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**Eternal Salvation’s Key Element**

***In One Verse of Scripture***

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*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God . . .* ([1 Peter 3:18a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+3.18a&t=NKJV))

This singular portion of Scripture succinctly and completely states the foundational element of God’s plan of salvation for mankind; the element or portion that alone brings a person out of his/her “lost” condition – the path to eternal separation from God – to a permanent and Devine unification with God.

In Scripture, God’s salvation plan for mankind is presented covering both the *spirit* and the *soul* of a person – two parts of the *tripartite nature* (spirit, soul, and body [[1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.23&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 4:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.12&t=NKJV)]) of man. For an inclusive treatment of God’s salvation plan covering the tripartite nature of man, please access [Bible One - Tripartite Salvation](http://bibleone.net/print_tbs149.html).

It is unfortunate that within many, if not most, evangelical churches (assemblies) only one aspect (*spirit*) of the plan is realized and presented. Still, it should be understood by those who have a grasp of soul salvation that the foundational/key, and thereby the *most important* aspect/element of God’s salvation plan is *spirit* salvation, for it alone is the *open door* to the entire structure of salvation for mankind, *i.e.*, one may have *spirit* salvation apart from that of the *soul*, but one can never achieve salvation of the *soul* without first experiencing that of the *spirit*.

Salvation is a tripartite doctrine. A Christian *has been saved, is being saved*, and *will be saved*. This multilateral (three-part) doctrine is often partitioned and described as justification, sanctification, and glorification. Each has to do with a different part of tripartite (spirit, soul, and body) man. It is unfortunate that these aspects of salvation are often ignored, misinterpreted, misapplied and/or combined, birthing doctrinal error. So, let’s examine each.

It should be clearly recognized that *spirit salvation* can only be applied to individuals who are “*dead in trespasses and sins*” ([Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV)) and is relevant to eternal life, which is based solely upon the work of Christ on the Cross of Calvary; whereas *soul salvation* can only be applied to those who have been "*justified by faith*” and are “*alive together with Christ*” ([Romans 5:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.1&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.5&t=NKJV), [8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-9&t=NKJV)). The salvation of the *soul* is relevant only to the Christian’s participation in the coming millennial kingdom of Christ upon the earth, which is based upon one’s temporal works.

This may be seen in the Apostle Paul’s address to those who composed “*the church* (assembly) *of God which is at Corinth* (Greece), *to those who are sanctified* (made holy, set apart) *in Christ Jesus*” ([1 Corinthians 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+1.2&t=NKJV)). In chapter 3 of First Corinthians Paul states that although they were indeed Christians, they were still “*babes* (spiritually immature) *in Christ*” due to their carnality (subject to the flesh rather than the Spirit) and thereby unable to digest only the “*milk and not* [the] *solid food*” of God’s Word ([1 Corinthians 3:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.1-3&t=NKJV)). Paul likened them to “*God’s building*” ([1 Corinthians 3:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.9&t=NKJV)) of which he had “*laid the foundation*” ([1 Corinthians 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.10&t=NKJV)), the only possible foundation ([1 Corinthians 3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11&t=NKJV)) – *spirit salvation* – subject to a subsequent process of building/construction ([1 Corinthians 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.10&t=NKJV)) – *soul salvation* – a process compared to a structure composed of “*gold, silver, precious stones* [good works], *wood, hay, straw* [bad works]” that will eventually be *tested and revealed by fire* ([1 Corinthians 3:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.12-13&t=NKJV)).

The end result being either (1) eternal salvation (spirit salvation) including the reward of participation in the coming kingdom (soul salvation) or (2) eternal salvation (spirit salvation) apart from any participation in the coming kingdom ([1 Corinthians 3:14-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.14-15&t=NKJV)). A more comprehensive treatment of this result may be accessed, in this site, at [Salvation of the Soul](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/salvation-of-the-soul.php).

Expressed succinctly, the *eternal aspect* of God’s salvation plan (the spiritual birth experience) may only be obtained by one’s decision of *faith in the Living Word of God* ([John 1:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.1-2&t=NKJV), [12-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.12-14&t=NKJV); [3:6-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.6-7&t=NKJV), [14-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.14-17&t=NKJV); [Acts 16:30-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+16.30-31&t=NKJV)); whereas the *kingdom aspect* of God’s salvation plan (participation with Jesus Christ in His coming millennial kingdom upon earth) may only be achieved as a reward for *spiritual growth in the continued consumption of* *the Written Word of God* ([James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV)) *during one’s life as a Christian*.

