



CONDITION FOR SALVATION IN PETER'S TIME

1. After many disciples decided to leave Jesus, He turned to the Twelve and asked them: “You do not want to leave too, do you?” And Peter answered Him: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that You are the Holy One of God¹.”

1.1. Remarkably, right after Jesus’ teaching, we have an event where His prophecy (“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life²”) was fulfilled: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws them³.”

1.2. I intentionally placed those words in parentheses because they actually show the initiative of the individual, while the text after the colon shows God’s sovereignty over the free will of the individual.

1.3. The question arises: why did the disciples say that Jesus’ statement was hard⁴? What was it in His teaching that was so offensive to them that, after this event, they said: “I can’t follow You anymore. Even though You have done many miracles before my eyes, even though until now I believed You were the chosen Messiah—the one leading us (the people) toward a righteous interpretation of the Law of Moses unlike the Pharisees—now I see it was all a lie. Now I see You are just an ordinary madman asking me to be mad with You.”

¹ (John 6:67–69)

² (John 6:53)

³ (John 6:65)

⁴ (John 6:59)

1.4. In short, I believe the trigger was Jesus' statement: "I will raise them up at the last day⁵."

1.5. Let's remember something: two thousand years after Jesus' death, our ears are accustomed to the concept that Jesus is the one who has the authority to choose who will be in His kingdom and who will not. We have no problem with that. But His listeners (the Israelites) certainly did. In their eyes, He was not the High Priest who, through His perfect sacrifice, became the only NECESSARY mediator (priest) between people and God⁶.

1.6. First, He had not yet gone to the cross—He was still alive as He spoke with them. And when they heard that one of the roles of the Messiah was to have the authority to decide who would be resurrected and who would not—the respect they may have had for Him up to that point went out the window. "But why?" you might ask. Perhaps because, in their eyes, He was Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary and Joseph, their neighbors? Or maybe because He was not from Jerusalem, not from a wealthy family, did not look like a military commander?

1.7. If I had to answer that question, I would say that the listeners who heard Jesus would have rejected Him whether He was a villager or a military leader from Jerusalem; in their minds, only God had the authority to choose those who would inherit His kingdom. In other words, one human being could not decide for another whether they would inherit the kingdom of God—that belief, then and I believe even now, was considered blasphemy in their circles. "You are completely insane if you believe such a thing," they would have thought in that moment.

1.8. And that is what happens here: in their minds, Jesus had so far been their rabbi (teacher). That teacher had said that He, as a human being, had the authority (given to Him by the Father) to decide who would inherit eternal life—and at that moment, in their eyes: not only was He no longer the Messiah (as He had been to them), not only was He no longer their teacher (as He had been), He was now a madman blaspheming their God.

THE CONDITION FOR SALVATION CHANGED THROUGH THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF GOD'S PLAN

2. This was the condition they had to accept if they wanted to inherit the kingdom of God. The cross had not yet come onto the scene; Christ had not yet become the High Priest who is righteous, holy, and perfect. So here and now, God's grace was shown in those who could swallow this truth (the condition for salvation) and still say, still believe: "You are the Son of God, You are the Holy One of God!" (§ 1.)

⁵ (John 6:40)

⁶ (Hebrews 7:26–27)

2.1. The entire text before us **John 6:41-65** is based on the belief that Jesus, as the Messiah, as a human being, has the authority to decide who will inherit eternal life. When we understand the condition Jesus speaks of here, the text is actually simple to interpret: **At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."** Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them."

2.2. Jesus continually communicates with His listeners through metaphors: their fathers (ancestors) received bread from heaven so they could survive in the wilderness. His listeners knew that Old Testament truth very well. Jesus uses that fact to tell them that they must receive Him as the new bread that has come down from heaven. They must eat Him (accept the condition that He, as Messiah, has the authority to decide who will inherit eternal life) if they want to enter the kingdom of God. If they do not drink His blood and eat His flesh (accept the truth about Him), then they will not inherit the blessing promised through their prophets. If they do not believe Jesus' words, if they do not accept the Father's condition for salvation, they will not witness the fulfillment of God's promises given to their fathers in the faith (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).

