

Making a Case for Salvation

As I begin to write, I look at this title and ask myself what and why? At this moment, I have no ideas about what to write. The “why” I think I do know, but the “what” is not yet clear to me. The “why” is because I believe that I have been instructed to do so. I got up at 3:00AM this morning as I always do every Monday, Wednesday and Friday in order to pray, discuss things with my Lord, and to do some of the natural protocols which I started over nine years ago and through which He healed me from a rapidly growing terminal cancer, which was to have ended my life in less than a year. This morning the very first thought to enter my mind was clear as a bell. It was simply, “Make a case for salvation.”

I pray continually for His wisdom and discernment and am often rewarded with answers regarding many issues, and especially those regarding biblical questions. The answers come to me often days and sometimes weeks after I have asked them. Many of my previous papers have been written through similar persuasions as this. However, this seems to be the first time that His prompting came without a clue as to what He wants me to write.

Perhaps it was foolish of me to reveal this very precious and personal part of my life. We all, as Christians realize that God, through the Holy Spirit speaks to His sons and daughters, but we believe so more in the abstract than the actual recognizable events. When someone we know tells us that God speaks to him or her, and here is what He said, we look askance and tend to doubt the validity of the claim. We conclude that surely, it must be all in his or her heads. I pray in this case, as with all that I write about, you judge the message, whatever it will be, and not the messenger, or how he came by the message. The truth is always in Scripture, and there only. Please go into it to confirm or refute what follows if you question, doubt or seek to know more about this supremely vital subject.

What is salvation? It is what you have as a result of having been saved. Saved from what? It's not saved from drowning or any physical circumstance. It is strictly a spiritual matter. If someone saves you from drowning or from a fire, you don't consider yourself as now having salvation. It is only when we speak of lost souls being saved that we call the result salvation. Many don't believe that there is such a thing, or that it is even needed. Others believe that they have it because they are more "good" than "bad". Still others "feel" they have salvation in that they decided to call themselves "Christians" even though they have only the vaguest notion of what it means. Also, there are some who believe that somehow souls move on to "higher or lower levels" until they achieve some permanent status, having nothing to do with salvation, but instead with repeated reincarnations.

As one examines various religions and beliefs, it's amazing how many different ones there are. Yet all of them that believe in an after life, excluding biblical Christianity, share a common theme, and that is, that a life of good works will get you to "that better place." This also applies to the many variations of "Christianity," again, except what must be called biblical Christianity, that is faith, which is derived from a direct understanding of Scripture with nothing added or taken away.

Salvation in accordance with Scripture in the true Christian faith, results in an eternity in the heavenly places with our Creator. It can be obtained in only one way, and that is by His grace through faith in Jesus. This faith must be an unshakable, unqualified belief that Jesus suffered on the cross for our sins, died, was buried, was resurrected, and ascended to heaven, all in accordance with Scripture. This salvation is the free gift from God available to everyone, who by such faith accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is not the result of any good works. However, the act of acceptance includes far more than acquiescence, or an intellectual acknowledgement of His deity and the truth of the Gospel. There are many who claim this alone is adequate evidence as to the achievement of salvation. But this is false teaching! Until this Gospel truth penetrates the heart, and the very marrow of every bone, it must remain suspect! Until one's heart and soul has repented, confessed every known sin and having done so with a contrite heart and broken

spirit, nothing has been accomplished in the way of salvation. Many “violently” disagree with this, but Scripture tells us “that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?”(Jeremiah 17:9) This is true of yours as well as mine, whether we like it or not, or believe it or not. Because the heart is so deceitful, that none are capable of knowing it, how can anyone know even his or her own heart? Therefore to know with certainty that the true salvation providing faith is surely in the heart, one must be watchful and circumspect of ones heart and soul and mind over a period of time, and especially through testing situations in order to be certain that it be so.

The thief on the cross is invariably the “great escape” from this time and evidence dependant premise. Because there was no recorded accumulation of time dependant evidence from which one might draw any conclusions as to the thief’s faith, this episode is often used to justify the adequacy of a “just in time”, just before death sufficiency of an expression of faith. This seems to prove, at least to some, that simply mouthing the sinner’s prayer, and at that moment feeling a belief, is sufficient for salvation. Let us examine the situation of the thief for a moment to see if this is a safe conclusion. Only in Luke do we learn of this event. Here in chapter 23 verses 39-43, we read the following: “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Here we find in these few short words from the thief:

1. a fear of God
2. a recognition and confession of his sinful justly condemned life.
3. An admission that Jesus is God
4. An acknowledgment of Jesus as Savior who had the ability to forgive, and of his own need for deliverance from sin.
5. A solid understanding that Jesus was innocent, that this was innocent blood being shed on the cross

6. An acceptance of physical death along with recognition that there was another “life” to come
7. A belief that even through this was God beside him, and therefore had the power to save His physical life if He chose to, did not do so for reasons the thief may not have understood, but did not question or challenge, but accepted through faith

All of these obviously heart-felt thoughts were converted into spoken words while the thief was dying in excruciating pain, worse than any of us can imagine. It was hardly a time when one would casually reminisce or engage in intellectual discussions or even think to connive. It was a time when only what is truly in the heart cries out.

