

“A Present Salvation”

Ellet J. Waggoner

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AS God inhabits eternity, so that all time is present with Him, so all His promises and blessings for men are in the present tense. There can be no future or past time to Him. This makes Him “a very present help in trouble,” for we can live only in the present. We cannot live one moment in the future. We expect things in the future, and have hope of things to come, but the present is all that we can ever have, for when the things hoped for come, they will be present. Indeed, the things which we have reason to hope for in the future, will be only the continuation of the things which we have now. All things are in Christ, and His promise is, “lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

The apostle Paul blessed God because He “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). The promises of God for the future must be present realities to us, if we ever receive any benefit from them. “For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us” (2 Cor. 1:20). It is by these “exceedingly great and precious promises” that we “may be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). The glories of the world to come will be but the revealing of that which we have now in the personal presence within us of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only hope of glory is Christ in us.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Heb. 13:8). The word of God “lives and abides forever.” (1 Peter 1:23). We do not have to deal with a dead word, which was spoken so long ago that there is no more force in it, but with a word which has the same life as though it were just spoken. Indeed it is of benefit to us only when we receive it as spoken directly and personally to us. “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thess. 2:13). “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16). **It is all in the present.**

For this reason we can never outgrow the Scriptures. There is not a single text in the Bible that has become obsolete. There is none that the Christian of the longest experience has outgrown, so that he has no need of it. There is none that can be laid aside. The text, which brings a man to the Saviour, is the text, which is ever

needed to keep him there. And this, too, although his mind has expanded, and his spiritual sight has been greatly strengthened; and the reason is that every word of God is of infinite depth, so that as the Christian's mind expands the word means more to him than it did in the beginning. The universe appears much greater to the astronomer than it does to the man who has never looked through a telescope. We look at the stars with the naked eye, and they seem very far off. Then we look at them through a powerful telescope, and, although we can see so much farther with it, the distance to the stars seems to be very much greater than it did with our limited vision. So the more one becomes acquainted with the word of God, the greater does it become. The promises of God, which seemed so exceedingly great when they first appeared to us, become much more exceedingly great the more we consider them and apply them.

The word of God is a light shining in a dark place. (2 Peter 1:19). It is the revelation of Christ who is the Light of the world therefore it is a lamp. (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23). We have all heard of the young sailor who was left in charge of the helm, with instructions to hold the ship's head straight toward a certain star, which was pointed out to him, and who, in a few hours called the captain and said that he wanted another star to steer by, as he had sailed past the first one given him. What was the trouble? He had turned the ship round, and was sailing away from the star. So it is with those who say that they have outgrown certain portions of the Bible. The trouble is that they have turned their backs upon it.

What is the Gospel? "It is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). It is present power applied to the salvation of the one who has present faith. From what does the power of God save men? Jesus is the power of God, and of Him it was said, "you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). "This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). The Gospel is the power of God to save men from sin. But it is present power, for sin is ever present. Its power is applied only while one is believing. "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). The moment a man ceases to believe, then he is a sinner, just the same as though he had never believed. Yesterday's faith will not answer for today, any more than the breathing of the man yesterday will keep him alive today.

The message of the Lord to the church in the days immediately preceding His coming is, "you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—" (Rev. 3:17). Who is there that has outgrown this text? Not one. The blessing comes to the one who acknowledges the truth of the Lord's charge; for to

him the Lord will enter, with a supply for all his need. It is the man who says, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner," that goes down to his house justified.

And it is only as the man continues to utter that prayer, that he is justified. "For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14). The apostle says: "'This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15). Note that he does not say, "Of whom I was chief;" but "of whom I am chief." And it was when he acknowledged himself to be the chief of sinners, that in him as chief was exhibited the mercy and longsuffering of God.

Some have wondered whether a Christian ought to sing these lines in Wesley's blessed hymn: —

"Just and holy is Thy name,
I am all unrighteousness;
Vile and full of sin I am;
Thou art full of truth and grace."

The man who thinks that he has outgrown those lines is in a pitiable condition, for he is shutting himself off from the source of righteousness. "No one is good but One, that is, God" (Matt. 19:17). Therefore whatever righteousness is ever exhibited in any soul must be only the righteousness of God. It is only the soul that acknowledges his own sinfulness that will lay hold on the righteousness of God that is by the faith of Christ. It is only by the obedience of one that many are made righteous. (Rom. 5:19). And that one is Christ.

"And He Himself is the propitiation for sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). The Christian of forty years' experience is just as much in need of the righteousness which comes through Christ, as is the sinner who is now for the first time coming to the Lord. So we read again, "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:7, 8). The most that anyone can say is that Christ is without sin, and that Christ has given Himself for us. He is of God become "for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). But note that cleansing is a present process. We may know that the blood of Christ did cleanse us from sin at some time in the past; but that will do us no good. That life is continually needed, in order that the cleansing may go on continually. We are "saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10). For Christ is our life. (Col. 3:4).

So it is that "every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God." (1 John 4:2, 3). Note again the present tense. It is not enough to confess that Jesus Christ did come in the flesh; that will bring no salvation to anybody. We must confess from positive knowledge that Jesus is just now come in the flesh, and then we are of God. Christ came in the flesh eighteen hundred years ago, just for the purpose of demonstrating the possibility. That which He did once, He is able to do again. He who denies the possibility of His coming in the flesh of men now, thereby denies the possibility of His having ever come in the flesh.

So our part is with humbleness of mind to confess that we are sinners; that in us is no good thing. If we do not, then the truth is not in us; but if we do, then Christ, who came into the world for the express purpose of saving sinners, will come and take up His abode with us, and then the truth will indeed be in us. Then there will be perfection manifested in the midst of imperfection. There will be completeness in the midst of weakness. For we "are complete in Him" (Col. 2:10). He has created all things by the word of His power, and therefore can take men who are but nothing, and can make them "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph. 1:6). "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be the glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36).