

# What is it that Saves a Soul?

J.C. Philpot



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## **PUBLISHERS NOTE & PREFACE**

The following work by J. C. Philpot was not a sermon but was originally written at the request of the Publisher of another work who used it as an Appendix. It was subsequently re-published as a separate work and is here reproduced in response to many requests.

### **PREFACE BY J. C. PHILPOT**

WHEN, at the request of the Publisher of another work, I undertook to furnish an Appendix, and to give in it an answer to that important question, "What is it that saves a soul?" which question was there left undecided, I intended merely to write a few pages, without affixing to them my name; but as I wrote, I found the subject to grow under my hand, and thoughts and ideas to flow into my soul.

I felt, especially when I came to the second part of my subject, namely, salvation as an inward possession, that it could not be despatched in a few common-place words, but that it demanded what I could not bestow—pages of life and feeling, unction and power—to set it forth so as to meet the wants of God's tried family. I saw on every side of me salvation as an internal reality, unknown, unprized, uncared for, unregarded. Some I saw who called themselves ministers of God zealous enough for salvation outwardly, sound in the letter of truth, and contending earnestly for the doctrines of grace, who either never spoke of salvation inwardly, or if they mentioned it at all, despatched it in a few meagre sentences, which were usually so mixed with error that they only puzzled simple souls and discovered to a discerning eye the ignorance and emptiness of the preacher.

Others I observed who, from their pomposity and conceit, seemed to think that "wisdom would die with them" Job 12:2, pulling down what God in His Word has built up, and building up what He has pulled down. These would-be teachers I saw setting up forms, ceremonies, ordinances, prayer-meetings, church membership, family prayer, and a thousand other external things, all good in their place, as if they were the sum and substance of vital godliness. Others, again, I perceived, who call themselves experimental ministers, either setting up sins as evidences of grace on the one hand, or holding up universal hatred of sin as an evidence on the other.

Thus the ins and outs, the ups and downs, the mysterious workings, the invisible track, the inward conflict, and all that peculiar, deep, ever-changing, fluctuating path which is trodden by the family of God. I saw to be either never touched upon or, if attempted to be entered into, so mystified, confounded, and misrepresented, that a living soul was more distressed and perplexed by all that he heard than comforted and encouraged. I saw, also, that even ministers who bore marks of their call by grace and of their call to the ministry, were either resting in a past experience, or so "established," as they call it, "in Christ," which I believe to be an establishment upon their lees, that they differed little, if at all, from the letter Calvinists of the day.

Thus, whilst some were calling good evil, and evil good, putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, and others were setting up the shadow for the substance, and the form for the

power, I saw that those who should stand in the gap had put up their swords into the scabbard, and never drew them against those enemies of Christ who came in the garb of friends. The question seemed to be. "Are you an Arminian or a Calvinist? If the former, you are a foe; if the latter, a friend." And thus the most dangerous and insidious enemies of vital godliness are received into the camp of Christ because they can repeat the watchword and wear the dress of His soldiers. Thus I saw truth to be fallen in the streets, vital godliness uncared for, external things highly regarded, Christ' s sheep unfed, and the devil' s goats unseparated. So that I felt myself led to insist on an internal salvation at greater length than I at first intended, though with the deepest consciousness of my ignorance and inexperience, and to affix my name, that it might not have the disadvantage and suspicion which are usually attached to an anonymous work.

Without, then, expressing any opinion in favour of or against the pamphlet to which this Appendix is affixed, I send forth this feeble attempt to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and to show the nature of that salvation which a man must know and possess for himself before he can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

**J. C. PHILPOT**

## **WHAT IS IT THAT SAVES A SOUL?**

WELL may every sensible sinner desire a true and satisfactory answer to a question of such importance. Well may everyone who has tasted the wormwood and the gall, been pierced with the sting of sin, groaned beneath the curse of the law, and trembled at the judgment to come-well may every such guilty, self-condemned wretch "kiss his lips that giveth a right answer" to the all-important question, "How shall man be just with God?" Job 9:2

## SALVATION OUT OF AND IN US

To answer, then, this question aright, we must view salvation under two points:

1. Salvation considered as an act out of us.

2. Salvation considered as an act in us. As the former precedes the latter, we will give it its due preference. And as "none teacheth like God" Job 36:22, and as He is "the Father of lights" Jas 1:17, "the Fountain of life" Ps 36:9, and "the only wise Jehovah" Jude 1:25, may both writer and reader have grace given them to look up unto Him for that "anointing which teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie" 1Jo 2:27 .

I. Salvation, then, is to be considered, first, as an act out of us, as an eternal, irreversible transaction, originating in the mind of Jehovah, and utterly independent of the creature. To suppose that any new plans, any before unthought of schemes, any alterations of purpose, any improvements of an originally imperfect design, can take place in the mind of Jehovah, is to cast one of the greatest insults on the wisdom and power of the Triune God which the creature can offer. If He is All-wise, no new thought can arise in His mind; if He is All-powerful, no unexpected obstacle, no unlooked-for contingency, no unforeseen emergency can defeat His purpose; and if He is the source and spring of the very existence of the creature Ro 11:36, neither the will nor the power of the creature can be stronger than He. We consider him to be the most skilful engineer who can calculate beforehand, with the greatest accuracy, the movement and effect of every wheel and cog of some new piece of machinery, and whose hand can execute with the greatest nicety the invention of his mind. We call him the ablest general who plans best before the battle every manoeuvre which he means to perform, and who executes with the greatest precision and success his original design. To miscalculate, to be defeated by some unlooked-for obstacle, to stop short on account of some unforeseen hindrance, stamps a man as a bungler. To err in his original estimate impeaches the skill; to be unable to execute his plan argues defect of power in an architect.

