

IRON SHARPENS IRON LIFE

How does one become a partaker/receiver/beneficiary of this gospel?

Salvation is by grace through faith: Justified by faith

Key verse: *by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. (Isa 53:11, NIV)*

Introduction

To be a partaker of eternal life promised in the gospel is to be saved. Therefore, in this article, we are going to talk about how one is saved, the object of saving faith and what a preacher is required to do with regard to the proclamation of the gospel. These are foundational things in the Christian faith hence it is important to be well taught in these matters. Our sanctification is dependent on the truth of the word of God: *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17, NIV)*. Therefore, each subject we address should drive each one of us to desire the word of God more. *"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:2-3, NIV)*.

How is one saved? One is saved by grace through faith

The Bible teaches us that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ. *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph 2:8-10)*. The whole of salvation of God is given to us by grace and we receive this gift by faith. *"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" (Rom 11:6, KJV)*. When Jesus was asked, *"What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:28-29, NIV)*. What the Lord wants us to know is that believing in Him is of ultimate importance than us seeking to do any good work without being reconciled to God. *"For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6, NASU)*.

What is faith?

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Heb 11:1-2, NASU). This definition follows the context of Hebrews 11 which is the list of the men and women of faith. Why are they called men and women of faith? We are taught that they took hold of God’s promises and welcomed all that God promised at a distance even though they did not receive what was promised and God was not ashamed to be called their God (Heb 11:13). They were convinced of God’s promises because they knew that He who promised does not lie (Heb 11:11). Now this definition drives us to look deep into the promises of God and his character. The assurance of these people was rooted in who God is—that is his faithfulness to bring to pass that which he has promised. Their hope was that which God promised.

It is then important to know that faith is marked by assurance that come from God, hope that come from God and conviction rooted in who God is. All these are rooted in the Character of God, his work and his promises. These are very important to note because when we talk about believing in Christ for eternal life we still have the same elements taught.

Applying the above knowledge: This is how we apply the above knowledge of faith:

- a) ***Conversion:*** Since salvation is rooted in the character of God, when we believe God for eternal life we are assured that eternal life because God is faithful. We hope for forgiveness from God when we realize that we are sinners and God who is faithful forgives us because our hope is in Him through Christ our Lord. We live convinced that we are forgiven and have eternal life not because of our works but because of God’s faithfulness in forgiving those who believe in Him through Christ Jesus our Lord. By faith we have the Holy Spirit and we cry unto God, “Abba Father.”
- b) ***Life after conversion:*** Our lives after conversion continue by faith. For when we stumble in our walk with Christ by sinning against God *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9, NIV). Our hope for the future is shaped by who God is and what he has promised in Christ. We live with a hope of the resurrection because Christ is the firstborn from the dead and we also will rise from the dead just as our Lord did. We hope for an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ because God promised those who believe an inheritance. In light of that we live that pleases him who has promised us such blessings.

What to know about saving faith

- a) ***Saving faith rest in the person of Christ: How do we come to rest in the Character of God?***

Paul helps by citing Isaiah he says, *“Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ (Rom 10:16-18, NIV).* We come to know God as our savior through his word. So when we are talking about the saving faith, we are talking about faith that cannot be separated from the knowledge of God. Isaiah said, *“by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities” (Isa 53:11, NIV).* Our Lord helps us to see that eternal life is linked to knowing him and the Father. In his

high priestly prayer he said, “*this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*” (John 17:3-4, NIV).

b) *Saving faith rest in the work of Christ: What are we to know about the work the redemptive work of God?*

Saving faith is the faith that rest on the person of Christ and his redemptive work. In 1 Cor 15: 3-8, Paul tells us that “*3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born*” (1 Cor 15:3-8, NIV). In 1 Cor 15:2 Paul told the Corinthian Christians that they are saved through this message in 1 Cor 15:3-8. Now let us learn more about this content of the gospel.

The content of the gospel

This content is given in a summary form. Many Bible scholars consider this as the creed of the first century church having what is important to know about the gospel. The content draws us to Christ (the one who died for us, was buried and rose from the grave on the third day and as a resurrected Savior he was witnessed by his disciples and many people more than five hundred).

i) *The death of Christ according to scripture*

Christ died. The phrase “*according to scripture*” is used to show that what the scripture said about the death of Christ is exactly what happened to him. Isaiah says, “*it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering*” (Isa 53:10,NIV). This shows that the death of Christ happened according to God’s eternal plan and the scripture is there to make an everlasting witness to the death of Christ. Wherever the word of God is preached faithfully the death of Christ is proclaimed for the salvation of those who believe in Christ.

