The Church of Monett

"Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord we persuade men."

The Root and the Fruit of the Modern Salvation Message

1.

What Martin Luther taught about salvation

First, let's take a look at where evangelical Protestantism got its start. Here is the testimony of the father of Protestantism himself Martin Luther and what his salvation experience and message was. Luther wrote:

> "No matter how irreproachably I lived as a monk I felt myself to be a sinner in the presence of God. My conscience bothered me very much. I could not believe that I pleased God with the things I was doing to gain his favor. I did not love God and his justice. In fact I hated him -if not in open blasphemy, at least with huge murmurings in my heart.

> I was indignant with Him, thinking that on top of condemning us as miserable sinners to eternal destruction though original sin and oppressing us with all kinds of calamities through the law and the ten commandments He had added sorrow upon sorrow by giving us the gospel impossible to obey through which his wrath would finally fall on us.

> In this way I struggled fiercely and desperately with my conscience, While I continued to knock away at the epistles of Paul, consumed with a burning desire to know what he meant...

Then at last I began to understand the justice of God. I began to see that a just man lives by the gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that the justice of God revealed in the gospels is to be taken in a passive way, and that God justifies men not by works but by faith as it is written: ¨The Just shall live by faith¨. When I comprehended this I felt myself to have been born again and to have entered through the open gates into paradise itself.¨ *{from Martin Luther's complete works , which he prepared for publication in 1545}*

The next quote is from an early Anabaptist named Michael Schneider written while he was imprisoned in a castle in Passau Bavaria reflecting their salvation message...

¨ Listen to me all people of the earth. Listen to me young and old , great and small. If you want to be saved you need to leave sin, follow Christ the Lord and live according to his will. Christ Jesus came to earth to teach men the right way to go, to teach them to turn from sin and follow him. He said I am the way the truth and the life , no one comes to the father except through me.¨

He who longs for communion with Christ and wants to take part in his kingdom, need to do what Christ did while he was on this earth. He who wants to reign with Christ must first be willing to suffer for his name. The man who dies with Christ in this life will enter in with him to his fathers kingdom, in eternal joy. But the man who does not follow Christ is not redeemed by the blood of Christ and his sins will never be forgiven. Those whose sins have been forgiven should live no longer in sin. This is what Jesus Christ our Lord teaches us. Those who fall back into is break their covenant with God. Even greater pain and suffering will be theirs - and their loss will be forever.

Not all who say ¨Lord , Lord ,¨ will enter into the kingdom. Only those who keep his covenant will be accepted by him. He who confesses Christ before the world and stands for the truth till the end will be saved. Help us to that our Lord that we may stay with Christ -that we may always walk according to his teachings , that we may commit no more sins and that we may be an honor to his name , now and forever... into eternity.

> *Amen¨ {from Ausbund 82}*

Now, I want to stop there for a minute and ask a very relevant question. What would the response be if a man were to share a testimony similar to Luther's in an Anabaptist audiance? Would everyone bite their lip and agree that "this guys a Lutheran"; or would they exclaim ¨Boy that guy really has faith!¨ The truth is, such a testimony *would be* warmly welcomed among an Anabaptist audience; why? Because many, if not most of them would share a similar testimony.

On the other side of the fence we might ask, what if someone were to share a message similar to Michel Schneiders in the same Anabaptist setting? Would it be warmly welcomed, or would the speaker be accused of promoting an unsound eschatology? Just last September this was exactly the scenario in an Ohio based Anabaptist church. "We don't worship our will we die to it!" retorted a man in his sermon. Trying to correct the message I shared he hammered on salvation by faith alone, and ridiculed the idea of fighting for The Faith, or being a martyr. He branded such a person as a "heaven stormer" and accused them of "working their way into heaven". Makes you wonder, where's that leave Michel Schneider locked up in Bavaria for preaching against Lutheranism?

It seem the eschatology of the modern Anabaptism has recanted, causing men like Michel Schneider to be a threat to his progency rather than a consolation. Sadly, the gospel of modern Anabaptim lines-up more with Lutheranism than Anabaptism. We don't want to stop at this point and draw our final conclusion. But rather, we want to take an objective look at the early Anabaptists message of salvation and that of Luther's. Again, we will go back to Mr. Luther:

> ¨I could not believe that I pleased God with the things I was doing to gain his favour...

> … I was indignant with Him, thinking that on top of condemning us as miserable sinners to eternal destruction though **original sin** and oppressing us with all kinds of calamities through the law and the ten commandments He had added sorrow upon sorrow by **giving us the gospel which is impossible to obey,** and through which His wrath would finally fall on us

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> ….While I continued to knock away at the epistles of Paul... Then at last I began to understand the justice of God. I began to see that a just man lives by the gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that the justice of God revealed in the

gospels is to be taken in a passive way, and that **God justifies men not by works but by faith** as it is written: ¨The Just shall live by faith¨.

When I comprehended this **I felt my self to have been born again** and to have entered through the open gates into paradise itself.¨

We notice here two things that are worthy to point out. 1)Notice that Luther's understanding of Original Sin brought him to the conclusion that the gospel is impossible to obey, and that God is impossible to be pleased. 2)We also notice that Luther arrived at his understanding of the Gospel through the Epistle of Paul, instead of understanding Paul's epistles through the foundation of Christ's teachings. This same approach has been adopted by the modern church which is why new converts are lead through nine verses in Romans and two in the Gosples.

Perhaps the most powerful of Luther's teachings was that of "faith." Basically Luther thought that man is incapable of doing anything to please God, nothing we do will ever be good enough in Gods eyes – Luther drew this conclusion from his Catholic indoctrination, an indoctrination which inevitably was influenced by Augusitns Original Sin doctrine. This doctrine was the soruce of Luthers frusteration, blasphemey and murmuring. However, he found resolve when he finally got a hold of the true meaning of "faith".

According to Luther, "faith alone" was all a man needed to be saved. According to his definition "faith" cannot not include obedience to God. He taught that obediance was working for your salvation, and such an activity militates against Christ. This concept is a double shot of "turning the grace of God into lasciviouness", because anyone with a desires to obey God is immediatly stimied and dubbed as a heaven stormer, while those who want to sit in the middle and play games with God get a big foul area to play in. The oppsoing side of this double edged sword is that belief and obediance become two seperate principals.

Luthers breakthrough definition of "faith" which is synonymous with "cop-out" or "loop-hole" eased his murmuring, blasphemous consience giving him the feeling of being "born again". Some years later Luther would pen a letter to a fellow pastor admonishing him to "sin boldly!" "because we are preachers of grace".

Chapter 2 →

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