Now, shall a general have a plan, an engineer have a plan, an architect have a plan, and shall God not have a plan? Shall we measure a man's skill by the wisdom of his design, and his power by its execution, and shall we not measure the wisdom and power of God in the same way? Shall we consider him a dolt and a fool who has no regular system of business, no organised plan of managing his affairs, no fixed hours of work, no preconcerted series of operations, and shall we not tremble to ascribe all this folly to God? A Manchester cotton factory could not go on for a week if it had not some system of operations, some regular plan which assigns to every wheel its work, and to every hand its place. And yet men are to be found of such daring impiety as to ascribe to the only wise God a confusion, a disorder, a negligence in the management of the eternal destiny of man which, if acted upon in this great town, would shut up its busy factories, beggar its vast population, and turn its crowded streets into a habitation of dragons and a court for owls.

We cannot, therefore, deny that all which God does, He does according to a plan settled in His own eternal mind, without impeaching either His wisdom to contrive, or His power to perform. If, then, all that God does, He does "according to the counsel of His own will," it is plain that the salvation or damnation of souls must form a part of His eternal purpose. If all things that take place flow in a channel cut out for them, follow each other according to a fixed

order, and form as much a part of God' s universal government as every wheel contributes to the movement of some complicated machine, then salvation must be included in the one great original design. To say that God appoints some things, but not others; decrees temporal events, but not spiritual; watches over the fall of a sparrow, but leaves man' s immortal soul to chance, random, and hap-hazard, is as bare-faced an assumption as for an ignorant rustic to examine one of Watt' s steam-engines, and say: "This boiler, this flywheel, this piston, Watt planned; but this parallel motion, this governor, this self-registering valve, this beautiful precision of every movement, he left to chance. His mastermind forgot this part of the machine, and omitted that; and all this exquisite arrangement and nice adaptation is the result partly of skill and contrivance, and partly of hap-hazard, luck and fortune." No less vainly and ignorantly do all talk who deny salvation to be a complete plan, harmonious in every part, and having its origin, progress and end in the will and purpose of God alone. Because we cannot perceive the harmony and beauty of the one great whole, because there are objections and difficulties, because we cannot comprehend the object and bearing of every part, are we at liberty to deny that salvation is one great harmonious plan? As well might the ignorant rustic above-mentioned cavil at every wheel and movement in the steam-engine, the use and beauty of which he could not comprehend.

## **SALVATION OF GOD AND TO HIS GLORY**

If salvation, then, as a whole, be one grand harmonious plan, all the parts and branches of salvation must be of the same nature. Say that a part is not harmonious, and you say the whole is not so, for the harmony of the whole depends on the harmony of the parts. These branches, or parts, then, demand our careful attention; and if we can show them to be complete, we shall do so of the whole.

The first branch, then, of salvation is the manifestation thereby of the glory of the Triune Jehovah. Nothing can be so dear to God as His own glory. Nothing less than the manifestation of it can be the supreme end of all His actions. The origin of all created beings, from the brightest angel to the grovelling worm, can only be ascribed to the desire which Jehovah has to manifest thereby His own eternal glory. Salvation, therefore, which is the greatest act of God, must be traced up to the same source. "To the praise of the glory of His grace," says Paul Eph 1:6, "wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." And again Eph 1:12: "That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ." "And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory" Ro 9:23.

Now, if salvation at all rest on the will of man, and depend for its final success on the power and ability of the creature, it is evident that not a single soul might be saved. Nay, if it did so depend, there is not the slightest doubt in the mind of those who experimentally know the fallen state of the creature, that no one could or would be saved. Unless, then, salvation be a decreed, fixed, unalterable, irreversible plan, it is clear that God might be disappointed of all the glory which He has proposed to Himself to accrue to His great Name thereby. And if we only allow that He sees the end from the beginning, and knows beforehand every event which is to take place, which Arminians themselves acknowledge, it is evident that looking forward to, and foreseeing the disappointment of all His schemes, He would have stopped short, and never would have devised the plan of salvation at all. Nay, to carry the argument one step farther, if God could, by the resistance of the creature, be defeated of the revenue of His own glory, He would never have called this world into being, or formed man from the dust of the earth. We plan schemes, in the result of which we are disappointed, because we cannot foresee future events; but if we were gifted with the fore-knowledge of all things, we should only commence such undertakings as we were sure we could execute. Let no man, then, ascribe that folly to God which he would not do to a fellow-creature.

## LOVE THE CAUSE

Our feeble faculties being unable to grasp the mind of Jehovah as one harmonious whole, we are compelled to ascribe to Him a succession of acts, which succession has no real existence in Him who is one eternal Now-"the same yesterday, and today, and for ever". Thus we speak of the regard which God has to His own glory as the first act in the scheme of salvation, and His eternal love as the second. But in His infinite mind there is neither first nor second, future nor past, prior nor posterior. When we say, then, that eternal love is the second moving cause of salvation, we use the language demanded by our feeble minds, and do not mean thereby to ascribe to God any such imperfection as a succession of motives implies.

Love, then, is a cause of salvation. But if Jehovah be perfect and unchangeable, His love must be of the same nature. The more pure, the more unwavering, the more unalterable that love is, the nearer it approaches to perfection. To be fickle, to move from object to object, to be damped, discouraged, destroyed, alienated, or in any way impaired by external circumstances, takes from the purity of love. The fond wife that clings to her husband in spite of ill-treatment and neglect, that loves him in disgrace and ignominy, that wears his image on her heart, though he be transported as a felon, or hanged as a malefactor, commends herself to our admiration as a pattern of conjugal love. The tender mother who yearns after her profligate son, and waters her midnight pillow with tears of love towards him, though her heart is well-nigh broken by his licentious habits, we at once admire as an example of maternal affection. The strength, the unalterable nature, the purity, the disinterestedness of these two instances of human love go instinctively to our heart.

Now, shall we measure the purity and perfection of creature affection by a certain standard, and throw that rule aside when we measure divine love? If the love of God to the sons of men be fickle, changeable, dependent on circumstances, influenced by their conduct, alternately given and taken away. then we must say boldly that the love of God is imperfect; and if the love of God be imperfect, then is God Himself imperfect too. But if God loves those whom He loves, eternally, infinitely, perfectly, then must He love them unchangeably and unalterably. Does God, then, love all men? Did He love Esau, Pharaoh, Saul, and Judas? He tells us Himself that "He hated Esau" Mal 1:3, and Paul declares that this hatred was "before the children were born, and before they had done any good or evil" Ro 9:10-13.

