

SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

– *DECEMBER 27. – 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-21. –*

"Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." – Galatians 6:14. R.V.

TODAY'S Bible Study reminds us afresh of the fact that Jesus is not merely the Savior of the Church, but that He is also the Savior of the world. In the past, Bible students have overlooked this great truth, to their confusion. Now we see that God has provided two distinctly different salvations – the one for the Church in the Gospel Age, and the other for the world in the Age to follow this – the period of Messiah's Kingdom.

Not only do we see that there are two different salvations, but also that they are wholly different, totally different in kind. They are alike in some things, however. Both are salvations from sin and from its power and its penalty, the curse – sorrow, pain, crying, sighing, dying. Both are salvations to an everlasting happiness. But there the similarity ends; for the Church is to be saved by a change of nature, while the world is to be saved without a change of nature – by a resurrection to the perfection of human nature.

The Church's salvation, which is now in progress, has its beginning in the "hearing" of faith. The Message of God's grace is proclaimed here and there by stammering lips, which do not appeal to many of the great or wise or learned, but chiefly to the poor of this world, rich in faith. Such of these as are of humble mind, of "broken and contrite heart," are charmed with the Message of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God through the Redeemer. As they approach and seek to draw near to God, He through His providences draws near to them. If they continue to hunger and thirst after the Lord and His Message, He will satisfy them. He will show them His Covenant. He will enable them to

understand the terms and conditions upon which they may be received back into fellowship with God as dear children – no longer aliens, strangers, foreigners – no longer condemned to death, but on the contrary justified to life.

Here comes to them another test of their love of righteousness, their hunger for fellowship with God; for the requirements made of them seem at first to be exacting. These requirements, as stated by the Master Himself, are: "If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself [renounce his own self-will], take up his cross [begin to live contrary to his own preferences in that he will do according to the Divine will, instead of according to his own will, where it crosses the Divine], and follow Me." Then he must continue to follow in the Master's footsteps – faithful unto death.

Some, upon learning of these stringent conditions of discipleship, turn back and follow no longer in pursuit of the Lord's favor, forgiveness, reconciliation, blessing, begetting of the Holy Spirit. It is their option; and their course will decide their worthiness or unworthiness to be counted in with the special class whom the Lord is now selecting from the world to be the Church – "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

THE BLESSINGS OF FAITH

We are not to think of those who reject the Lord's cross and refuse to make a full consecration of their lives as being, therefore, condemned either to eternal torment or to anything else. The call of the Gospel Age is a favor and a privilege. Those who respond get a special blessing; those who reject miss that special blessing. They are not condemned (damned) in any sense of the word because of rejecting the privilege of walking in the Master's steps. On the contrary, as the Scriptures declare, they were already condemned – condemned in Adam, because members of his family, sharers of his weaknesses and unworthiness of life – sharers of his death sentence.

They failed to escape from that condemnation, and thus they continue under it. [R5597 : page 379]

It is of the Church class only that St. Peter writes, "Having escaped the corruption that is [still] in the world." (2 Peter 1:4.) As the Apostle Paul wrote, "We were children of wrath, even as others [still are]." (Ephesians 2:3.) By believing in Christ, by accepting His terms, by becoming His disciples through full consecration, we secure forgiveness for the sins that are past, and additionally secure relationship with the Heavenly Father through our Redeemer, our Advocate. Now His acceptance of us is by and through the begetting of the Holy Spirit, and this is granted to none others than those who come by His appointed way.

Those begotten of the Holy Spirit are Scripturally styled "New Creatures in Christ." To them, "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." They have new aims, new objects, new hopes in life. To them, earthly things have no value, except as they can be used to glorify the Lord and to serve Him. Earthly learning, reputation, honor, titles, are valuable only as they can be used in some way to the glory of God – in the service of His Cause or for the benefit of fellowmen, especially those of the Household of Faith. To these, earthly prospects, political hopes and ambitions, etc., are nothing; for they have before their mind's eye Heavenly prospects, which include joint-heirship with Christ in His Messianic Kingdom of a thousand years and, after that, additional glory and honor in the ages to follow.

But all these blessings, you note, are heard with the ear of faith, seen with the eye of faith. Thus the Lord selects and draws only those who can and do exercise faith; for "without faith it is impossible to please God."

Those who either never hear, or hearing fail to respond, or responding go for a little way and then stop when they come to the crucial test of self-denial, self-renouncement – these lose all those

spiritual blessings which the others, if faithful, will attain – Heavenly honor, Heavenly glory and immortality through the change of nature begun at the time of their begetting and to be consummated in their complete change in the First Resurrection. These the Apostle describes as "sown in weakness, raised in power; sown an animal body, raised a spiritual body; sown in dishonor, raised in glory."

But even those who lose God's highest blessings and rewards will still have open before them great and wonderful favors of God, all of which were purchased by the Redeemer's precious blood – by His sacrifice for our sins, by His submission of His life for the forfeited life of Adam, for the recovery of Adam and all his race from the sentence, or the curse, of death. These blessings for the world, however, are not to be clearly seen or appreciated yet, except by those who are especially taught of God – those who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit and thus enabled to understand "the deep things of God." – 1 Corinthians 2:10.

