

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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What Must I Do to Be saved?

While the apostle Paul was in prison he was asked this very question because a prison guard had observed his life. In a difficult circumstance he was content to praise God and pray instead of complain and worry because he was occupied with Christ instead of his circumstances – 1 Thess 5:16-18; Phil 4:6-7; Eph 5:19-20. Therefore, when the jailer saw his own need to be saved, he knew who had the answer. An appropriate question then for the church today is: Do those who are without Christ, who observe our daily life, see us as persons who have the answer because they observe in us a saved (delivered) life? We need to soberly consider this question! Lives depend on it – 2 Tim 2:19; Mt 5:13-16. We also must be ready to share a clear, undistorted gospel from Scripture. If we are not equipped with the true gospel, we will be like the blind leading the blind, and both will fall into the pit - Lk 6:39. We must first know the true gospel and apply it to our lives before we can effectively share it with others - Ezra 7:10, Mt 28:18-20.

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Paul's answer to the Roman guard was simply, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved"* - Acts 16:31. Carefully take note here – the gospel message gives us Someone to believe on to be saved, not something or some things to do to be saved. If our answer is a list of things to do like confess with the mouth, pray a prayer, or go to church, we confuse the one inquiring about salvation into thinking a Christian is someone who does things instead of someone who trusts in Christ. *"We proclaim Him"* Paul says - Col 1:28. Also note the sure result of believing on the Lord Jesus – *"You will be saved."* The good news to the Roman guard was that Jesus had already completed the work for his salvation, so there was nothing left for him to do or say, only believe. Jesus said, *"He who believes in the Son has (right now) eternal life, but the wrath of God (right now) abides on him who does not believe."* *"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies"* - Jn 3:36; 11:25; Heb 9:27. Look at why God wrote the Gospel of John to us: *"These things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name"* - Jn 20:31. Could it be any clearer!? That by believing you may have life in His name. This is good news to the sin burdened heart who sees his need to be saved from sin.

Christ is central to creation, the Law, the gospel, God's whole revelation and His whole purpose in redeeming and ruling His creation forever. The gospel is the Person and work of Christ.

In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John we can see the gospel in the perfect Person and finished work of Christ. In Romans, Paul explains the gospel, and in

Galatians he defends it with such concern and urgency, that of all his letters, he writes this one only by his own hand - Gal 6:11. There were some in Galatia who wanted to add conditions to the gospel that man must do in order to be saved - Gal 1:8, 9; 3:15. I can hear them now. If they would have answered the jailer's question, it would have been, "Believe and be circumcised" or "and something else." Sadly, Paul's concern and urgency is just as relevant for the church today as then (the flesh has not changed). Many in churches today still think that the things they did or are doing are gaining in some way the favor of God, instead of seeing their sinful, condemned condition before a holy God and their refuge from God entirely in God (in the Person of Jesus Christ) - Rom 3:21-26. The majority of the church today does not even think that man is by nature evil. The absence of this critical Biblical truth from the gospel message many times preached today and the works of men added to the message literally means that the majority of the church has not even heard the true gospel. Depending on what group in the church you associate with or what tract or pamphlet you read you will be given a wide variety

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved"- Acts 16:31. The gospel message gives us Someone to believe on to be saved, not something or some things to do to be saved. "We proclaim Him," Paul says - Col 1:28. Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has (right now) eternal life, but the wrath of God (right now) abides on Him who does not obey (believe)"- John 3:36.

of different things (Add-Ons I call them), which you are told you must do to be saved. This is clearly a departure from the truth as you can see from the above quotes from Paul and Jesus. So you can recognize the Add-Ons of today and better understand and apply what I am saying, I have included a list of Add-Ons I have read and heard. However, it is not a complete list. This is part of the problem with men adding to the gospel. No one has all the lists, and

