

What is at the base of every authentic Christian understanding of salvation is the following:

1. *Trinitarian Creation*: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have created the world freely out of their overflowing love. The world came to be from the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit.
2. *Sin as turning away from God*: That the world has turned away from God, and this we call sin. The world was separated from God not only by God's absolute transcendence (discussed in Units 1-2) but by its sinfulness.
3. *God's Revelation to the Patriarchs and Israel*: When God formed his covenant with Israel, we could see most clearly how God is faithful and yet we are unfaithful as the recipients of God's loving fidelity (cf. Rom 1-11).
3. *The Father sends the Son; the Son obediently and freely comes into the world to reconcile the world to the Father*: That the Father, who has for all of eternity loved his Son, sent his Son into the world in order to reconcile the world to himself, to embody his love for the world, and to save the world through his love.
4. *The Incarnation and Obedience*: That the Son, by descending to the depths of the earth and of human experience in the incarnation (Cf. Jn 1:14; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Jn 1), became "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom 8:3). This means that the "gap" between God and the sinful world is now embraced within the relationship between Father and Son. The Father's eternal love for his Son is now the Father's eternal love for his Son in "the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom 8:3), in "the form of a slave, coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance" (Phil 2: 7), in human flesh (Jn 1:14). And just as we as human beings were unable to be God's faithful partners, to live in obedience, the eternal Son who is always faithful to his Father, was obedient for us (Heb 5:8), even to the point of death (Phil 2:8). He gave his whole life out of fidelity and obedience. What this means is that in the Covenant with Israel, God showed himself to be the Bridegroom and called Israel to be the bride (See Unit 2). When Jesus reveals the Father and his love, he shows that the Son and Father are eternally wed in love (Cf. Jn 15:9-17; 10:17, etc.), and that the Son will become flesh, to be the faithful bride that we could never be, in order that, by becoming wed to Christ (Cf. Eph 5:22-33), we are welcomed into the eternal union of Father and Son (Cf. Rev 19:5-10; 1 Jn 1:1-4; Jn 17:20-6).

This means that the Father's hate for sin is now taken up and into the Father's love for his Son. They both occur within the relationship between Father and Son. The entire drama of God's reconciliation of the world to himself takes place between the Father's love for his Son. Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. ... This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to

lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father” (Jn 10:14-15, 17-18).

5. *Death on the Cross*: This takes us to the moment of the Cross. Now, the Son stands for sinful flesh. The Father and Son once upon a time looked down upon the world that turned away from them. The world made itself into God’s enemy. But out of love, the Son descended and took on our sinful form, and dwelled among us. He now stood in the camp of God’s enemies as one of us. And so now, when the Father looks down upon his eternal Son, whom he has loved with his whole life, he sees the Sin of the world. And as he turns his face – the face which alone gives life – away from his beloved Son, his Son screams out for all of us, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34).

6. *Trinitarian Resurrection*: Jesus’ death is the Father’s ultimate word on Sin, but it is not the Father’s ultimate word on love. The Father and Son, who are inseparable from eternity, appear divided (Matt 27:46; Mk 15:34; Cf. Ps 22:1ff). The Father has loved us so much that “he did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all” (Rom 8:32a; Cf. Jn 3:16a). But the love between Father and Son is such that not even death can overcome it. Jesus descended into the depths of the abyss of death (cf. Rom 10:7) – the abyss of God-forsakenness. The Son, abandoned by the Father because he stood for our sin, descended into the depths of Hell itself (Cf. 1 Pet 3:19-20; See Apostles’ Creed). But will sin conquer the Father’s love for his Son? “We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God” (Rom 6:9-10). The love of the Father for his Son and the Son’s unfailing fidelity to his Father, even in the face of death and abandonment, is the life of the world. Sin has been swallowed up in the unfailing love of the Father and Son. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaims, “God raised [Jesus] up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it” (Acts 2:24).

7. *Trinitarian Ascension*: Jesus’ death and resurrection from the dead is the healing of our sin. It is the proclamation that the Father’s love for his Son is greater than the Father’s abandonment of his Son in sin. And in Jesus’ ascension to the Father after his resurrection (Jn 20:17), the Son brings the whole world with him and offers it up to his Father. He elevates all of humanity with him by bringing us with him to the Father, into the inner life of God. During the last supper, “Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1). The Son takes the entire world into himself and into his hands and raises it up to the Father, just like the celebrant at Mass who takes his paten and raises it up to our Father.

8. *The Spirit of the Son:* The Son has reconciled the world to the Father. He has died the death of sin and has been raised by the Father to newness of life. Love has conquered death. And he has taken the entire world with him to his Father. And he sends forth his Spirit into the world. Christ is the living water (Jn 4:10) and the Spirit is the stream poured into the world. The task of the Spirit is to Christify the world: that is, to take the entire world into Christ, in order that the world thus taken into Christ may be transfigured and elevated to the Father. By the work of the Spirit, the living heart of Jesus which died in obedience to the Father but which now lives only for the Father (Rom. 6:10) is made into the heart of the world. At the center of the world now is a Spirit that is renewing all things; a Spirit which makes all things new; a Spirit which searches the depths of God and which brings and offers the world up to the Father through Christ. Jesus went up to the Father like a firework into the heavens, and once he was at the right hand of the Father, he spread himself into the whole work through the Spirit, like how a firework explodes and spread across the whole sky. The one light – the light of the world, Christ, ascended to the Father, but now the whole world is lit by Christ's light because the Spirit of Christ has indwelt in us all.

8. *Trinitarian Salvation:* But how do *we* share in this Trinitarian drama? How do we come to live in the love between the Father and the Son? This is the work of the Holy Spirit, to which we turn in our next Unit. Salvation is not the work of the Father and Son alone. It is the work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.