

# WHAT IS SALVATION?

THE greatest reward a true worshiper in the Christian Faith expects to receive from God ultimately is SALVATION. Although it is a matter of divine grace, it cannot come within the reach of any person who has no faith or who does not justify his faith by deeds of righteousness.

All the religions of the world share a common hope of salvation yet their conceptions and beliefs as to what salvation is and how to obtain it are at variance. Among the Christians there are those for whom salvation means “heaven”. The Muslims have a similar belief but as regards the method and way to reach “heaven” they are diametrically opposed to the Christians. And for the Hindu or the Buddhist salvation (*Moksha* or *Nirvana*) is the final goal of human life in a state of blessedness that is attainable either in this life or at death.

Very often we come across certain preachers especially among the Church groups who make people believe that salvation is cheap and very easy to obtain. They are fond of making statements such as these: “Believe in Christ today and you are free from your sins.” “Accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and you are saved.”

Under the caption, “How to Find Salvation” the *African Challenge* (Sept., 1964) stated: “You may realise that you have sinned, and you may want to be saved from sin, but do you really know how to find salvation?... Pray to God and tell Him that you know you are a sinner and that you cannot save yourself. Then tell Him that you want to put all your trust in the Sacrifice of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment you do this, from an honest heart, you ARE saved. The Bible says: ‘He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life’ (John 5: 24).”

Evangelist John R. Rice of the “Sword of the Lord Foundation” at Murfreesboro, Tennessee in U. S. A., wrote in his pamphlet, *What Must I Do to be Saved?* thus: “Here is God’s simple way to be saved. You are a sinner, your heart is wrong, you cannot save yourself, you are already condemned. The thing you are to do then, to be saved, is to simply trust the Lord Jesus with that matter. When you trust Him, then you have God’s promise, ‘Thou shall be saved.’... Salvation is instantaneous... The way is plain and **YOU CAN BE SAVED THIS MOMENT** if you will... **YOU CAN BE SAVED RIGHT NOW, THIS MINUTE**. I beg you, do it now. Turn your whole heart from sin to trust in Christ.” (*Caps ours*).

So, there are many people who are convinced in themselves that they are already saved because they believe in Jesus Christ. Not long ago a certain friend said: “I was saved on August 21st, 1965. Oh! I had a wonderful experience on that day when Christ saved me.” We have seen some who said they were already saved but who later on turned away from the Christian faith. And when they were asked as to what had become of their salvation they simply laughed off the embarrassment shamelessly.

Knowing that we are now in the last days of this evil world when some would depart from the true faith and pay heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (1 Timothy 4: 1-3), we are not surprised that many people accept teachings and beliefs which are known to be incompatible with the Scriptures.

### Eternal Life

That the salvation of God is for those who believe in Jesus Christ and who worship Him in truth is beyond argument. Christ truly said: "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (John 6: 47) When the jailer of the prison into which Paul and Silas were thrust asked them what he must do to be saved, they answered: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16: 30, 31) There are several texts in the Holy Bible that have similar tenor. But we must point out that it is Not just the moment one believes in Jesus Christ that one is instantaneously saved neither does mere acceptance of Christ as one's personal saviour qualify one for salvation.

Salvation according to the Holy Scriptures, means complete deliverance from the consequences of sin including death. Therefore a person who is saved is one to whom the Almighty God through Jesus Christ has given everlasting life. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord", said St Paul. – Romans 6: 23.

The foregoing definition of salvation which is purely spiritual must be distinguished from the ordinary usage which implies deliverance or preservation from danger or misfortune or discredit. Thus it can be said that Mr. X saved Miss R from drowning, and so on.

The granting of eternal life to anyone is not within the power of any mortal but it is the prerogative of the Almighty God. Said the Psalmist: "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: Thy blessing is upon Thy people." Again he said: "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." – Psalm 3: 8; 68: 20.

It is a plain truth of the Scriptures that salvation is the ULTIMATE reward of those who keep the faith of Christ Jesus zealously, steadfastly and faithfully till the end. Any Christian believer who later turns to be an apostate having caused his faith to be overthrown, is not worthy of salvation. This is why stress is always laid on steadfastness in the service of the Lord. Jesus Christ himself said: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." – Matthew 24: 12, 13.

If a person is saved or has everlasting life the very moment he believes and accepts Christ, there will be no point of ENDURING TILL THE END. Exhorting the Christians St. Peter said: "Receiving the END of your faith, even the SALVATION of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." (1 Peter. 1: 9, 10) It is an illusion, therefore, for anybody to say or believe that he is already saved merely because he accepts Jesus Christ.

