

Salvation and Reconciliation

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the distinct yet interconnected roles of salvation and reconciliation through Jesus Christ, highlighting their importance for believers today.

Scripture: Acts 4:12, Romans 5:11, Romans 8:24, Romans 10:13, 2 Timothy 2:10, Hebrews 7:25

Topics: "Salvation", "Reconciliation"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the profound difference between salvation and reconciliation, emphasizing that salvation delivers us from ruin and distress while reconciliation sets us before God in Divine favor, removing alienation and enmity. Through Christ's atoning work on the Cross, we receive both salvation and reconciliation, entering into a personal relationship with God. The salvation offered through the gospel is individual and personal, leading believers to be saved, to share in the glory, and to approach God as worshippers through Jesus, our High Priest.

Transcript

Oftentimes when gathered together in assembly character as worshippers in the presence of God, a wonderful sense of His own greatness, and also of the greatness of His salvation, have moved us to sing with glad hearts and with good reason:

"How rich is Thy mercy,

How great Thy salvation!

We bless Thee, we praise Thee!

Amen and Amen."

We might also continue in our praise-offering to Him--who has not only given us to know His great salvation, but also the marvellous reconciliation secured through the death of His Son--and happily sing:

"O God, we delight in Thy love and Thy favour!

For unto Thyself we are reconciled now.

In grace failing never, and for Thy good pleasure:

In deep adoration before Thee we bow."

The Spirit of God makes clear for us in the inspired volume the difference between these two inestimable benefits; and, in such wise, that the One in and through whom they are made ours, becomes endeared to our rejoicing hearts; for if the "salvation be in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:10), and "neither is there salvation in any other," it is equally true, through Him alone "we have received the reconciliation" (Rom. 5:11, N.Tr.). In and through the One who came into the world to save sinners--the One who made peace by the Blood of His Cross to reconcile to God--we have both, thanks be to Him for ever and ever!

An illustration might help some to see that which distinguishes the one from the other, and enhance in their souls the sense of the Divine favour which has made each ours. A merchant overtaken by serious losses has got into distressing financial difficulties. There is one person he knows who could easily aid him, and save him from his trouble, and from ruin. There is a matter, however, which keeps him from turning to his old friend. Some while before, he grievously offended him, and though he had often longed for reconciliation, he felt that it would appear mean to seek it now he was in need, and look as if it were his money more than restored intimacy which he prized.

Without any approach on his part, however, his old friend, having heard of his difficulties, comes at once to his assistance. The deep need of the merchant yields the opportunity to his friend of showing his unchanged love. He saves him from commercial disaster, and the desired reconciliation also takes place. Salvation from ruin and reconciliation to the one he had offended are both his now, and yet they are distinct things. "God commendeth His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

Without any approach from our side, He acted from His own side for our blessing. We had sinned against Him, and He delivered Christ for our offences. We were ruined sinners and needed salvation; we were the offenders and needed reconciliation; and we read, "Being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son"--through that death which disclosed God's great love to us!--the death which met far deeper needs than our illustration speaks of!--the death of Christ which secured eternal salvation and reconciliation for us!

It was in a person the merchant found salvation from his distress. It was in a Person--a Babe received into his arms--Simeon saw God's great salvation, and he blessed God, saying, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:28-32). Though Israel was favoured by His coming to that nation, in the line of King David, yet the salvation of God could not be confined to Israel. Zacharias might speak of Him as "a horn of salvation (or deliverance) for us in the house of David" (Luke 1:69); but in chapter 3:6, it is said, "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (see Isa. 52:10). Even the woman of Samaria was surprised that Jesus--being a Jew in her eyes--spoke to her; but when His words of grace were heard by others of that city, they said, "We know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world"! In the first Epistle of John, we also read, "The Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world"! (4:14, N.Tr.). It is truly for the nation of Israel, but it is also for the world. At the present time, however, as we shall see, the call to salvation is not national but personal.