We must come, then, to this conclusion, that God loves some and hates others. But is there no moving cause in the individuals themselves? Are not some good and others bad, some obedient and others disobedient, some who deserve love and others who deserve hatred? If all men are equally fallen, equally vile, equally involved in condemnation and transgression, there can be in them no original difference. If some are saved and others lost, some made eternally happy and others eternally miserable, we must look for the cause of this difference as existing somewhere else than in the persons themselves. And let us argue the matter as long as we will, if we once admit original sin and the Fall of man, we must still come to the same conclusion, that the difference made between the saved and the damned originates not in them, but in God; in a word, that He freely hates some and freely loves others.

But the existence of love can only be made known by actions. Love is a hidden principle in the bosom, as far as regards those by whom it is felt; but with respect to those to whom it is

felt, it can only be manifested by some outward conduct. Thus love is the spring of salvation, as salvation is the fruit of love. The one is the cause, the other the effect; the one the inward motive, the other the outward action. But we measure love by the trials it will undergo, the sacrifices it will make, the sufferings that it will endure for the object of affection. By the same standard we measure the love of God towards the children of men. Redemption, therefore, is continually set forth in the Word as the test and proof of the love of Christ: "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" Eph 5:25. "Who loved me," says Paul, "and gave Himself for me" Ga 2:20. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us" 1Jo 3:16. If redemption, then, is the fruit of love, the effect of it, and the expression of it; if love is limited and particular, redemption will be limited and particular, too. The effect cannot be greater than the cause, nor the action than the motive.

## **A COMPLETE ACT OF GOD**

But is redemption a complete act, a finished work? If it is the execution of an original plan, and executed, too, by incarnate Deity, it surely must be as perfect as its Author. But is that work perfect which is uncertain and contingent, which depends on the fickle caprice and changeable will of a creature, and that, too, a fallen creature? Did the creation of the world depend on the co-operation of man? Can he cause a single blade of grass to grow, or make one hair black or white? Is the co-operation of man admitted into any one of the acts of God? If such a thing were possible, would not the admixture of the work of the creature stain and mar the whole?

## HOW MANY ARE REDEEMED?

Universalism means all; if Christ does not save all, can His work be called a perfect work? If redemption be universal, and only a portion saved, is it to be called a perfect work? If redemption springs from love, if redemption is universal, love will be universal; but if any be lost, if any be in hell, for whom Christ died, their redemption was in vain, and all Christ's love to them was in vain. He paid their debt, and still their debt is due. He put away their sins, and still their sins remain. He loved them, had power to save them, did all that He could to deliver them from hell, came down upon earth for the express purpose of bearing their sins in His own body on the tree, rose from the dead for them, and ascended up into heaven as their High Priest and Advocate; and after all He cannot save them, after all this mighty, this infinite, immeasurable expenditure of love, sufferings, tears, groans, agony and blood, they perish in their sins, and are cast into hell.

Is Christ really and truly God? Has He all the attributes of Deity? Is He all-wise and all-powerful? Does He see the end from the beginning, and know all things, past, present, and to come? Did He know, when upon the cross, who would be saved and who would be lost? Then what a waste of love, what a useless expenditure of suffering, what a needless amount of agony, if the effect of all He then suffered hung upon the free-will of the creature, and millions were never to benefit by all that He then endured for them. But did Christ die for the sins of all mankind? Then He bore the sins of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah; of the host of Pharaoh, that perished in the Red Sea; of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, whom the earth swallowed up; of the seven accursed nations of Canaan; and of all those who perished in the universal deluge. But all these had died in their sins. Was a chance given them in hell? Did Christ bear their sins on the cross, and afterwards go down into hell with offers of grace to the damned? Had free-will another opportunity, another day of grace, another season allowed it for the exercise of its mighty powers? Jude tells us that such as these "are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" Jude 1:7. Paul says that "they were destroyed of the destroyer" 1Co 10:10. But if Christ died for all, He died for these, and if He died for these, there must have been some purpose, something to be done, some effect to arise from His bearing their sins. If He died not for them, then redemption is no longer universal.

We have found out millions for whom Christ did not die. A limit is at once set to the universality of the texts so often quoted in favour of universal redemption. If He did die for them, then they either receive some benefit from His death, or they do not. If they receive any benefit, then souls already in hell, who have died in their sins, and perished under the wrath of God, are saved. And if some, why not all?

The pains of hell will surely have taught them to use their free-will better than they did upon earth, and an hour's experience of the burning lake will have made them close in with the offers of grace. Christ would not knock so long in vain at the doors of their hearts as the Wesleyan ministers say He now does at the hearts of their hearers. If the damned, they tell us, had the same offers as we, how gladly would they embrace them. If Christ then died for them, hell has long ago been dispeopled of its ancient inhabitants. Cain, Pharaoh, Saul, Ahithophel, Doeg, Esau, and thousands of others, whom the Scripture represents as the enemies of God, are now in heaven, singing the praises of the Lamb. But if Christ did not die for all these, then

redemption is not universal; a limit has been set to it, and it is what we contend for-particular.

Thus we consider and believe from the Scriptures of truth that Christ "laid down His life for the sheep"; "was once offered to bear the sins of many"; "sanctified the people with His own blood"; "loved the church, and gave Himself for it"; and bare the sins of His elect family in His own body on the tree. As the names of the children of Israel were borne on the breast of the high priest Ex 28:29, so do we believe that Jesus bore on His heart the names of His elect when He hung upon the cross, and atoned by His blood for all their sins and transgressions. He paid their debt to the uttermost farthing, satisfied the most rigorous demands of eternal Justice, suffered in body and soul the full weight, measure and tale of the sins of His people, and left not a single sin of theirs unexpiated or unatoned for. Godhead gave dignity and merit to the sufferings of Manhood; and thus Immanuel, God with us, became the all-sufficient Saviour of all that were given to Him, loved by Him, and redeemed by Him.

