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When We All Get to Heaven

By Ordell Heavin

For years now men and women across this land have enjoyed the beautiful old hymn, "When We All Get To Heaven." While this is a grand old song, suggesting a day of rejoicing and mansions bright and blessed, it also holds another lesson that is overlooked by the world--Not all will get to heaven. How sad this thought is! How tragic it is! I say this because many never give any thought to it, and others who plan to get there will be sadly disappointed. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." All of us will not reach heaven, and this is also true even of the members of the church of our Lord. When we violate the Scriptures and allow our lives to become wordly and disobedient, continuing to live like the world without turning back to God through repentance, we also along with all the lost will be eternally separated from God and eternally punished for our sins.

The Bible teaches that every soul will be judged by the words of the Bible (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12). If we have kept His commandments in obeying the gospel, worshipping as He teaches, and living each day as a Christian should live, He has promised to give us a crown of life, and all the glory and beauty of that place He has prepared for the faithful will be ours to enjoy. The story is told of a little girl, who, as she walked with her father one clear night, looked up at the handiwork of God, and as she viewed all the stars shining so brightly, she commented, "Daddy I have been thinking, if the bottom side of heaven is so beautiful, can you imagine what the top side will be like?" The beauties of heaven will be enjoyed only by those who have lived and served God as the gospel teaches. How sad that so many will miss going to this beautiful place.

The Garden of Eden was in many ways a type of heaven. The garden was only for the faithful, and within it was the tree of life which man could enjoy and sustain life. In Rev. 2:7 Jesus said, "To him that overcometh will I give to

eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Man lost his paradise on earth because of sin, and will also lose the heavenly paradise unless he turns from sin in obedience to the heavenly Father. It is God's will that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). The apostle Peter said that the Lord "is not willing that any perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9.) However, as much as God may desire that every person go to heaven, He has left the choice to each individual. We make the choice by our response to the gospel. Christianity is pictured as a race. Each one who runs must enter the race by meeting certain qualifications, and then run the full course of the race. In Heb. 12:1-2 the writer states, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith..." What are some of the weights and sins that hinders you from running the race for eternal life?

There is no way that the human mind can fully picture the beauty and splendor of heaven, but from what the Bible teaches about it we should all determine to go there. It is the dwelling place of God, the place where the faithful will spend eternity, a place where there is no more pain, sorrow, diseases, death, a place where there will be no more good-byes to friends we love so dear, a place where there will be no sin to bring shame and hurt to man, and a place that is free from fears, cares, and the anxieties of this life. It's no wonder that Paul said, "For me to depart and be with Christ is far better." I can remember a song that we used to sing years ago, which encourages us to look beyond the "vale of tears". The first verse states, "O think of the home over there, by the side of the river of light, where the saints all immortal and fair, are robed in their garments of white." Why would anyone want to miss heaven? But, as sad as it may seem, not everyone will get to heaven. Many had rather enjoy the

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Comfort Others

By Lavern Stewart

Christians are to comfort those who need comfort. To comfort means "to soothe in distress or sorrow; ease the misery or grief of; bring consolation or hope to"--Webster. Doubtless all of us at one time or another need to have our fears, doubts, or griefs soothed. In 1 Thess. 5:11 Paul wrote, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." Out Heavenly Father comforts us that we might in turn console others--"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Our methods of comforting must be varied for all men are not distressed by the same cause. Some might have been mistaught and need to be told the truth. The Thessalonians were troubled by the untruth that their dead loved ones would not be raised, but Paul taught them the truth and told them to teach this and thereby comfort others. In 1 Thess. 5:13-18 he wrote, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For is we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him..." And after teaching them this truth, he said, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Sometimes God's children fall into sin and need to be comforted after they repent. In 2 Cor. 2:7 Paul spoke of such a case, and said, "So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him lest perhaps such an one be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." However, one who has not repented of his sins should not be comforted, but rather rebuked (1 Tim. 5:20). We must not get the comforting and rebuking out of order. But let's learn to comfort others as our Father comforts us through his promises.

**FULTON COUNTY
GOSPEL NEWS**

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EDITORS: Erwin Cowen
and Harold Turner

The Church and Salvation

By Harold Turner

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:41, 47.)

Numerous questions have been asked, and many discussions have been held over the relationship between the church and salvation. The majority, it seems, have concluded that one can be saved, live the Christian life, and go to heaven apart from being a member of the church. One of the most influential preachers of our day has convinced thousands to receive Christ in salvation, and then to join the church of their choice. This suggests the concept that salvation is separate and apart from the church, and that membership in the church is optional after one is saved. It is commonly declared that the church can't save you; implying that there is a distinction between salvation and the church. The church is taught to be important from the standpoint of fellowship and service, but not essential to our relationship with Christ. But are these teachings and beliefs supported by the Scriptures? Are they true?