even new ones are being created even as I write this (the flesh never sleeps). The Add-Ons have changed over the centuries, but they have always found their way into the gospel that many preach. Here is a partial list of things commonly added to the gospel as conditions men are told they must do in order to be saved instead of simply believing on the Lord Jesus: water baptism, pray the sinner's prayer, lead a good life, church membership, ask for forgiveness, ask Jesus into your heart, keep the 10 commandments, confess Jesus with your mouth or make a public confession, confess your sins, ask for mercy, give Him your heart, attend church regularly, penance, confirmation class, speak in tongues, and holy communion. Some of these have their place in scripture, but that place is not in the gospel message. In the Captive's Corner, *Add-Ons In Their Proper Place* we give their proper use and purpose according to God in His Word so we can not only keep them out of the gospel we believe on and preach but also rightly apply them to our life. It is very important that we see from Scripture that we do not receive Christ and all the blessings that are found in Him by doing any of these things but only by faith in Him, period.

Paul gives us some very important truths in Galatians which are the Scriptural reasons for why we should not add the above or any other conditions to the

gospel. First of all, if man's work is added to the gospel, then the gospel is distorted so that it is really no gospel at all - Gal 1:7. Secondly, God must receive all the glory in the gospel we preach. God has done it! Salvation is of the Lord! The gospel bears His name, not ours - Gal 1:7; Rom 11:36; Ps 52:9a; Jonah 2:9; Jer 9:24. Christ is preeminent in the gospel as in all things - Eph 1:20-22; Col 1:13-22. He cannot share the glory with man. Add-Ons subtly give men the glory

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and then broadcast on the evening news. Wow! the large, deep, patient heart of God, even so, come Lord Jesus - Rev 22:20. In addition to the creation, the Law was meant to lead men to Christ - Gal 3:24. Christ is the goal or end of the law for righteousness - Rom 10:4. Now, in the gospel, the cross is drawing men to Christ - Jn 3:14-18; 12:32; Gal 6:14. Christ is central to creation, the Law, the gospel, His whole revelation, and His whole purpose in redeeming and ruling the visible and invisible creation forever. Therefore, it is Christ Paul preached - Gal 1:16. Here it is, clear as can be, Paul gave them the Person (God in the flesh) and work (the cross) of Christ in his preaching, not a list of things to do. Faith is not a work. It comes by hearing the gospel of Christ - Rom 10:14-17; Eph 1:13. The one who

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hears of his need and his full need met in Christ need not be told to believe on Christ any more than a terminally ill person needs to be told to accept the cure when it is found. Just as taking the medicine cure is an admission that I would die without it, so it is with faith. Faith in Christ is condemnation of self and the world (Gal 2:20; Heb 11:7). If we are totally depending on Christ to save us, we are admitting that without Him we are helplessly and hopelessly condemned. We have no ability to contribute in any way to our salvation. In Gal 1:18 - 2:10 it is also clear that this gospel is the same for all, everywhere. After 17 years of preaching the gospel to the gentiles

because the glory goes to the one who accomplishes the salvation, and it is man who performs the Add-On (It is "man has done it" vs. God has done it). Now more than ever I believe God is drawing men to His Son Who has done it. Notice that compared to the whole of man's history it is only recently that we have discovered the vast majority of God's physical creation due to very high-powered telescopes (i.e. Hubble) and microscopes. When we consider this in light of Rom 1:20 and Col 1:16-20 we can clearly see the heart of God drawing man to Christ with every molecule and galaxy which is discovered

Paul met with the other apostles, and they had nothing to add to the gospel he preached. Their gospel was the same because it had the same Source - Jesus Christ Himself - Gal 1:7, 12. There is none other who can save (Acts 4:12), and there is no greater authority than God. Therefore, there can be no other gospel than His. All authority has been given to Christ. The Lamb Who has been slain for the sins of the world will judge the sins of the world - Jn 1:29; Acts 10:36, 40, 42; Rev 5:12-13; 20:11-15; 21:22-27. Although God is patient, there will be a Judgment. - 2 Pet 3:9; Rev 20:11-15. Therefore, the gospel of Christ is to be

obeyed. It is a command ("*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*") as much as it is a sure promise ("*and you will be saved*") - 2 Thes 1:8; 1 Pet 4:17; Gal 5:7; Acts 16:31; Rom 1:5; Jn 3:36, 12:50; Mt 28:18-20. The gospel received from Christ is the one we must obey (believe) and preach: that Christ died for our sins, that Christ was buried, and that Christ was raised on the third day - 1Cor 15:1-5. Do you see? Christ is preeminent in the true gospel. Therefore, if man's work is added to it, Christ is no longer preeminent in it.