2.3. In the whole passage, Jesus is actually cementing the same truth again and again, but through different metaphors. He reminds them of the prophets, reminds them of the historical events of their ancestors, reminds them of all God's promises, and then explains

how God will fulfill His promises given throughout Israel's history: *"I am the final puzzle piece that connects all the other pieces into a clear picture of how our God, the Father, will fulfill His promises. Everything was created because of Me; I am the main character for whom all the promises exist—not because of you, Israel, but because of Me. And whoever understands this and accepts it in their heart as truth—this can only mean one thing: God's Spirit is working in you because you are listening to your Father's teaching. You have life in you because you listen to Me, and My words are life because they come from the LIVING GOD."*

2.4. To sum up: yes, the condition for salvation was hard to digest, but God's conditions have always been hard to digest. When we study the Bible, we come to the conclusion that every individual in history has faced the great weight of God's condition. In other words, he or she knew that accepting God's condition would cost them more than ever before. And when, after some time, looking back at their life, they realized that despite trials and hardships they had not abandoned God—that condition had become more precious to them than gold⁷. And why had it become more precious than gold? Because they realized through their journey of faith that it was God's grace holding them so they would not run away from Him.

2.5. That being said, Jesus knew that none of those present would accept the new condition of God unless the Father gave it to them. On the other hand, every Jew who heard Jesus' message could, in their free will, say: *"Oof, this will cost me if I accept it; my life will become a heavy burden if I eat Jesus' bread. My greatest burden will be my own people and the religious authority under whose leadership we live, breathe, and exist."*

2.6. I believe that even Peter, when he spoke the words: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You are the Holy One of God; You have the words of eternal life"*—at least for a moment thought: *"I can't believe what Jesus is asking of us. He could have asked us for anything else, but why this? Why did He have to say this? I can't accept it; I want to run away. Why did I listen to my foolish brother Andrew and go with him to see Jesus for the first time⁸?"* But he managed to resist the reaction of his flesh (hard heart) and, in his free will, decided to stay anyway. And after Jesus heard Peter's answer, He simply confirmed what He had been teaching them up to that point: *"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven⁹!"* In other words, Jesus, by His reaction to Peter's statement, was telling him: *"It has been given to you by God to accept the truth about Me."*

THE CONDITION IN PAUL'S TIME

3. We all know Paul, I assume. He was the most zealous of all the Pharisees: in studying the Torah, in applying the Law of Moses in his own life, and ultimately in his mission to destroy the first Christian sect that was formed during Christ's first coming. We also know that Christ

⁷ (1 Peter 1:3–9)

⁸ (John 1:40–42)

⁹ (Matthew 16:15–17)

appeared to him on the road to Damascus¹⁰, and that was when Paul was converted (born again). He realized that Christ truly was their Messiah, but now he first had to prove to himself and then to his people, through the Old Testament, that this had been God's plan from the very beginning. Through studying the Torah again, he came to the conclusion that everything Jesus had taught was in full agreement with God's promises given to His people through the Old Testament.

3.1. Unlike Peter, who in John 6 was faced with the condition that Jesus had the authority to decide who would inherit God's kingdom, Paul was faced with the condition that the Messiah had to die in order to become the perfect sacrifice that redeems the sins of the people of Israel—not only Israel, but of all nations on earth. Paul understood that at His second coming, Jesus would fulfill God's promises spoken through the prophets: He would become the eternal King of Israel, ruling over a righteous and holy people who would proclaim the righteousness and holiness of their God the Father to the rest of the world. In short, this was the condition the apostle Paul had to believe in—of course, Peter as well—and Paul knew that this condition would cost him dearly¹¹, and it did.

3.2. Do you see where I'm going with this? The condition changed because God's plan was revealed progressively to the people of Israel. And every individual, as well as the nation as a whole, when faced with a new truth within God's plan, had to decide whether they would believe or not.