## **IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS**

The last branch of salvation as an outward act which we have space to consider is the imputed righteousness of the Son of God, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe. The law of God, being the transcript of His eternal justice, could no more be broken with impunity than that God would cease to be God. Unless, therefore, that law were perfectly obeyed, either by man, to whom it was given, or by a Surety who should stand in his place, that holy and just law must pour out its penalties and curses on the disobedient to all eternity. If this is true, then Christ was made under the law, and perfectly obeyed it, either for the whole of the human race, or for a part of it. If for the whole, then all men are justified, all men have obeyed the law through their Surety, all stand before God complete in Christ, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. The doors of heaven are opened for all, and all the race of Adam shall sit down in the wedding garment at the marriage of the Lamb. But if this be not the truth, and though all have broken the law, only a portion be saved, then we must come to this conclusion, that only those are justified for whom Christ as a surety obeyed the law, and that it is Israel only who are justified in the Lord, and shall glory.

## SALVATION INWARDLY

Thus far have we traced salvation as an external act, as something done for us, and done out of us. In these covenant engagements and transactions, we had no participation as living agents. They were planned and executed before we had any existence, except in the predestinating mind of Jehovah. As the tree pushes out its buds, which buds had an existence in the tree before they came into visible growth, so do the predestinating purposes of a Triune God bring us into being, that we may enjoy the benefit of all that was done for us, when we had no existence but in the mind of Jehovah.

And this leads us to speak of salvation as a work wrought in us, as a mighty act whereby that which was originally and always ours becomes a personal reality, an enjoyed possession, a received inheritance, as an heir is invested, when he arrives at age, with that property which was his own long before he was put into possession of it.

God is all-wise, and therefore takes no rash, precipitate steps. As the original plan of salvation was devised by infinite wisdom, so all the successive steps of the execution of that plan are directed by the same boundless wisdom also. "Wherein He hath abounded towards us," says Paul Eph 1:8, "in all wisdom and prudence." Thus, in His dealings with His people, God does not put them at once into possession of all the blessings which He has laid up for them. He has pardoned, for instance, their sins; but He does not immediately, when He calls them by His grace, put them into possession of this blessing. He has first to teach them their need of it. He has to prepare their heart for the right reception of it. It is no common gift, and He has to teach them how to value it. They are saved from wrath and eternal misery, from His dreadful displeasure and ever-burning indignation against sin. They have need to be shown, and made deeply to feel, from what they are saved, as well as to what they are saved. And as the oak does not grow to its full stature in a day, but needs years of sunshine and storm, of beating winds and howling tempests, to give it strength and consistency, a deep and wide root, as well as a lofty and branching stem, so do God's children need months and years of trial and temptation, that they may push a deep root downwards, and shoot up healthy and vigorous upwards.

Thus, before the soul can know anything about salvation, it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature of sin, and of itself, as stained and polluted thereby. It is proud, and needs to be humbled; careless, and needs to be awakened; alive, and needs to be killed; full, and requires to be emptied; whole, and needs to be wounded; clothed, and requires to be stripped. It is, by nature, self-righteous and self-seeking; is buried deep in worldliness and carnality; is utterly blind and ignorant; is filled with presumption, arrogance, conceit and enmity, and hates all that is heavenly and spiritual. Sin, in all its various forms, is its natural element. Covetousness, lust, worldly pleasure, desire of the praise of men, an insatiable thirst after self-advancement, a complete self-abandonment to all that can please and gratify every new desire of the heart, an utter contempt and abhorrence of everything that restrains or defeats its mad pursuit of what it loves-these are some of the features of the unregenerate nature of man.

Education, moral restraints, or the force of habit, may restrain the outbreaking of inward corruption, and dam back the mighty stream of indwelling sin, so that it shall not burst all its bounds, and desolate the land; but no moral check can alter human nature. A chained tiger is a tiger still. "The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots" Jer 13:23. To make

man the direct contrary of what he originally is; to make him love God instead of hating Him; fear, instead of mocking Him; obey, instead of rebelling against Him; and to tremble at His terrible majesty, instead of running upon the thick bosses of His buckler-to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful change, requires the implantation of a new nature by the immediate hand of God Himself. Natural light, natural love, natural faith, natural obedience, in a word, all natural religion, is here useless and ineffectual. To turn the stream does not alter the nature of the waters. Let the muddy brook be diverted from its southern course. and made to run north, it is a muddy brook still.

Thus the old nature may be restrained and modified, and directed into new and different channels, but it is old nature still. And this is the employment of hundreds who call themselves ministers of Christ and labourers in His vineyard, to use pick-axe and spade, and cut out various channels for the waters of old nature to run in; and when, by much toil and labour, they have drawn off a few streamlets into their narrow canals, they dignify their success with the names of "conversion," and "regeneration," and "a work of grace." Thus one cuts out a channel in the Sunday School, another digs a broad canal for the Bible Society, a third opens a new cut for decided piety, and a fourth excavates a wide channel for self-righteousness. under the name of Christian holiness. But after all their pains, and after all their success in leading the streams of nature to flow into these new channels, it is old nature still, as fallen, as ignorant, as blind, as carnal, as dead, as full of enmity against God, and as unable as ever to enter into the kingdom of heaven. To whitewash, to paint, to gild over, to clothe, to trick out, to put a gloss upon, in a word, to reform the outside of old nature, is the religion of the day.

Hundreds of churches and chapels are built, thousands of sermons are preached and millions of money are expended with the sole purpose of hewing out the rough block of nature into the shape, limbs and features of a man; and all this labour produces nothing but a statue, a dead image, a lifeless resemblance of vital godliness, which has a mouth, but speaks not' eyes, but sees not; ears, but hears not; hands, but handles not; feet, but walks not; neither speaks through its throat. Churchman and Dissenter, Orthodox and Evangelical, Baptist, Independent and Methodist, all join hand in hand in the good work. "They help every one his neighbour, and every one says to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encourages the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smites the anvil, saying. It is ready for the soldering: and he fastens it with nails, that it should not be moved" Isa 41:6,7.

