3:28)...What leads God to justify the sinner is his inherent gracious favour, his saving, benevolent purpose towards sinful, undeserving humankind. But his grace for sinful people is manifested in the life, suffering, death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ. The work of Christ in justification is not to be seen as a pattern or model for human action but as obedience to the holy will of God for and

on behalf of the sinful human race, on the basis of which the sinner is declared righteous or justified.

In love for the world, God gave his Son to take away the world's sin. Jesus of Nazareth announced the sovereign grace of God whereby the poor in spirit could receive the Father's love. He himself, through his life and death, made the response of humility, obedience, and love, which God had long sought in vain. In raising him to live and reign, God confirmed and completed the witness which Jesus bore to him on earth. He reasserted his claim over the whole of his creation. He pardoned sinners, and made in Jesus a representative beginning of a new order of righteousness and love. To God in Christ men are called to respond in faith. To this end God has sent forth his Spirit that men may trust Him as their Father and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. The whole work of man's salvation is effected by the sovereign grace of God alone. (UCA Basis of Union 3)

The term justification speaks of a divine declaration of acquittal, of the love of God manifested to an alienated and lost humanity prior to any entitlement on our part. Through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, God declares that we are forgiven, accepted and reconciled to him. Instead of our own strivings to make ourselves acceptable to God, Christ's perfect righteousness is reckoned to our account. God's declaration is sometimes expressed in the New Testament in the language of law, as a verdict of acquittal of the sinner. The divine court, where the verdict is given, is the court of the judge who is also Father and Saviour of those whom he judges. While in a human law—court an acquittal is an external, even impersonal act, God's declaration of forgiveness and reconciliation does not leave repentant believers unchanged but establishes with them an intimate and personal relationship. The remission of sins is accompanied by a present renewal, a rebirth to newness of life. Thus the juridical aspect of justification, while expressing an important facet of the truth, is not the exclusive notion in the light of which all other biblical ideas and images of salvation must be interpreted. For God sanctifies as well as acquits us. He is not only the judge who passes a verdict in our favour, but also the Father who gave his only Son to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. By virtue of Christ's life and self—oblation on the cross we are able with him to say through the Holy Spirit, "Abba, Father" (Rom.8.15: Ga.4.6). (ARCIC II An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican—Roman Catholic International Commission).

We believe, teach, and confess that a poor sinner is justified before God (that is, he is absolved and declared utterly free from all his sins, and from the verdict of well—deserved damnation, and is adopted as a child of God and an heir of eternal life) without any merit or worthiness on our part, and without any preceding, present, or subsequent works, by sheer grace, solely through the merit of the total obedience, the bitter passion, the death and resurrection of Christ, our Lord, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness. The Holy Spirit offers these treasures to us in the promise of the Gospel, and faith is the only means whereby we can apprehend, accept, apply them to ourselves, and make them our own. Faith is a gift of God whereby we rightly learn to know Christ as our redeemer in the Word of the Gospel and to trust in him, that solely for the sake of his obedience we have forgiveness of sins by grace, are accounted righteous and holy by God the Father, and are saved forever. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration Article III).

Christ has given to men in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation. The Church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation. (UCA Basis of Union 3)

Justification and sanctification are two aspects of the same divine act (1 Cor.6.11). This does not mean that justification is a reward for faith or works: rather, when God promises the

removal of our condemnation and gives us new standing before him, this justification is indissolubly linked with his sanctifying recreation of us in grace. This transformation is being worked out in the course of our pilgrimage, despite the imperfections and ambiguities of our lives. God's grace effects what he declares: his creative word imparts what it imputes. By pronouncing us righteous, God also makes us righteous. He imparts a righteousness which is his and becomes ours. (ARCIC 11,15)

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you understand by the word "justification"?
2. In what ways is "justification" expressed in the life of the church to which you belong?
3. Mark any words or statements (in the quotations given above) which you find especially significant. Explain to the group what you find significant about them.
4. It has been suggested that the concepts of "sin" and "justification" are largely irrelevant to contemporary Western society and therefore should be replaced by images such as "brokenness", "alienation", "healing" and "wholeness". What is your response to this suggestion?

