

## CHAPTER NINE

### The Atonement of Jesus Christ – What does it mean to be saved?

**Problem - The Fall of man** – God warned Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden that if they partook of the forbidden fruit they would surely die. When Eve then Adam made the choice to partake of the fruit so they could “multiply and replenish the earth” as also commanded they were cast out of the garden and the presence of God and they became subject to growing old and dying. The death or **the fall**, then, of which they were warned, came in two forms:

- 1) Physical Death – The separation of the body and the spirit.
- 2) Spiritual Death – The separation of Adam and Eve and their posterity from the presence of God. Our doctrine teaches and I believe that no unclean thing can dwell with God; therefore, whether this spiritual death as initiated by the transgression of Adam and Eve continues for any individual eternally depends upon the worthiness of that individual in this life.

**Solution - The Atonement** - Broken down, the word **at-one-ment** simply means overcoming these two deaths or separations to be at one with God or in other words, to dwell in the Celestial presence of God. Jesus Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane to the extent the he bled at every pore and suffered severe pain at the hands of his tormentors culminating in being nailed to a cross where he died. By so doing, he paid for Adam and Eve’s transgression which had brought about physical death which he subsequently overcame in the resurrection. The resurrection resolves the problem of physical death and eternal life (life with Heavenly Father) means that spiritual death is overcome for those who are true followers of Jesus Christ.

1) Resurrection – *20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:20 - 22)*

2) Eternal Life (with God) - *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

I believe this means that the wages of sin is a continuation of **spiritual death** or being separated from our Heavenly Father and his kingdom, which eternal life.

The scriptures teach that to obtain that life, we must: *13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction [spiritual death], and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto [eternal] life, and few there be that find it. (Matthew 7:13 - 14)*

As Peter spoke to a crowd of people, they were filled with faith and asked what they needed to do: *37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 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. (Acts 2:37 - 38)*

*3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:3-5)*

It is interesting to me to note that this requirement to be born of water (baptism) and of the Spirit (reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by those holding proper priesthood authority) precedes the famous John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

The message of the scriptures, to me, is that to obtain eternal life or to be saved from spiritual death in the eternities living in the presence of God, we must acquire enough **faith in Jesus Christ's** atonement to **repent** of our sins, be **baptized** for the remission of sins and receive the **Holy Ghost** by the laying on of hands. Baptism and the laying on of hands to be acceptable must be performed by those truly authorized who have been appropriately called and ordained with true priesthood authority as we have discussed earlier. The scriptures also make it clear that: *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. (Matthew 7:21)* And *...he that endureth to the end shall be saved (Matthew 10:22)* [from spiritual death].

Salvation to me and according to the doctrine of our church has two meanings: 1) Being saved from physical death in the resurrection by grace alone and 2) Salvation from spiritual death through the grace of Christ and our following him by living by his teachings, his gospel.

There are many questions sent to me that challenged my belief that we must live righteous lives to be saved and they quote: *8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8 - 9)*

I understand and accept this teaching, for without the atonement of Christ, no matter what we did, we could not be saved from spiritual death (remember that all are resurrected as they are saved from physical death). I do, however, see in the complete scripture clearly taught the things we must do to qualify for the salvation from spiritual death (eternal life with Father). One passage that seems, on the surface to contradict the scripture above is the following:

*17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22*

*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? (James 2:17 - 22)*

I think the scriptures are clear that without the Grace of Christ, we are lost, no matter what we do, but there is no question, that we are also required to follow Jesus by living his gospel and keeping his commandments to take full advantage of his grace.