

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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IN HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE

Part 1 - How To Be Saved

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

The desire to live forever is universal and strong in mankind. Yet the plain truth is that we all will die. *“What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?”* (Psalm 89:48) Physical death is the penalty God placed upon mankind because of the sins of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:17-19). One thing said of all human beings, even those who lived to be the oldest recorded ages, is *“and he died”* (Genesis 5:20, 26) [Enoch (Genesis 5:20-24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-2, 11) are the only two apparent exceptions recorded in Scripture. These both passed from this life to heaven, but not in the usual manner of physical death.] Since the events in Eden mankind has been fearful of death, but Jesus Christ came *“to destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Death is properly defined as “a separation.” Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body (James 2:26). The Scriptures speak of another death, an eternal death, in contrast with eternal life. Eternal death is the separation of the soul from God, as punishment for personal sins. Romans 3:23 says, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* Romans 6:23 says, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* So, while we all have sinned and deserve to die both physically and eternally, we can be saved from

all death through Christ. One warning the apostle Paul gives is that *“Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). However, by coming to *“know God”* and by *“obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* one can be saved from this eternal destruction!

OVERCOMING DEATH THROUGH CHRIST

Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us from the penalty of our sins and make possible eternal life (John 3:16). The apostle Paul taught, *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through Him”* (Romans 5:8-9, ASV). Jesus *“loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God . . .”* (Ephesians 5:2). There is no other person or way we can be saved from our sins. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). The apostle Peter said of Christ, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12).

In John 11, Jesus went to the tomb of His friend Lazarus to raise him from the dead. The Lord used this occasion to show that

He can raise from the dead those who have physically died. He also taught that there is a death that no one needs to suffer, if we believe in Him (cf. John 8:24). He told Lazarus' sister, Martha, *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”* (John 11:25-26). Even though we all will die physically, unless the Lord Jesus comes again first, He will raise us from the dead. He showed His ability to do that when He raised Lazarus from the dead, although he had been dead for four days and was beginning to stink from decomposition (John 11:38-44). See also Luke 7:11-15; 8:41-42, 49-55. Although we will die, that will not be the final destruction of our bodies, for they will be raised again. Our resurrection bodies will be raised incorruptible, suited for our heavenly habitation (1 Corinthians 15:1-58; 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8). Therefore, we will overcome physical death when Jesus raises us from the dead. There are two possible destinies for those raised. Christ said, *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:28-29). Which do you hope for?

Now notice the other statement Jesus made to Martha; that *“whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die”* (John 11:26). What death is Jesus saying we never have to experience? Not physical death, for we all shall die, as God has *“appointed”* such to be the destiny of our earthly life (Hebrews 9:27). The other death we do not have to suffer is

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the death of the soul, eternal separation from God because of our sins.

Just who is that person who "liveth and believeth" in Christ that "shall never die"? Faith in Jesus Christ that leads us to "obey the gospel" saves us from eternal spiritual death. Instead of being separated from God eternally, we shall be in His presence with everlasting life. Christ said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Spiritually, we are **dead in sin** before we obey the gospel (Ephesians 2:1). If we do not obey the gospel before we die our physical death, our eternal spiritual death (separation from God) becomes certain (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Though one may be alive physically while spiritually dead in sin (1 Timothy 5:6), when one becomes a Christian, we are told that God "**made us alive** [spiritually] together with Christ" and has saved us by grace (Ephesians 5:5). Note that the Lord said we must

hear His word and **believe** on God who sent Him in order to have everlasting life. In another passage Christ said "Verily, verily I say unto you, **If a man keep my word, he shall never see death**" (John 8:51, ASV). Thus, hearing, believing, and keeping Christ's word are essential to escape eternal spiritual death and obtain eternal life.

OBEYING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Remember that those who "obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Obeying the gospel begins with hearing it and believing it, but **there is more involved in obeying the gospel than faith alone**. For example, "among the chief rulers [of the Jews] many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43). The demons (devils, KJV) believed that Jesus was the Son of God and confessed that to Jesus, but surely that did not save them (Matthew 8:28-29; cf. James 2:19). James 2:26 plainly says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." We are saved from our sins and thus have a hope of heaven by faith, **but not by faith alone!**

In order for faith to be acceptable to God, it must be a faith which acts in obedience to His word. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.**" Jesus asked others who believed in Him, "And why do ye call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). One of the Bible's best definitions of faith states, "But without faith it is impossible to please him," and then goes on to define faith as to "believe that [God] is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews

11:6). Note the active faith of those mentioned in Hebrews 11 - "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice that Cain (verse 4); Enoch [walked with God, Genesis 5:4] pleased God (verse 5); Noah moved with godly fear, prepared an ark (verse 6); Abraham obeyed, sojourned, offered Isaac (verses 8-9, 17); and on it goes, adding more proof to James' statement that "**faith without works is dead**" (James 2:20, 26).

What then, does one earn salvation by doing meritorious works, contrary to what other New Testament writers like Paul have said (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5)? Certainly not! It is as Jesus said, "So likewise ye, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). The fact that we cannot do enough good works to earn our salvation does not mean that we do not have to obey what Christ has said we must do in order to be saved. The truth is, the blood of Christ does not save us unless we obey Him. **Jesus "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him"** (Hebrews 5:9).