## New World

Even the early apostles of Jesus Christ were not saved instantaneously or given everlasting life as soon as they believed. Eternal life is a reward which God promised to give the faithful in the world to come-the New World- which is His Kingdom of endless bliss.” And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life.” (1 John 2: 25) When a certain rich man was unable to meet the Lord’s requirement because of his love for material possessions, Christ said it was hard for those that trust in riches to be saved Then Peter, the apostle, said: “Lo, we have left all and followed thee.” But Jesus Christ gave this answer: “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the Kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” – Luke 18: 18-30.

The point is that Christ said that those who for the sake of God’s Kingdom forsake the world to follow him would not only have manifold blessings in this present world, but they would also obtain salvation or eternal life in the world to come.

If those who believed in Christ in his days on earth were given everlasting life or salvation in their time they would not have died. The Bible shows clearly that it is at the second presence of Jesus Christ he would begin to give eternal life as reward to the faithful. And it is further indicated that the righteous who are dead would receive their reward of life at the resurrection. As it is written: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” – Daniel 12: 2; see also John 5: 28,29; Luke 14: 14.

St. Paul as well as all the other apostles had the understanding that it is at the coming again of Christ that he would receive the crown of life. Said he: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4: 7,8.) The “crown of righteousness” or “crown of life” means immortality which is the reward of the saints. –James. 1: 12; Revelation 2: 10; 1 Corinthians 15: 53, 54; 2 Corinthians 5: 1-4.

## Conditions

The statement of Jesus Christ – “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life”- means more than the superficial interpretations some give it. There are vital conditions underlying the belief in Christ, and unless those conditions are fulfilled by a believer he cannot be saved. Christ himself said: “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” – Matthew 7: 21.

First, the belief must be genuine in the sense that it is based on the unadulterated TRUTH of Christ because it is the express will of God that all those to be saved must “come unto the

knowledge of the truth". (1Timothy 2: 3, 4) Jesus said: "I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "And ye shall know the truth, and the TRUTH shall make you free." (John 14: 6; 8: 32; see also 2 Thessalonians 2: 10-14) Any belief therefore that is built on false doctrines cannot lead to salvation.

Secondly, the belief must be adorned with Christ-like virtues such as love, faith, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and so forth, which are "the fruit of the Spirit". A believer who is a clandestine – idolater or who indulges in stealing, fornication, adultery, witchcraft, bribery and such like, is unworthy of the grace of salvation. He has NOT repented. He has NOT accepted Christ. Said St. Paul: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind (that is, men who indulge in carnal copulation with male persons), nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." – I Corinthians 6: 9, 10; see also Isaiah. 33: 15,16 and Galatians 5: 19-23.

Thirdly, the belief must be constant and unwavering – not for a while but till the end. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;" said St. Paul. (Hebrews 3: 14) Furthermore, he stated: "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." – Hebrews 10: 38, 39.

And fourthly, the belief must be demonstrated by works of love and righteousness in support of the faith. St. Paul also stated: "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." (1 Corinthians 13: 2) Moreover, James the apostle said: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?...Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils (and nominal Christians) also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD ALSO." – James. 2: 14-26.

### Grace

When St. Paul said, "For by grace are ye saved through faith...not of works..." he did not mean that salvation could be obtained in a cheap manner without working to merit it. Rather the same apostle exhorted Christians and said, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2: 12) And he further enjoined Titus, his yoke-fellow in the gospel, to affirm constantly "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works". – Titus 3: 8.

The grace of God is not a licence for anyone to practise Christianity loosely and expect to be saved. Contrariwise the grace makes Christians to be God-fearing, and to abstain from iniquity. Said Paul the apostle: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” – Titus 2: 11, 12.

In the light of the Scriptures explained in this *Sermon*, it will be tantamount to self-deception for anyone to think that he is already saved for having made a mere oral confession of repentance of his sins or acceptance of Christ. Salvation is not as simple and as easy to obtain as that. The sinner must not only repent but must also bring forth fruits or “do works meet for repentance”. – Matthew 3: 8; Acts 26: 20.

We have made it abundantly clear that salvation means complete deliverance from or triumph over death. Those who obtain it are the people who have been given eternal life by God through Jesus Christ to inherit His everlasting perfect kingdom. Those of the Little Flock-the saints- are to be clothed with immortality in heaven above while all the other faithful, men and women, will inherit the New Earth in abundance of peace and happiness forever and ever. – 1 Peter 2: 5, 6; Hebrews 12: 22-24; Psalm 37: 10, 11; Matthew 5: 5.