

## Acts 16:30 (W.H.S.) 51270

Things New and Old: Volume 26, God's Salvation

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What must I do to be saved? How often has this question been asked since the words were first uttered by the jailor of Philippi? How necessary it is that the divinely given answer should be before us in this our day, when thousands are clinging, with a terrible zeal, to human righteousness and fleshly ordinances as a means of salvation! How refreshingly simple is the reply of the Spirit given through the apostle: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But how difficult it is to persuade the sinner that this is all that God requires of him! And yet, turn to whatever portion of God's word I may, I fail to find that man has ever been his own savior.

Take an example. On the sands of the desert were stretched a multitude of Israelites, writhing in the throes of death, through the bite of the fiery serpents, the reward of their sin. (Numb. 21) What can save them? If their prayers and works of righteousness, surely the time to do so has now arrived. Their religion is one of works and ordinances, but they have sinned, they are guilty—yea, they are lost and dying, and nothing can for one moment avail them, save God Himself, the One against whom they have sinned; and, blessed be His name, He interposes, and, by the mouth of His servant, Moses, proclaims His salvation.

"One look" at the serpent of brass, and the deadly wound is healed, the Israelite is saved from death. It was a salvation outside of man, it was God's salvation; man had neither to merit it by good works, nor obtain it by ordinances—he had simply to believe it.

All that he could do was to turn his dying eye to the uplifted serpent, and this was all Jehovah required of him, for He had said to Moses, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." The bitten Israelite's faith grasped the promise of God, and expressed itself by a look. Healing and life were the immediate result.

Thus has it ever been. Man in his extremity has always had to go for help and succor to that God, whom, in his moments of prosperity or trial, he has treated with proud neglect. But, blessed be His name, flowing from His heart is an exhaust-less supply of grace, which is ever at the service of all who, confessing their sins, turn away from creature help, and trust implicitly in Him.

And now a word with you, reader, if unconverted. Know you not that you are suffering from the bite of a serpent more terrible than those which retribution brought upon the sinful Israelites in a bygone day? In what are you trusting for salvation from the awful consequences of your sin, the hell towards which you are traveling so rapidly? Who can rescue you from that dread abyss, on the brink of which you are even now tottering—that abyss of eternal judgment?

Will your ceremonies, baptism, confirmation, teetotalism, blue-ribbonism, reformation, the keeping of feasts, and observance of holy days, your good works and prayers, avail you in this matter? No! No! No! Not all the ceremonies and good works in the world, ten million times repeated, can ever atone for one sin; they do but come in as a barrier between your soul and God. I tell you, He will accept neither you nor them. You are lost, poor sinner, and none but God can save you, and He will only save you in one way.

You must come to Him as the prodigal came to the father, in Luke 15, just as you are, in all your nakedness, wretchedness, filthiness, and unworthiness, with no good thing about you, and nothing to recommend you to God but your need, your penitence finding expression in the cry, welling up from the heart conscious of its guilt, "I have sinned" with faith that God can, and will forgive, you, through the work of His Son.

Listen, while Jesus proclaims the gospel of God's salvation.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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 3:14-16.)

How unspeakably precious is this! The blessed Son of God is using the story of Israel's sin and Jehovah's mercy, to illustrate God's present way of saving sinners. As then, so now, the sinner of that day looked, and lived. The sinner of today, weary of that sin which threatens him with God's eternal wrath, looks back in faith to that wondrous scene at Calvary where Jesus suffered, the Just for the unjust; sees Him there as the One who came from the glory, out of the love of His heart, to bear in His own sinless person the judgment due to fallen man; and believing God has raised Him from the dead, receives everlasting life.

Oh! mystery of mysteries—love unfathomable, unutterable—God's love to man!—to man who had trampled His glory underfoot, and whose vile heart took perpetual delight in transgressing His holy laws. Yet forth from the Father came the Son of His love, and trod the earth as the "Man of sorrows," and the Father traced, with ineffable delight, each step of His blessed journey, while was sounded forth from the glory the Father's voice of loving recognition: "This is my beloved Son." Wondrous word, the heart of Jesus, dishonored by man, was refreshed and cheered by the sense of the Father's full delight in Himself.

It was the Father's presence, the abode of eternal light and love, exchanged for a world which understood and loved Him not; the cold indifference of men pressed upon that loving heart, and grieved it to its core. It was the joy of heaven exchanged for a cross and a grave. The form of God, with its supernal glory, laid aside, that He might assume a body prepared for Him, in which He could suffer and die.

Only the Father and the Son will ever know the depths of the sorrow and anguish of Gethsemane and Calvary: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was the dying cry of the Son of God. Dost thou know, my reader, why God forsook Him in the hour of His awful agony? It was because He was bearing sin, and a holy God hid His face from the Sin-bearer, in order that He might bless the sinner with eternal glory.

