



EXPERIMENTAL SALVATION

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Salvation may be viewed from many angles and contemplated under various aspects, but from whatever side we look at it we must ever remember that “*Salvation is of the Lord.*” Salvation was planned by the Father for His elect before the foundation of the world. It was purchased for them by the holy life and vicarious death of His incarnate Son. It is applied to and wrought in them by His Holy Spirit. It is known and enjoyed through the study of the Scriptures, through the exercise of faith, and through communion with the triune Jehovah.

Now it is greatly to be feared that there are multitudes in Christendom who verily imagine and sincerely believe that *they* are among the saved, yet who are total strangers to a work of divine grace in their hearts. It is one thing to have clear intellectual conceptions of God’s truth, it is quite another matter to have a *personal, real heart* acquaintance with it. It is one thing to believe that sin is the awful thing that the Bible says it is, but it is quite another matter to have a holy horror and hatred of it in the soul. It is one thing to know that God requires repentance, it is quite another matter to experimentally mourn and groan over our vileness. It is one thing to believe that Christ is the only Saviour for sinners, it is quite another matter to really trust Him from the heart. It is one thing to believe that Christ is the Sum of all excellency, it is quite another matter to love Him above all others. It is one thing to believe that God is the great and holy One, it is quite another matter to truly reverence and fear Him. It is one thing to believe that salvation is of the Lord, it is quite another matter to become an actual partaker of it through His gracious workings.

While it is true that Holy Scripture insists on man’s responsibility, and that all through them God deals with the sinner as an accountable being; yet it is also true that the Bible plainly and constantly shows that no son of Adam has ever measured up to his responsibility, that every one has miserably failed to

discharge his accountability. It is this which constitutes the deep need for God to work in the sinner, and to do for him what he is unable to do for himself. “They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (Rom. 8:8). The sinner is “without strength” (Rom. 5:6). Apart from the Lord, we “can do *nothing*” (John 15:5).

While it is true that the Gospel issues a *call* and a *command* to all who hear it, it is also true that ALL disregard that call and disobey that command — “They *all* with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:18). This is where the sinner commits his greatest sin and most manifests his awful enmity against God and His Christ: that when a Saviour, suited to his needs, is presented to him, he “despises and rejects” Him (Isa. 53:3).

This is where the sinner shows what an incorrigible rebel he is, and demonstrates that he is deserving only of eternal torments. But it is just at this point that God manifests His sovereign and wondrous GRACE. He not only planned and provided salvation, but he actually *bestows* it upon those whom He has chosen.

Now this *bestowal* of salvation is far more than a mere proclamation that salvation is to be found in the Lord Jesus: it is very much more than an invitation for sinners to receive Christ as their Saviour. It is God *actually* saving His people. It is His own sovereignty and all-powerful work of grace toward and in those who are entirely destitute of merit, and who are so depraved in themselves that they will not and cannot take one step to the obtaining of salvation. Those who have been actually saved owe far more to divine grace than most of them realize. It is not only that Christ died to put away their sins, but also the Holy Spirit *has wrought a work in them* — a work which applies to them the virtues of Christ’s atoning death.

It is just at this point that so many preachers fail in their exposition of the Truth. While many of them affirm that Christ is the only Saviour for sinners, they also teach that He actually became ours only by *our* consent. While they allow that conviction of sin is the Holy Spirit’s work and that He alone shows us our lost condition and need of Christ, yet they also insist that the decisive factor in salvation is man’s own will. But the

Holy Scriptures teach that “salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9), and that nothing of the creature enters into it at any point. Only that can satisfy God which has been produced by God Himself. Though it be true that salvation does not become the personal portion of the sinner until he has, from the heart, believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet is that very *believing* wrought in him by the Holy Spirit: “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that *not of yourselves*; it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8).

