

## *Salvation*

*Matt 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

*Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*

*Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

The old-time Baptist preachers (17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries) such as Alleine (technically, Alleine was a Puritan), Gill, Philpot, Tiptaft, and even Spurgeon, used to preach about conversion – kind of like Jesus and Peter did. They used to exhort sinners to repent. They insisted on new creatures, through the power of God. They looked for fruit befitting repentance. They believed that the indwelling Holy Spirit would make a change in the life of the child. The requirements are not difficult:

*II Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

The cure for the perishing is repentance. I hesitate to inject human logic into this treatise, but if the Lord is desirous that men should not perish, would He really be that secretive about the antidote? Would he really require “extra things” in order to be “really saved?” Would He require you to remain lost if you trusted Him with your soul, but the wrong words were said at your baptism, or you failed an ordinance, or you kept the wrong Sabbath because the right one was a secret?

Today, it seems we are more concerned with plans for salvation, with prayers for salvation, with programs for salvation - with walking isles, raising hands, and counting numbers, than with converts. We are more concerned with arguing the necessity of baptism than of seeing the proper candidates partake of it. We live in a fast society, and we want a fast salvation. We have instructional courses for soul-winners, and Roads of the Romans to lead people to Christ. We abhor life-style evangelism because it would require a testimony of Christianity, but we require the unholy spiritual

among us to be able to get a soul saved within five minutes, and then take the credit for it.

I hope this will not be overly tortuous, but I would like to present a few thoughts about conversion – the saving of a soul – the new birth – salvation – whatever you would like to call it. I will first present a few things that salvation (conversion) is not. I will then present a few thoughts on what it is. Pretty simple, isn't it? I hope you will muster the intestinal fortitude to read on, especially if you have questions, concerns, or doubts about your salvation.

### **WHAT SALVATION IS NOT**

1. Salvation is not professing to be a Christian. It is more than a name. It is not the result of a few words spoken in an overly emotional state, although there may certainly be emotions at the time of salvation. Salvation is not in word, but in power.

*I Cor 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.*

I can say I am tall, dark, and handsome, but others will disagree. My words don't mean much if my life doesn't show it. We are told about this kind of individual in scripture.

*II Timothy 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

The gospel is not just a plan, or just words, or just requirements. The gospel from the Word of God is alive and powerful, and brings with it the power of God to change your life.

*I Cor. 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

2. Salvation is not in submitting to some external ordinance.

If our salvation rests in external ordinances, then internal grace is obtained through external means. If we declare that baptism, for example, is necessary for salvation, then if you cannot find water, you cannot find the power of God. Thankfully, such is not the case. Please don't get me wrong.

Baptism is a very important ordinance for the child of God. All saved persons should, and are commanded to, be baptized. It is interesting to note that most of the arguments taking place today between groups fighting over baptism have no practical value (although the soteriological arguments behind the act may have great value, indeed) because the adherents of both doctrines are baptized. If we were required to be re-baptized every time we changed what we thought about the particulars of it, we really get into a lot of theological muddy water. I offer only one of many possible examples. Alexander Campbell, his father Thomas, and five other Presbyterian persons were baptized by a Baptist preacher by the name of Matthias Luce on June 12, 1812. By Baptist doctrine, that makes them Baptists (baptism adds them – Acts 2:41). By their doctrine, I don't know what it made them, and I'm not sure they knew, either. There is no evidence that they believed baptism to be necessary for salvation when they were baptized. They were Baptists for a while, and Campbell even upheld Baptist successionism in debate, but eventually they were required to leave for doctrinal reasons. But they never disavowed their baptism, and were never re-baptized. Twenty years later, Alexander was beginning to teach an evolutionary theology that baptism was necessary for salvation. This eventually developed into a doctrine that a belief in the design of baptism is necessary for salvation. I have read much of Alexander Campbell's writings, and he was obviously a very brilliant, thoughtful man. But, if you have to believe in the "design of baptism," as they call it, for baptism to save, he may have been condemning himself to a need for re-baptizing. If you don't, his Baptist baptism is still valid. If Baptist baptism was valid for him, I guess it's valid for Baptists. Campbell's ultimate position seemed to be that Baptist baptism was valid for those Baptists who left the Baptists and joined the Restorationists. Who knows? Is there a scripture for that? Similar arguments could be made for other external salvation requirements, but we would be here forever. So let us move on.

### 3. Salvation is not in "being good."

*Matt 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Paul said that, while he was persecuting the church, he was blameless regarding the righteousness that was in the law (Eph. 3:6).

Morality is an excellent virtue, but salvation will not be attained by it.

Men may make long prayers (Matt 23:14), fast often (Luke 18:12), and hear gladly (Mark 6:20). They may even give their bodies to be burned (I Cor 13:3), but it does not equal salvation.

We may, from time to time, become convicted that we need to be more Godly, or do better things with our life. We may become concerned that we do not love God and our neighbor enough. We may try, in our own strength, to “turn over a new leaf.” Conviction, however, is not conversion. The man is most deceived who deceives himself.

