

The Life and Teachings of Jesus 16

How One Condition Saves Souls

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In looking at the life and teachings of Jesus, we have been focused on the salvation experience. In the previous lesson, I concluded stating believers have security and hope in Christ and explaining how He redeems us now and later.

In Christ, we have security and hope because of His work and His promise. We are the benefactors of all the work He has done for us. We have security of eternal life that begins the moment we believe in Jesus Christ. We are secure because of the redemption of our inward born-again spirit, and we have hope in the completion of our redemption with a newly born-again body.

Paul wrote of this redemption we hope for in Romans 8:23, saying, “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

When we believe, we are saved. Our inward man, as Paul refers to it in Romans 7:22 is born again and imputed with His righteousness. Once you have the righteousness of God, it is impossible to sin. First John 3:9 makes this very clear, saying, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” Just as God cannot sin, those born of Him cannot sin. It is impossible to sin because they are made righteous.

But for believers physically alive, this occurred in the inward man. It was a spiritual change, not a physical change. We still expect to die physically. Everyone dies physically. Our bodies have not been redeemed, yet. Our bodies still sin. For this reason, Paul wrote in Romans 8:23, “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” We are waiting for the day our body will be redeemed. And it will be redeemed. It is God’s promise.

God’s promise of what will happen is the reason we are waiting in hope for it. Hope is for that which has not occurred. But when hoping for God’s promise, it is not the hope of wishful uncertainty. Rather, it is hope of confident anticipation for that which is guaranteed and cannot be prevented.

It will occur because God promised complete redemption, and because He already made complete redemption possible with the redemption of our inward man. With the imputed righteousness of God inwardly, you cannot sin. If you cannot sin, you cannot die. Your body will be redeemed because your inward spirit already is. This is guaranteed security.

There are many religions and denominations concerned with an important question that arises from the topic of security and hope in Christ. I have spent countless hours talking to such people trying to help them with Scripture to understand what God says.

The concern raised by legalists is trying to determine what the threat is to our security and hope in Christ. The Bible says, there is no need to be concerned, because there is no threat to our security and our hope. What God has done cannot be changed. He paid for the sins we have committed (Romans 3:25), and He purges and prevents

sin in our inward man at the moment He saves us. For this reason, we have security, eternal security in Christ. Once saved, always saved. Nothing can change that status. Jesus said in John 10:28, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Eternal security begins the moment we believe. It is at that moment, Jesus applies the payment for our sins, and at that moment, He miraculously changes us from being sinful to being sinless in our inward man, spiritually. The redemption of our body is promised to take place later. This is our hope.

Hope in the promise of God is different from hope in ourselves or in others. The word *hope* is the same, regardless of what we hope in. It means anticipating something that has yet to happen. But the cause and source in which we hope is different.

Unlike hope in the promises or people, hope in God's promises is guaranteed. He backs His promises with His immutable will, His righteous quality that makes it impossible for Him to lie, and His omnipotence that makes it possible for Him to do whatever He desires to do. Nothing can foil or prevent Him from doing that which He promises to do. If God says He will do it, it will be done. It is as good as done. Our hope in His promise is the confident anticipation of Him fulfilling His guaranteed and unpreventable promise. If He could be foiled, then our hope would just be wishful. But we are not wishing for the possibility of something to happen. We are hoping, that is we are waiting with absolute certainty, for God to fulfill His guaranteed promise.

When and after He redeems our bodies, we will no longer hope for it. In Romans 8:24-25, Paul explained the reason for hope, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." We do not hope for God's promise of eternal life. We have it. However, we hope for the completion of our redemption with the raising of our bodies and with our dwelling in the new heavens and new earth.

What makes redemption possible? Obviously, God makes redemption possible by the work of His Son Jesus Christ. And His work to make redemption possible is done.

But if His work is done, and Jesus died for all, what prevents redemption from sweeping through the entire population of humanity? Why is the redemption of all souls not automatically applied? Why are so many lost and unredeemed? Why did Jesus say in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Why will most not be redeemed?

The reason souls are not automatically redeemed is due to God's choice to apply redemption only to those souls who believe in Him. God has chosen not to impose or to force His desire and will on us. He wants all to be saved, but He also wants all to make the free-will choice to permit Him to save them.

God's desire to save everyone is clearly stated in the Bible. First Timothy 2:4 refers to God's will, saying, "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Titus 2:11 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Christ did not die for some, He died for all. God is not reserving His grace for only some. He is making it available for everyone.

In Isaiah 45:22, God says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

In John 3:16, Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the promise from God that He is making His gift of eternal life available to whoever believes in Him.

If God's desire was fulfilled automatically, everyone would be saved. His will is that none perish. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

In Ezekiel 18:32, God says, "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves , and live ye."

And in Matthew 23:37, Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

God has made salvation conditional. He requires that we choose to believe in Him without attempts to offer good deeds. He wants us to believe that His promise and work are sufficient. He wants us to believe that we have nothing to offer that is sufficient. He wants us to believe that we must depend on Him 100% to save us. We must believe that He must save us despite our unworthiness.

If we do not believe in Him, we cannot be saved. John 3:18 says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

1 John 5:13 says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

John 5:24 says, "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 6:40 says, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:47 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

There are some who argue that making salvation conditional makes salvation by works. But not according to the Bible. The Bible is very clear that salvation is not by works.

Ro 3:20 says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Ro 3:28 says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Tit 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Ephesians 2:8–9 "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."

Ro 11:6 says, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

If the Bible says salvation is only for those who choose to believe, and salvation is not by works, then believing is not a work. The condition of believing cannot be a work of the law, or about good works and good deeds.

There are Scriptures that specifically state belief is not a work by contrasting belief with works.

Galatians 2:16 says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Speaking of Abraham, Romans 4:2–3 says, "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

Romans 4:5 says, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Belief is a condition. It is not a work. Regardless of what some say or how they feel about it, belief is not a work. Scripture says it is not a work.

Believing in God is believing that works cannot save you, that there is nothing you can do to be worthy of salvation, that you are unworthy, and that God must save you despite you.

Believing is credited as something God makes possible.

John 6:29 says, "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

Believing is not the work of man. It is the work of God. This is not because God believes for us. It is not because God makes us believe in Him. It is because without God, we would have nothing to believe in. God is the Savior we believe in, and God is the one who reveals to us what we must believe in.

God personalizes His promise and invitation for salvation when He convicts us. After hearing the Gospel message by the words of men, the Spirit of God confirms those words in our hearts and makes it real. It is at that point God personally confronts us with confirmation of who He is, of what we are, of what He has done to save us, and of His invitation to believe unto salvation or not.

This personal conviction and confirmation from God make us accountable to Him, not to the messenger. And this personalized confirmation separates the true God from all the false gods claiming to be gods. This personalized confirmation identifies which God you must believe in. Conviction ensures that you are believing in the true and living God, who is the only Savior who can save you.

Do you know the true and living Savior? Have you accepted as true that Jesus Christ is the only name under heaven whereby you must be saved? Have you accepted as true that there is nothing you can do to be worthy of God's gift of salvation? Do you believe that God loves you and has personally invited you to believe Him?

This is the only way to be saved. Amen.

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