



“And you hath he quickened, who was dead in trespasses and sins,”
Ephesians 2:1.

Salvation

Aim: To emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation.

Covenant: Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour . . .

Text: Acts 16:13-14; Ephesians 2:1-10.

INTRODUCTION — Today, a new year is begun. With it begins a new quarter of study. This quarter is centered in the relationship and obligations of church members as set out in the Church Covenant. This Covenant is not a creed nor manual of discipline, but simply a statement of what may rightly be expected from those who compose the membership of a Baptist church. The student should keep in mind that these stipulations are in full agreement with Bible teaching, which principles are binding upon him whether he has been conscious of them or not. Of course, the Church Covenant was written by men, but its scriptural basis makes its principles worthy of most serious observance.

The subject of today's lesson is “salvation.” It is based upon the following statement from the Church Covenant: “Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour . . .” Study this statement carefully and observe its application in the exposition of the lesson text which follows.

Salvation is a theme which binds the Bible into a unity. It is the deep concern of God. It is the greatest need of sinful man. It is the prerequisite of church membership. It is essential to fellowship with God. Without it, baptism becomes a farce and hollow mockery. It is a work of God which is possible only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the convicting, cleansing, and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. It is available to all who

will repent of sins and trust in Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour. It is a present reality with eternal consequences.

I. Salvation Prerequisite to Baptism and Church Membership, Acts 16:13-15.

The Bible is clear that only one who has been truly saved is a proper candidate for baptism and can become a member of the Lord's church. Acts 16:13-15 tells of Lydia who heard the word of the Lord from Christian missionaries. She was arrested by the message and the Lord opened her heart (that is, caused her to receive the message in faith). Following that, she was baptized. This is the New Testament method which true churches still follow. On the day of Pentecost "*they that gladly received his word were baptized,*" Acts 2:41. The missionary Philip met an Ethiopian and told him of Jesus Christ. When the Ethiopian wanted to receive baptism Philip answered, "*If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest,*" Acts 8:37. Upon confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the new convert was baptized. Peter preached to the household and friends of Cornelius, a Roman centurion. As he preached the hearers believed his message and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Peter and his fellows recognized them as fit subjects for baptism and thus they were "baptized in the name of the Lord." (See Acts 10 and 11.)

The above scripture references (which could be multiplied by other similar teaching) adequately demonstrate the order of salvation, baptism and church membership. Since this is the order which God has ordained, it reveals the falseness of accepting into membership any person who has not been truly saved. It points to the absurdity of the practice of sprinkling infants and thus receiving them into church membership. It shows that he who was baptized before being saved does not have scriptural baptism at all. It teaches that the unsaved church member is no better than any, other unsaved person. Here is the God-given order: Salvation, confessed in baptism authorized by a New Testament church, which thereafter recognizes the candidate in fellowship as a member in full standing. To change this order is to pervert truth.

II. Salvation Necessary for All Men, Ephesians 2:1-3.

1. All men, whatever their race or generation or nation, are dead in sin, Ephesians 2:1. Paul uses the powerful illustration of resurrection from

the dead to describe what happens in salvation. Each man is born with an inherent weakness to sin. When he comes to the age of responsibility, each individual chooses to turn away from God, Isaiah 53:6. In turning from God he enters into spiritual death, *“so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned,”* Romans 5:12b. As a consequence of this rebellion before God, every single person in the whole world stands in need of salvation, Romans 3:19, 23. This is true of people in every generation, nation, and walk of life. It is true of “good” people and “bad” people. The only solution to the sin problem is forgiveness through Jesus. Even the reader of these words has forgiveness through Him or he is dead in sins.

2. The unsaved man is a follower of Satan, Ephesians 2:2. Man can have only one of two masters—God and Satan. The believer has come to God through Jesus Christ. Now God is his Heavenly Father and his full allegiance is to Him. The unbeliever has refused to heed God's call. He is still subject to the present world powers, *“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”* It is not that the unbeliever willfully chooses Satan as his master. Simple rejection of God's call is sufficient to constitute one as a servant of Satan. Moreover, obedience to things of sin rather than righteousness marks one as the child of Satan, Romans 6:16. Because all who rebel against God are thereby constituted sinners, it is necessary for every individual to repent of sin and be saved. However honorable, upright, and respected a man may be, he who has not repented of sins and received forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ is a child of Satan and headed for destruction.

3. Each unsaved man is destined to suffer the wrath of God, Ephesians 2:3. To be a “child of wrath” means to be in mortal danger of the wrath of a just God. The Bible warns against one falling into the hands of God when He reveals His wrath against sin. The anger of God against sin is already being revealed from heaven, Romans 1:18. A fuller manifestation of “the great day of His wrath” will cause convulsions of nature and terrify the hearts of men, Revelation 6:12-17. None shall be able to stand in that day. The last manifestation of His wrath is seen in the consigning of Satan and his angels to the lake of fire along with all the impenitent, Revelation 19:20; 20:10-15. How does it fare with you? *“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.

III. Salvation a Work of the Holy Spirit.

The statement of the Church Covenant says we are “led by the Holy Spirit” to receive Jesus as our Saviour. This is recognizing that one would not be saved without the work of that Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in the following ways.