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In addition to Christ being preeminent in the true gospel, as further proof that conditions should not be added to it, Paul highlights the fatal flaws in the thinking of those who would add on to the gospel. One flaw in adding things men must do to the gospel is that what is really being said (even if it is unwittingly) is that Christ alone can not save and, therefore, He died needlessly, and He is of no benefit - Gal 2:21; 5:2. If I hear of the Person and work of Christ and still think there is something I must do, then I don't believe/see that Christ has done it all. Christ has finished the work to save me, and so I dare not add to it but rather simply thank the Lord for saving me - Jn 19:20. A second fatal flaw in the Add-Ons thinking is that if man adds conditions to the gospel, then he must perform the conditions perfectly and continually without exception - Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10. If you think you must believe and confess Christ with your mouth to be saved then

By nature, we are sinful, at enmity with Him (mutual hatred/hostility) and anything we do except believe on His Son is as filthy rags to Him before we receive new life from Him - Eph 2:1-3; Jer 17:9; Rom 11:32; 5:12; Is 64:6. Do you believe this? This truth has been so far removed from the gospel and teaching of most of the church that adding man's work to the gospel has been easily received and spread like leaven in a loaf - Gal 5:9. Instead, we should hate what is evil (self) as God does, and cling to what is good (Christ) - Rom 12:9.

consider if you have ever failed in the slightest at any opportunity to confess Christ. If you have, you would be condemned according to this 'gospel'. Do you see the effect of adding on to the gospel? Consider the other Add-Ons. Have you ever missed a church service? What if confessing your sins was necessary to be saved from sin's penalty? Do you know every sin of your life in order to perfectly and continually fulfill this condition? Of course not, so you would be condemned. Therefore, no condition can be added or all men would be condemned - Gal 3:15. Only Christ can and has fulfilled the necessary work for our

salvation, perfectly and forever. He is the perfect Savior! Therefore, we can rest from even the slightest attempt at doing anything to be saved because the benefit of His work is given freely given to those who simply believe - Col 2:8-15, 1 Pet 2:3; Mt 5:17; Gal 3:13; Heb 12:25. To add conditions to the gospel is to add man's work and therefore put men under law (where there is no rest) because it is under law that blessings only accompany man doing things (Deut 28:1-6) while under grace blessings flow freely to those who believe on the One Who has completed the work and sat down at the right hand of God. Grace now reigns - Rom 4:5; 5:4; Heb 10:12. Finally, a very critical and often overlooked flaw in the Add-On thinking is that "*The Scripture has confined all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe*" - Gal 3:22. By nature, man is sinful and, therefore, our best effort to earn His favor is a filthy rag to God. So how could we think we could contribute anything of our effort to the gospel? Unless? We don't believe God when He says we are by nature evil, at enmity with Him (mutual hatred/hostility) and anything we do except believe on His Son is as filthy rags to Him before we receive new life from Him - Eph 2:1-3; Jer 17:9; Rom 11:32; 5:12; Is 64:6. Do you believe this? This truth has been so far removed from the gospel and teaching of most of the church that adding man's work to the gospel has been easily received and spread like leaven in a loaf—Gal 5:9. If we understood this truth we would never think of adding things men do to the gospel. We would instead hate what is evil (self) as God does and

cling to what is good (Christ)—Rom. 12:9. Without faith it is impossible to please God because it is not until our faith is in Christ alone that we share in His life, Spirit, and nature from above which is altogether good and pleasing to Him - Heb 11:6; Jn 1:12-13; 3:3-18; 2Pet 1:3-4; Rom 1:18-32; 3:10-20; Ps 53:1-5; Prov 6:16-19; Mt 19:17. He is the Source of all that is good, and we are ever dependent on Him. Only in union with Him are we accepted by God and enabled to please Him - Jas 1:16-18. Only in Christ do our works become good works because they have Him as their source - Phil 2:12-13; Eph 2:1-10; Gal 5:22-23.