The above Scripture, Acts 2:47, indicates that the same action by which one is saved also makes him a member in the church. When we do what is required to be saved, the Lord both saves and adds us to the church. In 1 Cor. 12:18 Paul said, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." This body is the church as Paul shows in Eph. 1:22-23 where he said that Christ is the "head over all things to the church, which is his body." And in Col. 1:18 he said, "And he is the head of the body, the church." The idea of first being saved and then joining some church is foreign to the Bible. In fact, the idea of joining the church is nowhere indicated in the Bible. The Lord adds us to the church when he saves us. There is no salvation apart from the church, for the church is the saved.

The word "church" is derived from the Greek word "ekklesia", which means "the called out." We are called out of sin by the gospel 2 Thess. 2:14. When we obey the gospel call, we are called into the one body (Col. 3:15), the church. The church is the body of people who have obeyed the gospel call, they are the saved.

In Eph. 5:23 Paul stated, "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body." If Christ is our head, we must be in the church. If Christ is our Saviour, we must be in the body. Jesus

said that he came to "seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.) He gave himself a ransom to redeem lost man (1 Tim. 2:4-6). However, that for which Jesus gave himself was the church (Eph. 5:25). Jesus gave himself to save the lost, he gave himself for the church, hence, the church is the saved. If we are that for which Jesus gave himself, we are a member in his church. Too, in Acts 20:28 Paul stated that Christ purchased the church with his own blood. If I have been purchased from my sins by the blood of Christ, then I am a part of the church.

Christ is the Saviour, but that which he saves is the church. He does not save people and leave them in the world of sin, rather, when he saves them he adds them to the church, the body of the saved. Outside the church we are lost in the world of sin. The gospel is a lifeline of hope extended into the world to save the lost. Any who will may lay hold on this hope and be saved. By the gospel they can be drawn from the sea of the lost into the place of safety, the church.

Since Christ built but one church (Matt. 16:18, 1 Cor. 12:19), the conditions for membership are the same for all who want to be a part of it. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit clearly set forth these conditions. The gospel message was preached, when the people heard it they asked, "What shall we do?" "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost... And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. They they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:37-47.) These heard the gospel, they believed it, repented of their sins, and were baptized for the remission of sins, and the Lord saved and added them to the church. If we do the same as they did we will be a member of the same church to which the Lord added them, and we can have the assurance of our salvation. Have you done as these three thousand? To be saved and a member of Christ's church you must do these things, for salvation is in His church.

WHEN WE ALL GET TO HEAVEN (Cont.)

pleasures of sin for a season. But what about you? Will you get there? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:7, 8.)

CONTRIBUTIONS

Churches of Christ

Agnos	5.00
Big Pond	12.00
Elizabeth	5.00
Dellhalf	15.00
Garfield	15.00
Jeff	5.00
Viola	5.00
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Individuals:

Emit Pogue	2.00
Mrs. J. H. Leman	2.00
B. Seybert	5.00
Mrs. Malcom Heugel	1.00
Joseph T & Edith Robinson	20.00
Clyde and Delphia Smith	5.00
A. H. Sanders	5.00
Mrs. H. L. Balls	5.00

NOTICE OF GOSPEL MEETING

Arthur Smith of Paragould, Ark. will be with the Church of Christ in Mammoth Spring, Ark. on April 12-14, for a three night gospel meeting. Services will begin each evening at 7:30 P.M. Everyone is invited to attend this meeting.

"If you are not as close to God as you used to be, do not make a mistake about which one has moved."

The Spirit Bears Witness

By Harold Turner

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Romans 8:16.)

This Scripture has been interpreted in various ways, which has presented some problems to understanding its meaning. Some interpret it to mean that the Spirit will bear witness through some experience in our life whereby we can have assurance of our salvation. This experience is usually defined as a wonderful feeling that one has when he receives Christ as his Saviour. On the other hand, there are others who will not agree with this interpretation, but rather suggest that the witness of the Spirit is contained in the Scriptures. Obviously both interpretations can't be true. Either or both may be wrong, but both can't possibly be true. Can we know which interpretation, if either, is correct? And is it important for us to know? Since the object of the witnessing is that we are the children of God, certainly it is important that we understand the meaning of this Scripture.