## CLOSING DEVOTION

**Leader:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**All:** And also with you.

## THE WORD OF GOD

Reader: Philippians 2:1—11

## INTERCESSIONS

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you emptied yourself and took the form of a slave that we might have new life in you. Hear us now as we pray.  
For the times we have acted out of rivalry and conceit.

**All:** Forgive us, Lord.

**Leader:** That our attitudes may always reflect the love you give that we may be known as followers of Christ.

**All:** Forgive us, Lord.

**Leader:** May we be strong in our encounters with obstacles and temptations, strengthen our hearts and our minds.

**All:** Forgive us, Lord.

**Leader:** Let us never forget the poor and oppressed of our world, guide us as we reach out to those in need.

**All:** Forgive us, Lord.

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Leader:** Let us pray as Jesus did:

**All:** Our Father

### **CONCLUDING PRAYER**

**Leader:** May the peace and glory of God which is beyond all understanding keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

**All:** Amen.

**SALVATION: Fully Free, Fully Human in Christ**  
**SESSION 4: SALVATION AND THE HUMAN PERSON**

**OPENING DEVOTION**

(Pause for Silent Prayer)

Open my eyes that I may see  
The Presence that is all about me.  
Open my ears that I may hear  
The voice that is quiet yet ever near.  
Open my heart that I may feel  
The love of my God close and real.  
Open each sense, make me aware  
Of the Power and Peace always there.

**A reading adapted from 1 Cor. 12:12-27**

Leader: Christ is like a single body which has many parts.

All: IT IS STILL ONE BODY,  
EVEN THOUGH IT IS MADE UP OF DIFFERENT PARTS

Leader: Therefore the foot cannot say:

All: I AM NOT PART OF THE BODY.

Leader: Nor can the ear say:

All: I AM NOT PART OF THE BODY.

Leader: The eye cannot say to the hand:

All: I DON'T NEED YOU.

Leader: Nor can the head say to the feet:

All: I DON'T NEED YOU.

Leader: If one part of the body suffers,

All: ALL OTHER PARTS SUFFER.

Leader: If one part of the body is praised,

All: ALL OTHER PARTS SHARE ITS HAPPINESS

Leader: All of you are Christ's body:

All: EACH ONE OF US IS A PART OF IT.

**Prayer of Confession**            **(All sit)**

Leader:        Let us pray  
                  Lord, Jesus Christ,  
                  We are your body  
                  Not because we have chosen that name,  
                  But because you have given it to us.  
                  While we marvel at this great privilege,  
                  We also regret our failures.

All:            (spoken or preferably sung)  
                  LORD HAVE MERCY ON US,  
                  CHRIST HAVE MERCY ON US.

Leader:        If through false pride or selfish independence,  
                  We have said, 'I am not part of the body...'

All:            LORD HAVE MERCY ON US,  
                  CHRIST HAVE MERCY ON US.

Leader:        If through superiority or lack of love,  
                  We have said 'I don't need you...'

All:            LORD HAVE MERCY ON US,  
                  CHRIST HAVE MERCY ON US.

Leader:        If we have known that other parts of your body suffer,  
                  And have refused to share their pain

All:            LORD HAVE MERCY ON US,  
                  CHRIST HAVE MERCY ON US.

Leader:        If we have seen other parts of your body rejoice,  
                  And have suspected or scorned their happiness.

All:            LORD HAVE MERCY ON US,  
                  CHRIST HAVE MERCY ON US.

Leader:        If, in place of you, the head of the body,  
                  We have served our own theology, tradition or prejudice,  
                  And loved only those who loved or looked like us.

All:            LORD HAVE MERCY UPON US  
                  CHRIST HAVE MERCY UPON US.

(Silence)

Leader:        Let the Body of Christ join hands and become one.

(all join hands)

Lord Jesus, here is your body;  
It is frustrated and fallible;  
It is flawed and gullible;  
It is tired,

But through you it can be made new.  
Help us to always remember  
We are never alone  
We pray through you. Amen.

