

I. Living Condition VS Legal Position

- A. It can be difficult to harmonize the clear truth of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone with the frequent, unwavering call for us to walk in righteousness. We are constantly exhorted to uphold righteousness in our heart and activities in order to attain the kingdom, and to keep ourselves from being disqualified from it. We run into this difficulty more than a few times in this Sermon. (Mark. 16:16; Lk. 7:50; Jhn 3:14-18; Rom. 3:20-28) (Mat. 5:29-30, 6:14-15, 7:14, 7:21-23)
- B. The way forward in harmonizing and exegeting these difficult passages is to first view the relationship you have with Jesus as just that; a relationship. Through His death and resurrection, He made a way for you to have that relationship, by grace, through faith. As in any relationship they are strengthened or weakened based upon the intentionality sown into the relationship. This is where understanding the progression of salvation, and the language of “legal position” vs. “living condition” in your relationship with Him can be very helpful.
- C. Salvation Progression – There is a very clear progression of the promises and realities of the work of our Savior in the saving of us. We are made up of a spirit (our eternal interior man made in God’s image), soul (mind, will, and emotions), and body (our physical makeup and features). Our entire person was subject to sin and death through the fall of man and the promise of salvation is to save the entirety of our person. (Sermon Series “Foundations of our Faith” 2-part teaching on “Salvation”)
1. Phase 1 (Saving your Spirit) – The Salvation of your Spirit is what I mean by your “legal position”. Your “legal position” of eternal life is attained by your faith/belief in and through the person and work of Jesus alone. This position and work in God only requires faith/belief and is an instant finished work. The moment you believe in the person and work of Jesus, your spirit is saved. You will live forever in the Kingdom of God.
 2. Phase 2 (Saving your Soul) - Your righteous legal standing before God, through Christ, now positions you through Him to experience His life in your soul. This “living condition” however is not an instant, finished work at the moment of belief in Jesus. Your soul (mind, will, and emotions) is still plagued and filled with unforgiveness, hatred, lust, envy and the like. The work of Jesus in saving your soul requires intentionality and happens as you set yourself to behold Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit reveals revelation, wisdom, and understanding, the nature and character (beauty) of Jesus to you, your soul is progressively transformed into His image. Ultimately your entire soul is transformed through this process.

3. Phase 3 (Saving your Body) The finality of the salvation progression is the transformation of your physical body. Like the salvation of your spirit this is also an instant transformation, which happens at the promised time, known as the resurrection of the dead. The requirement for this is for the believer to simply continue in faith/belief in Jesus.

D. It is my interpretive position the Sermon on the Mount was in no way intended to be a discourse or teaching on how to attain or maintain your “legal position” or the salvation of your spirit. Rather Jesus is teaching us the way forward into the salvation of your soul, the fullness of life known as your “living condition”.

1. Biblically, the context of the hope of our salvation is to experience the fullness of love and life our creator intended for us forever. In short, we will call this experiencing the Kingdom of God. We are called to contend for both the physical and spiritual aspects of the coming Kingdom of God in this age, and place our hope in the full manifestation of it in the age to come. (Col. 1:13; Phil. 3:20)

II. Eschatological and Eternal Significance

- A. The beginning and end of the SOTM are both very clearly focused on end time and coming kingdom realities. Both of these realities are set by Jesus as incentive, along with fullness of life, to living out the SOTM now - in light of coming events.
 1. Eternal Rewards - It starts with the Beatitudes which all are tied to an eternal reward which correlates with the cultivation and lifestyle of the fruit of love referenced. The very first beatitude references the Kingdom of Heaven as the reward. The Kingdom of Heaven at its most basic, biblical core definition indicates we will not receive a full and complete reward until Messiah comes and establishes His government upon the earth. (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Rev. 11:15-18)
 - a. Jesus commonly used the promise of eternal rewards to motivate the believer to pursue transformational attitudes and actions which carry eternal weight. There is a growing religious mindset within the church that believes the pursuit of eternal rewards is selfish and should not be encouraged. This view comes from a misunderstanding of our Bridegroom God and disconnects those rewards from intimacy. It also shows great disregard for the clear teaching of scripture that the transformational work is accomplished by His grace and not of our own determination. (Over 50 references in the NT; Mat. 5:3-12, 46, 6:1-6, 16-18; Is. Is. 62:11; Mat. 16:27; Rev. 22:12)

2. Eschatological Perspective - The SOTM ends with Jesus exhorting us to be wise builders who cultivate a heart able to withstand a great coming storm. We often miss that this is a correlation to the flood of Noah. However, the Jewish audience in which He was speaking would have automatically made this connection. Especially when Jesus referenced the flood in correlation to the coming last days. (Mat. 24:27-43)

III. Embarking Upon a Glorious Journey

- A. The SOTM is simply mind-blowing when one understands all the implications and realities which are included. In one discourse Jesus displays the beauty of His bridegroom's heart by inviting us into the depths of deep friendship and love. In doing so we are given the way forward into experiencing the fullness of Kingdom life and love in our souls, in this age and in the age to come. He positions us as true witnesses and messengers of the coming Kingdom, as His beauty is manifested through us to the world. Then in His grace and kindness He gives us eternal rewards for our love and friendship with Him - that He gave us the ability to experience. At the same time all of this prepares our hearts to walk victoriously through the difficulties, which will come upon the earth now and in the final days leading up to His return. (Ps. 40:5; Rom. 11:33)