But reformation is not regeneration, neither is a change of life the same thing as a change of heart. There may be abundance of zeal, devotedness, consistency, studying of the Bible, private and family prayer, hearing of the gospel, religious conversation, attention to the ordinances of the New Testament, and a great show of outward piety and holiness, where there is not a spark of divine life in the soul. Man' s religion is to build up the creature in good works, in piety, in hearing the word, in reading religious authors, in activity, in all the busy ferment and excitement of societies and schools. God' s religion is to throw the creature down into the dust of self-abasement and self-abhorrence.

Man would teach religion as he teaches arithmetic or mathematics. This rule is to be learnt, this sum is to be done, this problem is to be understood, this difficulty is to be overcome, and thus progress is to be made. The fire is to be kindled, the bellows to be blown, the steam to be got up, the engine to be set to work, the prescribed task to be done. Religion, according to the received creed, is something which a man must be urged into. He must be made religious somehow or other. He must either be driven or drawn, wheedled or threatened, enticed or whipped into it, by human arguments or human persuasions. Religion is set before him as a river

betwixt his soul and heaven. Into this river he is persuaded, invited, exhorted, entreated to jump. He must leap in, or be pushed in. His feelings are wrought upon, and he takes the prescribed spring. He becomes a professor. He hears, he reads, he prays, he supports the cause; he attends the Sunday School; he models his garb according to the regimentals of the corps to which he belongs; he cashiers shirt collars, combs his hair smooth, and trims off his whiskers; he furnishes his head with the creed of the sect which he has joined, talks as it talks, believes as it believes, and acts as it acts. And all this is called "conversion" and "decided piety," when all this time there is not an atom of grace, a grain of spiritual faith, or a spark of divine life in the poor wretch' s soul.

Now, God' s way is very different from all this miserable system, so widely prevalent. He does not build up until He has first pulled down, nor save before He has made the soul to feel itself lost. He does not take the sticks and stubble of old nature to lay a foundation with, nor does He use slime instead of mortar to build up a rotten Babel. Man' s way is to put a stick here, and place a stone there; to fill up this corner with a brick and the other corner with a tile; and in this progressive way to build a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.

God' s way is to come down and confound their language, to scatter every stick and every stone to the four winds of heaven, and not to leave one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. He is a jealous God, and will have no partner in the way of salvation. He will not put the new wine into the old bottle, nor a new patch on the threadbare garment. Joshua' s filthy garments Zec 3:4 must be taken away from him before he is clothed with a change of raiment. Thus killing goes before making alive: poverty before riches; beggary and the dunghill before the inheritance of the throne of glory; the grave of buried hopes and the dust of self-abhorrence before exaltation to a seat among princes 1Sa 2:6-8 . Sowing in tears precedes reaping in joy; ashes go before beauty, mourning before the oil of joy, and the spirit of heaviness before the garment of praise.

Salvation is not an outward thing. It stands not in the letter, but in the spirit; not in a sound creed, but in the enjoyment of it as a balm to a broken heart. Thus, in answering the great question, "What is it which saves a soul?" we must first premise that the very word "save" implies a previous state, for which, and from which, it is a remedy, an escape, a deliverance. That salvation implies previous loss, ruin and misery, and that it is a deliverance from all these everybody admits. But it is not so readily admitted, or, if acknowledged in words, it is not put forward as a fundamental truth, that it is a felt loss, ruin and misery, from which salvation is an escape.

All who acknowledge the truth of the Bible admit in words the Fall of man, and that to be saved is to be delivered from the terrible consequence of that Fall. But that a man must deeply know and feel it; that he must have his soul weighed down and burdened by it; that the conviction of guilt, wrath and alarm must be wrought by a supernatural power into his experience; and that he must be ground down by the upper millstone of the law, and the nether millstone of a guilty conscience-these great and solemn truths are shunned, shirked and muffled by nearly all who profess to show the sinner the way to Zion. "Go to Christ; look to Jesus; devote yourself to the Lord; lead a consistent life; read this and that author; attend to known duties; be up and doing; join our society; become a member of our church; hear our minister; set up family prayer; send your children to the Sunday School; diligently cultivate holiness; hate all sin; watch against all evil tempers; exercise faith in the atonement"-these, and similar exhortations, are lavished in boundless profusion upon seeking sinners from thousands of modern pulpits. But the nature, the depth, the power, the feelings, the cutting convictions, the groaning cries, the tearful

anguish, the gloomy prospects, the sinking despondency, the utter helplessness, the thick darkness, the wretched unbelief; in a word, all those inward transactions which are carried on in a seeking sinner are passed over by all the letter-ministers of the day. These things are taken for granted, and are either totally omitted or slightly alluded to.

## WHAT WE ARE SAVED FROM

But if we wish to know what it is that saves a soul, we must know what that state is out of which it is saved. If we have not the beginning, we cannot have the middle nor ending. But our modern professors and preachers never had a beginning to their religion. They were pious from childhood; or they had the advantage of religious parents; or they were brought up at the Sunday School; or they sat under a gospel minister; or a good book fell into their hands and made them pious; or they became serious, and impressed with the necessity of religion; or they married a religious wife, or husband, and so they became religious too. Such, and similar accounts, are daily given to the public in pious periodicals, related in conversation, or given in at church meetings, and implicitly received by universal charity as a true experience and as a genuine work of grace. But where is one to be found out of a thousand who can tell how the Lord began with him, and what were his feelings under His divine teachings; who can describe the path by which he has been led, the ups and downs which he has experienced, the changes through which he has passed, the vessels from which he has been successively emptied, and the conflicts in which he has been engaged?