It is spoken of in various aspects in the Old Testament. It is mainly from something, whereas reconciliation is to the God of our salvation. The first meets our need, while the second meets the desires of God's love. This latter was only unfolded after the work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross was finished, and after

He had been exalted to the right hand of God, therefore it is brought out in Romans 5 and 11; 2 Corinthians 5; Ephesians 2; and Colossians 1. In the Old Testament we read of salvation from trouble, enemies, low condition, transgression, judgment, ruin, death, reproach, distresses, uncleanness and unhappy circumstances. Jehovah proved Himself to be a Saviour to them in these things, nevertheless Moses complained of Israel that he "lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deut. 32:15). David prays, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (Ps. 51:12). We read also, "He will beautify the meek with salvation" (Ps. 149:4).

This goes beyond being simply saved from something, just as we read also of His priests being "clothed with salvation" (2 Chr. 6:41), and of the walls of the Lord's city being called "Salvation" (Isa. 60:18). As he contemplates the mercy and goodness of God, Isaiah joyfully breaks forth with singing, "Behold, God is my salvation! I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song: He also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation"! (12:2-3). All is found in a glorious Person--in El Jah Jehovah!--in God, everlasting and sublime, "which is and which was and which is to come!"

Passing to the New Testament, we find this glorious and eternal God manifested in flesh--we see "Emmanuel"--"God with us"--in its opening pages. Born of the virgin, as Isaiah had foretold, His Name was called JESUS. This means Jehovah the Saviour. And in connection with that Name, in this very first chapter, salvation is first spoken of in the New Testament, and we are told that this is the reason why the Name was given, "for He shall SAVE His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Now Israel are the Lord's people, and here, as elsewhere, we find salvation is for the Jew first. It is for "His people." Israel are Jehovah's people, and He had come in this way to save them; but, notice carefully, it is "from their sins" they are to be saved. Those sins, therefore, necessitated His death for them. His Blood must be shed for their remission. He must be wounded and bruised for them on the Cross as Isaiah 53 shows. This atoning work having been finished, a day is drawing near when "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26). There will not be one Jew on the earth unsaved in that day! Nearly all of them are now enemies of Jesus, their true Messiah, and they are unsaved; but a change will take place when, as Jehovah said, "They shall look upon ME whom they pierced" (Zech. 12:10), when He comes again, "having salvation" (9:9), as their King.

Jehovah their Lord, their King, their Saviour and their God will put them in the full good of the salvation Jesus righteously secured for them by His death at Calvary. From their enemies, from their sins, and from all their distresses He will save them; and they will become the means of spreading the benefits of God's salvation to all the nations and to all the peoples of the earth. Israel's national salvation having taken place, world-wide blessing through them will follow, even as the Lord Himself said, "Salvation is of the Jews"! (John 4:22). Their Messiah, the Son of God, is the Saviour of the world, as we have seen. He will save them first, and then "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our [Israel's] God" (Isa. 52:10). Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only hope for Gentile or Jew. Already the responsible rulers and elders of the nation of Israel have been told that "Salvation is in none other" (Acts 4:12)! Jehovah is their Saviour!--Where is He to be found? God is their salvation!--How is He to be revealed to them? Their Saviour is their King!--Where can the nation discover Him? He must be of David's royal line!--David's Son and David's Lord!--David's Offspring as well as David's Root! Apart from Jesus, Israel is hopeless!--Where else can they find one of David's line? They shall "see" yet--they shall "look" upon their pierced Jehovah, and like Thomas, exclaim in faith, "This is our Lord! This is our God!" He will become their salvation.