Sometimes there is the danger when reading a statement, that we read it for what we want it to say rather than for what it actually says. This is sometimes the case with Romans 8:16. This passage does not say that the Spirit bears witness “to” our spirit. The Spirit bears witness “with” our spirit. Surely we understand the difference between bearing witness “to” something, and bearing witness “with” something. When two people bear testimony “to” some event, their testimony must agree to be of any value. When their testimony agrees, they are bearing witness “with” each other “to” the event. The object to which the Spirit bears witness is that we are the children of God. However, before the Spirit can bear witness “with” our spirit, that we are the children of God, our testimony must agree with the testimony that the Spirit bears concerning this matter. If the evidence, presented by both parties, does not agree, then there is no assurance of the matter being true. In other words, unless our spirit bears witness “with” the witness of the Spirit, we have no assurance that we are the children of God. There must be agreement between the testimonies presented before the case is proven and valid.

The first question of concern at this point would naturally be, What has the Spirit witnessed concerning the children of God? The Spirit has revealed every thing pertaining to life and godliness through the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:3). Everything that I need to know about becoming a child of God, and living as a

child of God is set forth step by step in the Scriptures. In the Scriptures the Spirit has presented the evidences required to identify myself as a child of God. If the evidences that I present, by which I declare myself to be a child of God, is in harmony with the evidences that the Spirit has presented to identify a child of God, then my spirit is in agreement with the Spirit, and I can have assurance that I am truly a child of God. On the other hand, if I am declaring myself to be a child of God on the basis of something that the Spirit has not borne witness to in the Scriptures, then there is no agreement between my spirit and the Spirit, and I have no assurance of my salvation.

To illustrate this point further let's notice some things that the Spirit has testified which are required in identifying one as a child of God. In John 6:44, 45 Jesus stated “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him . . . And they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” Jesus further stressed this in Mark 16:15 when he told his apostles, saying “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Before any person can become a child of God he must be taught the gospel, and thereby learn what God requires of him. So, for one thing, the Spirit has testified that to be saved, or a child of God, one must be taught. Now, if I have heard and learned what the gospel requires about my salvation, at this point my spirit is bearing witness with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit testifies that I must hear, my spirit declares that I have heard, so they are in agreement.

Going one step further, we learn in John 8:24 that unless we believe that Jesus is the Christ, we will die in our sins. Jesus said that the Spirit would testify of him (John 15:26). And John stated that sufficient evidence had been presented to establish full reason for believing that Jesus was the Son of God (John 20:30-31). So, the Spirit testifies that one must believe that Jesus is the Son of God before he can be saved. Now, suppose that one states that he believes in God, but he just doesn't believe that Jesus was anything more than just another man, yet this person declares himself to be a child of God. Is he? His spirit does not bear witness with the Holy Spirit. There is no agreement between the two witnesses. So this person has no assurance that he is a child of God. He may believe that he is, but he has no assurance from God to this effect.

Another thing that the Holy Spirit

testifies that one must do before being saved, or becoming a child of God is to repent of his sins. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said that we must either repent or perish, and in Acts 17:30 the Spirit declares that God now commands all men every where to repent. No person can become a child of God who does not repent, so testifies the Spirit. One may declare that he is a child of God because he has heard the gospel and believes that Jesus is the Son of God, but unless he repents of his sins, his spirit does not bear witness with the Holy Spirit to this claim.

Too, the Spirit testifies that before one can become a child of God he must confess with his mouth that he believes Jesus to be the Son of God (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9,10). This confession is “Unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). Suppose that the confession one makes is that God has already saved him, is his confession in agreement with the Spirit? He has his salvation before the confession, and the Spirit testifies that it must be prior to salvation, looking unto salvation. There is no agreement. Does it matter? The only assurance we have of salvation is when our spirit agrees with the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Another thing that the Spirit testifies is required for salvation, after that one has heard the gospel, been led to believe in Christ, repented of his sins, and confessed his faith before others, is that of being baptized. In Mark 16:15, 16, Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.” When the apostles went forth preaching this message, they required the people to “Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins.” (Acts 2:38.) In 1 Peter 3:21 the Spirit testifies very plainly that “Baptism doth also now save us . . .” Now, again, let's suppose that some one wants to prove himself to be a child of God, but he has not been baptized for the remission of his sins, does his spirit agree with the witness of the Holy Spirit? The Spirit requires him to be baptized, but he states that he doesn't believe this is necessary, is there an agreement?

But, someone will contend that this baptism is with the Spirit, and that the baptism with the Spirit is the witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God. In Gal. 4:6 Paul said, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts . . .” Notice that it is because we ARE sons that we receive the Spirit, not that the

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The Eldership

By Hugh Fulford

The duties of the eldership of a local congregation to the membership of that congregation are many and varied. For purposes of simplification, we have chosen to present these duties under four headings.