Who, of a thousand professors, can speak feelingly of the wormwood and the gall of sin, the poisoned stings of guilt, the arrows of God in the conscience, the mire and filth of a desperately wicked heart, the strugglings, sinkings and wrestlings, the alternate hopes and fears, the beams of light and the shades of darkness, the short-lived confidence and the soon-returning despondency, and all the varied experience of an awakened soul? Self-loathing and self-abhorrence in dust and ashes, gloomy forebodings of eternal punishment, cries unto God out of the pit of guilt, succeeded by fits of sullen silence, alternate repentance and hardness of heart, being now overcome by sin, and now mourning and sighing over his weakness against it—such exercises as these, how few speak of with that feeling, unction and power, which show that they have passed through them! Or, again, the heavy burden of sin, the daily weight of evil, the floods of infidelity and atheism, the torrents of filth, lust, and obscenity, the sudden rushings in of blasphemous thoughts, dreadful imaginations, foul ideas, horrible cursings, and all the heavings up of the filthy bed of a sensual and devilish heart, what minister in a thousand carries any evidence in his preaching that such a track has been trodden by him?

But if salvation implies a previous state from which it is a deliverance, then I say that it is childish folly to talk of being saved if we know nothing experimentally of what we are saved from. If a man ask me, then, "What is it which saves a soul?" I answer, "Why do you ask that question? Before anything about salvation can be known, there is a previous lesson to be learnt. If you have not learnt this, you have nothing to do with the other. You might as well think of learning vulgar fractions without first learning to read. But what is your motive for wishing an answer to this question? To learn a few notions, to inform your judgment, to adopt a sound creed? If this be your motive, my business lies not with you. You have to go and first learn another lesson, and until you have been taught this, I can give your question no answer."

Salvation is a gift, the choicest and richest gift which the hands of a Triune God, whose name is Love, can bestow. It is a portion, an inheritance, an estate, a treasure, an eternal reality. The full possession, the entire enjoyment, the complete acquisition of this predestinated weight of glory, is indeed reserved until a future state; but the earnest, the first-fruits, the early ripe

clusters, the first dew-drops of this eternal inheritance, are given to the elect whilst upon earth. The everlasting enjoyment of the presence and glory of Christ is often compared in Scripture to a wedding. Thus we read Re 19:7 of "the Lamb's wife," and of "the marriage of the Lamb." So the Church is said to be "brought unto the King in raiment of needlework," as the bride in Eastern countries was brought by the father Ge 29:23 to the bridegroom. But we read of "espousals" also, which always preceded the celebration of the marriage. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals" Jer 2:2. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" 2Co 11:2. So Joseph "was espoused to the virgin Mary, before they came together" Mt 1:18; that is, before they became man and wife.

Now this espousal was a necessary prelude to marriage, though it was not the same thing. And, therefore, a betrothed virgin was punished as an adulteress by the Levitical law De 22:24, if she was unfaithful to her espoused husband. To be betrothed had the nature of marriage in it, though it was not the same thing as marriage. The parties did not live together, and were not put in possession of each other. Thus, it is in this life that the spiritual betrothment takes place, and the spiritual marriage in the life to come. "I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord" Ho 2:19,20.

## **SALVATION-PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE**

Thus, if we look at salvation, we shall see that it consists of three parts-salvation past, salvation present, and salvation future. Salvation past consists in having our names written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. Salvation present consists in the manifestation of Jesus to the soul, whereby He betroths it to Himself. And salvation future consists in the eternal enjoyment of Christ, when the elect shall sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and be for ever with the Lord. Now, as none will ever enjoy salvation future who have no interest in salvation past -in other words, as none will ever be with Christ in eternal glory whose names were not written in the book of life from all eternity-so none will enjoy salvation future who live and die without enjoying salvation present. In other words, none will live for ever with Christ in glory who are not betrothed to Him in this life by the manifestations of Himself to their soul.

According to the Jewish custom, the man, at the time of betrothing, gave the bride a piece of silver before witnesses, saying to her, "Receive this piece of silver as a pledge that at such a time you shall become my spouse." And the parties then exchanged rings. This meeting of the espoused parties together, who then saw each other for the first time, is a sweet type of the first meeting of the soul with Jesus. The damsel had heard of the youth, but till then had never seen him, as seeking souls hear of Jesus by the hearing of the ear before their eyes see Him. The veil was upon her face Ge 24:65, as the veil is upon the heart 2Co 3:15, until Jesus rends it in twain from the top to the bottom.

The bridegroom gave his betrothed a piece of silver as a pledge that all he had was hers. And thus Christ gives to the soul, whom He betroths to Himself by His own manifestations, a pledge, a token, a testimony, which in itself is the first-fruits and assurance of eternal glory. The parties exchanged rings as pledges of mutual affection and eternal faithfulness. And thus, when Christ reveals Himself to the soul in His dying love, mutual engagements, mutual promises, mutual assurances and pledges of faithfulness and love pass between the soul and Him. "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord" Isa 44:5. At these seasons, "in the day of the King's espousals" So 3:11, the language of the soul is, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste; He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love" So 2:3,4.

All doctrines, notions, forms, creeds, ordinances and ceremonies short of this manifested salvation are as the dust in the balance, and as the driven stubble before the wind. What, for instance, is election, except it be revealed to my soul that I was elected before the foundation of the world? What is redemption to me, except the atoning blood of the Lamb be sprinkled on my conscience? What is the everlasting love of a Triune Jehovah, unless that eternal love be shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost? What is the final perseverance of the saints, unless there is a blessed enjoyment of it in the conscience as a personal reality? To see these things revealed in the Bible is nothing. To hear them preached by one of God's ministers is nothing. To receive the truth of these into our judgment and to yield to them an unwavering assent is nothing. Thousands have done all this who are blaspheming God in hell. But to have eternal election, personal redemption, imputed righteousness, unfailing love, and all the other blessed links of the

golden chain let down into the soul from the throne of God; to have the beauty, glory and blessedness of salvation in all its branches-past, present, and to come-revealed to the heart and sealed upon the conscience, this is all in all.

And thus all doubts and fears, all convictions of sin, all cutting discoveries of inward vileness, all terrible views of God in the light of a broken law, all groans, sighs and tears, all heart-sinkings, and dismal forebodings of death and judgment that do not lead up to, and terminate in, a revealed salvation and a manifested Jesus before a man closes his eyes in death, have no more to do with religion than the clanking of a madman's chains or the howling frenzy of a maniac. A man's soul must be damned or saved. And as far as inward religion is concerned, a man must have salvation as an internal reality, as a known, enjoyed, tasted, felt and handled possession, or he will never enter the kingdom of heaven. He may be Churchman or Dissenter, Calvinist or Arminian, Baptist or Independent, anything or everything, and yet all his profession is no more towards his salvation than the cut of his clothes, the height of his stature, or the colour of his complexion.

