

Chapter 10: The Christian Life

In the previous chapter, **The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit**, I proposed the following distinctions within a Christian grammar of salvation:

1. Salvation as God's Reconciliation and Justification in Jesus Christ

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is that objective sequence of events in creation/historical time and within the Life of God in which the triune God in self-giving love takes sin upon and into the divine life itself thus defeating it as the final judge of human life and being, thus reconciling all humans to God.

All humans are thus justified in Christ.

2. Salvation as God's Historic Redemption of the World through the Holy Spirit

Historic redemption is how human beings come to appropriate in temporal history the benefits of Christ's reconciliation and justification through the following spheres of appropriation: liberation, sanctification, and emancipation.

In historic redemption only some humans are so historically saved.

3. God's Transhistorical and Ultimate Redemption

This life beyond death and in ultimate consummation in which all humans will be ultimately redeemed by the irresistible love of God.

A. Orientation to the Christian Life

1. Discussing the grammar of the Christian Life, as Life in the Church, that transpires in the salvific dimension of God's *historic redemption* through the Holy Spirit in the complex events and processes of *liberation, sanctification, and emancipation*.
2. The *indicative foundation of the Christian Life* is the objective givenness and actuality of the work of Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest, and Victor on behalf of a sinful and sinned against humanity.
3. Because of this indicative foundation in Jesus Christ, the Christian life is the *life and ethics of grace*, in which the Christian lives *from grace, into and for the world, and into the future* as the future over which God reigns.
4. As shaped by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Christian life is a life of both *appropriation of the benefits of Christ's life* and *enacting life in conformity to the life of God in Christ*.
5. Concerned herein with the *pragmatics of Christian life*: the actions/passions, practices, and discourses of self-understanding that Christians live in the world.

B. The Grammar of Just Deserts and Justification by Grace [pp. 513-19]

1. Basic unavoidable issue: is Christian life to be understood in terms of:
 - a. a life of *earning and striving for salvation*, or
 - b. a life of *living from grace already given*.
2. How this issue is discussed and answered is one of the most pivotal issues in understanding the church and the Xn life.
 - a. is it the *works righteousness* that Paul condemns, or
 - b. the life rooted in a grace that cannot be earned?
3. Read this section carefully, as I claim that much Xn tradition has been engulfed and distorted by what I call the *Ethics and Eschatology of Reward/Punishment and Just Deserts*.
4. My basic claim: the ethics of the Xn life is always the ethics of grace: given what God has done for all in Jesus Christ, how then are we called to live?

Inviting the reader to plunge further into this chapter, the following topics are discussed in the search for the comprehensive grammar of the Christian life.

Orienting Notes on Reading and Engaging *A Grammar of Christian Faith*
Joe R. Jones

It is important to note throughout this chapter that I am proposing that such basic words as *faith, freedom, liberation, justification, sanctification, and love* have complex grammars and thus are not reducible to a simple, single definition.

C. The Grammar of Faith

Exploring a continuing distinction between the overarching structure of faith and what I call the various *routes of faith*, as those various routes an individual person might follow in the process of *becoming a Christian*.

1. Faith as Encounter with the Gospel of Jesus Christ
2. Faith as Gracious Gift of the Spirit
3. Faith as Epistemic
4. Faith as Trust in God
5. Faith as Knowledge of Self
6. Faith as Trust in Christian Witness
7. Faith as Intentional Action and Knowing-How
8. Faith as Orientation of Heart to God
7. Faith as Relationship with the Triune God

D. The Grammar of Christian Freedom

Basic tension that has echoed through the centuries concerning Xn freedom: is it to be understood as:

- a. that freedom, as *freedom of choice*, that is presupposed and precedes faith, wherein faith is itself the act of person's *free will*, or
- b. that freedom that is conferred graciously by God in faith, as *freedom from sin* and therefore *freedom for faith*?

These issues can be deeply confusing, hence the following discussions might be helpful in discerning the complex grammar of freedom and liberation:

1. Finite Freedom, Encumbrances, and Faith
2. Sin and Human Freedom
3. Freedom From and Freedom For
4. Freedom as Power to Decide and Enact
5. Oppression, Emancipation, and Primal Liberation
6. Hence, the grammar of Xn freedom involves reckoning with:
 - a) *finite freedom*: that humans in general make decisions daily, however conditioned and encumbered in degree and kind they may be.
 - b) *Primal Liberation of Faith*: that humans receive God's empowering grace to free them from the power of sin to shape their hearts and give them their identity, self-understanding, and destiny—also called *freedom in Christ*.
 - c) *Freedom for the Passions and Works of Love*: that humans who experience the primal liberation of faith are empowered for and summoned to the passions and works of love on behalf of the neighbor.
 - d) *Freedom as Historic Emancipation*: that persons concretely and historically become socially free or liberated from the conditions of subjugation, oppression, and injustice that thwart and diminish human well-being—often called *liberation* by liberation theologians.

E. The Grammar of Sanctification

Attempting to recover a vivid sense of *sanctification* as a guiding understanding of *spirituality and growth in faith* that does not fall into that misunderstanding whereby sanctification is thought of as that process by way of which persons *earn their salvation*.

1. Justification in Christ precedes Sanctification
2. Conversion and Repentance

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3. An Authentic Spiritual Life: the relationships to God, neighbor, and self and the disrelationships that confuse the Xn life.
4. Both Justified and Sinner: Remembering Luther!
5. A Route of Growth, Maturation, and Virtue: Recovering Virtue Ethics

F. The Grammar of Discipleship

1. Disciple of Jesus
2. Cross-Bearing as an Alternative Way of Life
3. N.T. Themes on the Shape of Discipleship [dependent on Yoder here]

G. The Grammar of the Works and Passions of Agapic Love

In some recent theological discussions there has been an attempt to decenter agapic love from the role it had previously played in much Lutheran post-reformation works.

I introduce a new sign: ‘agapic love’ in distinction from ‘erosic love’ as a way of rethinking the contrast often invoked between agape and eros.

A very long and complex discussion, tightly woven and interwoven.

1. Agapic Love is Commanded, Empowered, and Motivated by God
2. Agapic Love is Love for God—not simply reducible to love of neighbor
3. Agapic Love and Love of Self: self-love, illicit self-love, self-contempt, and self-denial.
4. Agapic Love for the Neighbor is Indiscriminate—non-preferential
5. Works of Agapic Love for the Neighbor’s Good
6. Risks in Seeking the Good of the Neighbor
7. The Grammar of Erosic Love—in contrast to agapic love
8. The Passions and Desires of Agapic Love: compassionate openness to the neighbor involving passions and desires for the neighbor’s good, for the good of the ‘other’
9. The Contrast between Agapic Love and Erosic Love, systematically examined
10. Agapic Love and Mutuality
11. Agapic Love Practices Forgiveness
 - a. forgiving debts
 - b. forgiving those who sin against us
 - c. forgiving harm done to others, to the neighbor
 - d. seeking forgiveness
 - e. forgiveness as habit and virtue
12. Agapic Love and Evangelism—witness to the neighbor
13. Agapic Love and Spiritual Practice

H. The Grammar of Christian Vocation

The complex and interrelated issues of being called to be in the world and for the world, as also being called to faith, to freedom, to sanctification, to discipleship, and to agapic love in exactly the everydayness of our lives.

And yet this vocation becomes impossible without also being lived in and through the church somewhere in particular and in general.