

## Declaration

The Lord reigns forever. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you. (Psalm 9:7,10)

## Hymn, by S Townend, K Getty

1. In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This corner-stone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of Love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My comforter, my all in all, here in the love of Christ I stand.
2. In Christ alone! Who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe!  
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save;  
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied  
For every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.
3. There in the ground His body lay, light of the world by darkness slain  
Then bursting forth in glorious day up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
For I am His and He is mine bought with the precious blood of Christ.
4. No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from His hand;  
Till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

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## Scripture

- 1 Corinthians 1:20-2:2

## Prayer

Dear Father God,

You have provided for all humanity free access into your presence through the finished work of the cross. I thank you that you have graciously worked in my life that I am able to accept your full and complete salvation, that I do not have to strive to be accepted by you, that instead the work and invitation of Jesus Christ is all-sufficient.

Accept my deep gratitude and help me to live a life worthy of your holy name. I pray in the name of my Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen

### Message: Only Christ

For anyone thinking about their eternal destination, about heaven and hell, about Peter and the pearly gates, or about the final judgment, the basis on which one might expect to have the right of permanent entry into heaven is pretty important. For those who think seriously about this, there can be thoughts like “Have I committed the unforgiveable sin?”, “Has my faith been adequate?”, “What if all my life has not been what he wanted of me?” and other similar thoughts. How can one be sure?

In the record of Paul’s journeys we find that he spent time at Athens debating with the philosophers of the day about the “new religion” and “foreign gods”. The locals called him a babbler. He engaged in philosophical arguments with the elites of Athens who were always interested in the latest ideas, but Paul was frustrated at his lack of impact. From there he journeyed to Corinth, and he had determined to modify his *modus operandi*. Henceforth, as he states in his letter to the church at Corinth, he would no longer engage in debates, but instead would preach “nothing ... except Jesus Christ and him crucified”, not using “wise and persuasive words” and “men’s wisdom” but instead relying on the message of the cross and “a demonstration of the Spirit’s power” which he well understood to be “a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles”<sup>1</sup>. Nothing but Christ and him crucified.

There is a well known video clip by Alistair Begg (Parkside Church, Cleveland, Ohio USA) about the thief on the cross. Begg imagines the thief arriving at the pearly gates where he is asked some questions by the gate-keeper.

“Hullo, who are you?” he is asked. “I’m a thief” he replies.

“So, why are you here?” “Not really sure.”

“Do you want to come in?” “I s’pose so” he says with some hesitation.

“Well we need to check on a few things first. What do you understand about the virgin birth?” “Never heard of it. That would be a bit odd.”

“Oh! Well what is your understanding of eschatology – you know, end times?” “No idea. Sounds complicated.”

“Hmm. How do you understand the Scriptures?” “I had a copy at home but never read them so I don’t know.”

“Have you received the Holy Spirit?” “Never heard of the Holy Spirit.”

The gatekeeper paused. “Just a moment. I’ll have to speak to my supervisor”. A few minutes later he returns with the supervisor. The supervisor asks “I’m told you want to come into heaven?” “I guess so. I was invited, so here I am.”

The two looked at each other a bit puzzled wondering what to do next. “Tell me,” the supervisor eventually asks, “who invited you?” “The man on the middle cross. He said he would meet me here.”

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2

Begg goes on to make his point. He says when you're asked to give a reason as to why you should be accepted into heaven, or why you are saved or why you should be exempt from any sort of rebuke or punishment by God, and your reason starts with the first person "I" – "I believe ...", "I have faith...", "I *anything*..." – then you have missed the point. It's all about the third person, *Him*, the man on the middle cross. There's no reliance on *my* faith, or *my* belief, or *my* repentance or *my* efforts, but total dependance on *Him*. *He* died. *He* rose from the dead. *He* invited me. That's all that matters. There is nothing that *I* can do. My acceptance by God relies 100% on what Jesus said and did. All *I* can do is accept the offer that has been made.

If you expect that the open door into eternity, into heaven, being accepted into the presence of the Living and holy God is somehow dependent upon your level of faith, or the degree to which you have repented, or willingness to be involved in good works or in charity or philanthropy, or it's in danger because of the wickedness of the past, or some issue in life that was never resolved, then you have failed to grasp the significance and the purpose and the achievement of the cross. When you are asked "are you saved", or maybe even when you ask it of yourself, then say, or remind yourself: "I am relying totally on what Jesus did and said. He said if 'anyone comes to me I will never drive away.'<sup>2</sup> He said 'I am going to prepare a place for you ... and will take you to myself that where I am you may be also.'<sup>3</sup> He said 'I have come to bear witness to the truth.'<sup>4</sup>" It all rests on Him. If Jesus can't be trusted on these points, then nothing you do will help.

This is the wonder of the Gospel. Charles Wesley understood this: "Can it be that I should gain an interest [*IE a benefit*] in the Saviour's blood." The implied answer is "Yes, it is so." You trust in Jesus, no more, no less. That is the only claim that can be made, and it is the only claim that needs to be made. The work of Christ is all-sufficient. And on that basis you are accepted by your Father in heaven, adopted into his family and are citizens of his Kingdom. Of that we can all be confident.

Thanks be to God for his mercy, kindness and goodness.

### Prayer with suffering Christians (*Barnabas Prayer 25/10/26*)

Grant us, Lord Jesus, the capacity to stand, and even to suffer with, our brothers and sisters in North Korea who risk their lives by following you. Please protect them as they meet in secret and fill them with courage wherever they go, to follow you despite the risks.

We intercede for those held in labour camps, that they will know the overwhelming power of your love even through the harshest trials they endure.

We pray for Christians practising their faith in secret to know discernment in how to be lights in a dark world and be kept safe, for we ask in your most holy Name. (Joshua 1:9; Matthew 5:14)

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<sup>2</sup> John 6:37

<sup>3</sup> John 14:2-3

<sup>4</sup> John 18:37

Hymn *by FR Havergal*

1. I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus, trusting only Thee;  
Trusting Thee for full salvation, great and free.
2. I am trusting Thee for pardon; at Thy feet I bow;  
For Thy grace and tender mercy, trusting now.
3. I am trusting Thee for cleansing in the crimson flood;  
Trusting Thee to make me holy by Thy blood.
4. I am trusting Thee to guide me; Thou alone shalt lead;  
Every day and hour supplying all my need.
5. I am trusting Thee for power, thine can never fail;  
Words which Thou Thyself shalt give me must prevail.
6. I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus; never let me fall;  
I am trusting Thee forever, and for all.

**Benediction:**

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant raised from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for the purpose of his will and achieve in you that which is pleasing unto him.

Amen.

*This service was prepared by Warren Mack for HopeNet SA*