

1 Timothy 4:9-15 (Epistle)

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

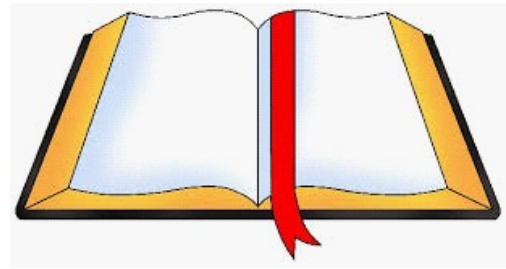
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS TAKEN FROM THE OCA WEBSITE

Grace and Salvation

Question: I was reading your answers about faith and life. I have been raised to believe that grace is all that is necessary for salvation... no works. But having read the verse from James that you quoted about faith without works being dead, it now makes sense that works go with faith. But how many works are necessary for salvation?

Answer: There is no “required amount” of works that are necessary for salvation. What is crucial is that, if we indeed have faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God, Who came into the world to save sinners, that we manifest or reveal our faith in how we live and how we treat others.

Read Matthew 25:31-46, in which we find the parable of the sheep and goats. In this parable, Christ reveals that which He will ask of us when He judges us, as well as that which He expects from those who call themselves by His name. He asks if we have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, given drink to the thirsty, ministered to the sick and imprisoned—and, of utmost importance, whether we have discerned His very image in those around us, especially the “least of the brethren.” If we fail to put our faith into action through such works of mercy, our faith is purely intellectual, “lip service,” so to speak. Simply stated, if we accept Christ as the Son of the Living God and the Savior of the world, yet we fail to bring His love to others around us, then we are liars. Hence, faith without such good works is dead, and it is precisely on our willingness to put our faith into action that our eternal salvation hinges, as Christ reveals in Matthew 25.



ANOTHER QUESTION

Life in this world

Question: If this is so, how do you understand life in this world right now? What is it that men should do?

Answer: The purpose of life right now is for men to become saints; to begin to share, right here and now, in the divine life of God; to become “holy as God is holy.”

With this as the goal, however, men must know that this effort is total. It is both personal and social. It is both inward and outward. It works within the soul of man as well as within the life of the world. And men must know that this effort, as a total one, ultimately requires a total self-sacrifice. It inevitably brings pain and suffering and perhaps even physical death. This is what “bearing the cross” means, and why it is at the heart of the Christian ethic.

The pattern here is Jesus Himself. There is no rule of Christian morality except the life of the Lord. The rule therefore is total love, the greatest expression of which is the laying down of one’s life for the other in obedience to the truth and love of God. The rule therefore is also nothing other than the cross, which cannot be “taken up” except by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

This Christian view of what man should do is, at bottom, the fundamental morality for all men. Every ethic must be the expression of what is true and good. All men must live this way. And inevitably, when they do, whether they are consciously Christian or not, their actual goodness and righteousness leads them to some sacrificial suffering on behalf of others. In this world where evil abounds, the Cross is certainly the rule.

WEEKLY REFLECTION FROM HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP PAUL

This Sunday evening, we will be doing our livestream on this question. I am looking forward to it. I wanted to share a few preliminary thoughts on this, as unworthy as I am to do so.

In August of 1993, my father passed away. I had completed my second year at St. Vladimir's Seminary. I was at the funeral home for visitation wearing my cassock. A four-year-old child, who was a family friend, approached me and asked, "Are you God?" I was startled by the question. I briefly mumbled "no." Yet what was it that this child saw in me that caused him to ask that question? It wouldn't surprise me if parents have been asked that question from their own children as they grow up. The wonderful thing about this brief exchange with this boy was that even at four years old he was dealing with the question of "Who is God?" To answer this, we can go the gospel of John as a start.

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14:5-9)

And finally, from Colossians 1:15: "He (Jesus Christ) is the image of the invisible God."

From these verses we learn that we come to know God, who cannot be seen, by fixing our gaze on Jesus Christ, who has been seen. In Christ is revealed the image of the invisible God. This becomes reality at the feast of Theophany, where we sing in the Festal Troparion:

"When You O Lord were baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness to You, calling You His Beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of your Word."

Up until the baptism of our Lord, the question, "Who is God?" was a mystery and not clearly revealed. This changed with our Lord's baptism. It

was in the essence and nature of the Son to reveal God the Father to this world and the Holy Spirit. But all of us, like the four-year-old boy, seek to know the answer to the question "Who is God?" I think this question becomes a never-ending thirst given to us at our own baptism into Christ. This is what drives us to come to know the "Way, the Truth, and the Life."

But that question and the drive to know needs to be nurtured and cultivated through our sacramental life in the Church, through our life at home as an icon of the little church, seeking to live by the Beatitudes of our Lord in Matthew 5:1-12, and seeking to acquire the gifts of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in Galatians 5:22-24. As we live the spiritual life and by grace acquire these fruits of the Spirit, this reveals the invisible God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. By doing so, many will in time come to terms with the question, "Who is God?" See you this Sunday evening.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you,

Archbishop Paul

Prayer of St. Ephrem

O Lord and Master of my life! Take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. *(Full Prostration)*

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.
(Full Prostration)

Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen. *(Full Prostration)*

O God, cleanse me, a sinner *(12 times)*.
And recite prayer one more time.