THE CONDITION IN OUR TIME

4. In Peter's time, in the time of the prophets, in the time of King David, and in Paul's time—the condition always carried with it some form of trouble (trial). That is why the question arises: Does faith in Jesus Christ cost us anything? We see in the biblical accounts that it certainly cost the people within them a great deal. To believe in the name of Jesus Christ meant for an individual: loss of loved ones, rejection, ridicule, psychological and physical abuse, unjust condemnation leading to imprisonment, hatred projected by those closest (family), and in some cases even death. So I ask myself again: Do we truly believe in the name of Jesus Christ as Peter and Paul did? In the end, this IS the condition that God the Father requires of us.

4.1. I will try to answer this question through Jesus' statement to His disciples in **Matthew 16:24**: Then Jesus said to His disciples: **"Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me."**

4.2. *"Take up their cross and follow Me"*—powerful words from our Teacher. And if I understand them in the right way, then this means that to believe in the name of Jesus Christ

¹⁰ (Acts 9)

¹¹ (2 Corinthians 11:22–33)

means that, throughout my life, I will have to take up my cross and follow my Teacher. What does this look like in the life of a modern Western Christian?

Here I can only give my own example: my cross is an incurable disease that gradually takes away the capacity of my lungs. There is no cure for it, no hope of healing through modern medicine; at times it makes my life extremely difficult.

4.3. So, what does Christ's command *"Take up your cross and follow Me"* look like in my life? It looks like this: I have made an existential decision in my life, and it goes like this—nothing in this world is more important to me than the truth—if I follow Christ, I will inherit the kingdom of God. My whole life is predetermined toward that goal.

4.4. Is the journey difficult? Yes. Has the disease made my life harder in every way? I would be lying if I said it hasn't. Is the condition of God the Father burdensome, and does it sometimes make me say: *"I can't follow You anymore, I'm tired, this cross is too heavy to carry"*? Yes, it is burdensome. But even when I think that, I still persist in carrying my cross. And why do I persist? Because I understand the meaning of Jesus' words to Peter: *"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven!"* Just like Peter, I am blessed—I am fortunate—because God has decided to give me this blessing. Through my decisions to remain with God despite the troubles I endure, I know that God the Father has predetermined that I would act this way. In other words, the author of my free will has decided, through His will (grace), that I will never leave Him.

4.5. Everything I have briefly stated above contains this: To believe in the name of Jesus Christ—THE CONDITION.

JESUS HAD A CONDITION TO

5. Are you surprised by the subtitle I put above? My intention is that through these sermons you will see that Jesus truly is the only one we need. In **Hebrews 7:26-27**, Paul writes: **For such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself.**

5.1. How did Jesus become the High Priest? Surely there was a condition He had to fulfill to become the only mediator needed between God and people. And there was—He had to freely choose to obey the Father and go to the cross. Because He was perfectly good and sinless, obedience to the Father's will came first. But that does not mean He was not afraid, nor does it mean He had no anxious thoughts.

5.2. We have a biblical account that proves my statement above. Motivated by fear, He prayed to the Father to let the cup that had been prepared for Him pass: *"Of course, if it is*

Your will, my Father,” He said in the Garden of Gethsemane¹². Yes, Jesus, like every one of us, had to fulfill a condition. Yes, Jesus knew that this condition would cost Him, but unlike Peter or me, He never once doubted God. And why not? Because He is the new Adam, the new human being who is the prototype of what each of us will one day become—perfectly good in our nature, perfectly obedient to our Father.

5.3. Why am I telling you all this? Because we must return to the biblical truth if we want to fully grasp the greatness of Jesus’ life. We are following a man, not God. If we see it as God going to the cross, then we diminish the strength, the weight, the perseverance, the consistency, and the greatness of Jesus’ decision as He carried the cross. In other words, for God, carrying the cross would have been easy. His words, *“If you want to follow Me you must take up your cross”* would make no sense then. Jesus’ words, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* would have no weight if He were not a human being like us, right? Why would we follow God (all-powerful, eternal, almighty) when such a cross, for such a God, would be a small matter to accomplish? *“God the Father told Me I must go to the cross—as if that’s a problem for God the Son like Me,”* Jesus would have said to Himself when He received the command.