Everything of an outward nature, nay, truth itself, is a bed too short and a covering too narrow. And thus all a man's consistency of life, soundness of creed, walking in the ordinances, long and steady profession, and everything on which thousands are resting for salvation, of a merely external nature, can no more put away sin, satisfy the justice of God, and give the soul a title for heaven, than the oath of a common swearer, or the lewd conversation of a harlot.

## WHAT IT IS NOT

If, then, we be asked what it is which saves a soul, we answer that it is not works of righteousness which we have done or can do; nor the use of our free-will, which is only free to choose and love evil; nor closing in with offered grace, to do which we have no natural power; nor watchfulness, prayer and fasting; nor self-denial, austerity and outward sanctification; nor any duties and forms; nor, in a word, any one thing singly, or multitude of things collectively, which depend on the natural wisdom and strength of man. Nor, again, is it head-knowledge, nor firm conviction of truth in the judgment, nor such workings of natural conscience as compel us to assent to a free grace salvation, nor a life outwardly consistent with the gospel, nor membership in a gospel church, nor natural attachment to the children and to the ministers of God, nor zeal for experimental religion, nor sacrifices made to support truth. Nor, again, does salvation consist in doubts and fears, tribulations, temptations, workings of inward corruption, legal terrors, fits of gloomy despondency and heart-rending despair.

All these things "accompany salvation," and are to be found in all the heirs of glory; but some of them or all may equally be found in hypocrites, apostates and reprobates. Nor, again, does salvation consist in desires, for "the sluggard desireth, and hath not"; nor in tears, for "Esau cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry" Ge 27:34; nor in merely seeking, for "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able" Lu 13:24; nor in wishing, for "it is not of him that willeth"; nor in running, for "it is not of him that runneth," and though "in a race run all, one alone receiveth the prize." Neither does salvation consist in outward gifts, as preaching and praying, as a man may "taste of the heavenly gift," and yet "his end be to be burned" Heb 6:4,8; whilst Saul prophesied, Judas preached, and the sons of Sceva adjured devils by the name of Jesus.

Nor does it consist in natural faith, as "Simon Magus believed, and was baptised" Ac 8:13; nor in natural hope, as there is "the hope of the hypocrite that shall perish"; nor in natural comforts, as there is "a walking in sparks of our own kindling"; nor in vain confidence, as "the fool rageth, and is confident" Pr 14:16; nor in talking about religion, for "a prating fool shall fall"; nor in being thought well of by others, as Paul once thought well of Demas Phm 1:24, "who loved this present world" 2Ti 4:10; nor in the children of God feeling a union with us, as David "took sweet counsel with Ahithophel, and walked to the house of God in his company" Ps 55:14.

To sum up the whole, salvation does not consist in anything of the flesh, that is, "in anything earthly, human and natural," as "the flesh profiteth nothing" Joh 6:63; neither "they which are the children of the flesh are the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" Ro 9:8. Thus, no man can deliver his own soul, nor give to God a ransom for himself, or his brother Ps 49:7; but all "flesh is grass," fit only to be cut down by the mower, and to be cast into the oven Mt 6:30.

We come, then, to this conclusion, to which God sooner or later brings every elect soul, that those who are saved are saved, because God will save them; that "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy," and on them alone Ro 9:15; that He saves them not from any foreseen goodness in them, but of His own distinguishing, sovereign grace; that He loves them freely, eternally and unchangeably; and that they are redeemed, justified, quickened, sanctified,

preserved, and glorified, only because they are the objects of the undeserved love of a Triune Jehovah.

## SALVATION OUTWARDLY AND INWARDLY

Here, then, is the answer to the question. "What is it which saves a soul?"

1. Having an interest in the electing choice of God the Father, in the redeeming blood and justifying righteousness of God the Son, and in the quickening, sanctifying operations of God the Holy Ghost. That is the inheritance sealed to the elect as eternally theirs, by "a covenant ordered in all things and sure." This is salvation outwardly, and he that has neither part nor lot in this salvation will perish in his sins under the tremendous wrath of a just and holy God.

But there is,

2. the salvation inwardly which consists in the manifestation of Jesus to the soul, whereby electing love, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and an eternal inheritance beyond the skies are sealed home upon the soul, and made personal, individual realities. To this inward enjoyment of salvation all the children of God are predestinated, and none of them die without a greater or less share of it. Some of them, indeed, are now being plunged into the terror of the law, others doubting and fearing, others cutting themselves off as hypocrites, others groaning beneath the weight of sin, others overcome by the power of their lusts, others harassed by the devil, others fainting by reason of the way, and all engaged in a terrible conflict with the old man of sin.

Some, again, are cut to the heart on account of their backslidings, others abhorring themselves in dust and ashes, others buffeted with the sorest temptations, others filled with rebellion and fretfulness, others entangled in Satan's snares, and others sitting in stubborn silence, or well-nigh swallowed up with despondency. Some have never found their Saviour, and others have lost Him; some have never felt pardon and deliverance, and others have been "again entangled in the yoke of bondage"; some are shut up, and others cannot come forth; some are hoping against hope, and others doubting against evidences; some are "plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning"; and others are fearing they are bastards, because "the rod of God is not upon them."

But as all the family of God have a common interest in the salvation that is external, so do they all agree in this point with respect to the salvation that is internal, that it must be a supernatural religion, a manifested Saviour, a revealed righteousness, a sprinkled conscience, a sealed pardon, a shed-abroad love, an enjoyed redemption, that alone will satisfy or save. And thus all their strippings, emptyings, chastisements, temptations, conflicts, sorrows, sighs, groans, and tears; all their doubts, fears, terrors, quakings, gloom and despondency; all their views of the justice of God in a holy law; all their ups and downs, changes, vicissitudes, guilt, condemnation, and bitter feelings of anguish on account of sin; in a word, all their experience of the depths of a desperately wicked heart—all, all serve in the hands of the blessed Spirit to bring them to this point, that salvation is in the blood and righteousness of Christ alone, and that this salvation must be revealed to them, and in them, to deliver them from the flames of hell.

