

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." – Ephesians 5:23

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## "What Must I Do To Be Saved?"

by Russell M. Kline

The question which serves as the title for this article was asked by a jailer from the city of Philippi and is recorded in Acts 16. The apostle Paul and his friend Silas were in this man's prison because they had helped a girl whose body was possessed by a demon (Acts 16:16-24). While they were in jail they did not feel sorry for themselves, but sang and prayed to God (Acts 16:25). This may have been one of the things which impressed the Philippian jailer enough to prompt him to ask this world-famous question and act upon the answer he received (Acts 16:26-34). There are many things that we can learn from the account of the conversion of this lost soul, not the least of which is that all of us should ask and seek the answer to this same question at some point in our lives.

One thing that we can learn from the Philippian jailer is that salvation requires a *work* of some human effort. His question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" implies the necessity of our work in salvation (Acts 16:30). The jailer expected to be told to do something, and, as a matter of fact, he was (Acts 16:31). He was told by Paul and Silas to "believe on the Lord," which is a work in and of itself (John 6:28, 29). At this point in his journey toward salvation, the jailer needed to develop faith in God which would motivate him to do even more.

For many people, faith is the "end all and be all" of the process of salvation. While faith and the grace of God are essential components of salvation, they are not all that is required (Eph. 2:5b, 8). If faith were all that one needed in order to be saved, then even demons would be saved (James 2:19). Faith is the force which motivates us to *do* the rest of the works which God requires of us (James 2:18-24). Just browse through Hebrews 11 and notice all of the people who were motivated to "do" something "by faith."

The Philippian jailer teaches us that salvation does require *faith*. He was *told* to

believe and then he was *taught* what to believe (Acts 16:31, 32). The importance of faith to the gospel plan of salvation cannot be understated (Heb. 11:6). If anyone obeys the gospel in order to please his family or his friends, he will not have the motivation that he needs to live a faithful Christian life. When we obey the Lord, we must do so because of our faith (Luke 14:26, 27). No wonder Jesus said, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

There are some who claim that we, in the churches of Christ, do not believe in things like faith and grace. As a matter of fact, **nothing could be further from the truth!** No self-respecting member of the Lord's church would ever deny something which the Bible plainly says (Col. 3:17). "For by grace are ye saved through faith..." (Eph. 2:8). What has led to this improper characterization of us is the fact that we, in the churches of Christ, place a strong emphasis upon the importance of works which God requires from us as does the Bible (James 2:17-26; Heb. 5:8-9).

Perhaps the most important thing that we can learn from the Philippian jailer is the gospel plan of salvation itself. We know that God does have a plan for bringing about the salvation of mankind (Rom 1:16). We know that it is part of His "eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:11). We know that God has already done His part by sending His Son to be our sacrifice for sin (John 3:16). Man's part in the gospel plan of salvation may be seen clearly in the account of the conversion of this jailer from Philippi.

Prior to the earthquake, he heard God's word, as Paul and Silas sang and prayed to God (Acts 16:25; cf. Col. 3:16). After the earthquake, when he had been properly taught, he **believed** God's word (Acts 16:30, 31; cf. Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). He demonstrated **repentance** by washing the "stripes" of his prisoners (Acts 16:33a; cf. Luke 13:3). He must have **confessed** Jesus as his Lord, or he would not have

been saved (Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37). Finally, he was **baptized** into Christ for the remission of his sins (Acts 16:33b; cf. Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:38).

It should be noted that baptism is not the end of one's journey to Heaven (Acts 16:34). We must preserve our salvation through the pursuit of spiritual growth (II Peter 1:10). We can do this by adding to our lives the Christian graces (II Peter 1:5-7), refusing the works of the flesh while feasting upon the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23) and putting on the whole armor of the Lord (Eph. 6:13-17). When temptation comes to us we must stand up to it and look for ways to escape it (I Cor. 10:13; James 4:7b). If we allow our souls to be lost after we have been saved, then we are in more dire straits than we were before salvation (II Peter 2:20-22)!

"What must I (or you) do to be saved?" Do not depend upon faith alone to save you (James 2:17-26). Do not depend upon boastful works either (Eph. 2:8-10). Obey every step in the gospel plan of salvation (II Thess. 1:6-9). Live a faithful Christian life (Rev. 2:10). Have you addressed the question that we have been discussing yet? If not, then be sure to attend to it, today! [Contact a gospel preacher or faithful member of the Church of Christ nearest you. They will be happy to study with you and help you respond to the question of this article. If you need help locating someone with whom you can study, call, write, or fax me at the address and numbers on page two. – Editor]

## FORGIVENESS: Obtaining and Remaining In The Grace of God

by Tracy Dugger

Working within some of the prisons in Virginia, we frequently receive numerous questions in our various avenues of contact with inmates. One common question arising among those we have baptized involves forgiveness of sins.