It is exceedingly solemn to discover that there is a “*believing*” in Christ by the natural man, which is not a believing unto salvation. Just as the Buddhists believe in Buddha, so in Christendom there are multitudes who believe in Christ. And this “believing” is something more than an intellectual one. Often there is much feeling connected with it — the emotions may be deeply stirred. Christ taught in the Parable of the Sower that there is a class of people who hear the Word and with joy receive it, yet have they no root in themselves (Matthew 13:20, 21). This is fearfully solemn, for it is still occurring daily. Scriptures also tell us that Herod heard John “*gladly*” Thus, the mere fact that the reader of these pages enjoys listening to some sound gospel preacher is no proof at all that he is a regenerated soul. The Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees concerning John the Baptist, “Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light,” yet the sequel shows clearly that no real work of grace had been wrought in them. And these things are recorded in Scripture as solemn warnings!

It is striking and solemn to mark the exact wording in the last two Scriptures referred to. Note the repeated personal pronoun in Mark 6:20: “For Herod feared John (not ‘God!’), knowing that he as a just man and an holy, and observed *him*; and when he heard *him*, he did many things, and heard *him* gladly.” It was the personality of John which attracted Herod. How often is this the case today! People are charmed by the personality of the preacher: they are carried away by his style and won by his earnestness for souls. But if there is nothing more than this, there will one day be a rude awakening for them. That which is vital is a “love for the truth,” not for the one who presents it is this which distinguishes

the true people of God from the “mixed multitude” who ever associate with them.

So in John 5:35 Christ said to the Pharisees concerning His forerunner: “Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in *his* light,” not “in *the* light!” In like manner, there are many today who listen to one whom God enables to open up some of the mysteries and wonders of His Word and they rejoice “in his light” while in the dark themselves, never having personally received “an unction from the Holy One.” Those who do “love the truth” (2 Thess. 2:10) are they in whom a divine work of grace has been wrought. They have something more than a clear, intellectual understanding of the Scripture: it is the food of their souls, the joy of their hearts (Jer. 15:16). They love the truth, and because they do so, they hate error and shun it as deadly poison. They are jealous for the glory of the Author of the Word, and will not sit under a minister whose teaching dishonours Him; they will not listen to preaching which exalts man into the place of supremacy, so that he is the decider of his own destiny.

“Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us” (Isa. 26:12). Here is the heart and unqualified confession of the true people of God. Note the preposition: “Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.” This speaks of a divine work of grace wrought in the heart of the saint. Nor is this text alone. Weigh carefully the following: “It pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me” (Gal. 1:15,16).

“Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph 3:20). “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it” (Phil 1:6). “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). “I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them” (Heb. 10:16). “Now the God of peace. . . make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight” (Heb 13:20). Here are seven passages which speak of the *inward*

workings of God's grace; or in other words of *experimental* salvation.

“Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us” (Isa. 26:12). Is there an echoing response in our heart to this, my reader? Is your repentance something deeper than the remorse and tears of the natural man? Does it have its root in a divine work of grace which the Holy Spirit hath wrought in your soul? Is your believing in Christ something more than an intellectual one? Is your relation to Him something more vital than what some act of yours has brought about, having been made one with Him by the power and operation of the Spirit? Is your love for Christ something more than a pious sentiment, like that of the Romanist who sings of the “gentle” and “sweet” Jesus? Does your love for Him proceed from an altogether new nature, that God has created within you? Can you really say with the Psalmist: “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.” Is your profession accompanied by true meekness and lowliness of heart? It is easy to call yourself names, and say, “I am an unworthy and unprofitable creature.” But do you *realize* yourself to be such? Do you feel yourself to be “less than the least of all saints?” Paul did! If you do not; if instead, you deem yourself superior to the rank and file of Christians, who bemoan their failures, confess their weakness, and cry, “O wretched man that I am!” — there is grave reason to conclude *you* are a stranger to God!

That which distinguishes genuine godliness from human religiousness is this: the one is *external*, the other *internal*. Christ complained of the Pharisees, “Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” (Matthew 23:25). A carnal religion is all on the surface. It is at the *heart* God looks and with the *heart* God deals. Concerning His people He says: “I will put My laws into their *hearts*, and in their minds will I write them” (Heb. 10:16).

“Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.” How humbling is this to the pride of

man! It makes everything of God and nothing of the creature! The tendency of human nature the world over, is to be self-sufficient and self-satisfied; to say with the Laodiceans, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17). But here is something to humble us, and empty us of pride. Since God has wrought *all* our works in us, then we have *no ground* for boasting. “What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Cor. 4:7).

And who are the ones in whom God thus works? From the divine side; His favoured, chosen, redeemed people. From the human side: those who, in themselves have no claim whatever on His notice; who are destitute of any merit; who have everything in them to provoke His holy wrath; those who are miserable failures in their lives, and utterly depraved and corrupt in their persons. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, and did for them and in them what they would not and could not do for themselves.

And what is it God “works” in His people? — *All* their works. **First**, He quickens them: “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63). “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth” (Jas. 1:18). **Second**, He bestows repentance: “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to *give* repentance to Israel” (Acts 5:31). “Then hath God also to the Gentiles *granted* repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25). **Third**, He gives faith: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that *not of yourselves*: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). “Ye are risen with Him through the faith of the *operation of God*” (Col. 2:12). **Fourth**, He grants a spiritual understanding: “And we know the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true” (1 John 5:20). **Fifth**, He effectuates our service: “I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor. 15:10). **Sixth**, He secures our perseverance: “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Pet. 1:5). **Seventh**, He produces our fruit: “From Me

is thy fruit found” (Hosea 14:8). “The fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22). Yes, He has wrought *all* our works in us.

Why has God thus “wrought all our works in us?” **First**, because unless He had done so, all had eternally perished (Rom. 9:29). We were “without strength,” unable to meet God’s righteous demands. Therefore, in sovereign grace, He did for us what we ought but could not do for ourselves. **Second**, that all the glory might be His. God is a jealous God. He says so. His honour He will not share with another. By this means He secures all the praise, and we have no ground for boasting. **Third**, that our salvation might be effectually and securely accomplished. Were any part of our salvation left to us it would be neither effectual nor secure. Whatever man touches he spoils: failure is written across everything he attempts. But what God does is perfect and lasts for ever: “I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him” (Eccl. 3:14).

But how may I be sure that my works have been “wrought in me” by God? Mainly by their *effects*. If you have been born again, you have a new nature within. This new nature is spiritual and contrary to the flesh — contrary in its desires and aspirations. Because the old and new natures are contrary to each other, there is a continual war between them. Are you conscious of this inward conflict?

If your repentance be a God-wrought one, then you abhor yourself if your repentance be a genuine and spiritual one, then you marvel that God did not long ago cast you into hell. If your repentance be the gift of Christ, then you daily mourn the wretched return which you make to God’s wondrous grace; you hate sin, you sorrow in secret before God for your manifold transgressions. Not simply do you do so at conversion, but daily do so now.

If your faith be a God-communicated one, it is evidenced by your turning away from all creature confidences, by a renunciation of your own self-righteousness, by a repudiation of all your own works. If your faith be “the faith of God’s elect” (Titus 1:1), then

you are resting alone on Christ as the ground of your acceptance before God. If your faith be the result of “the operation of God,” then you implicitly believe His Word, you receive it with meekness, you crucify reason, and accept all He has said with childlike simplicity.

If your love for Christ be the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), then it evidences itself by constantly seeking to please Him, and by abstaining from what you know is displeasing to Him: in a word, by an obedient walk. If your love for Christ be the love of “the new man,” then you pant after Him, you yearn for communion with Him above everything else. If your love for Christ be the same in kind (though not in degree) as His love for you, then you are eagerly looking forward to His glorious appearing, when He shall come again to receive His people unto Himself, that they maybe forever with the Lord. May the grace of spiritual discernment be given the reader to see whether his Christian profession be real or a sham whether his hope is built upon the Rock of Ages or the quicksand’s of human resolutions, efforts, decisions, or feelings; whether, in short, his salvation is “OF THE LORD” or the vain imagination of his own deceitful heart.

