

SALVATION: What it is, and How to obtain it.

BY THE

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Price, Post Free, Twopence.
In U.S.A., and Canada, 2 for 5 cents.

Published by The International Old Baptist Union Book and Tract Society, Headquarters, Emmanuel Church, Baker Street, Enfield, Middlesex, England.

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"To you is the word of this Salvation sent" (Acts xiii. 26). "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain Salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v. 9).

It is a great pity that all who profess to preach the Gospel do not understand, and therefore cannot teach, the fulness of that Gospel. Consequently, the height and depth, length and breadth of "So great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him" (Heb. ii. 3), are too seldom proclaimed.

In many cases this may be the fault of their tutors, or their denominational upbringing, so that they possess a prejudice against everything which does not form part of what they have been taught to regard as essential to be received and proclaimed as truth.

But while we are sorry for them, yet there is little by way of excuse to be made for any professed ministers of Christ, while they have an open Bible in their hands, and can read for themselves our Lord's own commands to "Preach the Gospel to every creature": "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). Surely it must be said of many who come short in this important matter, "*Thou hast known* the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation".

It is, however, in no spirit of criticism that we write thus; but rather with the desire to share with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, the wisdom which the Holy Scriptures are able to impart to all who diligently study their teaching concerning the "so great Salvation".

Let us then begin by pointing out some of the widespread errors which prevail on this subject of Salvation.

(1). How often have we heard Salvation described as "Full, present and free".

Now this is not a Scriptural phrase. Nor is it altogether true. "Free", so far as mankind is concerned, it undoubtedly is, for it is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and nothing that we can pos-

sibly do can merit Salvation. "Present", it certainly is, but only in part. For here we only possess the "earnest" of the gift,—the fulness is yet to come. But to say that we can now have "Full" Salvation is far from the truth; and the very expression shows how little the extent and power of Salvation is understood by the many who use this term.

Our authorised version of the Bible may be to blame somewhat, for in those places where the words "We are saved" are used, a better and more true interpretation of the original shows that this should be rendered, "We are *being saved*". This agrees with other parts of the sacred Scriptures, such, for instance, as Peter's words at the conference at Jerusalem: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we *shall be saved*" (Acts xv. 11). And Paul's words to the Roman church: "Being now justified by His blood, *we shall be saved* from wrath through Him" (Rom. v. 9).

This is further shown to be the correct view, by the promises given in the Scriptures that so far from being complete, our Salvation is yet to be consummated. Jesus Himself said: "He that endureth to the end, *shall be saved*" (Matt. x. 22). Peter speaks of "The Salvation of your souls" being "the end of your faith". And of being "Kept by the power of God, through faith *unto Salvation*, ready to be revealed *in the last time*" (1 Peter i. 9, 5). And Paul says: "Now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. xiii. 11).

(2). Notwithstanding the assertions of many earnest Christians Salvation is not completed by the assent of faith only, even in so far as it concerns this life, and the forgiveness of sins.

How often have we heard preachers mis-quoting the Scriptures in support of this unscriptural theory. The words of our Saviour, "Only believe", which had reference to the healing of the lad who was possessed by a demon, and not to Salvation from sin, are often thus wrongly applied ; as are also Christ's words, "It is finished" (see 1 Cor. xv. 17, 18).

The words of Paul and Silas to the jailer at Philippi (Acts xvi. 31), " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ", are also used without their context, which shows that the jailer heard from God's servants " The word of the Lord " which included the necessity for those who believed to be baptised also ; and this message he and his household obeyed without delay.

We rejoice to admit fully, that in every case of a seeker who is sincere and desirous of being saved, the Salvation of Christ will *begin* with his or her repentance from sin and acceptance by faith of the atonement wrought for mankind by our Lord Jesus Christ. But even so, this beginning is not the completion, as can be proved from many instances given in the New Testament, in addition to that of the Philippian jailer given above.

Our Lord's own Gospel message for all the world to receive and obey, was not "He that believeth shall be saved", nor "He that is baptised shall be saved". It was, instead, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" (Mark xvi. 16).

Even in those cases where an immediate change of heart had been evidently wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God, those who believed were at once required to prove the reality of their faith and conversion, by being baptised in water, and *they all did so*.

When those who "were pricked in their heart" at Pentecost asked of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said unto them, "*Repent and be baptised every one of you* in the Name of Jesus Christ, for (unto) the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptised; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts ii. 37-41). When Philip "went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them", "They believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ"; and because they thus believed, "they were baptised both men and women" (Acts viii. 5, 12).

When in the desert, Philip had "preached unto him Jesus", the eunuch from Ethiopia, as "they came to a certain water, said, See, here is water ; what doth hinder me to be baptised ? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still : and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch ; and he baptised him" (Acts viii. 35-38).

