

HE DIED FOR ME

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." I Thessalonians 5:9-10.

God did not appoint us to wrath, that is, He did not want us to die and go to hell. Instead, He appointed us "to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." What is included in the term "salvation"? Salvation is the forgiveness of our sins, that is, the beginning of it. We cannot be right with God unless our sins are blotted out and covered over, cast behind God's back, buried in the bottomless sea. When Christ sent His disciples out to preach the Gospel, He said, "Thus it is written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, to die, to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem." When Paul preached in the region of the Mediterranean Sea and turned thousands to Christ, this was his text: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

In another sermon Paul said "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). If you have salvation, your sins are forgiven. Secondly, in salvation you are made a child of God. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). God makes Himself responsible for the welfare of His children. Paul said, "He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." If God loved you and me enough to send His Son to die for us, He certainly loves us enough to feed and clothe us and to provide for us what we may need in order to serve Him and our fellow men effectively.

Thirdly, with salvation we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit in us who gives us the grace, the wisdom, the strength and the courage which we need to overcome Satan.

Salvation is life. It is not life in the biological sense, the life that we share with the lower creation. Rather, it is the life delivered from the sin and guilt that separate man from God, life with the quality of eternity in it. This life has three aspects.

As a past event it looks back to a mighty redeeming act of God in Christ. He died on the cross to break down the barrier that separates sinful men from the holy God. His death closed the old chapter of sin, but His resurrection opened the new chapter of holiness and life victorious.

As a present experience eternal life is now ours in Christ. God has "translated us out of the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son." This new life means forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit, and divine sonship through Christ.

As a future hope our present experience of salvation is but a foretaste of what is yet to be. One day we shall enjoy salvation in all of its fulness.

It is glorious to have this salvation which includes freedom from the past, fellowship and power in the present and hope for the future.

This salvation is very valuable. It is valuable for what it cost. It cost God His only begotten Son. It cost Christ His life's blood on Calvary's cross. It is valuable because of what the sinner loses if he rejects it.

This salvation is desirable. It offers you a better way to live. The Christian life is the cleaner, purer, better, sweeter and more satisfactory life. It offers you a better way to die. There is no comparison between the death of a Christian and that of a lost sinner. It is a fearful thing to die out of Christ. If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour and been saved, death will lose its sting and the grave will lose its victory so far as you are concerned. It offers you a better home in the life to come.

Salvation is obtainable because it is God's will for us to have it. It is obtainable because Christ died to save us. It is obtainable because the Holy Spirit invites us to accept it. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

The two great mysteries of the gospel of our salvation, unfathomed and unfathomable by the human mind, are the incarnation and the cross. As to the incarnation of Christ, the Gospel of John informs us that "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Christ's life was one of perfect blessedness. That Christ died for us on the cross and made atonement for our sins is the most wonderful thing that ever took place for us. His sufferings there were vicarious.

A vicarious act is one which is done in the stead of another. Christ suffered in our behalf, that we might benefit by His suffering. In giving an account of His death in our behalf, Christ made this remarkable statement, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). In these words Christ asserted that His death was not like that of a patriot for his country or a martyr who lays down his life for a great cause. Christ did not die merely for the benefit of others, but in their stead. The one great purpose for which He came into this world was to lay down His life as a ransom or redemption price for our salvation.

"Our sins on Christ were laid;
He bore the mighty load:
Our ransom price He fully paid,
In groans and tears and blood."

To eliminate the atonement of Christ from the Word of God would be like drawing the blood from a human body. There would be nothing left except a lifeless thing. The blood of Christ is emphasized throughout the entire Bible.

Christ died for us in order that we might live together with Him. When believers in Christ are alive here on earth they live unto God; when death comes they go to be with their Lord. Christ died for us that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him. In other words, He died for us that when He comes again, whether we are numbered among the living here on earth or our bodies have returned to the dust, it will not make any difference, we shall live together with Him. We live with Him here now and we shall live with Him hereafter. Now we are living here in a state of grace, but then we shall live with Him thereafter in a state of glory. All of this is true because He died for us.