When Paul mentions the death of Christ according to scripture, it does not mean that he has excluded the life of Christ as being part of the content of the gospel. The phrase “Christ died for our sins” is a summary of the life of Christ. Which means when look at the birth of Christ we have to know that his purpose was to die for our sins as it written “*She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*” (Matt 1:21,NIV). The life of Christ is vital to our salvation because Christ was not just required to die for our sins but also to live a perfect life in full obedience to God so that when we talk about the righteousness of Christ given to us by faith we are talking of righteousness lived out by our Lord. God was pleased that we see that life in Christ and that life given to us by faith. Now, if it was necessary for Christ to live a perfect life, it speaks then that if he disobeyed the Father there was not going to be death on the cross for our sins. Therefore, when we reach at the cross we have to know that the cross tells us that for the sacrifice to occur and to be accepted by the Father Christ’s life is without blemish. “*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet*

was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb 4:15-16, NIV).

For our sins. The phrase “for our sins” shows us the reason for Christ death. That which is considered by God a serious problem of mankind is put to display in the death of Christ. It is for our sins that Christ died. A faithful preacher knows the weight of that truth.

When Paul mentions the death of Christ without saying the “so that,” he does not mean that the offer of eternal life is excluded in the content of the gospel. The phrase “for our sins” shows a work completed by Christ on our behalf. That truth is foundational to how we proclaim the blessings of God in the gospel. Therefore, eternal life is proclaimed because Christ died for our sins. Righteousness that comes by faith is proclaimed because Christ died for our sins.

ii) *The burial of Christ according to scripture*

Christ was buried according to scripture. Isaiah says, “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth” (Isa 53:9, NIV).

iii) *The resurrection of Christ according to scripture*

Christ rose from the grave according to the scripture. Isaiah says, “he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied” (Isa 53:10-11, NIV). On the day of Pentecost Peter in his sermon quoted Psalm 16:8-11 to show that the Holy Spirit through David prophesied of the resurrection of Christ. “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence” (Acts 2:25-28, NIV).

Since Christ rose from the grave then we come to know that the promise of life which he offers to those who believe is true for it is validated by his resurrection. For the Lord said to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26, NIV).” He first rose from the grave as the author of our salvation as Paul says in Colossians on the resurrection Christ that “Christ is the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Col 1:18-19, NIV). The resurrection answers the hope that we have as Christian of rising from the dead when Lord Jesus Christ comes the second time.

The ascension of Christ. Just as mentioned earlier about how Paul presents the truth of the gospel, it is important to mention here that the ascension of Christ is not excluded in the content of the gospel. The resurrection is foundational to our understanding of our Lord’s accession. How do we understand that Paul has not skipped the truth of the ascension of the Lord? In 1 Cor 15:8 Paul says, “And last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born (1 Cor 15:8, NIV).” According to biblical history, the conversion of Paul is recorded after the ascension of Christ. Luke says in Acts 9:3-5 “As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” The Lord spoke from heaven when stopped Paul from persecuting the church which the Lord connected in suffering because it is his body. So to affirm the conversion of Paul in this creed is to affirm that the Lord’s ascension is in the content of the gospel. We cannot talk

about Paul's conversion without mentioning the fact that the Lord spoke from heaven on that day.

Summary on the subject: to believe that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose from the grave according to the scripture and appeared to the people that bore witness which we have to this day is have the message that saves us who believe. Therefore, these things should be held: One who believes the death of Christ should believe also that Christ lived a perfect life because the death of Christ is the very witness to that perfection. (2) The one who believe that Christ rose from the dead should believe also that he ascended and He is at the right of the Majesty on high reigning until his enemies are put under his feet.

The call of salvation: who can be saved?

The Bible makes a call of salvation to everyone but only those who believe in Christ are saved. The way of salvation is exclusive—it is by faith alone in Christ alone. The following Bible passages shades light on the subject.

i. **The call to come and drink:** signifying that people are called to believe in Christ. If they realize that they are thirsty, they are called to go to God to be quenched of the thirsty. Which means If they realize that they are sinners and see they need for forgiveness, they are called to believe in Christ and they will be forgiven

- **Rev 22:17:** *"The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Rev 22:17, NIV).*
- **Isa 55:1-3:** *"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live (NIV)."*
- **John 7:37-39:** *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

ii. Salvation is given to those who believe in Christ

- **John 1:12-13:** *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. NIV*
- **John 3:16-18:** *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands*

condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

- **John 6:40:** *For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* ",NIV
- **John 5:24:** *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*
- **John 7:37-39:** *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*
- **Rom 3:21-26:** *But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

What a preacher is called to do with regard to the proclamation of the gospel: to be faith in proclaiming the gospel

The preacher is called to be faithful in proclaiming the gospel. God is the one who saves. False presentation of Christ saves no one. Jesus said it is the truth that sets us free. For more information on teaching faithfully the word of God read the article "*the call to teaching faithfully*"

CONTACT US

Ironsharpensironlife.jb@gmail.com