

SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST

"But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

"Salvation" is truly a great, comprehensive, and all-inclusive word, but multitudes do not have any conception of what it means. Salvation includes all of the redemptive acts which are mentioned in the Word of God.

Whether one is reading in the Old Testament or in the New, the message is the same, "Salvation is of the Lord." The natural man thinks that salvation finds its origin in himself, and that he must do something to merit its blessings. Repeatedly the Word of God emphasizes the truth that salvation comes from outside of man. It comes from above and not from within. "Salvation is of the Lord." Salvation never becomes the possession of the person who imagines that it is of himself.

You will remember that when devout Simeon came into the temple took the baby Jesus into his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2:28-30), reminding all that salvation is a Person, and that Person is Jesus Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

I. God Planned Salvation.

All men are sinners in the sight of God. All by nature are lost and on their way to perdition. Human beings are rushing down a precipice toward destruction. In Isaiah 53:6 we read, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Romans 3:10 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Hence, all are sinners in the sight of God. They have sinned against God, they have rejected Jesus Christ, and now they are doomed. All whose names are not in the book of life will be lost forever.

You who have sinned against God are lost, condemned, and headed for eternal destruction. You may tell me that you are not a great sinner. I would remind you that, if you have sinned, one transgression will bar you from heaven. The fact is that you have transgressed the laws of God. You have broken His commandments. Because you have sinned you are not prepared to face a holy God. If you have not yet accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, then you are guilty of the greatest sin that you can commit, for you have spurned the love and mercy of God; you have refused His pardon; you have ignored His Son; you have turned your back on Jesus Christ.

You are not a sinner because you sin; you sin because you are a sinner. Your very nature is sinful. You were shapen in iniquity and born in sin. An apple tree is not an apple tree because it bears apples; it bears apples because it is an apple tree. So, you sin because you are already a sinner. You willingly started going astray as soon as you came to the years of responsibility, and you have been going astray ever since. Consequently, there is no hope of escape as long as you continue in your present state.

The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Death is therefore the outcome of sin. When I speak of death as the penalty of sin, I am not referring to your death

of the body only, but also to the death of the soul. If you have only been born once, then you will have to die twice. It is only those who have been born twice who will die but once. What could be worse than eternal death? Do you not dread the very thought of death as your eternal doom? Would you not flee from it if you could?

The Bible says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Now the awful thing about physical death is the fact that it is followed by judgment, and from judgment there is no escape. A day is coming when every man out of Christ will have to appear at the judgment, over which Christ will be the presiding judge. Today He is presented as the Saviour, but, if men will not have Him as a Saviour, then they will be compelled to face Him as a judge. God has committed all judgment to His Son. The Bible says, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

The plan of salvation from sin is entirely of the Lord. No human intellect, or no created intelligence, assisted God in planning salvation for sinners. He contrived the plan, and He alone carried it out. He never called in the angels for consultants. No one suggested anything to Him when He perfected the plans for man's redemption. He did not counsel with anyone when He dug the well of grace out of which the water of life flows to the thirsty souls of men. He did it all Himself. He alone devised the plan whereby law and love meet together and justice and mercy kiss each other.

All men have sinned against God, are lost, are on their way to hell, are doomed to death, and must face a judgment from which they cannot escape. What next? No man can be saved by his works, and no man can be delivered from his doom by any church.

Paul is an outstanding example of one who received salvation. He was on his way to the city of Damascus, not on a pilgrimage, or in order that he might become a better man, but he was going there for the purpose of seizing Christians and returning them to Jerusalem for persecution, punishment, and destruction. As he was journeying near the city, a great light from heaven shone round about him, and he fell to the ground. This experience resulted in his turning away from all reliance upon the good life he had been trying to live, realizing full well that it could not save him, and in his being truly saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. He could not do anything to save himself. No man can ever be his own Saviour.