In addition to proving that we can not enter into the blessing of God by doing, Paul also proves that we do enter by faith (15 times in Gal 3). See also Heb 4:2-3, 10-11. Three times he states that we "receive the Spirit through hearing with faith" (and we know it is the Spirit Who gives life) - Gal 3:2, 5, 14; Jn 6:63; Rom. 8:9. Also, we are "Sons of God through faith" in Christ - Gal 3:26. Three times he states, "We are justified (declared righteous) by faith" - Gal 2:16, 3:24. "The righteous live by faith" - Gal 2:20, 3:8. Abraham was credited with the righteousness of God when he believed, hundreds of years before the flesh had opportunity to use the law as a futile and self-exalting attempt to earn righteousness so that man could boast in self instead of in the cross - Gal 3:6, 17; 6:14. So, the blessings of God (justification, His Spirit, new life, etc.) are received at the moment you turn in faith to Christ and because you turn in faith to Christ not because you follow the instructions of a pamphlet, or pray a prayer, or confess with your mouth, etc. The slightest faith in Christ saves because it is He that does the

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saving. It is simple, but we must simply receive it and not try and be wise in our own thinking. Faith is the key, from Genesis to Revelations. Even before Abraham we see the faith of Abel, Noah, and Enoch in Heb 11:4-7. Note as you read through Romans that the main theme is righteousness by faith in Christ. Two of the key words are 'righteousness' and 'faith'. Believing in Christ for eternal life is a main theme of the Gospel of John. Count the times you read 'believe' and 'life' and consider how these words are used each time. Faith is simply the noun and believe is the verb form of the same Greek word. The word repentance is not in John or Galatians, but faith (believing) in Christ always means that repentance has occurred. No one will put their faith in Christ without having a change of mind (repentance) because we are by nature evil, children of Satan, controlled by the flesh, friends of the world, hostile to God and His Christ -

We must believe on Christ, not merely about Christ as the demons do. When we repent and put our faith in Christ we obviously do not reject His rule over our life. Submission is inherent in true faith. Therefore, with new life, by faith, we do what is pleasing to God (i.e. good works). True faith is invisible but the good works in obedience to Christ which result from it are not - Jas 2:19.

Eph 2:1-3; Col 1:21; Rom 8:5-8; Jn 8:38-44; Lk 13:1-5; 2 Cor 7:10; Acts 20:21. Read the Captive's Corner *Repentance Toward God and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ* for an understanding of repentance in Scripture. True faith can only come

from truly seeing our need for it. The demons believe that there is a God and that Jesus is God in the flesh. Yet, they do not repent and put their faith in Him nor can they (Christ did not redeem the angels). So they tremble because they know they will be judged by Him. They rebelled against Him and reject His rightful rule over their life. They will not confess Jesus has come in the flesh because it reminds them of their future (the Lake of Fire). Christ has triumphed over them as well as Satan, the world, and the flesh (including it's sin) by His death on the cross and

Remember, man fell and all of God's physical creation was cursed as a result of Satan subtly changing and adding to what God had said in the garden of Eden - Gen. 2 and 3. Consider the affect of subtle additions to what God says! Never underestimate the flesh.

His resurrection. We must believe on Christ, not merely about Christ as the demons do. When we repent and put our faith in Christ we obviously do not reject His rule over our life. Submission is inherent in true faith. Therefore, with new life, by faith, we do what is pleasing to God (i.e. good works). True faith is invisible but the good works in obedience to Christ which result from it are not.

These are some of the points James is making in James chapter 2. See also Heb. 2:5-19; Jas 2:19; Matt 8:29; 11:18-30; Mk 1:24; Col 2:14-15; Jn 16:13; Gal 6:14; Rom 6:6,9; 1Jn 4:1-6.

