

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. *Hebrews 12:12-13*

WHAT IS IT AND WHOSE IS IT?

Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

Psalm 3:8

Every flavor and stripe of religious teaching going by the general term of "Christianity" deals in some measure with the topic of "salvation". There are probably as many different concepts of what salvation is as there are sects and denominations purporting to all teach and believe that the Bible is more or less the word of GOD. It is my opinion that the vast majority of those factions and parties are actually ignorant of what salvation is (according to the Bible) and rely more upon folklore and common reason to define it than they do in presenting it simply as the scriptures set it forth. I am reminded of the proverb, "*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*" (Prov 16:25)

One thing is absolutely certain, "*This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" (Act 4:11,12) JESUS CHRIST is the salvation of HIS people. (see Mat 1:21) Each time that we read of "salvation" in the scriptures we find that it is speaking of something which is certain, provided by the LORD, and not in any wise left to chance or the free will of men. "*For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*" (Acts 13:47-48)

Yet when we hear the prevailing message of this present age (which purports to be the preaching of the gospel) we hear salvation set forth as an open ended opportunity or proposition, which is offered and made available to all men to take advantage of and in the process to make a bargain with GOD which will result in their deliverance from an eternal hell. Any one in his right mind would desire to escape the horrors of the pit of destruction which is described as outer darkness and a lake of fire if he comes to believe in its reality.

Therefore it seems logical to the natural man to seek to paint as awful a picture of that place as he can in hopes of scaring folks bad enough that they will be persuaded to make a deal with GOD concerning escaping that fate. When I was a lad I remember that this was quite a successful technique (akin to ghost stories and tales of rawhide and bloody bones) to cause a young man such as I was to want to do anything in my power to deliver myself from it. I was told that all I had to do was "make a decision" and choose to "believe in CHRIST" and that as a result of this action, salvation would be bestowed upon me and I would surely escape the dreaded flames.

I made that "decision" and was assured that "salvation" was mine just like buying a ticket to Chicago at the bus station window. I was not totally ignorant of the fact that CHRIST had died on the cross (so I was told) to make the salvation of all men a possibility, but I was taught that the thing that made that salvation effective for me was the fact that I believed it. The thought of that "transaction" was filed away in my memory banks so that I could consult with it from time to time

to “know” I was saved. Many well meaning folks assured me that it was so. Yet the reality was that I had merely become religious and was as much in darkness as I was before I made a “decision”. Men cannot be saved by an action of their own free will and none shall be. *“Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it:.” (Psa 127:1)*

In order to know what salvation is, one must first know what it is that men need to be saved from. While there is a pit of destruction which is prepared for the devil and his angels and for all of those whose names are not recorded in the Book of LIFE, (see Rev.20:15), the sons of GOD who are the objects of SALVATION were never appointed unto this display of the wrath of GOD. *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1Thess 5:9)* and are therefore not properly spoken of as “saved from hell”.

Having said that we are quite certain that all men, even the elect, are in and of themselves worthy of this same destruction since *“all have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD.”* and in that measure we can indeed speak of having been delivered from this destruction by the blood of CHRIST. Just as surely as HE has seen fit to make us subject unto the vanity of this world HE has seen fit to deliver us from it, and JESUS CHRIST has come into the world to pay the debt of sin which HIS people owed as members of the human race. HE would be both JUST and the JUSTIFIER of those who are manifested as the sons of GOD by believing in HIM, becoming sin for them that they might be made the righteousness of GOD in HIM. HE has fully atoned for the sins of HIS people and destroyed their accusers so that there is no grounds upon which any condemnation could ever be brought upon them. (see Rom 8:1)

Sin is an attitude of rebellion against GOD and is ingrained in the very flesh of the natural man. That SALVATION which is wrought by CHRIST for the sons of GOD deals with that very problem. The LORD came to *“save HIS people from their sins”*, not just from the punishment which was rightly due to them as lawbreakers, but from the very “attitude of sin” itself. HE told HIS disciples that it was necessary for HIM to go away that HE might send to them another COMFORTER (the HOLY SPIRIT).

HE said this COMFORTER would lead them into all truth and would reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It is this very operation of the “convincing” (or reproving) us of our sin that stirs up the heart to continually cry out to HIM for mercy, even as the publican in the temple. It is that same SPIRIT who teaches us of our own innate depravity even as the Apostle Paul lamented, *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?(and then exulted) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom 7:24-25)*

So what is “salvation”? It is the work of CHRIST in redemption wherein HE has delivered HIS people from their “sin”. It is an external work wherein HE has forever satisfied the claims of the Law against them as lawbreakers (i.e.; “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”), imputing to them HIS righteousness and taking upon HIMSELF their sin as a SUBSTITUTE.

It is also an internal work wherein HE does deliver them from the bondage of sin, which primarily manifests itself as an attitude of open rebellion against HIM. While they are still left in this world and engaged in the trials of their corruptible flesh, they are nonetheless made new creatures to whom all things are become new. Whereas once sin reigned in them without rival, the SPIRIT of the LIVING GOD does dwell in them causing them to will and to do of HIS good pleasure. The old man is crucified with CHRIST, (see Rom.6:6) and the new man is made alive unto GOD. Paul said, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2:20)*

So to whom does salvation belong? David knew the answer as he fled from the armies of Absalom, saying *“Salvation belongeth unto the LORD”*. He had no other confidence, most certainly not in anything he could accomplish by his own hand. Even as Jonah declared in the belly of the great fish which the LORD had prepared to swallow him, *“Salvation is of the LORD.” (Jon 2:9)* It was as this revelation came to him that the fish vomited him out on dry land.

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