With this in mind, consider the following specifics contained in the opening portion of [1 Peter 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+3.18&t=NKJV), which comprise the “key element” of God’s Eternal Plan of Salvation for mankind, as follows:

***"Christ”***

The pinnacle (highpoint, zenith, apex, ultimate aspect, major theme, foundation, etc.) of Christianity is (1) *a Person* – Jesus the Christ [Gk. *Christos* - Anointed One, Messiah] – and (2) *His work* for all mankind. This in no way diminishes the truth that there is only One True and Living God who indeed is the Creator of all that has ever and will ever exist. Rather, it is to honor Him by conforming to and precisely revealing His will and purpose for mankind as He has specifically outlined them in His written Word.

God’s plan of salvation for mankind, it totally centered upon one Person, who alone was and is Devine in nature, *i.e.*, God in human flesh, without sin. Arlen L. Chitwood, in his book, [The Study of Scripture](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/the-study-of-scripture.php), in this site, put it this way:

When studying the Scriptures – whether the Old Testament or the New Testament – one is studying about *Jesus the Christ*, whom God has “*appointed Heir of all things*” ([Luke 24:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.25-27&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.2&t=NKJV)). There is nothing in the New Testament that is not seen after some fashion in the Old. The New Testament is simply a revealing, an unveiling, of God’s Son, as previously introduced in the Old Testament Scriptures.

“Jesus” is *the Word made* “*flesh*,” referring, in an inseparable sense, to both *the Old Testament Scriptures* and to *God* becoming “*flesh*” in the person of *His Son*. “Jesus” is not only God manifested in the flesh but t*he Old Testament Scriptures* manifested in the flesh as well.

There is “the written Word,” inseparably identified with “God,” and there is this same Word manifested in the form of “*flesh*,” *with life and inseparability seen throughout. . . .*

***“suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust”***

Man (all of mankind) was and is completely unable to do anything that could or can result in his eternal salvation. His only condition is correctly stated as “*dead in trespasses and sins*” ([Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV)). His fallen nature, due to his failure at his very beginning in the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3&t=NKJV)), is only able to produce sin, that which can only keep him apart from unity with God. This being the case, a person can in no way make payment for his/her sin, which can satisfy God. Indeed, left to his own, man’s only destination was/is an eternal separation from the Living God.

Scripture clearly states that “*all* (mankind) h*ave sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” ([Romans 3:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+3.23&t=NKJV)), indeed, “*Scripture has concluded all under sin*” ([Galatians 3:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.22&t=NKJV)). Man and woman, in the garden in Eden, following their eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in direct defiance of God’s specific instructions, found themselves in *a ruined state* – a state of sin, which was/has been passed on to all their descendants. The result of this state – for all human beings – is death, *spiritual death*, which is *separation from God* ([Genesis 2:16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.16-17&t=NKJV); [Romans 6:23a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+6.23a&t=NKJV)).

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.* ([Romans 5:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.12&t=NKJV); *cf*. [1 Corinthian 15:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthian+15.21&t=NKJV))

It was established at the very beginning that the *consequence*, the *price* or *payment* for sin (disbelieving and thereby disobeying God), was *death*, the literal meaning of such is the *separation* between two entities – between the Divine and the temporal, between God and man. The death relegated to man due to his sin was all-inclusive. It was (1) the initiation of a progressing temporal death of the body and soul, which was/is promoted by the then-alteration (deterioration) of man’s physical environment ([Genesis 4:17-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4.17-19&t=NKJV)) and results eventually in a person’s separation from temporal life; but more importantly, (2) an instantaneous supernatural death of the spirit, affecting (passed on to) every human being from that day forward ([Romans 5:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.12&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV)), which results in the separation of a person from God.

Bottom line, the cost, the consequence, the price of sin was death – separation. The most crucial aspect of this death/separation was on the spiritual level. Man was separated from his Creator, the Living God. Furthermore, this cost, this consequence, this price, is eternal unless it can be “satisfied” (paid in full) before God.

And this is what Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, did for all mankind. On the cross of Calvary, He alone could and did “*pay the price*” (suffered in place) for the sin (past, present, and future) of mankind. Jesus Christ “took the place” of all sinners through all of time in order to “*pay the price*” of sin, so that any individually may take advantage of Christ’s payment in order to obtain eternal life. Christ’s death was a substitutionary death for all mankind. Still, this doesn’t exactly explain “how” Christ made the “payment” for all sin. So, a more detailed answer follows.

