

Summary of Christianity, 5 pgs

1- Christianity is **founded upon** (one act) the completed work of Christ on the cross ... *Jesus said, "It is finished."* With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit, **Jn.19:30**. **The finished work of Christ** [Jn.4:34; 5:17, 36; 19:30] is the foundation of our new life in the Spirit. Our living hope of glorification with Christ determines our priorities.

2- **The one requirement:** The Christian life is **accessed by** believing in him ... *to all who received him ... who believed in his name*, he gave the right to become children of God, **Jn.1:12; Rom. 10:10-13**. The only thing that can minimize Christ's saving work is our failing to lay hold of it by faith. **This is the foundation, the underpinning, the universal constant for God's people.**

3- It is **practiced by** **continuing the discipline of carefully working out one's salvation** ... [Paul writing to Philippian believers], *as you have always obeyed [listened to me, took seriously my words] — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — [an apostolic injunction to the whole church - discipline yourselves (implied) to] continue working out your salvation [persevere in living true to your faith by staying engaged with Scripture] with fear and trembling [a strong warning about doing what you know to be right], for it is God who is working in you [spiritually, through the events and circumstances of your lives] to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose*, **Phil.2:12-13**.

Christianity is not primarily about self-improvement through disciplined effort [The God who is there by D.A. Carson, **p.188**] ... Biblically faithful Christianity does not present itself as a nice religious structure that makes happier parents, well-disciplined children, and good taxpaying citizens [**p.210; GT#2, p.13**]. Training in the reality of supernatural living and true spirituality is the goal.

Working out your salvation means figuring out how to navigate an antagonistic world pursuant to your faith. It boils down to discovering and acting upon **tier 3 (GT#6, p.1-4)** wisdom, knowledge, & understanding. **This is not business (life) as usual**. It calls for nothing less than a serious, ongoing, intentional, effort in the power of the Spirit, **stage 3 (GT#2, p.6-7)**. Our endeavors are not to be undertaken in the power of the flesh, but in the Spirit - supernaturally empowered by trusting in God.

The righteous [supernaturally reborn, Jn.1:12-13] shall live [walk, carry on in this world] by means of faith, Rom.1:17.

Ceremonies (such as water baptism) **depict, typify, or signify realities, GT#2, p.14**. **God's Kingdom** is spiritual in nature. It can only be entered through spiritual regeneration [supernatural rebirth, *God ... made His light to shine in our hearts ... 2 Cor.4:6*] which cannot be accomplished by a duly appointed minister, priest, magic formula or incantation, religious ceremony, ritual, rite, or pageantry. It is within the discretion, purview, and work of the Holy Spirit. **The New Testament emphasizes one's faith in Jesus, God's Word under the New Covenant, and the culmination of the OT imagery in the 1st & 2nd coming of Christ.**

... his divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary for [spiritual] life and godliness through the rich knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence. Through

these things he has bestowed on us **his precious and most magnificent promises**, so that by means of [**faith in**] what was promised, you may become partakers of the divine nature [**holiness**], after escaping the worldly corruption that is produced by evil desire [lust, desiring things that are not rightfully ours] . For this very reason, make every effort to add to your **faith** excellence [virtue] , to excellence, knowledge; to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance [steadfastness, stick-to-it-iveness]; to perseverance, godliness; to godliness, brotherly affection; to brotherly affection, unselfish love. For if these things are really yours and are continually increasing, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately ... Therefore, brothers and sisters, make every effort to make sure of [confirm, certify] your calling and election . For **by doing these** [carefully working out your salvation] **you will never stumble into sin** . For thus an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be richly provided for you , **2 Pt.1:3-11**

Christian Maturity, GT intro, p.4

Having to be told what to do, how, and why is for children, the immature. Discerning what is right and how to go about it is for the mature. Paul describes it like this ... herein do I exercise myself, to always have a [good, quiet, clear] conscience void of offense toward (a) God [1 Pt.3:21; GT#6 , p.3] , and toward (b) men, Acts 24:16. As a matter of maintaining a good conscience before God, always work out how to thoughtfully implement what you know IN YOUR HEART to be right, good, or according to God's will, even if you don't have a specific command or directions as to how to proceed and purpose to do it. Do not let fear hold you back from taking the appropriate course of action, **1 Pt.3:16-17; 4:19; Gal.6:9-10; Jas.4:17**.

