

Call on the Name of the Lord and be Saved?

by Sebastian R Fama

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13). To many of my Protestant friends, this means that anyone who accepts Christ into his or her life, is on their way to heaven and there is nothing that can change that. Of course, when they say: “accepts Christ” they usually mean something more than lip service. In any event, once that decision is made, the person is on his way to heaven. However, this idea falls short of the Biblical view, and thus the Catholic understanding of salvation. For Catholics, our relationship with Jesus must be maintained. Since we always have free will, it is always possible for us to reject Him, even if we have accepted Him in the past.

Jesus said: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father” (Matthew 7:21). Paul reminds us: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23). So, it is true that eternal life is a free gift. But it is also true that if we persist in sin, we can forfeit that gift (the wages of sin is death).

Earlier in the book of Romans Paul said: “For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified” (Romans 2:13). Some will appeal to Romans 8:1 to counter this idea: “Now **there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**” And of course that is true. But Jesus Himself puts this verse in context when He says: “**Anyone who does not remain in Me will be thrown out like a branch and wither;** people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned (John 15:6). So, if you are in Christ, you must remain there. If you decide to abandon Him by indulging in serious sin, you will be lost.

Catholics are accused of teaching “works salvation.” That is, man earning his way to heaven by his own efforts. But that would be false. The good works associated with salvation are performed by the grace of God. In other words, they are accomplished by Christ working through us (1 Corinthians 15:10). Truly accepting Christ means being open to God’s grace.

Scripture is full of examples of God working through His people. This was true when Paul raised the dead (Acts 20:7-12). It was true when the apostles healed the sick (Luke 9:1). And the same will be true for us when we answer His call in our lives (Matthew 25:31-46). Jesus does the work. We are merely His instruments. Thus, calling on the name of the Lord is more than a one-time event. It is a decision to allow Jesus to continue to work through us so that we can remain in Him.