

Preface: "Who Loves You?" by Joe Hunt. The Gospel & Eternal Life: What One Must Believe in Order to Be Saved, John 20:31, Rom 6:22, John 5:24; 6:40, 47

Eternal Life: The Gift of God

Shreveport Bible Conference

June 20, 21, 22, 2006

East Ridge Bible Church

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Shreveport, Louisiana

I. Preface:

In November 2005, Joe Hunt, a member of our congregation and former deacon, learned that he had a terminal brain tumor. This shocking news was totally unexpected since he is the picture of good health. Ever effervescent, outgoing, friendly, and engaging, Joe's signature expression to fellow believers, friends, and associates is, "Who loves you? Joe-Moe does!"

Upon learning of his condition Joe asked his brother, Tim, and me to meet with him. He wanted to discuss how he could tell all those whom his soul loves about the fact he is going to die and why he has no problem with it. It was finally decided to fulfill this desire through the publication of a book.

Joe's vision was to tell his story by highlighting certain doctrines he had learned in his twenty years as member of Grace Doctrine Church. These doctrines are now the ones that sustain his confidence in God and His promise of eternal life. Tim and I had several discussions with Joe about these ideas, made a rough outline, and began work. Tim went into the archives and found the doctrines and wrote summaries that included Joe's comments on how they applied to his circumstances. Tim would e-mail me his writings which I edited into a first-person account, adding information that tied the various doctrines into a format that would read as Joe desired: his story about why doctrine is the *most* important thing a person can know and when death becomes a reality why it's the *only* thing a person needs to know.

On May 9th, Joe's book, *Who Loves You?* came off the presses and is now available at no charge from Joe Griffin Media Ministries. Subsequent to its release I taught a series that emphasized the Gospel and eternal life. It stressed the great confidence and courage the doctrine of eternal security provides to believers and especially for someone such as Joe who is nearing his welcome into the eternal state to be face-to-face with the Lord. Joe personally found this study to be very encouraging and his comments inspired me to prepare a distilled version of it for this year's Shreveport Bible Conference.

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II. The Gospel and Eternal Life

1 Corinthians 15:1 - Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,

v. 2 - by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

v. 3 - For I delivered to you of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

v. 4 - and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.



v. 12 - Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Gnosticism taught that the body was evil, that death separated the soul from the evil body, and therefore the idea of a resurrection body was unthinkable. Such ideas had been adopted by many members of the Corinthian church.

v. 19 - If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

v. 20 - But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

v. 21 - For since by a man came death, by a man came the resurrection of the dead.

v. 22 - For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

1. One's spiritual status and eternal future is determined by whether or not he has placed his faith in the Person and finished work of Christ on the cross. When presented with the Gospel, if a person is not confident that his faith in Christ results in eternal life then he is not saved. He is not saved because he does not believe in what the work of Christ provides.
2. God does not present the work of Christ as an initial step in a process that *leads* to salvation. He does not assert that eternal life is granted at some future time based on how one behaves between then and the day he dies.
3. The Bible presents the salvation work of Christ as a finished product. When the Lord said from the cross, "It is finished!" the sin problem of the human race was resolved. The question that then remains for each person to consider is "What think ye of Christ?"
4. The true Gospel presents the Person and work of Christ as the only way one may acquire eternal life, in fact the Apostle John concludes His Gospel by affirming the principle:

John 20:31 - These are written [γράφω, *graphō*: **consumative perfect: a completed action**] for the purpose that you may believe [**present active subjunctive of πιστεύω, *pisteuō***] that Jesus is the Christ [Χριστός, *Christos*: **מָשִׁיחַ *Mashiach*: the God-Man**], the Son of God [ὁ Υἱός τοῦ Θεός, *ho Huios tou Theos*: **a title for the deity of Christ**], and that by believing you may have [**present active subjunctive of ἔχω, *echō***] as a result eternal life [ζωή, *zōē*: **eternal life**] in His name [ὄνομα, *onoma*: **refers back to "the Christ" and "the Son of God"**].