Yes, Love's gift in death has satisfied infinite Holiness. The heart of the Father finds eternal rest and satisfaction in the shed blood of His dear Son, that blood which is to Him the blessed proof of a perfect obedience rendered in the scene of man's terrible failure. Heaven's gates are thrown wide open, a holy God, seated on a throne of grace, beckons the prodigal to Himself, and offers him the kiss of eternal reconciliation; bids him come just as he is, and partake of the feast which everlasting love has spread, bids him come and partake, without money, and without price.

Loudly sounds forth from God's own lips, over land and sea, the glorious proclamation of pardon and peace. Harken, oh, poor, perishing world—hearken to what a God of love is saying to thee: "Peace has been made through the blood of the cross." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The message is to the poor, as well as to the rich and the noble, and the command to His servants is, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

The presence of the Son of God on earth, His wondrous death at Calvary, His resurrection and ascension to glory, His being seated at the right hand of God—all this explains why God does not make man's salvation depend upon his own obedience and righteousness. Salvation has been procured for the sinner by the work of another, the divinely-appointed Substitute, who Himself bore God's wrath against sin, and rose from under it triumphant, bursting asunder the bands of death and the grave, and crushing beneath His pierced feet the enemy of souls—thrice blessed proof of an accomplished redemption.

Here may the weary, heavy-laden sinner find rest, joy, and everlasting peace.

Hail, glorious Savior! Worthy art Thou to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing throughout the eternal ages, Amen.

And yet—oh, sorrowful truth!—spite of all this, millions of unsaved men and women are inarching on towards hell, supremely indifferent to what God has done in love to save them from its endless woes.

And millions of others are groping about in a maze of ordinances, vainly seeking for a salvation which has already been procured for the sinner by the atoning death of the Son of God.

Oh, my reader, as you value your deathless soul, let me beseech you to tear from your heart everything in which you are resting for salvation apart from Christ. Look away from everything to Him, just as the dying Israelite looked away from everything to the serpent of brass. Look unto Him, the all-glorious, God-appointed Savior, once nailed to a cross of wood, from whose pierced side flowed that blood which alone could make atonement for the soul. Base all your hopes, for time and eternity, upon that precious, precious blood, and upon that alone.

Think of it, "one look," and the virus of the serpent's bite was annulled, the Israelite leaped to his feet, made perfectly whole. One look of faith at Jesus, and the load of sins is gone, buried forever in the sea of God's forgetfulness; all fear of wrath removed, and everlasting life gained.

Oh, do you not believe, my reader?—God asks nothing more of you, He waits to save you—He waits, I tell you. What a wonderful sight, God waiting to receive the sinner! The God who, in His mercy, came to the rescue of rebellious Israel in the wilderness, has sent His only-begotten Son to suffer in the sinner's stead, and to bear his judgment; and He now waits to pardon all who accept that Son as Savior. Oh, will you not accept salvation in God's own way? You are not expected to save yourself, or even to contribute towards your salvation. Jesus, the Savior, procured salvation, amid inexpressible sorrow and agony, at Calvary, for all who shall believe in Himself.

All things are now ready, sinner; the banquet is spread, the guests are pressing in through the open door of grace. Will you be among the blessed number? Pass in, poor wanderer—pass in.

Oh! says someone, my sins are so many and great. Of course they are; the wound of the bitten Israelite, no doubt, smarted dreadfully, but that did not hinder him from looking away from his wound to the God-appointed means of healing.

Jehovah had not said, Whoever is occupied with his wound shall live, but, Whosoever looketh shall live. Jesus did not say, Whosoever is occupied with his many and great sins shall receive everlasting life, but, Whosoever believeth in Me.

God speaks of man's ruin, and of His own gracious remedy, in the same breath. For example, we read in Rom. 3: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" but what follows immediately afterward? "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The man who has sinned, and come short of His glory, is he whom God justifies FREELY.

Instances could be multiplied showing that God's mode of dealing with the sinner, is, to convince him of his sin and danger, and then point him to what He has done, in His boundless love, to put away the sin, and avert the judgment.

Hence, when a sinner is convicted of his guilt, then God would have him look outside himself, away from his own helplessness and vileness, to His Son, once lifted up at Calvary, and obtain salvation by believing in Him.

God sent the earthquake, to awaken the Philippian jailor out of his sleep of indifference, and show him his need of salvation; and his lips gave immediate expression to the fear of his startled soul—"What must I do to be saved?" In an instant came the answer—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

There need be no pause between conviction and salvation. All the exercises of soul, the doubts, fears, cries, groans, and endeavors to find something meritorious in oneself, always end in the believer's ultimately looking away from himself to Christ, and finding, to his joyful

astonishment, that real peace and salvation are connected, entirely and absolutely, with Him and His finished work. W. H. S.

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