*For He* [God the Father] *made Him* [Jesus Christ] *who knew no sin to be sin for us* [mankind], *that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* ([2 Corinthians 5:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.21&t=NKJV); *e.g*., [Isaiah 53:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+53.6&t=NKJV))

It was on the Cross of Calvary that Christ made the sacrificial price of *taking on and becoming our sin*, thereby *personally experiencing* the type of “death” resulting from sin. This was a transaction that *only* God could and did perform, which would then enable any person who would/will appropriately take advantage of Christ’s payment for sin to be brought back into spiritual union with God.

The “death” that Christ experienced on the Cross of Calvary, which was indeed the payment (the price) required by God for the sins of mankind, was NOT the physical death experienced by the physical body of Jesus Christ. In fact, before that occurred, Christ specifically cried out “*It is finished!*” And only then did He bow His head and give up His spirit ([John 19:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.30&t=NKJV)), personally permitting His physical death.

What did Christ mean by “*It is finished*”? It refers back to His previous cry, which followed a specific period (3 hours) of time, as seen in the following passage of Scripture:

*Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying,* “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*?” *that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” ([Matthew 27:45-46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.45-46&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Mark 15:33-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+15.33-34&t=NKJV))

Precisely identified, it was during this three hours period of time, “f*rom the sixth hour* (noon) *until the ninth hour* (3:00 P.M.) *there was darkness over all the land*,” that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, having *personally taking on and becoming* the sin of all mankind, became *separated* from God the Father – personally experiencing *spiritual death* for (in place of) mankind.

Everything, in its entirety, to procure man’s salvation was done by Another. It had to be accomplished by Another, for, as previously stated, the one being redeemed was “*dead in trespasses and sins*” ([Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV)), *totally incapable* of acting on his own behalf. Christ is the One who died, Christ is the One who performed the work to procure man’s salvation, and *God is satisfied with His Son’s finished work.*

When Christ cried out from the Cross in “*a loud voice*” near the ninth hour, “*It is finished*” ([Luke 23:46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+23.46&t=NKJV); [John 19:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.30&t=NKJV)), He used one word in the Greek text – *Tetelestai* – that could be better translated, “*It has been finished*.” *Tetelestai* is a perfect tense usage of *teleo*, which means “to bring to an end,” “to complete.” And the perfect tense refers to action *completed* in past time, with the results of that action extending into and existing during present time *in a finished state.*

*All of the work* surrounding man’s redemption that Christ had come to perform had, at that point in time, been *completed*. This was the announcement that Christ made, in “*a loud voice*”; and, because of that which was involved in the announcement, there was then no longer any need for Him to continue His sufferings on the Cross. Thus, immediately after He cried out, “*It has been finished*,” He “*gave up the ghost* [KJV, *lit*., ‘He breathed out’ (He expired, willingly relinquishing His life)]” ([Luke 23:46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+23.46&t=NKJV)).

The work of Christ at Calvary, from the point He cried out, “*It has been finished*,” has existed in *exactly the same finished state* in which He proclaimed it to exist at that time. It has existed as *a work completed in past time that extends into present time* (in a finished state) *and that will extend into all the ages comprising eternity ahead* (in the same finished state). Nothing can ever be added, and nothing can ever be taken away. That is to say, *nothing can ever change* relative to Christ’s finished work at Calvary. That’s the way God’s procurement of man’s salvation had to occur. Once Christ’s work had been finished, that’s the way His work had to always continue to exist – *in a finished state* – throughout both time and eternity.

It is unfortunate that Christ’s payment for sin, which took place and was finished upon the cross of Calvary is largely unnoticed and honored by many within Christianity as so many only emphasize Christ’s physical death followed by His resurrection, two very important events that present a portrait of the Christian’s future.

***“that He might bring us to God”***

Here, concisely put, is the only purpose of the key element of God’s plan of salvation for man. Christ Jesus physically came and spiritually died for (in the place of) all of mankind, so anyone who would only (turning from anything else – the meaning of *repentance*) accept by *faith* His sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary for personal salvation could be saved.

Because of Christ’s finished work, salvation is extended to man “without money and without price” ([Isaiah 55:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+55.1&t=NKJV)); and apart from Christ’s finished work, there is no salvation. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already [*lit*., ‘has already been condemned’ (a perfect tense – condemned in past time because of unbelief and presently living in that condemned state)], because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God ([John 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.18&t=NKJV)).

It is utterly impossible – and foolish to even consider – that finite man, “*dead in trespasses and sins*,” could add one thing to or take one thing from the finished work of the infinite God through His Son. All man can possibly do is simply receive, by *believing on the Son*, that which has already been done on his behalf.

And this is the *key element* in God’s plan of salvation for mankind.