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SALVATION MADE CLEAR

BY: C. D. COLE

The aim of this message is to clarify our thinking on the question of salvation. I am using no particular text, but will consider many passages on this all important subject. From the standpoint of personal eternal well-being, salvation from sin is the most stupendous subject of all human interest. To live and die without being saved is the tragedy of tragedies. Life here is so brief and continued existence, either in heaven or hell, is such a solemn fact that salvation overshadows all other blessings. That a holy and righteous God should provide salvation for His rebellious creatures is nothing short of sensational. And to neglect such a great salvation is the very height of creature folly. The one question for which there is no answer is this: *"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"* Hebrews 2:3.

There is a present and a future aspect of salvation. In the full and complete sense, nobody is yet saved. Nobody will be completely saved until he is glorified in heaven and that awaits the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The present aspect of salvation is called justification in the Bible, and the future aspect is called glorification. Justification may be defined as that judicial act of God by which the believer in Christ is declared to be free from the guilt of sin and no longer exposed to the penalty of violated law. Justification has to do with the believer's standing before the Supreme Lawgiver. Justification and regeneration must not be confused in our thinking. Regeneration gives the sinner a new nature; justification gives the sinner a new standing before God in which there is no condemnation. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are*

in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:1.

In the Bible we are told that justification is by grace; that it is by faith, that it is by the blood of Christ; and that it is by works. Consider these scriptures. Romans 3:24, *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* Romans 5:1, *"Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:9, *"Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."* James 2:24, *"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."*

With these scriptures before us, what is to be our technique in handling them; or, in other words, how shall we rightly divide them? Some would say, that since not one of these passages gives all the truth about salvation, that we should connect them with the conjunction **"and"**.

The results would be, that we are justified by grace, and faith, and the blood of Christ, and by works; that it takes all these things to save a sinner—grace and faith and blood and works. We might ask, what is wrong with this method of dealing with these scriptures? There is much wrong with it. First, it denies that any one of these passages is true, but only partly true. When Paul says that we are justified freely by His grace, he is not telling the whole truth, according to some. Then this method is guilty of adding to the word of God. It insists on putting the word **"and"** where the Bible does not put it. Nowhere do we read that the sinner is saved by grace **and** anything else. Moreover, it ignores or denies

many plain statements of scriptures. Takes Ephesians 2:8, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any many should boast."* Take Romans 3:27, *"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."*

Therefore, we conclude that a man is *"justified by faith without the deeds of the law."* Consider Titus 3:5, *"Not of works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."*

Now let me give what I think is the right method of dealing with the scriptures before us. Each of the verses gives us all the truth on the particular subject it deals with. Romans 3:24, *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* This verse speaks of two things: the moving cause of justification, and the just basis of justification. That which caused God to justify sinners is His grace and His grace only. We are justified "freely," that is, without any cause in us; the efficacious cause of justification is the grace of God. The meritorious cause of justification is the redemptive death of Christ, and that only. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, and God forgives us for the sake of Christ and what He did at Calvary. To add anything to the blood of Christ as the object of trust is to pervert the gospel, and frustrate the grace of God. Being now justified by the blood of Christ we shall escape the wrath of God.

Now take Romans 5:1, *"Therefore*

being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we have the instrumental cause of justification, or how the sinner receives the benefits of the death of Christ. It is by faith only. To add anything to trust in Christ for salvation is to add to His blood as the just ground for salvation. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that we are justified by faith and works. It is not by faith and works, but by a faith that does work. Faith is not a dead something, but a living, working grace wrought in the human soul in the new birth. There is a sort of faith that is not of God--a human faith--the faith of the stony ground hearer--a temporary faith that is given up under testing. Saving faith is of God and belongs to those who have been born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:13, *"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* Faith is not the cause but the effect of the new birth. Christians are God-made, not man-made. In I John 5:1, *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him,"* it is the perfect tense in the Greek, and should read, *"has been born of God."* To believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe that He is God's anointed Saviour and to believe that, is to trust Him as Saviour. In Acts 18:27 we read of those who believed through grace. *"...When he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace."*

As to the source or moving cause of salvation it is grace all the way, and at every step. It was in grace that God gave His son to provide salvation at Calvary. It was in grace that Christ gave Himself. *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."* It was in grace that we were effectually called by the Holy Spirit to faith in Christ. Paul explains his conversion in Galatians 1:14-15. He had persecuted the church and profited in the Jews' religion, being zealous of the traditions of his fathers. Then he says,

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." And Peter talks about the grace that is to be brought unto us at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Dear old John Newton put the truth in verse:

*"Amazing grace!
How sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost,
but now am found,
was blind but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught
my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did
that grace appear,
the hour I first believed!*

*Thro' many dangers,
toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me
safe thus far
and grace will lead me home.*

*When we've been there
ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days
to sing God's praise,
than when we first begun."*

Now let us consider James 2:24, *"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."* James does not say that a man is justified by faith **and** works. The Bible keeps this conjunction "**and**" out of the picture, and we dare not put it in. James is saying that there is a justification by works as well as by faith. But who is justified by works? Not the alien sinner, but the believing saint. James gives Abraham as a case in point. Abraham was justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac. This was some forty years after he had become a believer. Abraham believed God according to Genesis 15:6, *"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness;"* and, in Genesis 22:12 he showed his faith by offering up Isaac, *"And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."* Martin Luther would not accept the epistle of James because he thought

James contradicted Paul. But there is no contradiction between Paul and James. Paul deals with the fact of faith; James with the proof of faith. Paul writes about the justification of a person; James writes about the justification of profession. Both of them illustrate their teaching by the faith of Abraham. God had promised Abraham posterity when it was impossible by the law of nature for him and Sarah to have children. God kept his promise and Isaac, the child of promise, was born. And then God commanded Abraham to slay Isaac through whom the Messiah should come. If his faith had not been genuine, he would not have offered up Isaac. He believed God would keep His promise and that Isaac would have a seed, even though he killed him. Abraham's reasoning was wrong, but his faith was strong. He reasoned that after he had slain Isaac, God would raise him from the dead and give him children.