Furthermore, we are not told of what may have gone on in this thief’s life before he was caught and sentenced. He may very well have heard about Jesus and perhaps knew of his miracles and teachings, and may even have been coming around to believing on Him much earlier. The fact that he so firmly attested to Jesus’ innocence seems to suggest some prior knowledge of Him. Lastly, this was Jesus next to him, the only one who can judge any heart, and He judged him both by his confession, and the heart from which it came. Based on the above, it would seem that anyone who uses the story of the thief on the cross to justify, rationalize, or excuse themselves from any other portion of Scriptural instruction as to the nature and means of salvation is on very dangerous ground.

No case regarding salvation could possibly be considered adequate without a discussion of its most important element and strongest evidence of its genuineness. That most precious ingredient is love. Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment is that, “Thou shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:36). In John 13:34 and 15:12 Jesus adds, “A new commandment I give you, that ye love one another as I have loved you.” In John 4:19 we learn that “We love Him, because He first loved us.” And in 1John 4:16 that “...we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.” Also in 1 John 4:7, 8 we are told simply to “...love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knowth God. He that loveth not knoweth not; for God is love.” Paul devotes all of chapter 13 in

1 Corinthians to describing love and how without it we have nothing. In the last verse of that chapter he says, “now abideth faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest is love.” To quote the Holy Spirit through John again we find in 1 John 3:10 “...whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God neither he that loveth not his brother”, and in verse 14 “...we know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren. He who loveth not his brother abideth in death.” So what is the theme here? It is simply that without a genuine love for God and for fellow Christians there is no salvation! This doesn't mean that this love is fully manifested at the instant one receives salvation, but the trail of the truly born-again Christian, that is one who has salvation, will be unmistakably marked with ever growing evidence of this Godly agape love. Just as the moon's light exists only in so far as it is able to reflect the sun's light, so is our love a mere reflection of God's love. That is part of what is meant by “We love Him, because He first loved us.” Any real love is but a reflection of His love. There exists only one real love, that is God's love. We are incapable of generating real love from within ourselves. We, at best, are only capable of reflecting the love that God provides us. That is why He had to love us first before we could love Him. The dross on silver does not reflect. Remove the dross from the silver, and we have a perfect mirror. The dross (sin) on our souls causes that lack of reflectability of love. Through faith our sin (the dross) is wiped clean. This now allows the cleanliness, the shining reflectively of the transformed souls to receive and reflect back God's love toward Him and towards each other. It would seem therefore, based on the referenced Scripture that this love is the greatest manifestation and evidence of a changed life and the saved soul.

We should not confuse this genuine Godly love with the so-called love within our human nature. This love is, for the most part, a conditional or an erotic love, not a Godly love. Even so, our Creator did impart into every soul a limited capacity for some measure of His love. This is most strikingly manifested in a mother's love. However, God's love in the redeemed heart far exceeds this love, because it necessarily expresses itself even to one's mortal enemies. No human love absent of God's input can possibly attain that quality.

Some additional evidences of the attainment of the new heart that ushers in salvation are first, the acknowledgement that one is a hopelessly condemned sinner whom no one but Jesus can save. There must be this admission along with repentance, a total change of mind and heart regarding one's belief and how life is to be lived. Also, one must grow more and more to hate sin. What is sin? It is everything contrary to God's word. What is God's word? One must read and study the whole Scripture to truly know. Next, one must confess to God all known sins and be ashamed and deeply regret them because they have offended our Creator. One must pray to God for forgiveness and strive to sin no more, although the very best anyone can do at first is to sin less and less. God commands in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Therefore, this must be our goal and nothing less. Throughout this process there should be a growing awareness that the Holy Spirit is working within the heart, that there is an increasing faith in Jesus, and that there is a growing love for God and for others. There must also be an ever-growing increase in a sensitivity to sin, along with a strengthening of a resolve to overcome one's sinful ways. A personal commitment to, and an on going relationship with Christ is an essential by product of salvation.

All of this is not to say that salvation did not enter the soul immediately upon ones acceptance of the truth of the Gospel. But if it did, then the things noted above must by necessity have followed, and are continuing. If not, then one should not let the matter rest, but examine one's faith and heart to see what is wrong. This is a profound point! Complacency where salvation is concerned should never be acceptable! To continue in ignorance and apathy can literally be the kiss of death, eternal death!