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## **REFLECTION ON THE TOPIC — Salvation and the Human Person**

The message of salvation for each person  
is central to the Church's teaching.

It is, put simply, the action of God  
restoring men and women to eternal  
fellowship with God. Salvation is what  
Christianity is all about.

Because fellowship is meaningless without  
the freedom of choice to relate, humanity  
has the capacity to reject God's love.

Just how men and women share in the saving work of Christ has always been a matter of debate among Christians. How we are brought into a proper relationship with God, and what role we have in the work of salvation has been controversial among Christians. (Intervarsity Dictionary)

The different understandings of salvation stem from different understandings of human nature, how human nature was affected firstly by the Fall and then by the Incarnation.

On the one hand there is the belief that human nature was fundamentally flawed by the sin of Adam and Eve. Linked with this thinking is that the sufferings of Jesus serve as a substitute for the works we ourselves are incapable of performing. Our free will is only used in ways that are displeasing to God. Some feel that the human person is totally passive in the transition from sin to grace, and the change is attributable to God alone. By faith, God credits us with the merits of Christ as if they were our own. This way of thinking can be found to different degrees in protestant beliefs of salvation.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic position is that human nature is fundamentally good, and remains so, even though it is wounded by the effects of original sin. The human person remains an image of God. Retaining the essential power of free will, the sinner is able to act responsibly, and does not necessarily sin in every act. Faith and conversion are not simply God's acts, but human acts elicited under the influence of grace.

Athanasius wrote that God became human so that we might be divine. But sinful tendencies remain.

The human response to God's initiative is itself a gift of grace, and is at the same time a truly human, personal response. It is through grace that God's new creation is realised. Salvation is the gift of grace; it is by faith that it is appropriated.

(Salvation and the Church ARCIC II)

We are in constant danger of falling into sin; we cannot promise ourselves that we shall persevere in grace. Nor at any moment can we be emphatically certain of our own state of righteousness. Our hope of salvation, therefore, must be placed in God, not in ourselves. (Dulles, 50)

It is said that the different understandings of human nature have had an inevitable impact on the way our churches are structured and function.

An Anglican theologian, Don Edwards, wrote on the theology of the human person:

In the incarnation, cross, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has taken our human life and our pain and suffering into God's very being, and has brought about the renewal of humanity and offered us eternal life. Through the Christ event, human life and death are transformed by being taken up into God...

Through the Christ event, we human beings have a foretaste of God's undisputed lordship over the human and non-human creation. Our sin is forgiven, our estrangement overcome...

In Jesus Christ, proclaimer and bearer of God's reign, God's image is revealed undistorted in our world. And if we accept the offer of reconciliation with God and new life in Christ, we have the promise of being transformed into the likeness of the risen Christ himself. We shall, as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, become like him and bear God's image without the taint of sin...

God's love refuses to leave us to our own devices and abandon us to our fate. In God's self-revelation as a whole, and supremely in Jesus Christ, we are promised the fulfilment and glorification of our human nature and the consummation of the whole creation.

## **QUESTIONS for DISCUSSION**

1. What does your Church teach about human nature?
2. Can you identify any way in which your church functions or is structured which is a result of the way in which human nature has been viewed?
3. "Does human working with God (or synergy) have a part to play in our salvation and the salvation of the world?" (Don Edwards)

## **CLOSING DEVOTION**

Quiet time to recall Jesus' presence within you

Leader: Lord give us wisdom before we speak,  
understanding while we listen,  
sensitivity towards those we meet,  
and the perspective of your kingdom,  
in which to see the things of earth.

Bring us to the day's ending  
Blessed through having shared the day's beginning,  
In Christ's name we ask this.

All: AMEN

Blessing:

Leader: May God bless you;  
May God keep us in the Spirit's care  
And lead our lives with love.

All: MAY GOD'S WARM WELCOME SHINE FROM OUR HEARTS  
AND CHRIST'S OWN PEACE PREVAIL  
THROUGH THIS AND EVERY DAY  
TILL GREATER LIFE SHALL CALL  
Amen.