Of course, keeping the gospel complete and free of Add-Ons is a spiritual battle because the flesh wars against the Spirit - Gal. 5:16-17. The nature of man has never been content to rest from working for or earning acceptance with God. Adam and Eve covering themselves with leaves illustrates this. They thought they could do something to come into the presence of a holy God. Unless the flesh has a part in earning it, it cannot boast. Also, for the flesh to not tempt man to try and earn righteousness would be for it to admit its corrupt, condemned state. Rather, the flesh's mindset has always been to exalt self and leave God out. At the Tower of Babel man said, "Let us build" and "Let us make a name for ourselves." Even before the physical creation Satan said, "I will ascend ... I will make myself like the Most High." When God manifested Himself to the world in flesh the world said, "Crucify Him!" The mindset of the flesh, Satan, and the world is the same. Well, Satan came crashing down to earth. The Tower of Babel is now dust, and those who crucified our Lord are in the grave awaiting judgment into the Lake of Fire with Satan and his demons. But, Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God (the very place coveted by Satan). God resists the proud but gives

How do you know you are saved? How did you receive Christ? By faith? or some other way such as "asking Him in," "praying a prayer" or by being baptized etc.? There can be no assurance of salvation from God's Word by any other way than by faith in Christ apart from anything you have done.

grace to the humble. He brings the proud low and exalts the humble in due time - Gen. 11; Matt. 27:22; Is. 14; Prov. 3:34; Jas 4:10; Is. 5:15-16. The flesh's mindset of earning acceptance with God subtly manifests itself in the church today in many ways. Adding man's work to the gospel is one of them. I say it is subtle because certainly most in the church who add on to the gospel mean no harm to it; nor do they mean to take away from the work of Christ. Yet, we would do well to be sensitive to the subtle reflections of the flesh in our lives as individual members as well as corporately in the church. After all, "It is the little foxes that spoil the vines" - Song of Solomon 2:15. Subtle things go unnoticed. Often, the subtle activities of the flesh in the church are cloaked in the appearance or form of good, even using Scripture (although out of context) to achieve its fleshly desires of exalting self so that Christ does not receive the glory due Him. When we are made aware of the flesh's activity, we should put it off and put on Christ - Eph. 4:22-24; Rom. 13:14. Remember, man fell and all of God's physical creation was cursed as a result of Satan subtly changing and adding to what God had said in the garden of Eden - Gen. 2 and 3. Consider the affect of subtle additions to what God says! Never underestimate the flesh. It is powerful and, although it is often

subtle, it, like Satan, is out to kill and destroy. The demons also promote a works salvation – 2 Tim 4:1-4. Paul understood the flesh's activity as well as our deliverance from it, Satan, and the world in the cross-work of Christ - Gal. 2:21; 6:14; Jn. 16:33. Likewise, we need to see the flesh for what it is and believe on the cross-work of Christ for deliverance. If it is not by faith it is flesh. If it is added to faith in the gospel it is flesh. Simple isn't it! - Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6. If we are abiding in Christ and His Word, He will be abiding in us. Then we will be able to recognize any voice (even in the church) that is contrary to what God is actually saying to us in His Word. If we are listening to other voices than God's and we are not diligent to sit at His feet and learn from Him in His Word, we can easily be used as a mouth-piece for the flesh to unknowingly communicate a distorted, confusing gospel which may very well be no gospel at all - Gal. 1:6-9; Jn 15:5. "There is a way that seems right to a man but in the end it leads to death" - Prov. 14:12. Jesus said, "I am the way" and "He who believes in Me shall live even if he dies" - Jn. 14:6; 11:25. There is a way and there is the way. The difference between the two is life and death. Therefore, choose life – Deut 30:19!

Because there is only one way to be saved, and it is only revealed in His Word, our assurance of salvation must rest totally on God's Word to us (the way). How do you know you are saved? How did you receive Christ? By faith? or some other way such as "asking Him in", "asking for forgiveness", "praying a prayer" or by being baptized etc.? There can be no assurance of salvation from God's Word by any other way than by faith in Christ apart from anything you have done. None of these methods or ways can be found in God's Word. God simply

If you have believed on Christ alone or you believe on Him now to save you, then He has. You are saved, and He has sent His Spirit to dwell in you. God's Spirit will confirm in your inward man that you know Him as your Savior and that you know God as your Father - Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn. 5:8-13; 3:34; 4:12-16; Jn. 5:24.

