

ETERNAL

SALVATION

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?
(7)

By Arlen L. Chirwood

The message surrounding the gospel of the grace of God is given *in very simple terms* in Scripture. In fact, it is *so simple* that man often misses it. And any person, missing the one true message given by the infinite God and drawing from his own finite wisdom and knowledge, invariably — he can't help but so do — ends up with a corrupted salvation message.

The salvation message, that which makes salvation possible for fallen man, is clearly stated in I Cor. 15:3:

“...Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”

The one key thought in the salvation message is *death and shed blood* (e.g., Gen. 3:21; 22:8, 13), which is what God requires (Ex. 12:13; Heb. 9:22). And the one key word in the salvation message is *believe* (John 3:15, 16), which is also what God requires (John 3:18).

The Lamb has died, His blood has been shed, and all that is left — all that can possibly be left — for man to do is simply *believe that which has already been done on his behalf*.

Eternal salvation is *by grace* (that which God is able to do completely apart from human merit) *through faith* (through *believing* on God's Son [Eph. 2:8, 9]), and it is based entirely upon *the finished work of Another* (John 19:30). Nothing which man has done, is presently doing, or will ever do can have anything to do with his eternal destiny. Man can do no more than receive *by faith* that which has already been done on his behalf. This is why Scripture states:

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

This statement is in response to a question in the preceding verse, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (v. 30).

And, within another frame of reference, the response to this question could only be, “*Nothing!*” This would have to be the response simply because there is not one single thing left for unsaved man to do (nor could he do anything if something were left, for, *he is spiritually dead and incapable of acting in the spiritual realm* [Eph. 2:1, 5]).

It is of interest to note that the question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” and the answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” only appear together *one place* in the entire Bible. Scripture is filled with information concerning redemption, but Acts 16:30, 31 is *the only place*, from Genesis to Revelation, where the question concerning eternal salvation is asked and answered in so many words.

Thus, within a *completely Biblical framework*, if the question in Acts 16:30 is asked, there can be *only one answer*: “Believe...” *Man's ideas, thoughts, comments are of no moment. God has spoken, and that's the end of the matter.*

John 3:16 is often called “the gospel in a nutshell” by individuals seeking to draw attention to the overall salvation message stated in its simplest form in Scripture. God, because of His love for

fallen man — *created in His image, after His likeness, for a purpose* (Gen. 1:26-28) — “gave his only begotten Son [I Cor. 15:3], that whosoever *believeth* in him [Acts 16:31] should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Everything, in its entirety, to procure man’s salvation was done by Another. It had to be accomplished by Another, for the one being redeemed was “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), *totally incapable* of acting on his own behalf.

Christ is the One Who died, Christ is the One Who performed the work to procure man’s salvation, and *God is satisfied with His Son’s finished work.*

When Christ cried out from the Cross in “a loud voice” near the ninth hour, “It is finished” (Luke 23:46; John 19:30), He used one word in the Greek text — *Tetelestai* — which could be better translated, “It has been finished.” *Tetelestai* is a perfect tense usage of *teleo*, which means “to bring to an end,” “to complete.” And the perfect tense refers to action *completed* in past time, with the results of that action extending into and existing during present time *in a finished state.*

All of the work surrounding man’s

redemption which Christ had come to perform had, at that point in time, been *completed.* This was the announcement which Christ made, in “a loud voice”; and, because of that involved in the announcement, there was then no longer any need for Him to continue His sufferings on the Cross. Thus, immediately after He cried out, “It has been finished,” He “gave up the ghost [*lit.*, ‘He breathed out’ (He expired)]” (Luke 23:46).

The work of Christ at Calvary, from the point He cried out, “It has been finished,” has existed in *exactly the same finished state* in which He proclaimed it to exist at that time. It has existed as a *work completed in past time which extends into present time (in a finished state) and which will extend into all the ages comprising eternity ahead (in the same finished state).*

Nothing can ever be added, and nothing can ever be taken away. That is to say, *nothing can ever change* relative to Christ’s finished work at Calvary.

That’s the way God’s procurement of man’s salvation had to occur. Once Christ’s work had been finished, that’s the way His work had to always continue to exist — *in a finished state* —

throughout both time and eternity.

Because of Christ’s finished work, salvation is extended to man “without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1); and *apart from Christ’s finished work,* there is no salvation.

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already [*lit.*, ‘has already been condemned’ (a perfect tense)], because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

It is utterly impossible — and foolish to even consider — that finite man, “dead in trespasses and sins,” could add one thing to or take one thing from the finished work of the infinite God through His Son.

All man can possibly do is simply receive, through *believing on the Son,* that which has already been done on his behalf.

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