Salvation is not imparted by good works. No deeds of merit, no pilgrimages, no prayers, no works of mercy, or nothing that you can do for yourself will avail in the least. You cannot buy salvation. You cannot achieve salvation. You cannot earn salvation. Your own works can never bring about your salvation. As Paul later wrote, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5). Church membership does not have anything to do with your salvation. You may join many churches and still be lost eternally. The whole work whereby men are saved from their natural estate of sin and condition of ruin, and are translated into the kingdom of God and made heirs of eternal happiness, is of God, and of Him only.

God's salvation is a gift. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). If salvation is a gift, it cannot be earned. There is no way to merit it. You cannot work for it and receive it. A gift has to be accepted as a gift. You must take God's salvation as you would take a Christmas present. All you can do is to receive it as a gift, and then thank Him for it. The price has already been paid, and it was enormous. God gave His only begotten Son. Christ Jesus gave His life's blood on Calvary's cross. Christ paid the penalty for your sin.

II. God Provided A Saviour.

Over and over the Scriptures bear witness to this fact. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (I John 4:14). Seeing man in his dire estate and lost condition, God sent a Saviour to do for him what he could not do for himself. This is why salvation is revealed to us as being on the basis of grace, which means that the Saviour does the saving rather than man. This has always been the Lord's method of saving human beings and is so revealed in every section of His Word.

God's Son was the infinite provision of infinite love for the infinitely precious souls of men. God could not have given more than when He gave "his only begotten Son." He could not have revealed His love more perfectly than He did in the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. In making this gift, He did not consult angels or any other of His created beings. It originated in His own heart.

III. God Provided A Sin-Bearer.

Man either had to bear the punishment which his own sins merited, or there had to be an adequate sin-bearer. John the Baptist understood the striking significance of this when he saw the Lord Jesus coming down the dusty highway. Lifting his hand and pointing toward Christ Jesus, he said: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

"Yes, 'tis a truth most precious
To all who do believe;
God laid our sins on Jesus,
Who did the load receive."

None of us can begin to comprehend the mighty load of sin He received when God reached out, as it were, picked up the sins of each one of us, and laid them on His blessed Son. These sins were not few in number, but as innumerable as the sands of the sea and as mighty as the mountains which surround us.

IV. God Provided A Substitute.

Jesus Christ was not only a Saviour and a Sin-Bearer, but one Who was to bear the penalty of the sins which had been reckoned against Him by a holy God. The sins of the sinner laid upon Jesus Christ must be condemned and dealt with.

One of the most startling verses of Scripture is found in Isaiah 53:10: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." As Christ Jesus took our place on the cross of Calvary, suffering there the outpoured wrath of

God, the law which man had transgressed was being vindicated and the righteousness of God was being upheld. Sin was not the victor, rather a holy and just God was victorious. Isaiah also wrote: "But 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. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

What a sight it was as Jesus Christ took our place! Angels beheld in sad astonishment, demons gazed with angry surprise, the sun hid its face at the amazing sight, and the moon blushed for shame. The rocks, the graves, and the veil of the temple were all rent as the Son of God cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The last farthing of man's sin debt had been paid. Our Substitute had completed the work He came to do and God was glorified thereby. Christ Jesus died for you and me. "For when we were yet without strength, (rendered helpless by sin) in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

V. God Provided A Surety.

How can any of us know beyond a shadow of a doubt that "salvation is of the Lord"? The answer is found in Romans 4:25: "Who was delivered up for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."

It was a wonderful morning when the angel of the Lord sat in the empty tomb and said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen." To reveal to all the world that Christ had provided a satisfactory redemption, God raised His Son from the dead.

This statement, "Salvation is of the Lord," declares God's part in saving the soul. There is nothing for man to do except to repent of his sins and accept what has been done for him. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

An old Negro came to the back door of a certain house and was met by a young man who said, "Well, uncle, you are getting pretty old, aren't you?" The aged Negro replied, "Yes, sah, I'se gettin' pretty old. I'se seventy yars now." "Well, you have lived a long time," the young man said, "But I wonder whether you've learned much in all those years?" "Well, sah, boss, I doan know whether I'se learned much or not, but I has learned the way to glory." Have you learned that much? "Salvation is of the Lord." The Bible has this to say about Christ: "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).