

THREE TENSES OF SALVATION

THE SAVIOUR

"Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me: a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:21,22). "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

We know that any man that is saved is saved by God's sovereign grace. Paul was the example or pattern of God's longsuffering and saving grace. It has been said that no two conversions are alike, and in a sense that is true, but the primary act of saving grace is the same in all conversions, i.e. it is by God's sovereign grace alone. Salvation comes through the quickening work of the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 4:12; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 2:1). What is different about each conversion is the circumstances. Consider Timothy, Lydia, and the Philippian jailor in Acts 16. Some are saved suddenly like Paul, and with others it may be more gradual, but their true experience is that they know that it is all of grace and that Christ lives in them.

The three tenses of salvation may be stated in various ways. (1) I am saved, I am being saved, and I shall be saved. (2) I am justified, I am being sanctified, and I shall be glorified. (3) Past, present, and future. (4) I am saved from the guilt and penalty of sin, I am being saved from the power of sin, and I shall be saved from the presence of sin. (5) The work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope.

(1) I am saved, or justified from the guilt and penalty of sin.

All the elect of God were chosen unto salvation by God the Father in eternity (2 Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9). We may not be fully aware of all our salvation all at once, but quickening must take place (Ephesians 2:1). This is the first tense of salvation. Because the term "saved" is used so much today, let us ask the questions, "Why does man need to be saved?, and, What does it mean to be saved?" Webster defines saved or save as, "preserved from evil or destruction," or "to deliver or rescue from danger." Scripturally it is defined as "to rescue from eternal death, or to preserve from final or everlasting destruction, to justify." Consider these Scriptures: John 3:36; Romans 5:8-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:9,10.

The Scriptures are clear on the matter of man's need. ". . . that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:1). "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Most people today want to be saved to go to heaven when they die, thus they go forward and say the so-called "sinners prayer," but never have a consciousness of their need. There is no sense of their guilt nor of their sin having offended a holy God. I do not think that a man can be saved until he sees his need. As long as I can swim in deep water I don't need to be rescued, but it is in deep water when I can't swim that I need rescuing. I have a definite need, and know it, and cry out for help. Bro. Dusty often stated that the greatest work of teaching or preaching was to get men lost and then God would save them.

"Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9). "But **when it pleased God**, who separated me from my mother's womb, **and called me** by his grace" (Galatians 1:15). God saves and justifies us by His grace (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:5,8; Titus 3:5,6), and we are declared to be judicially righteous in His sight. "There is therefore now no

condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

In summary, I am saved from the penalty of sin with its guilt, justified and declared righteous in God's sight, and **the entire work is all of God who sought me out and quickened me through His Word.**

(2) I am being saved, or sanctified and delivered from the power of sin.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). ". . . but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12,13). "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26). All those whom God has chosen and justified He will sanctify.

Sanctification is twofold.

(1) Positionally we are sanctified (set apart) and separated unto God in Christ (John 17:17,19; Hebrews 2:11). This aspect of sanctification is all of God. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:12,13).

(2) Experiential sanctification is our responsibility as the Word of God, and the will of God is made known to us, and is the result of our freedom from the power of sin, and is a continuing process throughout our life time. Experiential sanctification without the positional sanctification is nothing but works of righteousness (Ephesians 2:9; Titus 3:5). This is the area in which many believers, especially new believers, have difficulty because they lack understanding. They are saved and begin their walk in the Christian life with joy and gladness, but then they sin. Then they wonder if they are saved or not, and are troubled until the Holy Spirit through the Word of God assures them that they are saved, but they have need to be sanctified. Without temptations, testings, and warfare, how would we know that we were any different than before our salvation?

The first truth we need to understand is our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, which leads us to "reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 6:11). The life of the believer, if it is to be lived on a spiritual plane, includes the necessity of the cross daily. Once we are delivered from the penalty and guilt of sin, we encounter spiritual warfare between the flesh and the Spirit. Remember that the flesh can be repressed by abstaining from certain things (morality), but that is not crucifixion. The power to experientially live a life of holiness is through the cross. We cannot shun the cross if we would know the power of God in us.

Then comes mortification of those sins which were prevalent in the Gentiles (Colossians 3:5-7). Then we put off "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:8-10). Then we put on "the new man which is created and renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3:10-17). Eleven things to mortify and put off, and eleven things to put on (Colossians 3:5-17). This is perseverance and is a part of every believer's experience. It is having His will become my will, and His conforming of us to His image.

We need to remember that we are never to get tired or weary of persevering in the Lord. When we get complacent we set ourselves up for a fall. Augustine said, "Be always displeased with what thou art; if thou desirest to attain to what thou art not. For where thou hast pleased thyself, there thou abidest, for if thou sayest "I have enough,"

thou perishest. Always add, always walk, always proceed, neither stand still, nor go back, nor deviate." This agrees with Paul, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14). I pray that today we can say, "I'm not what I want to be, but by His grace I am not what I was, and by His grace I will fight the good fight of faith and go on in holiness."

Why do we need experiential sanctification? The Word of God answers thus, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). "That he might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

(3) I shall be saved, or glorified and delivered from the presence of sin.

"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" (Romans 8:30). "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:21). "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4).

The initial act of salvation, and the work of the Spirit in sanctification, are the preparation for our glorification. This is when we are delivered from the very presence of sin. This is out in eternity where sin does not exist, but all is light and righteousness. This is where Christ is glorified and we are glorified in Him. This is where all is purity and light, and there is no darkness at all. This is where corruption and mortality are changed into incorruption and immortality (1 Corinthians 15:52-57).

Because we are justified and sanctified, we shall be glorified. Does it not make sense that we should live in holiness and righteousness now because we will be in eternity what we are now? Let us not think that we shall be more in eternity than we are now. We shall be glorified and delivered from the presence of sin, but we will only be what we are now. May we say, "Lord, I must go deeper or higher, but I can't stay here."