Many of the inmates relate their difficulty in forgiving themselves of past sins.

(Continued on page 2)

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They carry a heavy burden of guilt. I believe this to be a common concern even among some members of the church not incarcerated.

I imagine the apostle Paul had these feelings after his conversion. Obviously his past life of persecuting the church and being an accomplice to the murder of saints frequently entered his mind. In fact he explained that he was the chief of all sinners in 1 Timothy 1:15. Yet, he received the pardon of his sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, his Savior (Ephesians 1:7). Listen to his words in 1 Timothy 1:12-16:

*"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."*

If God forgave the chief of all sinners,

will He not likewise forgive us?

We, of course, must meet the conditions of forgiveness (Hebrews 5:9; Ephesians 2:8-10). When we believe the gospel (Mark 16:16; John 3:16), repent of our sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), confess Jesus as Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10) and are baptized (1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38), our past sins are washed away, as were the sins of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:16). For all of Saul's persecution of Jesus (Acts 9:5) and His church (Acts 22:4), his soul was cleansed (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 1:22).

Just as something as sinful as persecuting Jesus and His followers can be pardoned, and just as the "chief" of all sinners can be forgiven, anyone today who will meet the conditions of forgiveness can have his "slate" wiped clean; his sins will be remembered no more (Hebrews 8:12; 10:16-17). Jesus stated, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Another common question we receive equally related to forgiveness is: *"What about the sins we commit following baptism? Do we need to be 're-baptized' to wash away those sins committed after we become a Christian?"* We explain to those inquiring minds that there is no need for "re-baptism." Once we enter into a saved relationship with God we have the power and privilege of prayer and asking for forgiveness as we repent. In Acts 8:5-25, Simon sinned after his baptism and needed forgiveness. Peter did not instruct him to be re-baptized, but rather to repent and pray to God for forgiveness. Another passage that is important for us to understand is 1 John 1:7-10. The apostle John stated,

*"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."*

John wants Christians to understand that as long as they walk in the light (walking according to the truth to the best of their ability; a continual attitude of confession and repentance) they will

continue to be cleansed of their sins. When we sin we must acknowledge that sin and ask God to forgive us, as well as asking those whom we sin against for forgiveness (Luke 17:3-4).

Guilt feelings are usually a sign of two things: (1) God has not forgiven us, or (2) we have not forgiven ourselves. Since we have already discussed how God forgives us, consider this second situation. If we have met the conditions of being forgiven by God, who are we to doubt or limit God's forgiveness? The blood of Christ, when applied, does not almost or partly remit sin. It totally, wholly, and completely washes away sin. There is more than enough grace to go around. God's grace is abundant to those who will do His will (2 Cor. 4:15). Remember what Paul stated of his forgiveness, that *"the grace of our Lord was EXCEEDING ABUNDANT with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 1:14). God will forgive any sin we confess and of which we repent. **Our God is able!** Consider the following passages:

–Ephesians 3:20-21–*"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."*  
–Romans 5:17-21–*"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Christians are not perfect individuals – we do sin. This fact does not give us a license to sin (Romans 6:1). However, Peter sinned (Galatians 2); David sinned (Psalm 51); the apostle John counted himself as among the Christians who sin when he said "we" (1 John 1:8, 10). What we must do is keep obeying the conditions of forgiveness that we might be in a saved state when we die.

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## MATTHEW 6:33-34

by Bob Winton

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." This is the key verse in the context. If one wants to have the essentials named in the preceding verses, let him meet the requirements of this verse:

"Seek" denotes an active, diligent search and inquiry.

☞ Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

☞ John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

☞ 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

☞ Galatians 5:6: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

☞ Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

☞ 2 Timothy 2:3-4: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

☞ Hebrews 12:1: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

"First" gives the order of our diligent search. Above all things, that which Christ here identifies are to be preeminent in our activities of life. Nothing is to equal or to surpass in importance the items he names; these are to be first in importance and in the order of our searching.

Seek first "*the kingdom of God and his righteousness*." The kingdom of God is the church of Christ (Matt. 16:16-19; Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2f; 1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 2; Col. 1:13f; Eph. 1:3; Eph. 5). The common notion of modern religious men is that the church is unimportant. They fail to see that the church and the kingdom are one

and the same. If they could learn this truth, then the Lord's statement would become as meaningful to them as it is to us. It is of such great importance that it must be placed first in our priorities. If one puts the church first, will he stay away from the assemblies? Will he refuse to give? Will he work for it?