5. Two things to note. First the verbs "to **believe**" (πιστεύω, *pisteuō*) and "to **have**" (ἔχω, *echō*) are in the subjunctive mood. In Greek syntax this ties the two verbs together. Second, a conditional situation is presented: a person is free to believe or not believe the message of the Gospel. John's Gospel was written for the *purpose* that anyone "may believe" and if he does then he will have eternal life as a *result*.
6. Salvation is contingent upon an individual placing his personal faith in Christ. But the Greek noun for faith, *pistis*, and the verb form, *pisteuō*, are both transitive and require an object.
7. The object is Christ. But there are certain things that one must believe about Christ. It must be accepted with confidence that He is both undiminished deity and true humanity in one Person forever: the God-Man Savior.

8. Further, one must believe with absolute confidence that his sins were judged in Christ on the cross. This judgment included his every sin—past, present, and future. Their judgment was removed from him and imposed on Christ.
9. Having confidence in this doctrine the individual must then have absolute confidence that his sins are no longer an issue. He has been set free from the power of his sinful nature and enslaved to God:

Romans 6:22 - Having been freed from the tyranny of the sinful nature and having become slaves to God, you are having your benefit in the form of experiential sanctification, and the outcome of eternal life.

10. Since sin is no longer an issue, the new believer is secure in the knowledge he has eternal life and will go to heaven when he dies. This confidence sustains his confidence in God and the veracity of His Word. He is now free to grow in grace in order to serve God by learning and applying His plan to life and circumstances.
11. Therefore, in order to be saved a person's faith in Christ must result in absolute confidence that the following things are true and irrevocable: (1) that his soul is delivered from eternal damnation in the lake of fire, (2) that instead he now possesses eternal life, (3) that he will go to heaven when he dies, and (4) that he is guaranteed a resurrection body just like the Lord's.
12. And Scripture is clear that faith in Christ results in eternal life. If you do not believe you have eternal life, what exactly was the *result* of your faith in Christ? Further, what *purpose* did the Lord's sacrifice on the cross have? Are salvation and eternal life unrelated?
13. If a person does not believe that eternal life is a result of placing one's faith in Christ then what they do believe about His work on the cross fails to resolve the issue of "after death, what?"
14. Some contend that a person's faith in Christ's work on the cross means his sins are forgiven but they further assert that this does not imply he would go to heaven when he dies.
15. This betrays an opinion that salvation is accomplished in two phases: (1) faith in the work of Christ on the cross is sufficient to forgive a person of his sins, but (2) the good deeds of the individual over the course of the rest of his life must then be sufficient to earn entry into heaven when he dies.
16. The question that then must be asked is, "Of what benefit is the work of Christ on the cross should an individual fail to produce a sufficient amount of good deeds prior to his death?"
17. The answer is, "Not very much." This is a gross misrepresentation of the meaning of the word for salvation. It is the translation of the Greek word **σωτηρία, sōtēria**, and is derived from the word **σωτήρ, sōtēr** which means Savior. It involves a multiplicity of things which God accomplished for us through the work of Christ:

Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Systematic Theology: Soteriology*. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 3:5-6:

With respect to the meaning of the word *salvation*, the Old and New Testaments are much alike. The word communicates the thought of deliverance, safety, preservation, soundness, restoration, and healing; but though so wide a range of human experience is expressed by the word *salvation*, its specific, major use is to denote a work of God in behalf of man. When thus employed, it represents what is evidently the most comprehensive one doctrine of the Bible. It gathers into one conception at least twelve extensive and vital doctrines, namely, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, conviction, repentance, faith, regeneration, forgiveness, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification. (p. 5)

It may be observed, also, that two fundamental ideas inhere in the meaning of the word *salvation*: on the one hand, to be saved is to be rescued from a lost estate, while on the other hand, to be saved is to be brought into a saved estate, vitally renewed, and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints. Divine salvation provides a dismissal and removal of every charge against the sinner and equips him with eternal life in place of death, with the perfect merit of Christ in place of condemnation, and with forgiveness and justification in place of wrath. (pp. 5-6)

In its broadest sense, the doctrine of salvation includes every divine undertaking for the believer from his deliverance out of the lost estate to his final presentation in glory conformed to the image of Christ. (p. 6)

18. The Lord's personal presentation of His Gospel makes it crystal clear that to believe in Him results in receiving eternal life. Here are some examples:

John 5:24 - "I am telling you the truth, he who hears My word [the Gospel], and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment; but has passed out of death into eternal life."

John 6:40 - "This is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

John 6:47 - "I am telling you the truth, he who believes has eternal life."