James challenges the professor to prove his faith by his works. He says that a man may say he has faith, but if he has no works he doesn't have faith, for faith without works is dead, that is, he has no real faith. Paul and James are agreed on the kind of faith that saves. James says it must be a faith that works, and Paul says that it is faith that works by love. Paul has more to say about works than James does, but he never makes salvation the result of works either in whole or in part.

Now to sum up or recapitulate: It is God who justifies the ungodly, and this is because of His grace, and grace only. That which makes it morally possible for God to justify the ungodly without doing wrong is the vicarious death of Christ, and by

(Continued on Page 4)

HE HAD NO SONG:

Trying To Get To Heaven Without A Saviour

BY: C. D. COLE

Several years ago, as I was leaving a meeting one evening, a lady sought me and asked me to go with her and see her husband who was quite anxious about his soul, knowing he would soon have to die. When I entered the room, I found him sitting in an easy chair, and he could not lie down without coughing. After a few words about his bodily sufferings, I asked him about his soul: did he think his sufferings would end when his body yielded and death came.

"Well," he said, "I think my chances for getting to heaven are pretty good."

I felt he was not real; so I said, "Do you believe heaven is a reality?"

He said, "Yes."

"Is it true there is a hell?"

He replied, "Yes, I believe it."

"And you have an immortal soul that will soon be in one or other of these places forever?"

"Yes," he said earnestly.

"You just now said you thought your chances for heaven were pretty good; you believe heaven is a reality, and hell is a reality, and your precious immortal soul will soon be happy in heaven forever. You must have some reason for it. Will you please tell me what it is?"

His voice was weak and I waited for his answer as it came slowly. It was this: "Well, I've always been kind to my wife and children, and I have not intentionally wronged my fellow man."

"That's all very good," I said, "and it is nice to be able to say that; but now tell me, what kind of a place do you think heaven is, and what do they do there?"

"Well," he said, "I think there is no sin or sorrow there. It must be a happy place, and I think they sing there a good deal."

Turning to Revelation 1:5, I said: "Yes, they do sing there, and I'll just read you a song they sing. It is this: *'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.'* I want you to take notice:

they have not a word to say about what they have done. It is all about what HE has done. He loved them and died for them. Now, suppose you were up there and had got there in the way you say, because you had been good to your family, and so on. There would be one sinner in heaven that had never been washed from his sins in the blood of Jesus; you could not join in the song they sing, could you?"

I waited for an answer. His head had dropped and his eyes were turned to the floor. I shall never, never forget his look as he raised his head and turned to answer me. It was as one waking out of a life dream. He was now coming face to face with eternal realities and his only reply was:

"Well, I never thought of that before."

But I said: "God has, and He has written a verse for persons like you, who are willing to take their chances, as you said on their good works, and are deceiving themselves by the false hope of getting to heaven in that way. I'll read the verse. It is the fourth verse of the fourth chapter of Romans: *'Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.'* Let me explain this: When you were well and could work, you received your wages because you earned them. You were under no special obligations to the man that paid you. You would come home to your wife and say, 'Here is what I made today.' You could talk about what you had done, and what you had got and you would not have a word to say about the man that paid you. That is just what God means by that verse. *'Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.'* If you could get to heaven by what you have done, there would be no grace about it. You would know nothing of God's love as shown in Jesus. You could not sing, *'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.'* for you

would be there without a Saviour; and you would have no song. Do you think you could be happy?"

He was now ready to give up his ground and for the first time frankly owned what his wife had said, that he was anxious about his soul and wanted to have the question settled. He fully confessed that in spite of all the good he claimed, he was a sinner and needed a Saviour. It was with joy I read to him I Timothy 1:15, *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* He repeated, "To--save--sinners! To--save--sinners!"

"Yes," I said, "to **save** sinners--not to **help** sinners to be saved, but to **save** sinners. He is not a helper, but a Saviour, and God's Word is *'to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.'* And again, *'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'* He did believe. I left him that night, after reading other Scriptures to him, with a new hope--not based on what he had done, but believing what God says about what Christ has done.

I called the next morning to see him. As I entered he looked up with joy in his face and said: "Oh, I'll have a song now. It will be *'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.'*"

He was with us about a week afterward, and fell asleep, happy in the Lord.

Reader, will you be able to sing that song? Or will you have to say, *"I am tormented in this flame?"* It will be one or the other. *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,"* John 3:36. And again, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him*

that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life," John 5:24.

(Continued from Page 2)

His blood only. The way of justification is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and through faith alone. And that which proves one has faith is his works, and his works only. Salvation is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. The sinner is not saved by the good life he lives; it is the other way round--the good in his life is the fruit of grace. Paul ascribed his conversion to the grace of God, when he said, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am.*" He goes on to say that he had worked harder than others; "*yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me,*" I Corinthians 15:10.

Now to summarize more briefly: Efficaciously, salvation is by grace; meritoriously, it is by the blood of Christ; instrumentally, it is by faith; evidentially, it is by works.

This way of putting the truth gives all glory to God, humbles man, and challenges to good works.