

Major Bible Themes

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CHAPTER XXVIII

SALVATION FROM THE GUILT AND PENALTY OF SIN

The divine revelation concerning salvation should be mastered by every child of God, (1) since personal salvation depends on it, (2) it is the one message which God has committed to the believer to proclaim to the world, and (3) it alone discloses the full measure of God's love.

I. THE MEANING OF SALVATION

According to its largest meaning as used in the Scriptures, the word salvation represents the whole work of God by which He rescues man from the eternal ruin and doom of sin and bestows on him the riches of His grace, even eternal life now and eternal glory in Heaven. "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). Therefore, it is in every aspect a work of God in behalf of man, and is in no sense a work of man in behalf of God. Certain details of this divine undertaking have varied from age to age. We are assured that, beginning with Adam and continuing to Christ, those individuals who put their trust in God were spiritually renewed and made heirs of Heaven's glory. Likewise, the nation Israel will yet be spiritually born in a time as brief as the beat of a foot (Isa. 66:8 Lit.). It is also said of the multitudes who are to live on the earth during the coming

kingdom that all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest (Jer. 31:34). However, the salvation which is offered to men in the present age is not only more fully revealed in the Bible as to its details, but it far exceeds every other saving work of God in the marvels which it accomplishes; for, as offered in the present age, salvation includes every phase of the gracious work of God.

II. THE THREE TENSES OF SALVATION

1. The Past Tense of Salvation.

There are certain Scriptures which, when speaking of salvation, refer to it as being wholly past, or completed for the one who has believed (Luke 7:50; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; Eph. 2:5, 8), and so perfect is this divine work that the saved one is said to be safe forever (John 5:24; 10:28, 29; Rom. 8:1, R.V.).

2. The Present Tense of Salvation.

This aspect of salvation, which is the theme of the next chapter, has to do with present salvation from the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:14; Phil. 1:19; 2:12, 13; 2 Thess. 2:13; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 2:19, 20; 2 Cor. 3:18).

3. The Future Tense of Salvation.

The believer will yet be saved into full conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:29; 13:11; 1 Pet. 1:5; 1 John 3:2). The fact that some aspects of salvation are yet to be accomplished for the one who believes does not imply that there is ground for doubt as to its ultimate completion; for it is nowhere taught that any feature of salvation depends upon the faithfulness of man. God is faithful, and, having begun a good work, He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

III. TWO ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF GOD

When contemplating the work of God for lost men, it is important to distinguish between the finished work of Christ for all, which is completed to infinite perfection, and the saving work of God which is wrought for, and in, the individual at the moment he believes on Christ.

1. The Finished Work of Christ.

"It is finished" is the last recorded word of Christ before His death (John 19:30). It is evident that He was not referring to His own life, His service, or His suffering; but rather to a special work which His Father had given Him to do, which did not even begin until He was on the cross and which was completed when He died. This was distinctly a work for the whole world (John 3:16; Heb. 2:9), and, in a provisional sense, provided redemption (1 Tim. 2:6), reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19), and propitiation (1 John 2:2) for every man. The fact that Christ died does not save men, but it provides a sufficient ground upon which God in full harmony with His holiness is free to save even the chief of sinners. This is the good news which the Christian is appointed to proclaim to all the world. The blood of God's only and well-beloved Son was the most precious thing before His eyes, yet it was paid to ransom the sinner. The offense of sin had separated the

sinner from God, yet God provided His own Lamb to bear away the sin forever. The holy judgments of God were against the sinner because of his sin, yet Christ became the propitiation for the sin of the whole world. The fact that all of this is already finished constitutes a message which the sinner is asked to believe on the testimony of God. One can scarcely be said to have believed who, having heard this message, has not experienced a sense of relief that the sin question has thus been adjusted, and a sense of gratitude to God for this priceless blessing.

2. The Saving Work of God.

The saving work of God which is accomplished the moment one believes includes various phases of God's gracious work: redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, forgiveness, regeneration, imputation, justification, sanctification, perfection, glorification. By it we are made meet (Col. 1:12), made accepted (Eph. 1:6), made the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21), made nigh (Eph. 2:13), made sons of God (John 1:12), made citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20, R.V.), made a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), made members of the family and household of God (Eph. 2:19; 3:15), and made complete in Christ (Col. 2:10). The child of God has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13), and he now possesses every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3).

IV. THE GUILT AND PENALTY OF SIN REMOVED

Among the stupendous works of God just mentioned, the guilt and penalty of sin is seen to have been removed; for it is said of the saved one that he is both forgiven all trespasses and is justified forever. God could not forgive and justify apart from the cross of Christ; but since Christ has died, God is able to save to the uttermost all who come to Him by Christ Jesus.

V. SALVATION CONDITIONED UPON ONE THING ALONE

In the New Testament in about one hundred and fifteen passages, the salvation of a sinner is declared to depend only upon believing, and in about thirty-five passages to depend on faith, which is a synonym of believing. The Scriptures everywhere harmonize with this overwhelming body of truth. God alone can save a soul and God can save only through the sacrifice of His Son. Man can sustain no other relation to salvation than to believe God's message to the extent of turning from self-works to depend only on the work of God through Christ. Believing is the opposite of doing anything; it is trusting another instead. Therefore, the Scriptures are violated and the whole doctrine of grace confused when salvation is made to depend on anything other than believing. The divine message is not "believe and pray," "believe and confess sin," "believe and confess Christ," "believe and be baptized," "believe and repent," or "believe and make restitution." These six added subjects are mentioned in the Scriptures and there they have their full intended meaning; but if they were as essential to salvation as believing they would never be omitted from any passage wherein the way to be saved is stated (note John 1:12; 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:29; 20:31; Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:16; 3:22; 4:5, 24; 5:1; 10:4; Gal. 3:22). Salvation is only through Christ, and men are therefore saved when they receive Him as their Saviour.

QUESTIONS

1. Name three reasons why the truth concerning salvation should be understood by every Christian.
2. What is salvation according to the Scriptures?
3. What nation and what peoples will experience the saving power of God?
4. What is peculiar regarding present salvation by grace?
5. Name and describe the three tenses of salvation.
6. What are the two aspects of the work of God?
7. What three-fold work has been accomplished in the "finished work" of Christ?
8. Define each of these accomplishments.
9. Indicate what God does at the moment a soul is saved.
10. How does the cross of Christ make possible the removal of human guilt and the lifting of the divine penalty?
11. Upon what one thing is salvation made to depend?
12. Name two reasons why we believe that prayer, confession of sin, confession of Christ, baptism, repentance, and restitution are not essential to personal salvation.
13. State in simple terms what the sinner must believe in order to be saved.
14. What would be the natural sense of relief experienced by the one who really believes?