If, as we have seen, the salvation of the world awaits the salvation of Israel, it is equally true that the nation of Israel awaits the complete salvation of those who form the assembly, the body of Christ, before

her salvation can take place. Those who form the assembly--those who by one Spirit are baptized into one body--must be translated from earth to heaven first, to be with their exalted Head and Lord; all Israel will afterwards be saved, and then all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God, for our Lord Jesus Christ is truly "the Saviour of the world." At the present time the saving grace of God is offered freely to all, but its call is quite un-national. Instead of calling nations as such to salvation, it is rather to call "out of the nations a people for His Name" (Acts 15:14), and the church--rightly rendered the assembly--is the ecclesia--the out-called. This is the character of the present work of grace before the day of Israel's national salvation.

Indeed, every circle of counselled blessing awaits the complete salvation of those who are out-called in this day of grace, as we read, "That they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:40). We say complete salvation, for, though the true believer is saved by grace, and is being daily saved as he abides in Christ, he is nevertheless awaiting the redemption of his body (Rom. 8:33). This will be glorified at the coming again of the Saviour and in this sense we understand the Scripture, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (13:11). Our salvation will then be complete indeed, and the assembly will be for ever with the Lord--glorified together with Him. In Revelation 21 she is seen as the heavenly city, with which not only Israel has immediate connection (v. 12), but all the nations shall walk by its light (v. 24), for the glory of God shines from it, and so all the earth shall then be filled with His glory. Great indeed is God's salvation.

Meanwhile, the gospel of God's grace, which is truly sent to all, and which is His power to salvation to everyone that believes (Rom. 1:16), reaches men and women as individuals, and that in view of their being brought into the assembly--to walk with those who are the out-called--the out-called now from the nations, the out-called soon from earth to heaven (like Enoch of old) at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is important, therefore, for us to understand the present character of the salvation which is brought to us in the gospel. Unlike the national character which will yet come to Israel, it is individual and personal today, even though it has the assembly, the collective, in view, now as we have pointed out, as well as the glory to come.

Reconciliation has the glory in view also, but there is this difference. While salvation delivers sinful man from his ruin and distress, to share in the coming glory, reconciliation sets him before God Himself in Divine favour, and with alienation and enmity removed, unblameable and holy in His sight, so that when the positions of dignity "on" the earth and "in" the heavens are reconciled also--"the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities," and Christ, the Firstborn of all creation and the Firstborn from among the dead, takes as the Head of the body, the assembly, the first place in all that vast domain of majesty, might and splendour--then all shall be for God's own good pleasure. The one frees man from everything to share the glory, the other brings all to pass for God's own satisfaction and pleasure.

Again, it is by the word of the gospel He brings both about today, for that is the "power of God unto salvation," as we have seen; and we read in 2 Corinthians 5:20 of "the word of reconciliation" being put in the servants of Christ, so that they entreat on His behalf, "Be reconciled to God." Although they are different things, God uses the proclamation of the word to bring them to pass at the present time in regard to men. And just as salvation is a personal matter in this dispensation, so also is reconciliation. The bearing of the latter is truly worldwide (Rom. 11:15), and the offer of salvation by the gospel is likewise; but both are entered upon through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ individually, and both the one and the other set the believer apart from the present course of things obtaining in the world, even as Jesus said twice in

His prayer to the Father, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14-16).

The personal character of present salvation should therefore be laid hold of by us. It is of the last importance to do so in these days of departure from the truth, and apostasy from the faith. To be saved, is to be saved! To be unsaved, is to be lost! The final issue is fast approaching! The coming of the Lord draweth nigh! The lights of the oil-less lamp-holders are going out! Those who "have not received the love of the truth that might be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10) will soon be carried away by the strong sweeping currents of error, "that they should believe what is false, that all might be judged who have not believed the truth, but have found pleasure in unrighteousness" (v. 12). God has no pleasure in this, but desires rather that "all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). The Son of God came not to judge the world, "but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17 and 12:47). Upon the cross He bore the believer's sin, and the judgment that those sins deserved; moreover, He was raised again from among the dead for their justification. On the basis of that work the believer is saved, for it is on account of this God righteously forgives sins, and the gospel brings "the knowledge of salvation . . . by the remission of their sins" (Luke 1:77). The first person outside of Judaism to be reached by the glad tidings was Cornelius. He heard words whereby he and all his house were saved (Acts 11:14). Those words pointed him to Christ, through whose Name everyone that believes on Him receives remission of sins (10:43). Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, for grace alone could meet the need of such; and while It is truly by the grace of God such are justified freely, through the great redemption which is in Christ Jesus, it is likewise true, we are "saved by grace" (Eph. 2:5, 8); not on the principle of works, so that none might boast. Grace is in Christ Jesus, and so is salvation (2 Tim. 2:1, 10). This latter is obtained there through faith, whether in regard to judgment, enemies, state, adverse influences, this present evil world or age. "Neither is there salvation in any other."

