

## **"THIS SALVATION."**

"Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the work of this salvation sent." Acts 13:26.

These are peculiar words, spoken at a peculiar time, and under peculiar circumstances. It seems that Paul and Barnabas, in their journeying, had come to Antioch, in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down in the audience as listeners; but the rulers of the synagogue very courteously invited them to speak, if they had any word of exhortation for the people, to which Paul responded, and among the things spoken by him at that time were the words quoted above.

We notice they are addressed to "children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God." The word fear, as used here, signifies to be in apprehension of evil; to be afraid.

The law was very strict, and to transgress the letter of the law meant a curse. Every member of the stock of Abraham must have been conscious of his inability to keep the whole law, and so must have been fearful of the consequences. Many of them, no doubt, were anxious to keep it, and were terrified at the thought of their repeated failures; many of them, too, had an additional fear "taught by the precept of men," and under the influence of both, must have realized something of the fear that hath torment in it.

Now, to such, trembling under the terrors of the law Paul addressed himself.

"The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt."

They must have thought that such a statement was a strange introduction to his speech, and would listen out of curiosity to what was to follow.

How little had they thought that their fathers were exalted while serving as bondsmen in Egypt, and yet it was so, as the subsequent unfolding of God's plan clearly shows, for their whole ritual and all God's dealings with them, from first to last, were the significant expressions of Deity by sign-words ("shadows") of his grand and glorious designs for the whole race of mankind in the ages following.

Paul then goes on to touch the mountain tops of God's dealings with them, and in a brief outline brings them up to the time of Christ, and then adds, as we have said, "children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of THIS SALVATION sent."

Your rulers knew him not ("He was in the world, and the world knew him not") nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, and yet "they have fulfilled them in condemning him" (27th ver.), but God raised him from the dead (30th ver.), "and we declare unto you glad tidings" (32d ver.) The promise made of God unto the fathers is beginning to be fulfilled; in fact, it is the same as though it were fulfilled, "in that he hath raised up Jesus again."

Paul and Barnabas saw the hope of Israel and the hope of the world, and very wisely and carefully unfolding to their view the glorious things belonging to "this salvation."

Paul did not, in this discourse, tell them plainly all the nature of "this salvation," but only hinted at it, and **[R352 : page 6]** left it in such a shape as to excite their desire to hear more. (People seldom are aware how strong their own prejudices are, and how careful the preacher has to be, to not feed too much and too strong feed at first; but Paul well understood this, as is manifest in the way he presented

the subject, and in the way he left it at that time). He evidently wished to set before them, as they could bear it, the importance of this salvation, and to have them understand that it was a very different salvation from anything they had conceived of, for it had been "brought to light through the gospel," and though it had been spoken of by the prophets, yet they "did not know the voices of the prophets."

Some seem to think that they were to blame for not understanding the nature of Christ's coming and kingdom. No doubt they were to blame for the evil which they cherished in their hearts, but how otherwise could they be blamed for not understanding the nature of that salvation spoken of by the prophets, when the prophets themselves did not understand it? Peter, referring to this same thing, says: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what (things) or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." They were made to understand that "not unto THEMSELVES, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into." – 1 Peter 1:10,11,12, "This salvation" seems to be the salvation which Jude (3d verse) found it necessary to exhort the brethren to earnestly contend for, when he was writing to them concerning the common salvation. This salvation is once for all (only once) "delivered to the saints." It is a prize which will be held out to view but once; that is, in only one age; there is no "second chance" for it; only once can it be earnestly contended for. This is the salvation which Paul meant when he said to Timothy: "Therefore we both labor and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men (to natural life the common salvation), specially of those that believe." 1 Tim. 4:10.

In this statement we understand that a general and a special salvation are referred to, and the special is "this salvation" to which he was calling the attention of "whosoever among you feareth God." By "this salvation" "all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." (39th ver.)

This must have been good news to a people apprehensive of evil because of their shortcomings under the law, and at this point they must have been getting anxious to hear what Paul had to say further on the subject. Perhaps some of them were beginning to think that they could live very loosely, released from the servitude of the law.

(Alas for poor, weak human nature; how readily it would cling to its moral corruption were it not for the apprehension of evil in consequence?)

But Paul evidently anticipated such a construction, and said: "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets." (40th ver.)

We can imagine the look of surprise on the faces of those law-abiding fathers who had begun to think of the policy of believing in Christ, that they might be justified not "from" but in "all things."

Is it not to be feared that many now get almost if not quite as limited a view of "this salvation?" To such let the "Beware, therefore," of Paul ring out clear and distinct.

Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish, for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in nowise believe, though a man should declare it unto you. (41st ver.)