#### 4. Salvation is not ‘by doctrine.’

I do not mean that doctrine (what is taught) is unimportant. It is by doctrine that we will understand the necessity of salvation. It is by doctrine that we will understand our sin, our savior, and our soul’s need. But in this day of information technology, if one searches the internet for salvation topics, he will discover myriads of groups claiming that other groups are not saved because of what they believe or don’t believe about the decrees of God. Calvinists claim that Arminians are not saved. Arminians claim that Calvinists or hyper-Calvinists (whatever they are) are not saved. Some Calvinists claim that other Calvinists are not saved if they believe Arminians can be saved. Generic protestants claim that anyone holding the Baptist bride doctrinal position cannot be saved. Some churches claim that unless you believe in the saving grace of the ordinances, you cannot be saved.

That means that, unless you are a doctrinal expert before salvation, you cannot be saved. That puts us in a most precarious position. Most professors of salvation have, since their salvation (whatever they think that consists of) changed at least a few of their beliefs about even the salvation process, and how it comes about. Some, from their study and external influence, reach the conclusion that God foreordained their salvation from the foundation of the world. Some reach the conclusion that God looked down through time and discovered, much to His amazement, that they would accept the salvation that God offered. Some conveniently pass over certain words in the Bible so they won’t have to deal with the issue. They might not (and probably didn’t) know much about any of those positions when they

were converted. All they knew was that the Lord had made a change in their lives based upon their trust in Christ for the salvation of their souls. They knew that a savior had been sent to die for them, offered them a free and full salvation, and gave them new life from above when they trusted. They were born again. To become unborn again because of what they eventually believe about the salvation process seems to me to be an unworkable position. Of course, I am a Baptist and tend to believe that eternal life is eternal, so that affects my position on the issue. We should be more concerned about our conversion than about our election or about our free will. There will be plenty of time to fight about that. After your conversion, you may rest assured of your election, and your will, for the first time, will be free.

So, let us move on and see:

### **WHAT SALVATION IS**

1. Salvation is something that makes a new creature

#### ***Ephesians 2***

<sup>1</sup> *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

<sup>2</sup> *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

<sup>3</sup> *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

<sup>4</sup> *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*

<sup>5</sup> *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

<sup>6</sup> *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

<sup>7</sup> *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

<sup>8</sup> *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

<sup>9</sup> *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

<sup>10</sup> *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Salvation quickens (makes alive) the dead. The lost are dead because of sin, but God loved us so much that He sent Christ to die in order to make us

alive. When we are made alive, we become His workmanship, created unto good works.

Yes, we still have to battle against sin. Yes, we still have problems and sometimes feel defeated. But the Holy Spirit within us gives us light and life, and we now follow a new course. In traveling across the country, my family and I have at times taken a wrong turn or two, resulting in some rough roads and unnecessary delays. But we still moved in the right direction, and still eventually reached the goal. So it is with the child of God.

*Philippians 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

*Hebrews 13:18 pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Christ's convert is engaged in a battle against sin. He struggles with it, and wars against it. He is sometimes defeated, but Christ renews his strength and he once again takes up the battle:

*Matthew 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

## 2. Salvation is something that secures our eternity

*Isaiah 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

*Luke 7:50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*

*John 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

*Revelation 21:24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*

*2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

*Hebrews 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;*

*1 Peter 1:9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*

### 3. Salvation is what makes us righteous before God

We have no righteousness of our own, but Christ provides righteousness on our behalf.

*Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

*Rom 3:22-24 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

*Rom 8:10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

*Phil 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

### 4. Salvation is turning to Christ

He is the only mediator between God and man:

*1 Tim 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

His work is to bring us to the Father:

*1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*

He is the only door by which we may enter:

*John 10:9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

Salvation is turning to Christ in all of his offices, all of his character, and all of his leading. We cannot accept Christ as savior but deny Him as Lord. He

is all in all, everything, the end from the beginning, the author and finisher of our faith.

### **WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?**

I'm glad you asked.

*Deut 32:46-47 And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day,.....For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life:*

There is no recipe, no precise prescription, for the methodology of salvation. As Jacob wrestled with the angel until the angel let him win:

*Gen 32: 28-29 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.*

So our heart must wrestle with God until the daystar arise.

The path to salvation will necessarily require some steps, such as:

- a. An understanding that our sins crucified the savior:

*Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*

*Galatians 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:*

*1 Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,*

- b. A turning to that savior (repentance) as the only remedy for our sins:

*Isaiah 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

*John 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

*2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*



c. An acceptance of that savior as everything we need for salvation:

*Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*Colossians 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

d. A heart cry to that savior as a seal of our soul's intent:

*Romans 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Is your soul right with God? Is your eternity settled? Will you not trust Christ and settle the matter? Is there something that you will not relinquish to obtain forgiveness of your sins? Will you not ask Him to turn you?

*Lamentations 5:21 Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.*

*Micah 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.*

*Revelation 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

A thousand years from now, it will all be worth while.

God Bless