These are not pleasant words, but neither is hell. We have all grown up in a society that shuns unpleasantness and avoids difficult situations. We have been conditioned to always choose to see "the bright side of things" to be positive, optimistic, and to "see the cup half full not half empty." All these things are fine "in the world." If you are seeking to be not of this world, but only temporarily in the world while Jesus prepares a place for you in heaven, then real reality must be faced, and it exist only in the spiritual world. The way to become part of it is revealed to us only in the Holy Bible, and through its

prescription for salvation. Anyone seeking it elsewhere, regardless of how logical or persuasive it may have been presented, is doomed to disappointment, as well as just doomed, as in not going to heaven.

Above, I said that real reality exists only in the spiritual realm. This may sound crazy, but, even “cutting edge science” today recognizes that we live in a “virtual reality”, in a simulation of some sort. This becomes less than ridiculous even to the layman, when we recognize the nature of atoms, the particles of which all matter consists. We know that every atom is made up of a “solid” sun-like nucleus surrounded by planet-like electrons. Each atom, therefore, has a ratio of millions-to-one of empty space as compared with a “solid” substance. So we can rightly say that there is far more of “nothing” than of “something” in every substance, even our own bodies. If we add to this the fact that “science” now realizes that there exist at least 10 dimensionalities of which we know only four, with time being the fourth, we can see how they might conclude that we live in a “virtual” reality rather than in a reality of actual substance. With this in mind, we can also imagine how Jesus, in His resurrected body, now in control of all these other dimensions of the real reality, could walk through walls and ascend “weightlessly” into the clouds. Hebrew history tells us that the great twelfth century sage Nachmonides somehow deduced the existence of these 10 dimensions simply from the first verses in Genesis. This seems incredible, yet was well documented centuries before “science” even remotely considered such a thing. This is just another small attestation to the supernatural origin of Scripture. Consider one more thought. How does, say seventy compare with a seven having a billion zeros after it? It is evident that the seventy is comparatively infinitesimal, truly negligible. Yet the seven with a billion zeros after it is infinitesimal compared to eternity. So then, how does eternity compare to a normal human lifespan of 70 years?

Does all of this seem to be one of my excursions away from the main topic? Perhaps, but here is my point. “Science” has stumbled onto a legitimate fact. We do live in a virtual reality here on earth. It is a temporary simulation which God created for His own sovereign purpose some six thousand years ago, and which He said He would end some

time in the future. The only real reality is God and the spiritual world in which He exists and which was from eternity past to eternity future. He created this earthly proving ground for us, this simulation where our fleshly bodies exist to house the only real reality that is our individual immortal souls. The 70 years or so we have here on earth in a virtual reality is infinitesimal compared to the eternity that is before us. As noted, Scripture tells us that this earth is temporary and will one day be discontinued. Immortal is that which will continue on forever into eternity. But God has also told us that He will create a new real heaven and earth, which will continue forever, and in which those “made in His image” will eternally dwell. Here, finally is the point! NONE, not one of us is made in His image unless and until we receive SALVATION! Salvation can be said to be that “peace which passeth all understanding,” for in the Greek, the word for peace in this verse is “eirene” which can mean being at one again with Him! God cannot, will not accept sin into His reality, His eternity. Salvation is the condition of the soul-spirit that is free of sin, and it is arrived at in only ONE way, through the cleansing authority of the blood shed at the cross by Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. While salvation opens the gate to eternal heaven, God has prepared another place for those who choose not to receive salvation by this singularly ordained means. It is also an eternal place, but one which no one in his or her right mind, and capable of understanding, would choose. Most who will go there will not go by his or her choice to do so, but by his or her failure to accept salvation, as God, through the Word, has offered it.

The dictionary tells us that salvation is defined as a source of preservation or rescue. In terms of God’s plan as manifest in Scripture, this definition applies equally well in the spiritual context. One who has received salvation has been rescued and preserved from an otherwise inevitable and eternal damnation. Salvation brings the blotting out of all of one’s sins and transgressions of the past, present and future. It brings acquittal from all guilt and criminalization in the court of heaven. On the Day of Judgment, all who have received salvation will be judged clean and pure.

But Salvation means even more than that. We are all naturally fond of, and hopelessly committed to sin. Salvation, through the power of the Holy Spirit, delivers us from the

power of sin if we are responsive to His presence in our hearts. Having received salvation, we do have the power of the Holy Spirit within our new hearts to help in the battle against those propensities to sin. As Spurgeon says “be assured, this emancipation from bad habits, unclean desires, and carnal passions is the main point in salvation.” Then he goes on to point out, that if emancipation is not progressing within you, neither then is the ultimate purpose of salvation working for you. In other words, you are not actually saved!

