

OCTOBER 14, 2021  
Thursday of the 28<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time  
Luke 11: 47-54

“EFFECTIVE THROUGH FAITH AND GOOD WORKS.”

Our first reading, the very heart of St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, considered how a person is justified by God or becomes right and good in the eyes of God. According to him, salvation happens through faith in Jesus Christ, “they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.”<sup>1</sup> This insights of Paul is in contrast to the urging of some Jewish Christians to return to the Mosaic Law, the basis for a life in and with God and promotes all Christians and Gentiles be circumcised which Paul opposed. He admitted that God’s goodness and justice made known through the Law and the Prophets, the whole Jewish tradition of the Old Testament. “But now, with the coming of Jesus Christ, that ‘saving justice’ is now given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe in him as Lord and Saviour sent by the Father. It is the ‘law’ of faith, that total giving and surrendering of the self to God in Christ, that saves and not the Law of works. Salvation is not based on self-initiated acts but by entering into an intimate relationship with a God who reaches out in love (agape) to me and calls me to share his life. That reaching out in spontaneous love is called here ‘grace’. My good works are not the down payment by which I ‘buy’ salvation; rather they are the sign of God’s love working in and through me. There are two extremes we have to avoid. One is the idea that we ‘get to heaven’ simply by the good works we do, by ‘keeping the Commandments’ so that God owes us salvation, like a worker earns his wages. This idea, which was proposed by a gentleman called Pelagius, was rejected centuries ago by the Church and came to be known as the “Pelagian heresy”. The other extreme is one hears from some non-Catholic Christians which gives the impression that all one needs is to ‘call on the

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 3: 24-25 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

name of Jesus' and one will be saved. Good works become totally irrelevant. But good works are not at all irrelevant. While good works cannot be totally initiated by us, still good works are the sign of God's grace-love at work in us. 'Faith without good works is dead' as the Letter of James tells us. God does not love me because I am good; I am good because I allow God's love to work in and through me. It is by my faith and openness to Jesus that this becomes possible. One would have to have serious doubts about Christians who claim to have 'faith in Christ' but show nothing of the Gospel spirit in their behaviour."<sup>2</sup> I have faith in God and live that faith through good works, my good works are result of my faith and love to God.

So, my brothers and sisters, St. Paul is reminding us today that we must cooperate on the grace of God, enter into an intimate relationship with Him and share that grace and life to others. Good works and faith in Jesus will lead us to salvation. It is not only the other that is important, both of them are essential and link together.

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<sup>2</sup> [livingspace.sacredspace.ie](http://livingspace.sacredspace.ie)