5.4. That is a completely wrong view of Jesus—He had to carry His cross just as we do. He had to decide to follow God the Father. Throughout His ministry, He had to deal with rejection, mockery, loss, and, in the end, His own death. And all of this was endured by a man, not by God. And when we understand this, then He becomes the only mediator we need. In other words, with one of us (a human being) we as human beings can truly identify. He understands us; He has gone through everything we go through—and worse, if we are honest with ourselves. He is our WAY because He completed His way to the end. He is our TRUTH because He showed us, through His reward (resurrection from the dead) received at the end of the way, that the same awaits us when we finish our journey (carrying our cross). He is our LIFE because without His perfect sacrifice, in which He became the High Priest, we would never receive our reward (eternal life).

5.5. You see, the irony lies in this—man has always wanted to EARN his way to God, and has never succeeded in doing so. Nor could he—he is a sinful human being, and as such could never meet God’s standard of righteousness (the Law of Moses). But God, in His grace, decided to create a human being who is perfect in His nature, and as such, Jesus is the only man who has DESERVED everything the Father promised Him. And that is why He is the only priest we need. In other words, if we base our salvation on what Jesus has done for us, if we believe that He is who He claims to be, then our salvation does not depend on us—it depends on the perfect One, who did perfectly, so that we might one day become perfect.

¹² (Matthew 26:39)

THE FOUNDATION OF SALVATION

6. In short, the foundation of salvation has always been, and always will be, God the Father and His grace. Now, I owe you an explanation of exactly what I mean by that.

In **Romans 9:14-18**, Paul writes: *What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."* It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore, God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden.

6.1. I believe Paul could not be clearer in his statements, even if he tried. Of all people, he knew very well what it meant, as a man, to run and to decide. He did this every day as a Pharisee, yet in the end, he found no wisdom in it. The only thing he achieved through his running was to deceive himself into believing he deserved God's favor. And when God, by His grace, struck him with the light of His wisdom, Paul realized that salvation comes only by the grace of God Himself, not by merit. In other words, Paul understood that he, unlike Pharaoh, was created to receive grace.

6.2. Let me try to explain in a bit more detail what God's grace looks like. In the time of King David, the grace of God was not as clearly defined as it was in the time of Peter and Paul.

6.3. King David believed in God's grace, and we see this in his Psalms. But although he believed in it, he did not have the assurance of salvation that Paul and Peter had. And what do I mean by that? Namely, Paul and Peter had a visual display of God's grace—Jesus on the cross as the perfect and only sacrifice needed. King David did not have that; he did not receive that revelation in his lifetime. His life was a life under God's Law—a Law which, in its rituals, prescribed the offering of animal sacrifices through mediators (priests) who were sinners just like their people. This was the worldview in which David lived. And while he understood that the priests, that the act of offering sacrifices, had no actual power in themselves—and by that I mean that these rituals could not persuade God to grant them the grace of forgiveness, or worse—that by performing these rituals they could, as a nation or an individual, earn God's favor, David understood the same thing that Paul did, I believe: *"God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden."* The only difference is that King David did not have the visual display of God's grace—that is, he did not have the worldview (revelation) that Peter and Paul had. By believing in Jesus' going to the cross, they had the assurance of salvation that Old Testament figures did not have.

6.4. Simply put, King David died with the question: *"Will my God forgive me in the end? He is a merciful God, that I know for certain. But still, I am not sure that He will—I hope He will, but I will know everything on Judgment Day when He raises me from the dead."* While Peter and Paul died knowing that their hope of salvation rested in what Christ had done for them, and

therefore they could say with certainty: *“I know that God has forgiven me, and I know that I will inherit the kingdom of God because of what my Messiah and High Priest has done for me.”*

CONCLUSIONS

7. Eucharist¹³ (A brief summary of the Church’s view of the Eucharist)

The Catholic and Orthodox Churches believe that the Eucharist is the real presence of Jesus Christ—not merely symbolic. They base this on Jesus’ words at the Last Supper (“This is My body...”) and on John 6, where Christ speaks of “eating the flesh and drinking the blood.” They connect this sacrament to the tradition of the Jewish Passover meal, in which the lamb was sacrificed as a sign of the covenant—and Jesus becomes the new Passover Lamb, whose sacrifice renews the Covenant between God and man. According to this teaching, the Eucharist is participation in that redemptive sacrifice.