"THE COMMON SALVATION"

The point we are here especially making is that God has provided a salvation for the world, as well as a salvation for the Church. The Bible tells us of the general facts of these salvations. It assures us that "God so loved the world [as well as the Church] that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) We noticed at first that the penalty that is upon the world is not an eternal torment penalty, but a penalty of destruction. Christ died that the race might not perish, but in due time recover from the death penalty through faith in Christ and obedience to Him.

Only the few can exercise the great faith that is necessary to a place in the Heavenly reward as members of His Bride class. By and by, when the knowledge of God shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep, all will understand; all will hear and be

able to believe in God's goodness and in His wonderful arrangement on man's behalf. Those who will then believe, and who will then accept God's favor on its terms of loyalty and obedience to the best of their ability, will be blessed by Messiah's Kingdom.

The blessing, as the Bible describes it, will be the rolling away of the curse and the rolling on, instead of the curse, "the blessing of the Lord, which maketh rich; and He addeth no sorrow with it." This work of rolling away the curse and rolling on the blessing is the appointed work of Messiah's Kingdom for a thousand years.

We may be sure that by the time His Kingdom shall end, and shall be delivered up to the Father, our Lord will have fully accomplished all the great work which was committed to Him of the Father and for which He has shown His worthiness by His co-operation in the Father's Plan, to the extent of dying for the race. And this King of Glory, Messiah, will have for associates those who, like Himself, delight to do the Father's will – those who delight to walk in His steps. His perfection, His sacrifice, making good for their defects through the fall, enables them to become joint-sacrificers with Him. Of these the Apostle writes, "For if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him; and if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him."

NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST

In today's Study St. Paul deals especially with the Church class. He explains to us that it is the love of Christ that has exercised the constraining, or drawing, power upon our hearts. The love of Christ is merely the love of the Father, but as men we would not be able to understand the Father's love. We are enabled to understand that love as it was manifested by our Redeemer; and thus through Him we look upward to the Father, and are able to appreciate something of the love that is beyond all human understanding. As St. Paul points out, Christ's love was manifested in that He died for all. When we say "for all," it means that the whole race was dead,

that none had a right to everlasting life, and that none could commend themselves to God so as to be worthy of everlasting life.

The Apostle explains that all who realize this matter fully, clearly, should indicate the fact by consecrating their lives to the Lord, to live unto Him, to know His will, to lay down their lives in the service of Him who died for them and who rose again. These have a special love for the Lord and they, properly, have a special love for each other. They are seeking to live, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit – in harmony with the begetting of the Holy Spirit, which they have received.

Hence they more and more are thinking of Christ, not as the Man Jesus, but as the glorified Lord. So also they are learning to think of each other, not according to the flesh, but according to the heart; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a New Creature." To such, earthly things – earthly hopes, aims and prospects – have gone, and all things have become new. They have new hopes, new ambitions, new relationships. If faithful, they will receive the glorious things which God has in reservation for those who love Him.

These things are of God. They are not of the Apostle's making up, nor of Jesus' origination. The Father Himself originated the whole Plan and arrangement. He has already reconciled us to Himself by Jesus **[R5597 : page 380]** Christ. We are fully given over to Him. We have no rebellion in our hearts. He has reconciled us to Himself through His Son; and God has nothing against us. "There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Their sins are forgiven. Instead of condemning them, God justifies them. As St. Paul says, "It is God that justifies; who is he that condemns? It was Christ that died," giving full satisfaction for our sins.

THE SERVICE OF RECONCILIATION

These New Creatures, begotten of the Holy Spirit, are given a work to do. They are not only to have a work in the future as kings and priests, joint-heirs with Christ in the blessing of the world, but they have a work to do at the present time, a work for God. They are to be ambassadors for God. They are to be His representatives amongst men. They are to seek to tell the Message of God's Love to those who do not understand it. They are to tell the way of return to God to those who know not the way and to those who give evidence of a desire for reconciliation. They are thus ministers, or servants, of the way of reconciliation even in the present time. All those reconciled in the present time by faith and obedience are privileged thus to become members of the Bride class – joint-heirs with Christ in His Kingdom.

In the 20th verse it will be noticed that the word "you" is in italics, indicating that it is not in the original. The passage does not read properly with the word "you." It should be omitted. God is not beseeching the Church through the Church, or through each other, to be reconciled; for all of the Church are reconciled.

The Apostle is telling us that God through us is beseeching or urging mankind – all who have the hearing ear – to be reconciled to Him, telling them that He is willing to be reconciled to them, and explaining the basis of this reconciliation; namely, that Christ took the sinner's place, that He personally knew no sin, but was holy, harmless, separate from sinners, and that those who receive this Message may have the privilege of coming into the righteous condition acceptable to God, and thus of being inducted into the Bride class, who will complete the Royal Priesthood beyond the Veil, and for a thousand years have the glorious work of blessing all the families of the earth.

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