

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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PROVISION
FOR OUR CONSTANT
SALVATION

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THE DIVINE AND RICH PROVISION FOR OUR CONSTANT SALVATION

In [Philippians 2:5-16](#) Paul not only speaks of constant salvation and its source, but also shows us the divine and rich provision for this salvation. For the working out of our own salvation we need this provision.

In [2:5-11](#) we have a record of Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, and exaltation. However, here nothing is said about Christ's redemption. It seems that in these verses Paul purposely does not refer to the redemption of Christ. His purpose is to present the Lord Jesus and His incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, and exaltation in such a way as to give us a pattern for our daily salvation.

Christ alone was qualified to accomplish redemption. We cannot share in this work. It would be blasphemy to say that we participate in the accomplishment of redemption. We enjoy Christ's redemption, but we cannot participate in Christ's work of redemption.

THE PATTERN AND THE STANDARD

Although we cannot share in Christ's redemption, we need to be partners with Him in His human living, especially in His emptying Himself, humbling Himself, and in His not grasping equality with God as a treasure. Although the Lord subsisted in the form of God and was equal to God, He did not consider this equality a treasure to be grasped and retained. He did not insist on holding onto the form of God, but was willing to empty Himself by laying aside the form of God and putting on the form of a slave. We all should be partners with Christ in this self-emptying. This means that instead of grasping what we have, we should lay these things aside and empty ourselves.

After Christ emptied Himself, becoming in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself to such an extent that He was obedient even unto the death of the cross. Then God raised Him from among the dead and highly exalted Him. Here we have not only a pattern for our constant salvation, but also the standard for this salvation. The pattern includes Christ's experience from incarnation through crucifixion; the standard includes His

experience from resurrection to exaltation. Daily we need to enjoy a salvation which has such a pattern and standard.

Suppose the wife of a certain brother gives him a difficult time. The way for him to be saved in this situation is not to insist on his headship or on her subordination. He should not regard himself as a king and her as a subject. Neither should he use [Ephesians 5:22](#) to insist that she submit to him. To do this would be to grasp his headship, his “husbandship.” This would not be in keeping with the principle that the Lord did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. Although it is difficult for one who has the headship to lay it aside, this is just what the brother must do in order to experience the Lord’s constant salvation. Of course, the brother can be saved by the inward operation of God. However, [2:5-8](#) comes before God’s operation, which is in [verse 13](#). Surely God will operate in the brother to save him. Nevertheless, he must be willing to empty himself and lay aside his headship according to the pattern in [2:5-8](#). However, in most cases, a married brother grasps his headship and refuses to lay it aside. This may give rise to murmurings, reasonings, and bitter exchange of words. The brother here should contact the Lord Jesus

and say, “Lord, You did not grasp equality with God, and I do not grasp my headship. Neither do I insist on my position as a husband. By your gracious mercy, I lay aside my headship.” Simply by doing this, he experiences the first step of God’s constant salvation. Now he must go on to experience the rest by humbling himself, even unto death. Instead of feeling resentment toward his wife for having to lay aside his headship, he should humble himself before her. This is to experience the pattern of constant salvation from incarnation to the death of the cross. If the brother experiences this, God will come in to raise him and exalt him. Then the brother will also experience the standard of God’s instant salvation. As a result, his wife may be humbled, troubled by the fact that she has been giving him a difficult time. Instead of reacting to her in a negative way, her husband emptied himself and humbled himself. Now she realizes that in his experience of Christ he is exalted and enthroned. He has experienced constant salvation with its pattern and standard.

In 2:5-16 we see how to work out our own salvation. We also see the source and the power for a constant salvation. As we consider the pattern and the standard found here, we see that we

need to be partners with Christ in His pattern and standard. This is the first aspect of the divine and rich provision for our constant salvation.

THE OPERATING GOD

When I was young, I learned that in 2:5-11 there are seven steps in the Lord's humiliation: emptying Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men, humbling Himself, becoming obedient, being obedient unto death, and being obedient unto the death of the cross. I was also taught that, as Christians, we should follow the Lord Jesus in these steps. However, the more I tried to follow Him and imitate Him, the more my fallen nature was exposed. I realized from my experience that the traditional teaching of imitating Christ does not work, for I simply did not have a nature that could follow the Lord in this way. The Lord Jesus was God incarnate, a God-man, a man with the divine element. How could I, a fallen human being, one who lacked even the proper human element and entirely lacked the divine element, follow this God-man? The Lord Jesus has both the divine element and the proper human element. Although He put aside the form of God, He never laid aside the nature of God. The reality, essence, substance,

of the divine nature was still in Him. Thus, He was a man filled with the divine element. He could pass through the seven steps of His humiliation. However, I could not imitate Him.

Gradually I began to understand that to follow the Lord Jesus according to [Philippians 2](#), we need to have God operating within us. In ourselves we are not able to follow the divine pattern or reach God's standard. Praise the Lord that God is working in us! The very God who became incarnate in the Lord Jesus is now in us. This God is the infinite God, the eternal God, the One who created the universe by His word. Through incarnation, this eternal God came to live in the Lord Jesus. He made Jesus a pattern and uplifted Him according to the divine standard. Now this same God is operating in us. When I first realized this, I was overjoyed. Because God is operating in me, I am now a God-man. All genuine believers in Christ need to see that, as Christians, we are God-men. No longer need we live according to our fallen humanity, for God is now operating in us. Hallelujah, because God dwells in us and is operating in us, we are God-men! This inward operation of God is the second aspect of the divine and rich provision for constant salvation.

