

SALVATION'S PLAN IN ETERNITY

As you know, the England women's football team is at this moment playing Spain in the Women's World Cup final. ... Actually, some churches in England finished early this morning so their parishioners can watch the match.

There is nothing wrong with football, and there is nothing wrong with women playing football, and some folks see nothing wrong in putting football ahead of all else ... but when it comes to professing Christians, what does 'it' say when meeting with God is 'relegated', - to use a footballing term, - to second place?

Ought we as believers to allow anything the priority over our faith? In His sermon on the mount, the Lord Jesus concluded with a warning, **Mt. 7:21** Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Paul cautioned Timothy, **II Tim. 4:2** Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth ... What does it mean to be a Christian today? The simple answer is to be a Christian today is the same as it has *always* been, as far as God is concerned.

How do you know you are a Christian? It is a serious question which Peter addressed in his epistle, **II Peter 1:10** give diligence to make your calling and election sure. ... Peter was quite a character, and he had his 'ups and downs' in his service for the Lord. Sometimes he was enthusiastic but unprepared, as when he stepped out onto the Sea of Galilee and tried to walk towards Jesus, but he began to sink in the water. Sometimes he was so keen to give his opinion before he had thought it through. Sometimes he fell in with 'the wrong crowd', as he did with the Judaizers. But there were also many times when he was fearless for the Lord, as at Pentecost, and when he was cast into prison.

Do you find it easy being a Christian? ... Before you answer that question, here's another one ... if keeping your salvation depended on you, *how* would you be today? ... *where* would you be today? ... Let's look at this ...

THE ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION. When you bring something new into your house, you want to be sure of it, - you want to be sure it will work (the

washing machine, the cooker, etc.) ... More importantly, you need to be sure you are saved for your eternal destiny depends upon it.

What took place when you were saved? ... Was it because you were in a convenient place such as a church, or a Sunday School, or a mission hall ... and the mood gripped you? ... When God saved you, what *actually* happened? ... This is a doctrinal subject, but it is also a deeply personal subject for many people attend a church, or a Sunday School, or a mission hall and are never saved ... Similarly, many people make a profession which they later abandon ... so *how* are you *truly* saved?

There is only one way to be saved and that is by trusting in the Lord Jesus as the only means of cleansing you from your sin. Like the Philippian jailor, you saw no other way to be saved. ... But that is not where God's program for your salvation began, - when *you* decided to believe. ... It did not begin with you.

God's plan of salvation is 'out of this world' for that is where and when it began. Paul explains, **Eph. 1:11** In whom *[God]* also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. It began with God and, therefore, it is not haphazard or random or left to 'chance'. He does not make His decisions on the spur of the moment. Neither does He regulate His plan in accordance with how we decide. Instead, God's plan for our salvation extends before the foundation of the world. That means my salvation is because of Him, and the glory of my salvation is His for "He called me long before I heard, before my sinful heart was stirred".

As a believer, God *planned* to save you and me ... even before there was 'a you and me' on this earth. ... He planned to make you His own when there was no such thing as time, and He planned all the details of our salvation before anything was. ... He planned for His Son to be our Saviour, the Lamb slain *from the foundation of the world* (Rev. 13:8). In eternity He had already planned how He would bring us to faith, **Jn. 1:12** as many as received him, *to them gave he power to become* the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³ Which were *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* ... **I Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy *hath begotten us again* unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. ... He does what He did with Lydia, *whose heart the Lord opened* (**Acts 16:14**).

THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR SALVATION In the Bible there are a number of affirmations, *covenants* which God sometimes made with individuals

and sometimes with the nation of Israel. Often those *covenants* were conditional, - that is, God was committed to keeping His side of the agreement so long as the other side kept their commitment. The *conditional* covenant.

The other type of covenant was *unconditional*, and it was initiated by God, for God, and kept by God. It had no input from anything outside of God.

It did not rely on whether the person or nation would keep it because *God* would maintain and preserve His covenant regardless of the other party's fidelity or infidelity. ... For example, we know how rebellious and obstinate the nation of Israel was, and yet God *unconditionally covenanted* with them, Dt. 7:6 thou art an holy *Iseparated, set apart* people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath *chosen* thee to be a *special* people *unto himself*, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. ... ⁸ But because *the LORD loved you*, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers. ... This was a promise God made and would *never* renege upon. ... His *unconditional* covenant.

And even when Israel *did* fall away on so many occasions, God always kept His promise, for example, Joel 2:25 I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten ... ²⁶ And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you. ... Why? Because He loved them and He had chose them, Jer. 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; *which my covenant they brake* ... ³³ But this shall be the covenant that *I will make* with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and I will write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* ³⁴ ... for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for *I will forgive* their iniquity, and *I will remember* their sin *no more*.

The 'new covenant' in the prophecy of Jeremiah is the covenant inaugurated by the Lord Jesus at the Last Supper, the night before He died, when He announced, Lk. 22:20 This cup is the *new I covenant* in my blood, which is shed for you. ... The 'you' is personal ... to the disciples and to all who will believe in Christ through the preaching of the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and in the uttermost parts of the world, Heb. 9:15 for this cause *he is the mediator* of the *new covenant*, that by means of *His* death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first *covenant*, they which are called might *receive the promise of eternal inheritance*.

The Gospel which unfolds out of the new covenant is founded upon the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross. That was when the redemption price

was paid by the Father's Substitute when He sacrificed His Son, Jesus, to purchase His Redeemed so we are saved not on our merits, but by His grace!

