

# Reflection on Stir Up Sunday

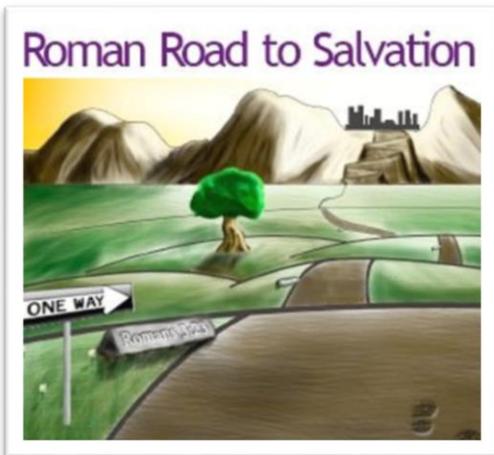
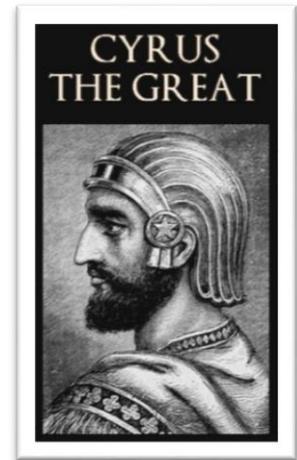
The Rev'd. Dr. John Roddam | [www.Pleroma.ca](http://www.Pleroma.ca)

Our rich Prayer Book tradition is augmented by beautiful collects – oft-quoted and memorized. The Book of Alternative Services (1985) introduced an interesting innovation. The editors moved the Collect for the Sunday Next Before Advent to September – Proper 23 (Sunday between September 4th and 10th). Historically, this is called “Stir Up Sunday” as the original 1549 Collect is worded:

“Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Stir Up Sunday is traditionally the Sunday before the new liturgical year (Advent I). So... why the change? In our culture, September is the beginning of a fresh cycle of school, etc. – a new year! 70% of the Prayer Book comes from Holy Scripture. This collect points to when the Lord stirred up the spirit of Persian King Cyrus to make a proclamation to allow the Israelites to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1), ending the Babylonian Captivity.

Article XIII (Of Works Before Justification) sets a criterion of good works “springing from faith in Jesus Christ” - *“WORKS done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.”* This article concludes that works before the saving action of God in Christ function against people receiving the Grace of God in Salvation... pretty strong words!



It is common in our culture to see that God holds a balance scale. If our “good deeds” outweigh our “bad deeds” we go to heaven. If that were the plan, Jesus Christ’s death on the cross would not be needed! It would all depend on us.

St. Paul in the Book of Romans sets forth God’s Plan of Salvation in Christ Jesus –

1. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. (Romans 3:23)
2. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:8)
3. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God,

and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved ... For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10: 9-10, 13)

4. Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. (Romans 5:1)

As we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, out of a heart of gratitude we seek to please our Saviour and Lord through good works... a good way to start the Fall!!!