7.1. Through John 6 I have tried to give you a different paradigm of belief. As you can see, it is significantly different from the Church’s teaching.

7.2. My personal opinion is this—although their interpretation is based on events from the Old Testament (the Passover meal)—the idea behind it all is wrong. Just as the lamb sacrificed as a sign of the covenant between God and His people was symbolic in nature¹⁴, so too were Jesus’ words metaphorical, meant to emphasize the importance of the condition¹⁵ that God had currently placed before His people.

7.2.1 On the other hand, it is a very clever idea brought by the Church leadership. Notice in the definition of the Eucharist who the mediator is in the whole matter—the priest is the mediator. Without his prayer, Jesus Christ cannot even appear on the scene. Ultimately, the Church is the portal through which Jesus manifests in the form of wine and bread. Without the Church, He cannot do it. And that is why I say it is a very clever idea. It convinces the ordinary person that without the Church he or she cannot receive Christ. Unfortunately, such belief contradicts the statement of the apostle Paul; it is no longer valid if the Catholic and Orthodox Churches are right. (§ 5.)

7.3. Today, many young Americans are returning to the Catholic Church precisely because of the Eucharist. One young woman, when asked by a host of an American news channel, *“Why are young people choosing the Catholic Church over the Protestant one?”*, replied: *“Young people, along with the Bible, which is very important in Christian circles, believe that the*

¹³ Definition of the Eucharist: The Eucharist, in Christian theology, is the sacrament in which bread and wine, after the priest’s prayer of consecration, are literally transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and the faithful receive them as Holy Communion. The Eucharist is the fundamental sacrament and is considered the source and summit of the Christian life.

¹⁴ A visual reminder to themselves, as well as to the other nations around them, that they had entered into a Covenant with Yahweh. In other words, there was no power or higher force residing in that ritual during the offering of the lamb as a sacrifice.

¹⁵ Read again (§ 2. – 2.6.)

Eucharist is even more important. And why? Because at that moment each of us literally receives the Spirit of Christ. In other words, He is literally with us in that moment. And that sacrament strongly attracts the hearts and minds of young people.”

7.4. Knowledge is a treasure greater than treasure itself. Recently, I watched a Harrison Ford movie (*Indiana Jones*) where he said: *“Knowledge is a treasure greater than treasure itself.”* He’s right—I believe that without knowledge of the Bible, a Christian cannot walk righteously in faith. The Eucharist cannot give a Christian the wisdom to discern, in this world full of distorted information, what is God’s righteousness and what is human righteousness. If we reject knowledge, we reject the apostle Paul; if we reject knowledge, we reject Peter, David, Moses, and ultimately we reject Jesus Himself.

FREEDOM TO DECIDE

7.5. But that is my conviction. You will have to decide for yourselves whom you will trust more and whose interpretation of the Bible makes more sense to you. My dear brother in Christ once said that Christ always gave His disciples the freedom to decide for themselves whether they would believe His teaching or not. I believe he is right—in fact, Jesus’ words in **John 6:67** prove that Jesus believed that an individual must freely decide what to do next: *“Do you want to leave too?”* Someone who wants to control would certainly not say such a thing. Someone who wants to control would say: *“You must not leave, because if you do, you are going straight to hell!”*

7.6. As we near the end, knowing that it is God who decides to give grace to whom He will is both a repelling and a deeply attractive idea for us humans at the same time. Repelling, because our sinful flesh simply does not want anyone to have that much control over our lives. And attractive, because it gives enormous assurance to those who have decided to follow Christ. (§ 4.4.)

7.7. With these words, we conclude John 6 and return to the Gospel of Luke. I hope everything is clear to you. And if it’s not, allow yourselves time to examine my interpretation of John 6. I know from personal experience—it is not easy to digest the hard truths I have presented here, and yes, they are hard, but they are also the most valuable thing I have ever possessed in my life. I hope that you too, in the course of your life, will come to the same conclusion.