begins His work of salvation in us when we believe on Christ. So, if you have believed on Christ alone or you believe on Him now to save you, then He has, you are saved, and He has sent His Spirit to dwell in you. God's Spirit will confirm in your inward man that you know Him as your Savior and that you know God as your Father - Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn. 5:8-13; 3:34; 4:12-16; Jn. 5:24. So much of the church today is struggling with assurance of their salvation, being confident one day that God has accepted them and they are going to heaven only to worry the next day

If we have not seen and agreed with God about our helplessness and our full need met in Christ for deliverance from sin's penalty, we can in no way see our helplessness and our full need met in Christ for deliverance from sin's power. The result is that we will depend on self to deliver from sin's power and to do right, but self is the problem.

that they are not because their assurance is not based on God's perfect, changeless Word. Instead, it is based on imperfect self (doing the Add-Ons). This results in lack of assurance of salvation and lack of security and fruitfulness because self is fraught with failure and changes like the wind. This results in a second problem. Until our assurance of past salvation (deliverance from sin's penalty) is based solely on God's Person and work revealed in His Word, we

cannot know deliverance from sin's power in our daily walk (present tense salvation). If we have not seen and agreed with God about our helplessness and our full need met in Christ for deliverance from sin's penalty, we can in no way see

our helplessness and our full need met in Christ for deliverance from sin's power. The result is that we will depend on self to deliver from sin's power and to do right, but self is the problem. Oops! This is like putting the fox in charge of keeping the chickens safe. As we consistently are no match for daily temptations (the flesh) we see our efforts have been futile to deliver us from sin's power, so then we doubt that we were ever saved from sin's penalty. We must see that it is our self we need delivered from. We can not trust our self as long as sin is within us. We can only trust Christ. Our deliverance is in His cross-work. It is not only that He died for us so that we could be delivered from sin's penalty (Rom. 5:8) but we died with Him (Rom. 6:8) so self (the producer of sin) would be condemned. God in now at work in us to perform

God has done it for us on the cross. He is doing it in us by His Spirit. He will do it in the future by giving us a new body without the presence of sin within - 1 Pet. 1:6; 1 Cor. 15:50-57. God does the saving. We are the blessed recipient by faith. To God be the glory forever and ever. May it never be that we boast in anything but the cross - Gal. 6:14.

His good pleasure in and through us (Rom 8:1-14; Phil. 2:13; Col. 2:6-7). When we move to obey Christ, we find that within us is the power to carry it out. In so doing we are led by, controlled by (filled with), and cooperating with His Spirit - Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 5:8, 18. We also have assurance in His Word that He will complete His good work of salvation He has begun in us (Phil. 1:6; Rom. 8:28-29). Can there be any doubt that grace reigns if you rest on His Word?! God has done it for us on the cross. He is doing it in us by His Spirit. He will do it in the future by giving us a new body without the presence of sin within - 1 Pet. 1:6; 1 Cor. 15:50-57. God does the saving. We are the blessed recipient by faith. To God be the glory forever and ever. May it never be that we boast in anything but the cross - Gal. 6:14

In closing, Paul bore the marks of the gospel of Christ - Gal. 6:17. We would do well as his fellow ambassadors of Christ to at least communicate Christ's gospel clearly, without adding conditions to it, giving a condemned, sin burdened world Someone to believe on instead of something to do. They need to hear it,

The true gospel condemns every man a sinner but does not leave the one there who agrees with God about his lost state. The gospel also carries to man the good news that there is no condemnation to those who believe on Christ because He has bore the penalty of our sin. "As many as walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them" - Gal. 6:16; Rom. 8:1; 10:14-17.

because when they do, they have opportunity to have a change of mind (repent) and believe on Christ to receive new life from above. Remember, faith comes by hearing the gospel which is the Person and work of Christ. The true gospel condemns every man a sinner but does not leave the one there who agrees with God about his lost state. The gospel also carries to man the good news that there is no condemnation to those who believe on Christ because He has bore the penalty of our sin. "As many as walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them" Gal. 6:16; Rom. 8:1; 10:14-17.

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