

**The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.**

*The Collect.*

**A**LMIGHTY and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain that which thou dost promise, make us to love that which thou dost command; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



How does one attain to the salvation of one's soul? Does salvation come by personal merit, good works, a commendable spirit, sacrifice, or bloodlines? No, salvation comes by none of these according to Holy Scripture. Then from whence does it come and by what means? Please review the following text – parse every phrase and word – then, answer by what means we are saved: *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* (Eph 2:4-10) Did you discover a single thing that you can do to enter into the salvation of the Lord? At the moment of salvation we were 'quickened' (made alive) to know and to love God. We did not love God before He came to love us. If we DO love God, when did we come to know and love Him? *We love him, because he*

*first loved us.* (1 John 4:19)

If we were, in fact, "dead in sins" how could we hear His voice or appeal to His mercy? We could not. A dead person can do NOTHING. It was His grace and love which spoke through our dead ears and pierced the chambers of our dead hearts – lying in state – in a dead and dying world. His grace revived us when we could not hear, see or speak righteousness just as the thief upon the cross.

Our Collect for this 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity brings to our remembrance Scriptural Truth concerning our means of grace and salvation. *ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity.* The beauty of the Collects of the English Book of Common Prayer is that each Collect is based wholly on Scriptural Truth, each word proven in biblical texts. Are we born with a faith in God, or do we somehow acquire that faith from some source along the way? *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast* Many of us prefer to base our view of Scripture on the writings of some great theologian, and identify our understanding by that man's name – Calvin, Arminius, Luther, or Cranmer. Admittedly, all of these were stellar biblical scholars; but these men do not define for me what I believe. I may agree with one, or more, of them in many respects; but I do not base my faith in those names but in that Name above every other Name – the Lord Jesus Christ!

I am a Christian, and not a Calvinist, or Arminian, or Lutheran, or Anglican, FIRST. Just the mention of these names or faiths will often needlessly open up a great division of distrust and misunderstanding. So I always insist on explaining my faith in biblical terms and not the writings of men. This is what the Collects do, as well. They appeal to that Name above every other Name – *Almighty and everliving God...* Today's Collect makes a petition of the Lord to be given – not wealth – but an increase of faith, hope, and charity. Of course, God is the Source for each of these mighty gifts. These three gifts are all of great merit; however, one is greater than the other two for, without it, the other two matter not. What is that one gift that surpasses all others? It is *LOVE!* *And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity.* (1 Cor 13:13) And did you love God first, or did He love YOU first? (1 John 4:19 above). Even our love comes from God. So the Collect petitions for an increase in these three gifts from the heart of God.

Do we wholly love God with all our heart, strength, mind and soul? If we do so love God, we will love every asset of God that defines Him – including His Holy Commandments. In fact, we will love ALL of His words and works from the beginning until now. "*.....and, that we may obtain that which thou dost promise, make us to love that which thou dost command.*" What promise? It is the promise and seal of salvation by the Holy Spirit: *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.* (Eph 1:13-14)

It is a truth revealed through our faith given us by God that we belong to Him. Why do we insist on spending endless ages arguing over finer points of Scripture to prove that our salvation came by the predestined Will of God, or by some decision made by us after gaining a knowledge of Christ. Isn't the more important issue that we KNOW we belong to Him regardless the means of our coming? The Calvinist will relegate all Arminians to Hell, and the Arminians are no more merciful toward the

Calvinist. It is a sad truth that both base their understanding on different interpretations of Scripture. In fact, many Christians who decry Calvin actually believe what Calvin taught if the proof is not Calvin, but Scripture. God must be terribly hurt by our theological quibbling when we basically, as Christians, all agree that our salvation is the sole act of God.

The Collect reassuringly is concluded, again, by an appeal to that Name above every other Name: "...*through Jesus Christ* (not through Calvin, Arminius, or Luther) *our Lord*. Amen Do you label YOUR faith by a man's name, or by that Name above every other Name? Are YOU Christian?