This is pretty hard stuff for this soft, easy does it, comfort and pleasure obsessed generation to accept, especially where Hollywood and Washington determine our moral values, and where most pulpits preach user-friendly platitudes rather than soul saving Biblical truths. No one wants to hear these things, or believe that there is anything more to salvation than saying, I believe, and then trying to be a nice person, while hoping for the best. That won't cut it! Not nearly! Not ever! Again, salvation requires repentance and a conversion to a belief, faith and trust, **ONLY** in Jesus' accomplishment on the cross followed by a life expressing the consequences of that conversion.

Jesus does want each saved person to know with certainty that he or she is saved. But the knowledge must be based on a firm foundation of evidence not ill informed assumption or presumption. The existence of salvation may be detected through the sincere profession of faith in the achievement of Jesus on the cross as accompanied by a truly contrite heart which has confessed and regretted all past sins, and a soul which has repented, that is turned from its acceptance of its evil ways, and perseveres in a firm resolve to live in the ways taught by Jesus.

Scripture in the context of its whole demands each of these elements as evidence of having achieved salvation. Furthermore, Scripture is replete in this respect with admonishments such as to “work out your salvation,” “examine your faith” and the “need to persevere to the end”, “if you continue in My word...” etc., etc. These and many similar passages can be found which add essential dimension to that simple and most beautifully promising of all verses, “Believe and be saved.” It's this word “believe, that

is exceedingly loaded with meaning far, far beyond anything we normally attribute to it. That is the issue and the basis of often-tragic misunderstanding. Jesus also said that one must be “born-again” What does that mean? Clearly it means starting a new life! In this case starting a spirit centered rather than the flesh centered life into which we are all born. It is evident that the requirement that one must be born-again in order to be saved adds a whole new and far more complex meaning to the word “believe”, in the simple instruction to “believe and be saved.” One should meditate long and deeply on this before one accepts as evidence of salvation the common meaning of “believe.”

How do we receive Salvation? Of course it’s by grace through faith as we learn from Ephesians 2:8. It is a gift from God offered with only one condition “through faith” in Jesus and His work on the cross as already alluded to. But again, how does one get it? If one gets it at all, it comes instantly, faster than the twinkling of an eye. Because God knows everything, He, of course, knows your mind and your heart and exactly what you feel, think, believe and will do every second of your life. Once He sees a true sustaining belief forming, accompanied by a faith even as “small as a mustard seed,” BINGO you have it! But remember, He knows what you don’t know yet, and cannot know with certainty until some time has elapsed and recognizable evidence of that salvation actually manifests. Perhaps that’s why Paul says in Philippians 2:12 “work out your salvation.” Of course, he doesn’t mean work to get it. That is impossible, as we all know, for work won’t do it. He is telling us to look inside and work it out, dig or drag it out into the open where we can clearly see that which can only be found in the heart. He says to do so with “fear and trembling”. Why? Perhaps it is because of the possibility that we may discover that there is nothing there to work out! In the context of His admonition, how else will you know? Is an assumption good enough, or should we do some confirming investigation as Paul suggests? We’ll all know for sure one second after the last heart beat, but by then the course will have been unalterably set as to where we’ll spend eternity. Is anyone offended by this suggestion that one should seek to confirm the existence of his or her salvation? Spurgeon would tell you, that anyone who is saved is

never as haughty as to object to the admonition and not wish to re-examine themselves. He views those who would be thus offended as being ones who really need such advice.

Just as we compared time in terms of life span vs. eternity, now let's examine priorities. Whose matter is this, this matter of your salvation? It yours and yours alone! No one, not your Pastor or your parents or anyone else, no matter how much they love you, can substitute or arrange in any way for your salvation. God is "not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance" (2Peter 3:9). Implicit in this expression from the Lord is that He wants to confer salvation on everyone, but He is willing to do so only for those who repent, that is change their minds, their ways and their priorities, or to conform to the Gospel message and all it contains. With eternity at stake shouldn't repentance with all that it implies, and all it thereby promises, be by far the top priority in this life, miles above any worldly priority? I'll close this "Case for Salvation" by quoting a few words from page 1376 of a five volume expository commentary on the Gospel of John by James Montgomery Boice. It's an observation about Judas which we should all take to heart if we look with too much comfort at our own perceived position in Christ.

Again, there is this final lesson. It concerns Judas, who was so close to Christ and yet unsaved. Think how close he was. He had been with Jesus for at least three years. He had heard his teaching. He had even understood his teaching; for although he had not understood the meaning of Christ's death, he had at least understood Christ's warning that he was to die. Judas was that close to Jesus. He understood his thoughts. Yet he was unsaved. I put it to you: It is possible to be quite close to Christ, to sit in a Christian church listening to good sermons, to hear good Bible teaching by radio, even to understand what you hear, and yet fail to make that personal commitment to Christ, that is the necessary human response to God's work of salvation. How foolish it is to come that close yet be lost.