

It is also vitally and eternally important to know and understand that the disciple of Christ MUST continue to follow and remain in him --- Jesus said **“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may beareth more fruit”** (John 15:1-2). Jesus also made it clear that following him would come at a great price --- **“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved”** (Matthew 10:22). The apostle Paul also spoke of the necessity of remaining in the faith that God provides, **“...if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and stedfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister”** (Colossians 1:23).

If, when the Lord calls and we fail to respond or later turn from him, there is nothing left but judgment: **“And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27); and **“...for we shall all stand before the judgement-seat of God”** (Romans 14:10c). The result of beginning with the Lord and failing to persevere and not continue, or to reject him outright, is to receive the penalty for so doing --- eternal punishment and separation from God. It is stated of those that do not know God and that do not obey the gospel given to us of Jesus **“...who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might...”** (I Thessalonians 1:9). Furthermore, the scriptures provide concrete examples of those that are judged --- **“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah,**

and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 7), and also the rich man who died and suffers the torments of hell (Luke 16).

For those that endure the very temporary persecutions and trials of this life and persevere with Christ to the end, there is the promise that **“...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”** (Romans 8:28). Our purpose in this world is to die to self and to walk in Christ likeness --- we must receive his full nature to walk as he walked: **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world”** (John 6:47-51).

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Will You Enter
*Eternal
Life?*



Have you ever discussed the meaning of life and of an existence beyond this one with someone else, or thought about this? Indeed, there is a God that demands holiness of created man which has fallen from his original position of favor and innocence before Him. However, God, who works all things after the counsel of his own will (Ephesians 1:9), had determined before the foundations of the world to redeem those that would be saved by the sacrifice of his only begotten Son (Genesis 3:15, John 3:16) --- the only worthy sacrifice that could remove sin.

In testifying to the sacrifice that Jesus would make, the Old Testament scriptures proclaim that **“...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed”** (Isaiah 53:5). There are many additional references contained within the Old Testament scriptures that bear witness to the Lordship of Christ and which confirm Jesus as having fulfilled the promise that God gave of a Savior that would remove sin and justify those whom he would and has chosen. Jesus is the only one that could have carried the full burden of sin and pay the price of redemption for the lost --- **“Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit...”** (I Peter 3:18), and also in II Corinthians 5:21: **“Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the Righteousness of God in him”**. God did not provide any alternate means that would make us acceptable in his sight other than through Jesus --- **“And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). Jesus said **“I am the way, and**

the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

The fact that all of mankind fell and is in need of God’s intervention is unmistakable: Romans 3:23 tells us that **“...for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God...”** Living a life of unrepentant sin then, leads to death in the ultimate sense of being eternally hopeless and separated from God, but through acceptance of the free gift of God in Jesus there is life eternal --- **“For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Romans 6:23). Truly, eternal life is found in a saving knowledge of God and that through Jesus Christ, **“And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ”** (John 17:3). We must be careful, therefore, how we handle or measure the word that the Lord attempts to impart to us. Jesus compared this process to a sower that casts seed to the ground in order for that seed to produce good fruit. He goes further to describe the different kinds of soil that respond differently to the seed that was sown. In the end, the Lord explains that most of the soil types produce little or no fruit which quickly withers away. Only one of the four soil types receives the seed to the point of producing good fruit; some unto thirty, some sixty and some one-hundred fold.

However, in order for a person to be in a position to bear acceptable fruit unto God, that person must first undergo a rebirth; not in the sense of a reincarnation but a rebirth in this lifetime. Jesus said in John 3:5-6 **“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”**. It was the faultless, sinless life of Jesus that provided the way --- his death, burial and resurrec-

tion. He walked the necessary sanctified (set apart) life unto God in order to give fallen man the opportunity to also walk in fellowship with him (John 17). He sowed his life in order to bear much fruit unto God --- **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit”** (John 12:24). Jesus then warns us that if we love our way of living in this world (living our own lives apart from him), we will lose it eternally. But, if we hate that life and forsake it, we will keep it unto life eternal (John 12:25). The result of turning to God in Christ is the ability to walk and live life in true love, joy, peace and in bearing other fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-26). Ultimately then, the reality becomes **“...Christ in you, the hope of glory...”** (Colossians 1:27).

God sent his only begotten Son to pay the highest price for those that he would call and elect. Jesus poured-out his soul unto death (Isaiah 53) and suffered the agony of separation from God on the cross (Psalm 22) in order to redeem the lost. He, therefore, is the beginning and ending of our faith --- **“...looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (Hebrews 12:2). Consistent with this faith in Christ is a transformed and renewed mind that allows the true disciple of Christ to know and understand God’s will (Romans 12:2); a process that follows a true belief and confession in the finished work of Christ (Romans 10:9,10). When we make seeking God and doing his will our priority then we can count on him to meet our every need --- **“But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”** (Matthew 6:33).