

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Finished Work Of Christ

(Jerry Fite)

Just prior to Jesus taking His last breath on the cross, He said, “*it is finished...*” (*John 19:30*). The cross not only was the cruel backdrop for the mangled body of Jesus, it was the finish line for accomplishing the will of the Father in Heaven. “*knowing that all things are now finished,*” Jesus fulfilled Scripture by saying, “*I thirst*” (*John 19:28, Psalm 69:21*). Foreordained death, and prophetic Scripture merged to cross the finish line of the cross.

But, was the complete work of man’s salvation completed at the cross? The resurrection had not occurred yet, and without that event occurring after the cross, man’s salvation could not be accomplished. As Paul writes, “*...and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins*” (*I Corinthians 15:17*). The death and resurrection of Christ were necessary components for justification from sin. God raised Jesus, “*who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification*” (*Romans 4:24*).

While Jesus was finishing His suffering portion on the cross, no other sacrifice for sin would be needed in the future (*Hebrews*

10:10). However, salvation for man was not completed or finished apart from His resurrection from the dead.

Some look to Jesus’ finished work on the cross as eliminating any effort of man in his own salvation. To many, adding human effort to salvation takes away the already finished work of Jesus on the cross. Such a view, however, fails to distinguish between Jesus’ death and resurrection as the only foundation for salvation, and man’s obedience of faith as the essential response to Jesus’ already finished work.

Jesus conveyed this essential distinction when He commanded His apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. Jesus added, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth, shall be condemned*” (*Mark 16:16*). Jesus emphasizes not only the necessity of man’s response to the good news of salvation in being saved, but He also distinguishes between the saving and condemning responses. Jesus clearly teaches us that one shall be saved if he or she believes and is baptized. The Gospel, which reveals the saving message built upon the foundation

of Jesus’ death and resurrection, must be believed. One must believe in Christ, and be baptized into Him for the remission of sins (*cf. Acts 2:36-38, Galatians 3:26-27*). Jesus certainly was not discounting His own finished work of salvation by revealing the essential saving response from man.

Paul exhorts Christians to “*...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (*Philippians 2:12*). The Holy Spirit is not guiding Paul to degrade Jesus’ work of salvation by emphasizing human effort, but He is showing how man is to work in response to God’s work. It is God who works in us through His word to create the proper mindset, and action that pleases Him. We must then work it out in our own salvation.

After Jesus’ finished work, and man’s response in belief and baptism, the Christian must “*put away...the old man*” with its deceitful lusts, and “*put on the new man*” (*Ephesians 4:22, 24*). Being raised with Christ in baptism unto a new life, the Christian must live that new life according to righteousness, and the holiness of truth. Man cannot add to God’s salvation in Christ, but he must respond in obedience if he or she is to be saved.