

# ETERNAL SALVATION

## What Saith the Scriptures?

Man's Way or God's Way?

By Arlen L. Chitwood

**For by grace are ye saved through faith;  
and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:  
Not of works, lest any man should boast.  
For we are his workmanship, created  
in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God  
hath before ordained that we should walk in  
them** (Eph. 2:8-10).

The Church has entered a rather strange era during the past several decades. The clear, simple message of salvation by grace through faith has come under attack, not from without, but from within the ranks of what is looked upon as fundamental Christianity itself; and the distorted message being promulgated, rather than being rejected, is finding ready acceptance.

In essence, individuals are being told that *more is required than simple belief*. They are being told that a person must go beyond this and *make Christ Lord of his life*; he must possess what is termed *saving faith*, a faith which will result in works; a faith which will result in his living after a certain fashion, bringing forth fruit, etc.

And the converse of the preceding is often brought into the picture. Christians are being told that if works do not follow a person's profession of faith, if that person doesn't live a certain way, if he doesn't bring forth fruit, the absence of these things shows that *he has never exercised saving faith*. That is to say, *the person has never really been saved*.

Then, usually in connection with the preceding and to further complicate the matter, the expression "easy believism" is being thrown around. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is made to be something completely alien to that which Scripture teaches. That is, "believing" is made to be difficult, or the word "believe" is being redefined to make it mean something which it doesn't mean at all.

Why do these problems exist within the ranks of that segment of Christianity where there should be a clear understanding and proclamation of the message surrounding salvation by grace through faith? The answer is really very simple, though it is an answer involving matters not understood at all by numerous Christians, allowing the problems to exist.

### By Grace through Faith

At the outset, before looking at the central problem, note that which Scripture teaches about salvation by grace through faith.

The clear gospel message, the good news, is:

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3).

And that which Christ has done on our behalf allows God, through His Spirit, to impart life to unredeemed man, who is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). It allows God, through His Spirit to breathe life into the one having no life, with the person then passing "from death unto life" (John 5:24).

The Spirit breathes life into lifeless man solely on the basis of that which Christ has done on man's behalf. And unsaved man can do no more than receive that which has already been done for him. *Nothing else enters into the matter.*

When Christ referred to His finished work immediately before His death on the Cross, He cried out in "a loud voice" — *Tetelestai* — one word, which has been translated in the English text, "It is finished" (John 19:30; cf. Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46).

*Tetelestai* is the perfect tense form of the Greek verb, *teleo*, which means "to bring something to an end or completion." This word in the perfect tense could be more accurately expressed and translated, "It has been finished," or "It has been completed."

That to which Christ referred in John 19:30 was His work of redemption. The perfect tense which He used refers to *a work completed in past time, with the results of that work extending into and existing during present time in a finished state*. At the moment Christ cried out, announcing that His work had been completed, there was then no reason for His death to be prolonged. The blood of the Passover Lamb had been shed, and God had "laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5, 6, 12; cf. II Cor. 5:21).

Thus, at this time, "he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit [*lit.*, comparing the other gospel accounts, 'He breathed out,' *i.e.*, *He expired, willingly giving up His life*]" (John 10:17, 18; 19:30).

Redeemed man has been saved by grace through faith solely on the basis of that which Christ referred to when He cried out from the Cross, "*Tetelestai*." The words "are ye saved [*lit.* 'you have been saved']" in Eph. 2:8 — "For by grace *you have been saved...*" — are also the translation of a perfect tense in the Greek text. The reference, as *tetelestai*, is to *a work completed in past time, with the results of this work extending into the present and existing in a finished state*.

At the moment a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ (places his trust, reliance in Christ, *i.e.*, receives, by faith, that which Christ has done on his behalf), the Spirit not only *breathes life into that person* but the Spirit also *takes up His abode in the individual* (cf. Gen. 1:2b; 2:7; Ezek. 37:1; I Cor. 6:19). Through this means, the man passing "from death unto life" becomes a *new creation* "in Christ," a part of *the one new man* (II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:1, 15).

Redeemed man thus possesses a salvation wherein everything pertaining to works/actions is past. The work necessary to effect one's salvation (Christ's work) is past and complete, and the work ef-

fecting one's salvation itself (the Spirit's work) is past and complete. The latter (the Spirit's work) is based on the former (Christ's work). Thus, Divine intervention on man's behalf is *the only work seen throughout*.