1. He convicts men of sin, righteousness and judgment, John 16:8-11. The convicting (convincing) work of the Holy Spirit is threefold. (1) He convicts men of the sinfulness of unbelief, which alone is sufficient to condemn men to hell, John 3:18. (2) He convicts men of the kind of righteousness which is accepted of God. God always refuses self-righteousness (Romans 10:3) and approves only that righteousness which comes by faith in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:9) (3) He convicts men of the reality of coming Judgment, Romans 14:12; Hebrews 9:27-28. The Bible order is: hearing the Word, conviction by the Holy Spirit, repentance and faith which issues in redemption.

2. He draws men to God, John 6:44. Jesus warns against the attitude of men who seem to think they can be saved any time they choose. The very opposite is taught here—no man can be saved unless the Spirit of God draws him! This drawing by the Spirit is evidenced when He reveals truth to men, makes them see their need, grants them the power to believe and leading them to trust Christ grants redemption unto their souls. No man can come unless the Spirit draws him. *“Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts . . .”* Hebrews 3:15.

3. He ministers to those who repent and believe. The Spirit seals the souls of penitent believers unto eternal redemption, Ephesians 1:13; 4:30. He dwells within the believer, Romans 8:9. He keeps the believer by the power of God, I Peter 1:3-5. He gives assurance of salvation to the believer, Romans 8:16. He produces good works through the believer, Ephesians 2:10. Most wonderful of all the Holy Spirit grants the miracle of redemption: by giving a new nature, Ephesians 4:24; by giving a new experience, Acts 8:3-8; by giving a new security and hope, Philippians 1:6.

Since all the above is true, how serious it is to sin against the leadings of the Holy Spirit. His calls to salvation and to service must not go unheeded. *“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation,”* II Corinthians 6:2c.

IV. Salvation a Provision of God, Ephesians 2:4-10.

1. It comes through the mercy and grace of God, 2:4, 8. Salvation comes down from God and can never be worked up by men. It is the act of

God whereby He forgives sin and makes the condemned sinner righteous. It is never the result of man's upward struggle toward holiness. It is provided solely because of the love of God and in expression of mercy and grace. It is never merited by the deeds of men. *“Not by 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,”* Titus 3:5. No greater exhibition of God's mercy, (meaning, “favor, pity, leniency”) and grace (meaning, “that which is unmerited”) is to be seen than in His saving of men. Rituals, self-righteousness, ordinances have no place here. This is holy ground where only mercy and grace hold sway!

2. It comes only through Jesus Christ, 2:5-7, 10. The very name “Jesus” means “Saviour” while “Christ” means “Anointed.” Thus Jesus Christ (or, Christ Jesus) is “The Anointed Saviour.” He came into the world to save men. He died and rose again to save men. He ascended to the Father and there carries on an intercessory work for the sake of saving men. It is He in whom we have redemption through His blood, Ephesians 1:7. It is He who is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, I John 2:1-2. It is He through whom alone we may approach God the Father, John 14:6. The believer's hope lies not in men, angels, or deeds of merit, but solely in Jesus Christ—and He is enough! *“Neither is there salvation in' any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,”* Acts 4:12. *“He that hath the son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life,”* I John 5:12.

3. It comes without deeds of merit, 2:8-9. How long will it take men to realize that no amount of goodness can atone for sin? Not even the innocent sinlessness of Jesus Christ was sufficient to atone for sin. Men are saved, not simply because Jesus was sinless, but because the sinless Jesus was offered up in sacrifice for sin! How emphatically does the Bible state, *“. . . without shedding of blood is no remission,”* Hebrews 9:22. One is not saved or lost because he does few or many evil things. He is saved or lost strictly upon his relationship to Jesus through repentance and faith. How much goodness would it take to overcome the single sin of unbelief? The longer one worked to overcome it (all the while not trusting in Jesus alone as Saviour) the deeper would be his sin! Even the best deeds of the best people are unworthy of the priceless gift of eternal life. Which of these two ways are better: *“Now to him that worketh (for salvation) is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,”* Romans 4:4-5.

4. It issues in a life of service, 2:10. Read this verse carefully observing each statement. It says the believer is (1) the result of God's working, (2) is

created anew in Christ Jesus, (3) is saved for the purpose of producing good works, and (4) is predestinated of God to walk in this manner of life. He who trusts Jesus and then fails to produce a life of service to God is defeating the very purpose of his salvation! While good works do not aid in the saving of the soul, they are the inevitable consequence of true redemption. In fact, it is possible to determine whether one has true faith or not by observing his manner of work for God. *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone”* James 2:17.

CONCLUSION — Read again the portion of the Church Covenant which is considered in this lesson. Think about how This applies to your own life and the church where you study, worship, and serve God. Perhaps this lesson has helped you to see that you need salvation, or that you are falling short in Christian service. If the Lord lays any such matter upon your heart, hasten to Him today to find the solution for your problems. *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,”* Hebrews 4:16.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the Church Covenant?
2. Define: Salvation.
3. Discuss: Salvation is prerequisite to baptism and church membership.
4. Discuss: All men stand in need of salvation.
5. What is the relation of the unbeliever to Satan?
6. Tell what you can about the wrath of God.
7. Discuss the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.
8. Discuss the Holy Spirit’s ministry to those who repent and believe.
9. What is the relationship between deeds of merit and true salvation?
10. Read and discuss Ephesians 2:8-10.
11. What is the subject of next Sunday’s lesson?