

# THINGS WHICH ACCOMPANY SALVATION

In last month's article I emphasised the fact that N.T. baptism came quite specifically from God (or, as Jesus said, "from heaven") and that it was not, therefore, something that any man could lightly dismiss or ignore (although he very often does). And in the article previous to that one, I showed that every instance of conversion in the Acts of the Apostles, involved not only belief, but repentance and baptism (notwithstanding that most tract-writers seldom see fit to mention baptism). In case any readers should think that I have given undue attention to baptism, or attributed to it a superiority above all the other things which contribute to man's salvation, I propose in this article, to refer to some of **these other factors: i.e. factors** which equally must be taken into account when we contemplate the gospel. But surely it must be very doubtful that we can ever over-emphasise the importance of **any** of the ingredients of salvation, whether it be faith, repentance, baptism or, indeed, any other necessity. Readers may well realise that we sometimes appear to overstate the case for baptism for the simple reason that the religious world at large make no case for it at all. Thus, if others were to make more of it, we would be very happy to make less of it. Obviously when we encounter those religious tracts which are in transit throughout the world, and which proclaim to readers that they need "only believe", **we surely have no option** but to declare this doctrine entirely unscriptural and draw attention to baptism, and the other things which accompany salvation. There is, of course, nothing wrong with printing tracts which stress the need for faith: but this is quite a different proposition from asserting that we are saved by "Faith Only". Such teaching is nowhere to be found in the N.T. and I invite any reader whomsoever (if they espouse this doctrine) to show us the justification for it in God's word. Since my original article I have received another four tracts from a tract-writer who prints his "Faith Only" message, and I have given him a written invitation to show where this dogma is to be found in the N.T. We shall see if the invitation is acted upon.

## FAITH ALONE AND LUTHER

If the "Faith Only" teaching is not in the N.T. from where did it come? It seems that the reformer, Martin Luther, gets the credit or the blame for originating the idea. Around 1530 AD Luther interpolated into his own translation of the N.T. the words *sola fide* (Latin for "Faith Only") into Rom. 3:28. This action has clearly had great ramifications in the religious world and has given us the term "Solifidianism" which is what the doctrine is officially called. It was not a slip of the pen but was very consciously done. Indeed Luther felt so strongly about it, that when he added the word "Only" to Rom. 3:28 viz. **"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith (ONLY) without the deeds of the law"**, he insisted that the word "Only" was necessary for clarity. He was greatly criticised at the time for his action, and said in an angry

letter. "It is **my** Testament and **my** translation and if I have made any mistake (although I never falsified intentionally) I will not let the papists judge me .... As to Romans 3:28, if the word "only" is not found in the Latin or the Greek texts, yet the passage has that meaning and must be rendered so in order to make it clear and strong in German." (Unquote). And so Luther acknowledged that "Only" is not in the Greek text but he thought that it ought to have been, and that it would have made for clarity and strength in the German language.

Luther had, of course, become increasingly disenchanted with the R.C. Church and in its excesses. In 1510, for instance, he visited Rome for the first time and was really shocked by the spectacle of worldliness. He later said "Rome is a harlot. I would not take 1,000 gulden not to have seen it, for I never would have believed the true state of affairs from what other people told me, had I not seen it myself. So great and bold is Roman impiety that neither God nor man, neither sin nor shame, is feared. All good men who have seen Rome bear witness to this, all bad ones come back worse than before". (Unquote). As a good catholic, Luther had previously submitted wholeheartedly to the priestly system of meritorious works. He gave himself to penances; self-mortification; fastings; night-watches; sacraments; invocations of saints and other features of monasticism, but eventually came to the conclusion that all such "works" were uncalled for, and that a man could please God simply by faith; or by faith itself; or only by faith: or by faith only. Thus his faith "only" attitude. This basic cry or theme, "Faith alone", became the cornerstone of the Reformation and the bedrock of the ensuing Protestantism. The three fundamentals of the Reformation were (1) The supremacy of the Scriptures over 'tradition'; (2) The supremacy of Faith over "works"; i.e. Faith alone: and (3) The supremacy of Christian people over an exclusive Priesthood. Most of Protestant churches, and Presbyterianism in general, embraced the "Faith alone" doctrine as well as Luther's belief in foreordination (that God has already chosen who will have faith and who will not have it) and, 450 years later, this is still largely the case. Perhaps it was only to be expected that Luther, fettered so long in the "works" of the R.C. Church, should swing so violently to the other extreme, and denounce works almost entirely, and reject almost outright the epistle of James. Alexander Campbell excused Luther somewhat on the grounds that Luther's error was understandable: in a man struggling his way out of the smoke of obscurity and spiritual darkness.