Relative to one's presently possessed eternal salvation, redeemed man did nothing in the past, nor can he do anything present or future.

- 1) Man can do nothing to be saved.
- 2) Man can do nothing to stay saved.
- 3) And man can do nothing to show that he has been saved.

Man's works — before, at the time of, or following salvation — *cannot enter into the matter after any fashion*. If they could, salvation would cease to be "by grace" (*that which God is able to do completely apart from human intervention, merit*).

*Only Christ's finished work on the cross can enter into the matter*. Salvation was and remains "of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

Redeemed man possesses a present, completed salvation based on the past, completed work of Another. Both man's present salvation and Christ's past work exist in a finished state, and neither can *ever* be altered, changed, added to, taken from, etc. *One's salvation is just as complete and secure as the work upon which it rests*.

(For Divine intervention throughout the work surrounding man's presently possessed eternal salvation, along with the corresponding complete absence of any action on man's part, refer to the unchangeable, foundational type concerning God's restoration of a ruined creation in the opening verses of Scripture, in Genesis chapter one [ref. the author's salvation tract, "As Seen in the Earth's Restoration."])

### Easy Believism

"Easy Believism" is a rather strange expression, especially when one considers the manner in which it is used today. Scripture presents salvation after one

fashion alone — by grace through faith (*i.e.*, through believing) — and *no place in Scripture is believing on the Lord Jesus Christ ever presented as something difficult*.

Man, in his perversion of the clear teaching of salvation by grace through faith, has sought to make believing difficult; and he has coined the expression, "easy believism," which, in reality, reflects, in a negative way, on that which Scripture teaches in this realm.

Such is also part and parcel with what has come to be called, "Lordship Salvation." This expression is actually a misnomer, for, in relation to eternal salvation (the manner in which the expression is used), there can be no such thing as "Lordship Salvation." *Salvation* is one thing, and *Lordship* is another. Christ exercising control over one's life, as the word "Lordship" portends, can *never* be used in conjunction with eternal salvation. Such must *always* be subsequent to one's salvation experience.

An unsaved person is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). He is incapable of making Christ Lord of something which he doesn't even possess. He must *first* pass "from death unto life" (John 5:24). *Then*, and *only then*, can the matter of "Lordship" enter.

Nor would it be correct to say that unsaved man, in order to be saved, has to believe to the extent that Christ becomes, after some fashion, at the moment of belief or at some subsequent time, Lord of his life. That is, as it is sometimes expressed, "True belief will result in a salvation which cannot be separated from obedience."

Such a thought would be absurd. *Life being brought into existence* on the one hand and *obedience* on the other (the one having been made alive following the leadership of the Lord as He exercises control over that life) are two different things entirely. Both could not possibly be brought to pass at the same time.

Scripturally, spiritual control of one's life *always* appears in connection with maturity in the faith, not in connection with initially exercising faith, resulting in salvation. And a Christian may or may not experience spiritual growth in this respect, which can have nothing to do with a prior belief, which allowed him

to pass "from death unto life."

A servant within a household in the world today may or may not submit to his master's wishes, but such submission has nothing whatsoever to do with his being or not being a servant. It has to do with his being a faithful or an unfaithful servant.

And this is exactly the way Scripture presents the matter. *Becoming a servant in the Lord's house* is one thing, but *submission as a servant in the house* is something entirely different. The latter is *always* subsequent to — *never* in connection with — the former.

There is nothing difficult about believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, becoming a Christian, entering into servitude. *Grace on God's part* and *difficulty on man's part* are incompatibles in the message pertaining to eternal salvation. Difficulty on man's part arises only after he becomes a Christian, only after he possesses a life in which such difficulty can manifest itself.

How easy is it for an unsaved man to exercise faith, resulting in salvation? It's just as easy as it was for the Israelites in Egypt during Moses' day to apply the blood of a slain lamb to the door posts and lintel of the houses in which they dwelled (Ex. 12:3-7); or it's just as easy as it was for these same Israelites, later in the wilderness, to look upon the brazen serpent which had been raised up on a pole (Num. 21:5-9).

(Again, refer to the author's salvation tracts where each of the preceding is dealt with.)

"Christ our Passover" has been "sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7), and the blood can be applied through a simple act of faith; or Christ, as the serpent in the wilderness, has been *lifted up*, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15).

How simple and easy is salvation? It was during Moses' day and remains today, *Look and live*. It's that simple and easy.

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