On this topic [preceding discussion about Jesus' obedience and suffering] we have much [more] to say [but] it is difficult to explain [ie, for you to understand], since you have become dull [instead of progressing in the Christian life through **working out their salvation**, they had become spiritually sluggish and mentally lazy] in hearing [hearing & doing are like faith & works – they belong together as two sides of the same coin. **Jas.1:21-25; Mt.7:24-27; GT-#6, p.3-4**]. For though you should in fact be teachers by this time [you haven't progressed in your understanding], you need someone to teach you the beginning elements of God's utterances [Heb.6:1-2 , all over again!].

You have gone back [actually regressed – Don't think you can coast very long without losing ground (retrograde motion) once you stop working out your salvation. PRINCIPLE: one's skill level will always decline through lack of practice] to [the point where you once again] need milk, [instead of] solid food [because your spiritual growth has been stunted]. For everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced in the message of righteousness, because he is an infant [not capable of handling it]. But solid food is for the mature, whose perceptions are trained by [practicing righteousness] to discern both good and evil [& distinguish appropriate from inappropriate approaches, see **NLP, The Lord's Work in the Lord's way**, **Heb.5.11-14**

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering ... So **do not throw away your confidence**; it will be richly rewarded. **You need to persevere** so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised

... my righteous one will [persevere & continue to] live by faith. **I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.** But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have [continue in] faith and are saved, **Heb.10:32-39**

Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not **drift away** [by spiritual inattention to working out our salvation]. For if the message spoken through angels proved to be so firm that every violation or disobedience received its just penalty, **how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?** ... See to it ... that none of you has an evil, unbelieving heart that forsakes the living God. But exhort one another each day ... that none of you may become hardened by sin's deception. For **we have become sharers with Christ, if in fact we hold our initial confidence firm until the end** ... **Heb.2:1-3; 3:12-14; 2 Pt.2:20-22.**

I pray that according to the wealth of his glory **the Father** will grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, **that Christ will dwell in your hearts through faith**, so that, because you have been **rooted and grounded in His love**, you will be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and thus to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so **that you will be filled up to all the fullness of God**, **Eph.3:16-19.**

Therefore, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord [by faith], **continue living your lives** [walking] in him, having been **rooted** [established] and being **built up** in him and **firm** [confirmed] in the faith just as you were taught [in attending to the development of your salvation], and overflowing [abounding] with thanksgiving, **Col.2:6-7.** **Verse 8** is a warning about being taken in by empty philosophy.

Do not be conformed to [molded by] this age, but be transformed [same as "transfigured," **Mt.17:2; Mk.9:2**] by the renewing of your mind, so that [in the process of spiritual discipline] you may [learn to] discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God, **Rom.12:2.**

So why do you keep calling me 'Lord, Lord!' when you don't do what I say? ... when someone comes to me, **listens to my teaching, and then follows it** [by not allowing my words to lapse through inattention]. It is like a [wise] person building a house who digs deep and lays the foundation on solid rock. When the floodwaters rise and break against that house, it stands firm because it is well built. But anyone who hears and doesn't obey is like a [foolish] person who builds a house right on the ground, without a foundation. When the floods sweep down against that house, it will collapse into a heap of ruins, **Lk.6:46-49**

In the **Parable of the Sower**, Jesus taught about the qualification for entering the kingdom of God. The seeds a farmer was broadcasting represented the spreading of God's word in the world. The four different places seeds landed represent people that heard it and what happened. **(1)** Some seeds fell **along the path** where it were trampled on and the birds came and ate it up. This represents people who hear the word, then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. **(2)** Other seeds fell **on rocky places**. This represents

those who receive the word with joy. The plants sprang up quickly, but when the sun came up, they withered because because the soil was shallow. When these people were [tested by] trouble or persecution they quickly fall away. (3) Others, like seed sown **among thorns**, hear the word, [but fail to devote proper attention to it. Choice is always either/or, but not both ^a.] so the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and desire for other things come in [lure them away] and choke the word making it unfruitful. (4) Still others, represented by the **good soil** are those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it and [by continuing to stay focused on developing their salvation] produce a valuable crop at harvest time [each of these outcomes represents the final state of people, GT#6, p.19-20]. Mk.4:1-20; Mt.13:1-23; Lk.8:4-15.