Seek the righteousness of God. God's righteousness is placed on the same plane as the kingdom. They are joined by the copulative conjunction *and*. It is in the church that we are able to work righteousness; be fully obedient to the will of God. If we do thus, then all these things (food, clothing, etc.) will be thrown in as an added blessing. The primary blessings are spiritual; these material essentials are given *to boot*.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34). Don't borrow from tomorrow's possible troubles and struggles; they are more than sufficient in each day. Bridges are to be crossed only when we come to them. Do not be filled with worry over what evil might arise tomorrow. Do not increase the struggles of today by adding to them those which belong to the future. "God governs in the affairs of man; and if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?" (Benjamin Franklin)

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## THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH

by Max Patterson

More and more people are abandoning the concept of an absolute truth – truth that is the truth for all times, and cultures, and for all people – truth that is the truth regardless of whether one believes it. I suspect we would be amazed at the answers we would get if we asked at random whether people believe in an absolute truth. In fact, such inquiry was made at a large university of twenty or more individuals interviewed at random. Every one of them but one answered somewhat as follows:

"Truth is whatever you believe."

"There is no absolute truth."

"If there were such a thing as absolute truth, how could we know what it is?"

"People who believe in absolute truth are dangerous."

Truth to more and more people is relative. What is true and right for one person might not be for another. Truth is not a fixed reality but is something decided by the individual or group in any given set of circumstances. It is very much like the situation ethics controversy of the 1960's, i.e., fixed law or rules do not govern the situation. Rather every situation creates its own rules. Truth changes as a matter of taste or fashion.

This is called today postmodernism, or it is, at least, one facet of postmodern thinking.

However, such theories of men do not take into account the fact that human beings are made in the image of God. Such does not take into account the fact that God deals with man today through an inerrant, infallible, and inspired Word. Such does not take into account that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and he claimed, "I am the truth." John 14:6.

Jesus said three things would happen if we abide (live, dwell) in the truth. (John 8:31, 32)

**1. We would be His disciples.** A disciple is a learner, among other things.

**2. We would know the truth.** When we abide, or live with the word, we learn and know the truth. What great value there is in knowing the truth.

**3. The truth will make us free.** This is true in all areas of life. We are particularly thankful it is true in the moral and spiritual realm.

## "Buy The Truth, And Sell It Not."

Proverbs 23:23

A wise man, a long time ago, said, Buy the truth, and sell it not." Prov. 23:23. Since Jesus said He is the truth, and the truth will make men free, we can understand why Peter said, "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth..." in I Peter 1:22.

Regardless of what men may say, there is an absolute truth. We must recognize it, believe it, and obey it. The alternative is not something we wish to believe, just as the alternative to going to heaven is not somewhere we wish to go.

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## The Procrastinating Servant (?)

by Jack Williams

*14 years old* - "I've just become a Christian, I don't know enough and I'm still too young to be involved in the work of the church."

*16 years old* - "I've just got my driver's license. I have to work to take care of my driving expenses. And of course this is the time in my life when I am very busy with friends, and you wouldn't believe all the school activities I have! I'll get involved a little later."

*18 years old* - "I just graduated from high school! Now I need a little time for myself before I enter the 'real world.' I'll have more time for the work of the church later."

*20 years old* - "I never knew college took so much time! When I get out and on my own I'll have time for church work then."

*22 years old* - "Boy, did you have any idea how hard it was to get started in the work place? It takes all my energy to get my career on line. And on top of that I just got married... I have to spend time to mold my new family life, too. In a couple of years I'll be ready to really dig into the work of the church."

*24 years old* - "Children! I never believed my parents when they told me how much time and money it took to raise them. I sure don't have time for the work of the church now... but when my kids get older I'll be able to do my share of the work then."

*36 years old* - "It seems the older the kids get the more they are involved in! Home from work, then to the school functions, then sports... I'll be glad when the kids get older so I can really be involved in the work of the church."

*46 years old* - "I've never had so much fun! Grandchildren! I should have had them first (Ha!). I can't deprive them... when they get older I'll be able to really be involved in the church."

*56 Years old* - "I'm on my last push at work now. I've got to really bear down for a few years now so I can be ready for retirement. And of course we have our place at the lake we're fixing up. In a few years I'll be able to quit the 'rat race' and really get involved in the church."

*66 years old* - "Retirement at last! I've worked hard so many years and now I can enjoy the fruit of my efforts. It's time now

for the young ones here at church to carry on and let us 'veterans' rest a little."

Instead of such a person as described above, isn't it great to see people who use their abilities in God's service NOW? Which are we?

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*If a man you regard as an enemy criticizes you, profit by his criticism instead of trying to show that he is also bad.*

*Sometimes you can know which way you are headed by looking at the crowd with you.*

*When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life in such a manner that when you die the world cries and you rejoice.*

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## GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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