#### A CHAIN OF EVENTS

Consider the following scenario. Imagine, if you will, an old man, in his wheelchair, enjoying the evening air on his porch overlooking the tranquil lake. Fairly well out on the lake a young man is fishing from a small rowing boat. A sudden splash alerts the old man to the fact that the boat has overturned and the young man is struggling for life, in the water. The old man can't do much but shouts to his son who is inside the house. The son rushes out and, sizing up the situation at a glance, runs to the beach. He finds a boat there, but no oars. He dashes to a neighbour and manages to borrow two oars. Frantically he rows out to the drowning man who, by this time, seems to be about to sink for the last time. Despairing of reaching the man in time, and noticing a coil of rope in the bottom of the boat, the son throws the rope out towards the victim. More by luck than good guidance the young man manages to clutch at the rope and to hold on to it. After a struggle the young man is eventually dragged into the boat and brought to the shore, but he seems to be dead. Someone, from the little crowd now assembled on the shore, steps forward and gives the young man artificial respiration, and, after some very worrying minutes, manages to bring him round. Later, the young man endeavoured to thank his rescuers and began with the old man, without whom the rescue would never have been mounted. He had also to thank the son, of course, and the man who gave him the artificial respiration. The son accepted the thanks with pleasure but pointed out that he would have been useless

but for the boat, and but for the neighbour's oars, and what about the rope? Without the rope he would never have reached the young man in time.

In short, the young man was not saved by **any one person** or **any one thing**, but by a chain of events and a series of actions, and it would be as foolish to say that the young man was saved by the rope **only**, as it is to say that sinners are saved by faith **only**. Surely it was a whole chain of circumstances which brought about the saving of the drowning man, and if any of the links in the chain had been missing the rescue would never have been successful. This fictitious anecdote is sometimes used as a rough, analogy of God sending His Son into the world to rescue man from sin and death, and imperfect as the analogy is, it does demonstrate, perhaps, that our salvation rests upon a *plurality of factors*, and not on any one particular thing.

#### STEPS IN A PROCESS

Having been alienated from God by his sins and shortcomings, man has to be reconciled again, back to God. Indeed the meaning of the word "religion" (**re: ligio**) is "a binding back" to God. We might say that we are bound back to God by a chain: the chain of salvation. Some see salvation as something acquired at once, when we obey the gospel, but, personally, I see it as a **process**. Paul, referring to the passing of time, said, "**Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.**" (Rom. 13:11). And Jesus said, "**He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.**" (Matt.10:22). Until the end of what? we might ask. Clearly the end of a person's life-span is being referred to, and our salvation depends upon us remaining faithful until that time. Plainly, if there are links in the chain of salvation, each link must come in its proper order, and has its proper place. We would not, for instance, expect someone to repent prior to them having faith; or to believe the gospel before they had heard it. Jesus said, "**He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved**". (Mark 16:16). Thus, according to Jesus, baptism should follow belief and both belief and baptism should come **prior** to salvation. Peter said, "**Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ...**" (Acts 2:38) and so he places repentance prior to baptism. Thus on this brief information alone, we can see a sequence of hearing, believing, repenting and being baptised: **all prior** to the promise of salvation. It must also be noted that having taken these aforementioned steps, and having entered the Kingdom of God, we have not **concluded** the process of salvation but merely set foot on the bottom rung of the ladder, or commenced the journey. Again, the Christian life has been likened unto a race that is set before us, in which we must strive for the prize. Changing the figure, Jesus said that no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, was fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. It's a process.

The following are some (not all) of the many links in the chain of our salvation :  
WE ARE SAVED BY :-

- ( 1 ) BY GOD'S GRACE: "**By grace are ye saved.**" (Eph. 2:8).
- ( 2 ) BY THE GOSPEL: "**... the gospel is God's power unto salvation**" (Rom. 1:16)
- ( 3 ) BY FAITH: "**Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved.**" (Acts 16:3)
- ( 4 ) BY REPENTANCE: "**For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation. .**"  
(2 Cor. 7:10)
- ( 5 ) BY IMMERSION: "**whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.**"  
(1 Peter 3:21)
- ( 6 ) BY CHRIST'S BLOOD: "**Redemption through His blood.**" (Eph 1:7)
- ( 7 ) BY HIS NAME: "**Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**"  
(Rom. 10:13)
- ( 8 ) BY CONFESSION: "**And with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.**"  
(Rom. 10:10)
- ( 9 ) BY HOPE: "**For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope.**"  
(Rom. 8:24)

- (10) **BY CHRIST'S LIFE:** "being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."  
(Rom. 5:10)
- (11) **BY OBEDIENCE:** "Save yourselves from this evil generation." (Acts 2:40)
- (12) **BY PERSEVERANCE:** "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."  
(Matt. 10:22)

Each item in the above group is linked, in scripture, with salvation (the actual word "saved" is used in each case) and as can be clearly seen the Holy Spirit never ever employed the word "ONLY" in regard to *any of them*. Salvation does not come by grace (only); or by the blood of Christ (only); or by immersion (only); or by hope (only); or by perseverance (only). Why then should it be thought that we are saved by faith (only)? Luther was right when he said that "only" was not in the Greek text. If the Holy Spirit never employed the word "only" neither should we.

#### FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

If we are ever fortunate enough to manage to get into conversation with those who write tracts and teach the "Faith only" doctrine (and it's not easy to get these conversations, for some reason) we will probably be told that they have no time for baptism because baptism is a "work," and Paul prohibited "works." The passage offered in support of this will be Eph. 2:8 where Paul says, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast." Clearly Paul is linking "works" with boasting and is simply saying that redemption is a gift and not a reward for our good "works." The N.T. has a great deal to say about "works" and we must be able and careful to differentiate between the various kinds. We read of "the works of the law" (of Moses): we read of "evil works;" we read of "good works;" we read of "dead works;" we read of "the works of God;" we read of "the works of the devil;" we read of "wonderful works;" The "works" Paul had in mind in Eph. 2:8 referred, of course, to any good deeds the Gentiles might have imagined they had done, *which merited* God's salvation and that God was therefore, in this way, indebted to them, and *owed them a favour* on account of their "goodness." Paul dispels any such idea and says that we are saved by God's GRACE (unmerited favour) and that any righteousnesses we may think we have, are as filthy rags. All have sinned and deserve death, but God gives us life: not because we merit it, but out of love and grace. James certainly had no 'hang-up' about "works." He said, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being ALONE" (2:17). This is, strangely enough, the only verse in the entire N.T. which refers to faith "alone" and it mentions it only to condemn it. "Faith Alone," says James is dead (like "a body without the spirit) and faith must be accompanied by works. This time "works" does not refer to our own estimation of righteousness but to the "good works" that Jesus had in mind when He said ". . . that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:16).

Abraham had a reputation for being a *man of faith*, but why was he seen to be a man of faith? It was by his "works." Indeed Abraham was "justified by works," because his faith was such that it prompted him into doing things: things that were well pleasing to God. Those who want to dismiss baptism as a "work" will obviously have to decide whether it is an evil work or a good work; and surely could hardly class it is an evil work if it came from God and was commanded by our Lord. Thus it must be a good work and Paul says that we should "be fruitful in every good work" (Col. 1:10).

#### SAVE YOURSELVES

God has done as much as he can to save us. Although Christ was sent into the world to save sinners, yet we must all take steps to *save ourselves*. Indeed, when Peter was preaching the gospel at Pentecost, we read that "with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying SAVE YOURSELVES from this untoward generation"

(Acts 2:40). Clearly, in addition to God's part in man's redemption man himself, has an important part to play. Some things God has done: some things man must do. In a broad sense nothing with God is impossible, yet it is impossible for God to accept man in the absence of faith, i.e. **"Without faith it is impossible to please God."** (Heb. 11:6). Luther believed that God gave some men faith but withheld it from others. If this is so why preach the gospel: if God has already decided our eternal fate? The apostle Peter certainly did not share Luther's view for he said, **"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."** (Acts 10:34). **"Faith comes through hearing; and hearing the word of God"** (Rom. 10:17). A "saving faith" is the kind which, like Abraham's prompts us to obey the gospel in repentance and baptism. These are things only we, ourselves, can do. Only man, himself, can decide to put his hand to the plough. Surely this is what Peter had in mind when shouted to the crowd **"Save yourselves"** from this reprobate generation. How did the crowd interpret his call? The very next verse says, **"Then they that gladly received his (Peter's) word were baptised: and the same day there were added to them about 3,000 souls."** And so, out of that vast audience 3,000 persons decided to "save themselves" and to take the next appropriate step in obeying the gospel i.e. baptism. They had never heard of Luther and didn't seem to regard baptism as "work."

Thus God has done all that He can for us. We are now expected to play our part. Man's salvation now rests entirely in his own hands. **"God is not willing that any should perish but that all may come to repentance,"** and so if we are eternally lost we have only ourselves to blame. Paul's exhortation to the Philippian Christians was that they should **". . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"** and he obviously thought it something that WE must work at. Peter adds his voice to Paul's, and confirms that there are *things that WE must do*. He says, **"Wherefore the rather brethren, GIVE DILIGENCE to make your calling and election sure, for if YE DO THESE THINGS, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."** (2 Peter 1:10).

As mankind "drowns in destruction and perdition" God has thrown out the lifeline. We must grasp it, and if that's a "work" it's a good one.

EDITOR.