SAVED BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

A multitude of passages testify to the fact that we are saved by the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28; Acts 20:28; Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:14, 20; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 1:5 et al.). However, in order for us to be saved by Christ's blood, we must appropriate the merits of His saving blood the way He tells us to do so. No one has been saved automatically just because Christ shed His blood on the cross. Jesus prayed on the cross for God to forgive those who crucified Him (Luke 23:24). Those who crucified Jesus were not forgiven the instant He prayed that prayer, for fifty days later on Pentecost the apostle Peter told the Jews that they were still guilty of their part

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of that most horrible deed. Peter charged, "*Jesus of Nazareth . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*" (Acts 2:22-23).

How could those guilty Jews appropriate the saving benefits of Christ's blood? How can any one of us have the merits of Christ's blood cleanse us from our sins? Dear friends, that is the most important question you can ever ask! Christ's blood is **what** saves us, but **when** does God save us by Christ's blood? After preaching that Christ was crucified, Peter continued to tell the Jews that although Jesus died and was buried, He arose victorious, ascended to heaven and is enthroned at God's right hand, as the prophets foretold (Acts 2:22-35; cf. 3:13-18). Peter announced, "*Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*" (Acts 2:36). This statement meant that the Jews must **believe** with all confidence ("know assuredly") that Jesus was the promised Messiah (Christ) and King (Lord) of Old Testament prophecy. Those who did **believe** Peter's claim "*were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" (verse 37). Please note that **if** it were true that we are saved by faith alone, when these Jews gave evidence of their faith by this statement, they were already saved and would not need to do anything more to obtain forgiveness of sins! However, this obviously is **not** true, for Peter told the inquiring Jews, "**Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**" (verse 38). Therefore, before these **believing** Jews could be forgiven of their sins they also had to **repent and be baptized** in Christ's name. That same promise of remission of sins is for all men and women (verse 39), and all must receive it in the same manner (Acts 10:34-35). Christ's blood is **what** provides remission

of our sins (Matthew 26:28). After we believe, repent, and are baptized is **when** remission of sins is granted (Acts 2:36-38).

This same concept of "what" and "when" applies to our sins being "washed away." Revelation 1:5 says that "*Jesus Christ . . . loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*" Christ's blood is **what** washes away sins. Ananias was sent by God to tell Saul of Tarsus (who became the apostle Paul), "*And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). Calling on the Lord's name in baptism is **when** those sins are washed away. One final illustration of "what" and "when" will suffice. The New Testament book of Hebrews, contrasting the sacrifices which brought cleansing of the flesh under the Old Testament, asks, "*How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*" (9:14, ASV). Christ's blood is **what** makes possible a good clean conscience regarding sin. Peter, speaking of the salvation of Noah and his family by the waters of the flood, said, "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 3:20-21). Thus, at baptism, if preceded by faith and repentance, is **when** initially we can have a good conscience toward God regarding our salvation from sin.

CONCLUSION

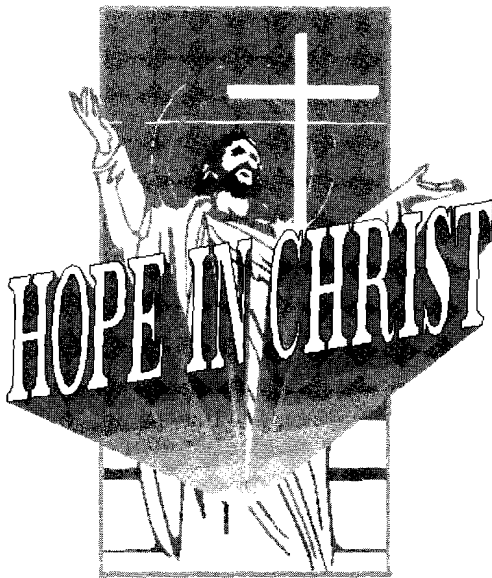
"Hope" should be defined as desire plus confident expectation. Many desire to be saved and have an eternal home in heaven, but have no Biblical reason to have a hope, a confident expectation of going to heaven when they die. In spite of the Scriptures we have shown to the contrary, some people insist that they were saved by faith alone, before they were

baptized. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; and First Peter 3:21 and other passages show that baptism is essential to salvation from sin. **No one in the New Testament was ever baptized because their sins were already forgiven, but they were baptized in order to have their sins forgiven.** Many have been baptized for the wrong reasons, to join a particular denomination or to declare they are saved before baptism. Such is not salvation in the manner by which God said we will be saved eternally through Christ's blood. Therefore, there can be no hope of heaven in following such teaching.

Furthermore, we have seen that our hope of salvation is centered "**in** Christ" (Ephesians 1:3, 7). We are not "**in** Christ" and saved until we are baptized **into** Christ. That is a bold statement, but one backed up by Scripture. "*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*" (Romans 6:3-4). Another passage affirms the same understanding, that baptism places us "**into**" Christ, wherein is salvation. "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Galatians 3:25-27).

We will be delighted to study this matter further with anyone who desires to do so. If we have misapplied the Scriptures in any way, you will be our friend for demonstrating how we did so. However, we believe we have set forth the truth of God's word on how we can be saved from our past sins and have the hope of heaven when this life is over, or when Jesus comes. With the book, chapter, and verse teaching of this article, you can have a genuine Biblical hope of salvation now and heaven hereafter.

[Part 2 in this two part series will deal with "How To Stay Saved."]



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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; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I 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; I 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; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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