

Session 3: Becoming Part of God's Story

In our second session, we met the “hero” of God’s story, Jesus Christ. We learned about God’s plan of salvation. Today the question we’ll take up is, “How do I become part of God’s story?” We will learn about the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and talk about how God comes to you and draws you to Himself. We’re going to be talking about the “means of grace” and the ways that God works in our lives. We’ll also explore the phrase “By grace alone, through faith alone” and learn more about how your salvation is accomplished entirely by God.

One of the challenging concepts of Christianity is the notion that we contribute nothing to our own salvation. In the explanation of the third article of the Apostles’ Creed, Martin Luther says, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.” Paul writes about it in his letter to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:8-9: ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1. God’s Story is Both Future AND Present

- a. God’s plan isn’t just for the future. It is something that has been _____ already through Jesus’ resurrection. The new creation has already _____.
- b. When we are united to Jesus’ story, we are _____ to our original purpose.

2. Becoming Part of God’s Story

- a. This is where it gets personal! It is a shift from “Jesus died and rose again for the whole world” to “Jesus _____ and rose again for _____.”
- b. The _____ article of the Apostles’ Creed talks about the work of the _____ _____.

c. Specifically, it says: "I believe in the _____, the holy _____ church, the communion of _____, the _____ of sins, the _____ of the body, and life _____.

3. Accept or Receive?

a. One of the most important concepts that Scripture teaches is that Salvation is entirely _____ work. We don't bring anything to the table.

b. Because of our sinfulness, we _____ make a decision to turn to God and believe in Him.

c. In Ephesians 2:1-2, Paul writes "you were _____ in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked..." His point: Dead people can't do anything for themselves. Someone needs to bring them back to life. That is the work of the _____.

d. The theological term for this is _____.

4. Decision Theology

a. In our video, we explore four different views of how salvation works: Pelagianism, _____, _____, and Monergism.

b. Pelagianism teaches that human beings can _____ by their own efforts.

c. Semi-Pelagianism and Synergism are very common. They are similar, teaching that salvation is a "me-and-God" proposition. Semi-Pelagianism says that we _____ to God first, and He responds to that. Synergism says that God _____ and does His part of the saving relationship, but man has to finish it up.

- d. The Bible teaches _____. You are spiritually dead. You can't do enough to win His favor. But God _____ to us, gives us _____, raises us to new _____ in Christ, and _____ our sins through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- e. Everything required for salvation is done by _____. We simply trust in His promises, and salvation is ours.

5. Good Works

- a. We ***are*** called to do good works, but we don't do these things to earn _____.
- b. Instead, we do good works in _____ to what Christ has already done for us.
- c. Luther said, "God doesn't _____ your good works. But your _____ does!"

6. The Holy Spirit

- a. We are powerless. We can't plug ourselves into the power of the cross. But the _____'s job is to connect us to Christ and _____ us to new life.
- b. The Holy Spirit works through means, including God's _____ and the Sacraments of _____ and the _____.

Conclusion: Our sinful nature means that we cannot come to God or do anything to earn our salvation. But the Holy Spirit works through the means of grace to call us, enlighten us, sanctify us (that is, make us holy), and to keep us in the true faith.

Assignment: Memorize the 3rd Article of the Apostles' Creed and its meaning (*page 8 in your Small Catechism*)