^a ... a woman named Martha welcomed Jesus as a guest. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he said. But Martha was distracted [lit, pulled away] with all the preparations she had to make, so she came up to him and said, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work alone? Tell her to help me. But the Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things, but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the best [good or better] part [course]; it will not be taken away from her, **Lk.10:38-42.**

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, hidden in a field, that a person found and hid. Then because of joy he went and sold all that he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he found a pearl of great value, he went out and sold everything he had and bought it, **Mt.13:44-46.**

The 3rd Tier of TRUTH

The series of essays about God's Training [conditioning] is a program for his people. Tier 3 is based on a mix of **knowledge** [accumulation of facts] and **understanding** [integration of facts] modified by **wisdom** [common sense] and **experience** [application of understanding to real world situations] within the Christian framework. Like everything else in the Christian life, these qualities [positive traits, characteristics, abilities] are not meant to stand alone, but are to be **practiced as elements of faith.**

Wisdom [personified] calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares ... in the gateways of the city she makes her speech [wisdom is commonly available everywhere to all who will pay attention], Prov.1:20-21; 8:1-4; 2:6; 23:12. [see p.5-9 in SELF-AWARENESS IN THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH, BEAUTY, & WISDOM]

Tier 3, working out your salvation

Finally the **third tier** [usually described by the terms "practical" and "application," see Implications-the depth and nuances of Scrip.] representing **God's training program** for his people explains his reasons and methods for accomplishing his goals. Approaching teaching this way is not new. Usually a few Scriptures define the subject in terms of what one should or should not do, leaving the wisdom of how to proceed, why, what to avoid, and other important details unspecified. **It is these details that comprise the third tier**, the working out of our own salvation, **Phil.2:12-13** [Journey].

OPERATING PRINCIPLE: **Equity** – As a matter of maintaining a good conscience before God, always work out **how to thoughtfully implement** what you know IN YOUR HEART to be right, good, just, or according to God's will, even if you don't have a specific command or directions as to how to proceed and **do not let fear hold you back from taking the appropriate course of action**, **Gen. 18:19; 1 Pt.3:16-17; 4:19; Gal.6:9-10; Jas.4:17.**

Do not be conformed to [molded by] this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God , Rom.12:2 .

*Have done with impurity and every other evil which touches the lives of others, and humbly accept the message that God has [supernaturally] sown in your hearts and which can save your souls ... The man who simply hears and **does nothing about it** [lets it lapse] is like a man catching his reflection ... in a mirror ... he goes on with whatever he was doing without the slightest recollection of what sort of person he saw there. But the man who looks into the perfect mirror of God's law, the law of liberty (or freedom), and **makes a habit of so doing**, does not see and then forget. **He puts that law into practice [obeys God] and [is blessed]**, **Jas.1:21-25** (Phillips).*

Hearing the word involves **tier 2, working through the passage** to get at its meaning, the TRUTH & WHAT to DO or AVOID, & WHY. That's why I insert bracketed material and include notes of commentary. **Dialog** with the passages, look things up, cross reference them, etc., meditating, clarifying, and teasing out the implications. **Going from hearing to doing is a tier 2 to tier 3 motion** working out the HOW to best proceed. It involves recognizing clues and formulating principles, all of which go toward remembering what I saw in the mirror, **Jas.1:23-25**, and keeping up **the discipline of working out my own salvation**, **Phil.2:12-13** . [**Mt.7:24-27**; see **p.3-5** in **self-awareness**] *This means that we are to apply ourselves to discover, understand, and implement tier 3 knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and experience and adapt it to our culture & situation.*

*In love **he predestined us to be adopted as his sons** through Jesus Christ ... In him we have also obtained an inheritance, because **we were predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in keeping with the purpose of his will** ... you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth , the gospel of your salvation . **When you believed , you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession** ... **Eph.1:5, 11, 13-14** .*

*... the one who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus ... And I pray that your love may abound even more and more in knowledge and every kind of insight so that you can decide what is best, and thus be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ ... **Phil.1:6-10***

God supplies some detailed instructions and illustrations for what his words mean, and HOW TO implement them, but **he leaves much for us to think about** because he wants us to do **just that!** [One key to maintaining an active faith is to work at our own salvation by filling in the blanks - bringing the Scriptures to life] That is what **tier 3** is all about, staying engaged with Scripture in discovering wisdom and applying ourselves to giving substance to God's words as LIVING REALITY in this poor world. This is something each of us must decide to do for himself, but not without other Chris-

tians or simply as a matter of personal discipline. God's Spirit helps us ... he has helped me.

God Bless