God did *everything* necessary to save us, **Rom. 8:32** He [*God*] that spared not his own Son [*Jesus*], but *delivered Him up for us all* [*His Redeemed*], how shall He not with Him also freely give *us* all things? ... And who are the 'us'? For everyone? ... Keep reading, ³³ Who shall lay anything to the charge of *God's elect*? It is God that justifieth [*makes righteous*] ... *who?* ... *His elect*. ³⁴ Who is he that condemneth [*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*]? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession *for us* [*... who?* ... *His elect*]. ³⁵ Who shall separate us [*His elect*] from the love of Christ? ... And that is how we shall 'stay the course' ... for the Lord Jesus is continually making intercession for us to continue in our faith, and reach Glory on the basis of our salvation in Him.

The affirmation of our salvation ... THE ANCHOR OF OUR SALVATION

Since we contribute nothing to our salvation, and because God did everything to save us, ... it means we owe Him more than words can describe, "Sin had left its crimson stain, *He* washed it white as snow". ... "I will not boast in anything [*for*] ... this I know with all my heart – *His* wounds have paid my ransom". ... "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of *Jesus*". ... The writer to the Hebrews describes it, **Heb. 6:18** we ... have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: ¹⁹ Which hope we have as *an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast* ... "safe and secure as the billows roll".

In God's eternal plan, the Father spared not His only Son because He was committed to our salvation *long before we were even born*! In time He would remove the heart of stone (Ezek. 11:19), and He would replace it with a new heart and a new Spirit (Ezek. 36:26,27). ... This is the *new covenant* ... He forgave us our sins (Jer. 31:34) and He writes His law on our hearts for He has made us for Himself, that we would believe in Him and serve Him (Jer. 31:33) ... and He will never turn away from doing good to us (Jer. 32:40). ... He will see to it our faith and our following Him reaches the standard for His glory, **Rom. 8:29** For whom he did *foreknow*, he also did *predestinate* to be *conformed* to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom he did *predestinate*, them he also *called*. and whom he *called*, them he also *justified*. and whom he *justified*, them he also *glorified*.

It is beyond human comprehension that even though we were born in spiritual deadness, dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), He saved us by His grace. ... I could not have believed to the level He required apart from the Holy Spirit

working in my heart. While religion is a human invention, *regeneration* is a gift from God, **Eph. 2:9** Not of works, lest any man should boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. ... And the psalmist records the same joy, **Ps. 115:1** Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but *unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.* ... **3** our God is in the heavens: *he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* ... Our salvation is His will from before time, and **I Cor. 1:18** [*while*] the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but *unto us which are saved* it is the power of God. ... That is why your salvation is precious to you!

The affirmation of our salvation, the anchor of our salvation ... THE AUTHENTICITY OF OUR SALVATION.

Salvation is the most important issue mankind has to deal with for it settles where we shall spend eternity, - in Heaven with God, or in Hell without Him.

Outside of God's grace there is *already* condemnation, for John wrote, **Jn. 3:18** He that believeth on him [*Jesus*] is not condemned: but he that believeth not is *condemned already*, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. **19** And this is the condemnation, that light [*the Lord Jesus, the Gospel*] is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ... **21** But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. ... We are born under condemnation, - **Ps. 51:5** I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me ... **Rom. 3:10** There is none righteous, no, not one: **11** There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. Yet, in eternity the Father *gifted* us to His Son, as the Son acknowledged in His High Priestly prayer, **Jn. 17:6** I have manifested [*declared*] thy name unto *the men which thou gavest me* out of the world: *thine they were, and thou gavest them me.* ... That is consistent with what He had previously affirmed, **Jn. 6:37** *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me*; and [*so that*] him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ... Our salvation is secure in Christ, - that is **the authenticity of our salvation!**

It is how the hymn writer describes, "Loved with everlasting love, *led by grace* that love to know ... Heaven and earth may fade and flee ... but while God and I shall be, *I am His, and He is mine*". ... Jesus declared, **Jn. 10:14** I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. **15** As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

The Gospel centres upon the love of God offered through the sacrifice of His Son so that whoever believes in Him *will have* eternal life (Jn. 3:16), starting the moment they trust in Christ as Saviour. When Jesus died on the cross, the Gospel was offered to everyone without exception, so there is none without

excuse. ... Paul explained, we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of *all men*, ... and he qualified it, specially of those that believe (I Tim. 4:10). Those who believe by God's grace will be saved, *Eph. 5:25* even as Christ also loved the church *[His Bride]*, and gave himself for her.

The **assurance**, the **affirmation**, the **anchor**, the **authenticity** of our salvation ... is all *in Christ*, for He alone is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one can come to the Father except through Him (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). ... He laid down His life for His sheep (Jn. 10:14,15). The Father gave us to Him (Jn. 17:6). He drew us to Himself (Jn. 6:44), and we come to Him (Jn. 6:37). He keeps us (Jn. 17:12), and He will never cast us out (Jn. 6:37). No one can pluck us from His hand (Jn. 10:28,29), and He will raise us up at the last day into Glory (Jn. 6:39).

We have our many trials in this life, some of them almost unbearable, but as a believer who trusts in God, He has you in His care and keeping. And even "when trials may press us and burdens distress us, He never will leave us alone". ... Even though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, *worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (II Cor. 4:16,17)

We weren't saved in eternity, and yet before we heard the Gospel and believed, the Father had already claimed us in eternity, *Is. 43:1* now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for *I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.* ... *Jer. 31:3* *Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.* ... *Eph. 1:4* According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

Today, our Saviour is interceding for us before His Father. He has saved us, and His prayers are being answered daily and He will keep us until the day He calls us to His side.

We shall come back to this next week to further examine what our priorities are. ... We can never repay the price He paid for our redemption, but to belong to Him and to serve Him is a lifelong honour and privilege which will one day be rewarded ... "Only faintly now I see Him ... but a blessed day is coming ... Face to face with my Redeemer, Jesus Christ Who loves me so".