## ONLY TRUE SOURCE OF FRUIT

"But," say the Arminians, "if salvation be such as is here described, what becomes of the interests of morality, what provision is made for good works, what security is there for holiness of life? Will not a belief of his election make a man presumptuous, a confidence in his final perseverance render him careless, and a persuasion that he cannot sin himself out of the covenant lead him to licentiousness?" To this we answer: "Yes; such will be, and are the fruits and effects of the doctrines of grace, when they are not wrought by the hand of God in the soul; but are learnt, as hundreds learn them, in the understanding and judgment only." But this effect does not prove the doctrines to be untrue, but is rather a fulfilment of the Word of God.

"Let their table," that is, the doctrines spread before them on which they profess to feed, "become a snare, and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap" Ps 69:22. We read of "spots" in the primitive believers' "feasts of charity, feeding themselves without fear." These drank into the doctrine of election, etc., unmixed with holy awe, unattended with a trembling at God's word, and a spiritual reverence of His terrible majesty. Now, these characters are said "to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and to deny," that is, by wicked works, "the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" Jude 1:4, Jude 1:12.

But because ungodly men pervert the right ways of the Lord, and abuse truth to their own destruction, does it follow that the same effects follow the same doctrines where they are spiritually taught and spiritually received? The rays of the sun draw up ague and fever from the pestilential marsh, and turn a dead carcass into carrion. But is the sun less pure, are his beams less bright, are his rays less cheering, is his genial warmth less fostering to every herb, fruit and flower, because he draws putrefaction out of what is in itself putrid, and corruption out of what is in itself corrupt? And thus, because the doctrines of grace received into a corrupt heart serve only to draw forth its natural corruption, it does not follow that it is so where the word of life is received "into an honest and good heart" Lu 8:15; that is, a heart made honest by the shining in of heavenly light, and made good or like unto God Mt 19:17 by the impress of His divine image. In this prepared soil the doctrines of grace take deep root, and being watered from time to time by the dews and rains of the blessed Spirit, bring forth fruit abundantly.

## INWARD AND OUTWARD FRUITS

Thus they bring forth: 1. Inward fruit. Of these the first is conversion, which consists in a change of heart, a change of affections, a change of feelings, a turning from formality to spirituality; from free-will to free-grace, from self-righteousness to self-abhorrence, from hypocrisy to honesty, from self-justification to self-condemnation, from profession to power.

The second is godly fear, which realises God's heart-searching presence, trembles at His frown, dreads His displeasure, is afraid of His judgments, feels His chastening hand, and seeks above all things His favour and the light of His countenance.

The third is humility, which springs from a knowledge of God and a knowledge of one's self, and consists in a spiritual acquaintance with the deceit and wickedness of the heart, in esteeming others better than ourselves, in feeling how little grace and real religion we possess, in confessions to God and man of our vileness, in sitting at Jesus' feet to be taught by Him, in taking the lowest room amongst the children of God, in being a babe in helplessness, weakness, foolishness and nothingness.

A fourth inward fruit is godly sorrow, which springs from a view of a suffering Saviour, and manifests itself by hatred of self, abhorrence of sin, groaning over our backslidings, grief of soul for being so often entangled by our lusts and passions, and is accompanied by softness, meltings of heart, flowings of love to the Redeemer and of indignation against ourselves, and earnest desires never to sin more.

A fifth fruit is hope, which springs up out of despair, and is raised up in the soul by a spiritual discovery of the compassion, the mercy, the forbearance, the lovingkindness, and the pity of the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. This opens the heart in prayer, melts down its sullen obstinacy, enlarges its narrow, selfish, jealous, contracted views of God, holds it fast as a sure and steadfast anchor amidst storms and tempests, and encourages it to wait at mercy's door till full deliverance comes.

A sixth fruit is love, which consists in love to God, on account of His tender mercies, loving-kindness and forbearance in the midst of, and in spite of, all our crookedness, obstinacy, perverseness and dreadful wickedness: in love to Christ as a Saviour, so suitable to our miserable condition as filthy, polluted, justly damned wretches; in love to the exercised, harassed, and tempted children of God, as fellow-sufferers and fellow-heirs; in love to the ministers of Christ, as messengers with a message to our guilty souls, as interpreters of our experience, as stewards of heavenly mysteries and discoverers of the secrets of our hearts 1Cor 14:25; in love to the truth of God, which makes us free; to the word of God, which has entered our hearts; and to the promises of God, which have from time to time encouraged us. These are only a few of the inward fruits which the doctrines of grace, spiritually received into the soul, invariably produce.

But besides these there are, secondly, outward fruits. Such are: separation from a profane world and separation from a professing world; honesty and boldness in the cause of truth; liberality to the poor and needy of God's family: general consistency of life and conversation, abhorrence of all the tricks of trade, lies of business, and frauds of commerce; hatred of flattery, given or received: in a word. a life agreeable to the precepts and ordinances of the gospel.

Such are the fruits, inward and outward, which are produced by the doctrines of grace when applied to the soul by the blessed Spirit. God being the only fountain of life, grace and

fruitfulness, the soul that is brought into His blessed presence, to walk with Him, to have communion with Him, and to enjoy access unto Him, derives, for the time, from this holy nearness, faint marks of resemblance unto Him.

And thus, eternal election revealed to the soul, personal redemption applied to the heart, imputed righteousness sealed upon the conscience, and never-failing faithfulness manifested within, so far from leading to licentiousness, are the only truths which will produce real fruit. And, on the contrary, all self-denial, outward sanctification, mortification of the flesh, long prayers, and all the good works of the Arminian catalogue, are nothing but counterfeits and imitations of the fruits of the Spirit, and will therefore leave their deluded owners to the just vengeance of Him who is a consuming fire.