Here Paul ended his talk for that time, and it is quite certain that they had not yet seen the "offense of the cross," for the next Sabbath "almost the whole city" came out to hear him. But let us notice the prophecy in connection with the last sentence of Paul's speech, above

referred to: (Don't lose the connection; the passage is in Isaiah 29:14.) "For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

What! Is it possible that "this salvation" is of such a character that the wisdom of their wise men fails to comprehend it? And cannot the understanding of their prudent men grasp it? No, indeed, it cannot; IT is (for the present) THE "stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel." – Isaiah 8:14. And the failure of their wise men to see (recognize) this, and the nature of the work itself, are facts, which Paul said they would not believe, though a man should declare it unto them. It is a pretty hard matter to conclude that the wisdom of their wise men has wandered so far from the truth that their counsel amounts to nothing, and is perished; but that is what the prophet said would come to pass at a future time, and is what Paul gave them to understand was imminent then, and is what we understand to have taken place in its full import now. The wisdom of their wise men has perished, and the understanding of their prudent men is hid.

Wherein? does some one ask. In that their conclusions and teaching make confusion of His Word, and imply a failure of God's designs or "plan." They allow that God provided for the salvation of all men; that is, he planned to accomplish that, but the subtlety of the enemy and the perversity of man were so great that his purpose is but partly accomplished; that is to say, that only a few will receive any benefit from the death of Christ. That though Christ came to "destroy the works of the devil," yet demons and lost spirits will forever exist in conscious misery, and that it is imprudent to teach otherwise. Is this not equivalent to saying that the plan of God fails of accomplishment; and is it not a confirmation of the prophetic statement that "the wisdom of your wise men shall perish?"

The word teaches that "in the last days" (of this age) "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3:1,13); but their wise men tell us the world is growing better and better, and yet a late secular paper of some note said that crimes were becoming so frequent that they, in their weekly issue, could only make a statement of them, not having room for particulars. [R353 : page 6]

It is a fact, not an assumption, but a solemn fact, that we are now living in a time when crime and corruption have assumed prodigious proportions, not only in the lower grades of society, but in what are called the upper grades. Even all the machinery of church and state seems to be so rotten that many are exclaiming, without knowing that their utterances are the fulfillment of the spirit of prophecy: "I don't know what we are coming to!" Thus already their hearts are beginning to "fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke 21:26.

No sane man to-day, unless he is trying to sustain a creed, fails to see (recognize) that thrones stand unsteady, and that throughout the world there is a feeling of distrust among all classes; there is "perplexity." Luke 21:25. Verily, the foundations of the earth do shake. But it is only the beginning of God's "controversy with the people." Plain as these things seem to those who are looking, yet the "wise" (?) men say "peace and safety."

"All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2 Peter 3:4.

Not very long ago we were speaking in a public place about the application of the prophecy in Isaiah 2:4, and showing that it had its application in a coming age and under a different ruling power, and the teacher (preacher) present said that it was now, in this age. We told him we thought if so it should read in the last clause of the verse "and they shall learn war more and more" instead of "no more," for earth trembles with the thunder of cannon and shock of contending

armies, and millions fall in this lake of fire and brimstone. Wonderful improvements in instruments of death are frequent. "Prepare war" (Joel 3:9,10) is the prophecy to apply now, and is beginning to have its fulfillment, but the understanding of the "prudent" (?) men does not discern it. It is a fact which the spiritually minded plainly see, that the portion of prophecy which is having and is about to have its fulfillment is as completely hidden "from the wise and prudent" of this time as it was from the wise and prudent at the time of Christ's first coming. Now, if the prophecies relating to earthly matters of this time are so utterly misunderstood by the wise and "prudent" men, shall we wonder that but few will see the grandeur and glory of "THIS salvation" until the accumulation of evidence shall be so great that the "sons of God" shall be MANIFEST?

Some of our former friends may think we are not very prudent nor modest because "we use great plainness of speech," and may be ready to say: "No doubt ye are the men, and wisdom will die with you," to which we would reply that the wisdom spoken of above, and that God by the mouth of the prophet said should perish, the wisdom of this world (age) has died with us; we have no reputation for such wisdom and make no pretensions to it. What we have seen has been shown to us in the Word because we were simple "babes." Matt. 11:25.

The next Sabbath Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and let the secret out to those who were simple enough to understand. In the 47th verse the eye of faith discovers "this salvation." "For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles that thou shouldst be for salvation to the ends of the earth."

In Isaiah 42:6,7 the same mystery is spoken of. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open

the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

Let him that readeth understand.

In Isaiah 49:6 that which the wise and prudent call an impossibility and absurdity, viz.: restitution is called a light thing for the Lord, and then he tells what he will also do.

"It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be for salvation to the ends of the earth."

"Therefore, having girded up the LOINS of your MIND, and being vigilant, do you hope perfectly for the GIFT to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ? As obedient children do not conform yourselves to the former lust in your IGNORANCE; but as HE who CALLED you is holy, do you also become holy in all your conduct. For it has been written, you shall be holy because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:13,16 (E. Diaglott.)

"He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

J. C. SUNDERLIN.