FEED AND OVERSEE THE FLOCK

First, it is the duty of the eldership to the membership to feed and oversee the flock. To the elders of the church at Ephesus Paul said, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28.) In the performance of this duty the following things certainly would be involved:

(1) Directing the worship, making sure that it is kept scriptural and carried out decently and in order.

(2) Superintending the Bible study program, seeing that a well-rounded program of Biblical teaching is carried on under the instruction of capable and godly teachers.

(3) Selecting evangelists, both those to be used fulltime and those to be engaged for protracted meetings.

(4) Teaching the Word themselves both privately and publicly. (1 Tim. 3:2.)

(5) Making decisions with reference to the work of the congregation, sounding out the sentiments of the membership and seeking their assistance but with the realization that the final decision rests with them, the elders.

(6) Directing the spending of the funds collected on the first day of the week, wisely making out a budget and then keeping the congregation well informed of income, expenditures, and current needs and opportunities where financial matters are concerned.

(7) Knowing the members, keeping a check on the regularity of their attendance at worship and Bible study, encouraging the weak members, and seeing that the needs of the poor, needy, and sick are supplied.

WATCH FOR WOLVES

Second, it is the duty of the eldership to the membership to watch for wolves (false teachers). Continuing his speech to the Ephesian elders, Paul declared, "I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock... Wherefore watch ye." (Acts 20:29, 31.)

Elders must be on the lookout for those who would, by false teaching or practice, corrupt the nature of the church, the work of the church, or the worship of the church. They must guard the congregation against those who would change the plan of salvation or in any

way "preach another gospel." (Gal. 1:6-9.) The eldership has a duty to the membership to not allow divisive and factious characters to ravage the flock of God. (See Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10.)

EXERCISE DISCIPLINE

Third, it is the duty of the eldership to the membership to exercise discipline. In nearly every congregation of any size there will be, from time to time, unruly members. These may be gossipers, tale-bearers, liars, or simply trouble-makers in general. The Bible says their mouths must be stopped (Tit. 1:10, 11), and elders are the ones to do the stopping! Others may become subjects of discipline by walking disorderly, living immorally, or teaching false doctrine. (See 2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; Rom. 16:17.)

Elders should first render private counsel to the one guilty of offense, but if this fails then public rebuke is required.

(1 Tim. 5:20.) In some cases it will be necessary to completely withdraw Christian fellowship. (See 2 Thess. 3:6.) Withdrawal of fellowship should never be done hastily or in anger, but when all efforts of corrective discipline have failed then withdrawal is essential, not only for the salvation of the guilty party (1 Cor. 5:5), but also to prevent the church from becoming a spectacle to the world.

BE AN EXAMPLE

Fourth, it is the duty of the eldership to the membership to be an example. Peter, in exhorting elders, said, "Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:3.)

Elders should set before the rest of the members a good example in everyday Christian living, in faithful attendance at all services of the church, in loyalty and devotion to the truth, in sacrifice of time and money for the cause of Christ, and in a spirit of cooperation and brotherly love. No congregation can attain the spiritual heights to which God would have it climb

if it is not motivated and inspired to do so by a "pace-setting" eldership! The elders cannot rightfully ask or expect the members to do what they themselves are unwilling to do.

Paul said to Timothy, "Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that they progress may be manifest unto all." (2 Tim. 4:15.) These are worthy words of advice to elders as well as to preachers. Elders who will give diligence to their duties will experience the joy of having served the Lord faithfully in this life and at death will be able to lay hold on that life which is life indeed.

The Spirit Bears Witness (Cont.)

Spirit is sent to make one a son. But when does one receive the Spirit? Notice Acts 2:38, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." When were they promised the Holy Spirit? Was it not when they were baptized for the remission of sins?

The witness of the Spirit is the testimony he has presented. That testimony is recorded in the gospel. This testimony sets forth every requirement for our salvation. When we have done each thing that the Spirit requires, then there is agreement, and the Spirit will bear witness WITH our spirit that we are the children of God. God promises us salvation only when we have obeyed the gospel (Rom. 6:17, 18, 1 Peter 1:22).

But, what about Gal. 3:26, 27? This passage has caused question about this subject. It states, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The expression "by faith" does not tell us when we become a child of God, but how. This passage also tells us where we must be to be a child of God—"In Christ." We are children of God BY FAITH, but we are not children of God until we are IN Christ. And the passage tells us how we get INTO Christ—we are baptized INTO Christ. We are then a child of God.

"The Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't."

"Busy folks don't have time to be busybodies."

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