CHILDREN OF GOD

The third aspect is that we are children of God (2:15). Because we have proclaimed this truth, some have falsely accused us of teaching evolution into God. We certainly do not teach evolution into God. According to the Bible, we testify the fact that, as children of God, we have been born of God. Just as an offspring of a dog has the life and nature of a dog, and a child has the life and nature of his parents, so as children of God we have God's life and nature.

If we were not children of God with the divine life and nature, we could not understand God's operation within us or cooperate with it. Our cooperation with God's operation can be compared to a three-legged race. In such a race, each person has one leg free and the other bound to one of his partner's legs. It is impossible for a human being to run a three-legged race tied to an animal, because an animal does not have the life and nature to cooperate with a human being. Figuratively speaking, because we have the divine life and nature, we are running a three-legged race with God as our partner. Paul says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). After our God came through incarnation,

lived on earth to establish a pattern of salvation, was crucified, and was raised and exalted according to the divine standard, He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). As such a Spirit, He has entered into us and now dwells in us as the all-inclusive, processed God. His operation within us is based on the fact that He has regenerated us and deposited into us His divine life with the divine nature. This is the greatest wonder in the universe! After setting up the pattern and establishing the standard, God put His life and nature into us. Now He is motivating, operating, and energizing within by His divine life and nature according to the pattern with the standard. When we call on the Lord or pray to the Father, we experience this inner operation.

We have seen that the first aspect of the divine provision for our constant salvation is the pattern with the standard and that the second aspect is the inward operation of the God who became incarnate, died on the cross, and was resurrected and exalted. This God has come into us to live out this pattern in us. First He regenerated us, imparting His divine life with the divine nature into us to make us God-men, children of God. Now He dwells in us to operate in us continually. Because we have the indwelling

God operating in us, Hebrews 8:11 says, “And they shall by no means teach each one his fellow citizen and each one his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the little one to the great among them.” Because God is operating in us, we know what He wants to do and what we should do. For example, when a brother’s wife gives him a difficult time, he does not need a pastor to instruct him. Through the operating God he knows that he should lay aside his headship and, according to the pattern of the Lord Jesus, be willing to serve her as a slave.

SHINING AS LUMINARIES

In verse 15 Paul says that we “shine as lights in the world.” The Greek word rendered lights denotes luminaries which reflect the light of the sun. As children of God with the divine life and nature, we have a special function—the function of shining. Because we have the divine life and nature, we have become luminaries reflecting Christ as the real sun. Whenever we cooperate with God’s inward operation according to the divine life and nature, we shine with the light of Christ. This is the fourth aspect of the divine and rich provision for constant salvation.

THE WORD OF LIFE

The fifth aspect is found in the phrase “holding forth the word of life” (v. 16). In 1:19 we have the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and in 2:16 we have the word of life. Between them we have the pattern of salvation with the standard, the operating God, the divine life with the divine nature, and the function of reflecting the light of Christ. What a tremendous provision! With such a rich provision we can be saved constantly.

We thank the Lord for two great gifts—the Spirit and the Word, the Bible. Every child of God must learn how to get into the Word of God by the divine life and nature. This is to contact the Scripture by exercising our spirit to touch the indwelling God. Such contact, based on the divine life and nature, is very different from reading the Bible merely with the exercise of the mind. Some Christians analyze the Bible purely in a mental way, others emphasize the memorization of Bible verses, and still others, especially those with seminary training, expound the Word in a doctrinal way. If we approach the Bible only in these ways, we shall not touch the word of life. Instead, to us the Bible will be a book of

knowledge, doctrine, teaching, and theology. Because we have been regenerated of the Spirit, we have the divine life, the divine nature, and even the divine Person, God Himself, dwelling in our spirit. Now we need to exercise our spirit whenever we come to the Word. If we do this, every line, phrase, and word of the Bible will become life to us.

Because everything related to God is living, God's words must be living words, words of life. If we come to the Bible with a living spirit, spontaneously we shall enjoy the word of life. Then we shall be supplied, strengthened, quickened, enlightened, refreshed, nourished, and washed.

As we experience the word of life in this way, we should hold forth the word to others, presenting it, offering it, and applying it to them. This is to speak the word of life to those around us. By speaking the word of life, we present the word of life to others. We should be a speaking people. Whenever we have opportunity, we should speak for the Lord. Preaching is not our profession; it is our living. We need to enter into the word of life in such a living way that we live by this word and speak it. By holding forth the word of life in this way we enjoy constant salvation.

In this booklet we have covered five aspects

of the divine and rich provision for our constant salvation: the pattern with its standard, the inward operation of God, the children of God, the luminaries, and the word of life. If we enjoy all these aspects, we shall experience constant salvation. The One who set up the pattern and who Himself is the pattern now operates in us as the indwelling God. Through regeneration, we have become children of God with the divine life and nature. This makes us luminaries with the function of reflecting Christ. Furthermore, we have the word of life, and we may enter into this word, enjoy its riches, and declare it to those around us. In this way the negative things are defeated, and we enjoy the victory of constant salvation.

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