Moreover, the account of Paul's conversion to Christ furnishes one of the most plain proofs that the beginning of our Salvation by sincere faith is not the final accomplishment of it, whatever some may say.

Acts ix. informs us, that when Christ revealed Himself to Paul on the Damascus road, the future apostle asked, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" Nor did our Lord reply as many have since done to similar enquiries, "Do nothing. Only believe. All was done for you when I suffered on the cross of Calvary."

What, then, did the Lord say to this penitent sinner ? Let us read on and see : "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee *what thou must do.*" So led by the hand, Paul went to Damascus, and was there fasting and praying for three days, before, sent through a Divine vision, Ananias came to him with instructions as to what Paul *must do.*

The apostle tells us himself, that besides laying hands upon him that he "might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost", Ananias said : " And now why tarriest thou ? Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the Name of the Lord " (see Acts ix. and xxiii).

All these accounts of conversion in New Testament times agree in setting forth the fact that Salvation without obedience was not taught by the Apostles, nor by Christ Himself.

We will content ourselves now with pointing out one other error, very often made by preachers when dealing with the subject of Salvation.

(3). No one ever did preach the full message of Salvation who confined it to *the Salvation of the souls* of the hearers.

And this brings us to the answer of our question : *What is Salvation ?*

It is a grave and momentous question, with an uplifting and joyous answer. Salvation is for the whole tri-une man. It embraces the body, the soul and the spirit of man. Thus Paul wrote to the saints in Thessalonica : " The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ " (1 Thess. v. 23).

The "Great Salvation" which our Lord Jesus Christ wrought for us when He "gave Himself a Ransom for all" (1 Tim. ii. 6), completely satisfied the Justice of God, and made full atonement for the sins of the whole world, from Adam to the last-born of his race. But it is not only *Salvation from our sins*, but also *from all the result of sin*.

Death, with its kindred diseases, its partings and sorrows, is the principal result of sin to the bodies of men. And Salvation includes our ultimate deliverance from this great enemy of mankind.

Hear what the Lord has spoken through His servants: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. v. 12, 20, 21).

"If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11).

For since by man's disobedience and sin came death upon our race, God has justly ordained that through the perfect obedience and gift of His life as a complete atonement for all the sins of the world, our Lord

and Saviour has wrought such a great Salvation that it has "Abolished death, and brought life and immortality" to light, for all who believe in and obey Him.

The Resurrection of the bodies of those who are Christ's, and the gift of God which is Eternal life for body, soul and spirit, and the likeness of the redeemed to "Christ's glorious body", are all comprised in "Full Salvation".

And this means that our redemption will restore us to the everlasting favour of God, as though we had never sinned against Him. For Christ is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, as says the apostle:—

We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24). "Whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 30).

And yet the Salvation of Christ goes even further still. For all that fell through our first parents' transgression, is redeemed through our Lord's perfect atonement. The evil powers of darkness that have possessed the overlordship of kingdoms and nations, and have made wars and destroyed the earth and its fruits, bringing in famine and scarcity when there should have been plentfulness, and making this world,

which God pronounced "good" at its creation, the scene of human hatred and abominations, all these "Principalities and powers" will soon be destroyed, and that for evermore. For it is written that Christ will come again with the glory of His Father and ours, and then will His angels gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend. Satan, the arch fiend, will be bound then and cast into the bottomless pit, to deceive the nations no more, for a thousand years.

As to the earth itself and its lower orders of Creation, hear what the holy Scriptures say : "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature itself was made subject to vanity ; not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because *the creature itself also shall be delivered* from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaleth in pain together until now" (Rom. viii. 19-22). This is that of which Peter spoke (Acts iii. 20) : "And He shall send Jesus Christ, Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began."

What need we say more ? This is the "so great Salvation" which the servants of Christ should rejoice to proclaim to all the world, and it is the "full Salvation" which the sin-stricken world needs.

How to obtain it? Why should any ask who have read how the first disciples of Christ preached and practised His commands.

First, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

Secondly, be baptised into the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, as Jesus has commanded; repenting of your sins.

Thirdly, receive, as did those saints at Samaria and Ephesus, the Laying on of Hands for the indwelling and abiding gift of the Holy Spirit whereby you may be "sealed unto the day of redemption", and led and guided into all the Truth of God. Then having laid this "foundation" of "The doctrines of Christ" (Heb. vi. 1, 2), go on by God's grace through Christ Jesus, unto perfection in Him. Believe His promises, trust His power to keep, and be watchful and ready for His appearing, which is drawing near.

"For if these things be in you and abound, they shall make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter i. 8).

"Salvation, let the echo fly
The spacious earth around;
While all the armies of the sky
Conspire to raise the sound."

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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