It should be pointed out, too, that not only have we been saved as sinners to be of the assembly, and "saved in hope" (Rom. 8:24, N.Tr.) to share the glory, but there is salvation for us as "worshippers"--as those who "approach to God" (Heb. 7:25) by Jesus, our living High Priest; for by His priestly grace and power, He is able to save such to the uttermost, or completely. We should always bear in mind that this aspect of salvation is for those who draw near to God, assembling together for this purpose being in view. The custom is increasing with some to give this up, but the real are to seek it more and more as they see the day of Christ's return approaching. The word for "assembling" in Hebrews 10:25 is better rendered "complete assembling," so in 2 Thessalonians 2:1; and our gathering together unto Him will indeed be complete then, for not one of His own will be left outside at His coming again! Meanwhile, according to the Word, all should get together now, in assembly character, and each of us should seek this "complete assembling" of all! Numbers of those who profess the faith are falling away! Scripture is being rapidly fulfilled in those who are turning from the truth! It behoves all those who hold fast to it, therefore, to get together so "much the more" and reap the full benefit of the uttermost salvation of our great High Priest, for a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation awaits the apostates of Christendom.

To neglect in any way God's great salvation is a dangerous thing (Heb. 2:3)! The nature of the salvation of which Jesus has become the Author is eternal, "to all them that obey Him" (chap. 5:9), for He Himself who secured it for us is eternal, though, notwithstanding the fact that He is the Son of God, He "learned obedience from the things which He suffered," having become Man. None need doubt that the salvation which is in Christ Jesus is for them. Jude speaks of it as our "common salvation" (v. 3). It is common to us all, and in its widest scope it is open to all, for "every one whosoever who shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13, N.Tr.)!

It is a great salvation truly! In Christ having come for all it has reached down to the chief of sinners! In Him, too, the most wayward of saints have been restored to its wonderful joy! In all its parts, and in all its bountiful benefits, it is open for us. The meek are beautified with it! The holy and royal priests are clothed with it! The most spiritual rejoice in the joyful sound of its proclamation! It was of the Saviour of the world the prophet spake, "I have set Thee for a light of the nations, that Thou shouldest be for salvation to the end of the earth!" It was the Apostle Paul who thus heralded Him (Acts 13:47)! Soon the glory of it shall be ascribed to God by a numberless multitude on earth, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev. 7:10), and by a great host in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah; the salvation and the glory and the power of our God" (Rev. 19:1)! And we who are of the assembly shall worship Him, immediately surrounding the throne of glory, for we shall then have reaped the fullness of His great salvation, judicially, livingly, corporately; spirit, soul and body.

"We lift our hearts and voices

In blest anticipation,

And cry aloud, and give to God

The praise of our salvation."

Past telling are the rich results of reconciliation! Soon shall we dwell in scenes of splendid majesty, with Christ our Head! When He is owned in His pre-eminence, where all the reconciled thrones, lordships, principalities and authorities yield fealty and honour and glory to the Son of the Father's love, in whom the fullness of the Godhead resides! When we, and they, and all the blest in Christ, shall be for the satisfaction and good pleasure of our God and Father, for ever and ever.

May we be adorned even now with the beauties of salvation, and carry in our hearts the gracious sense of God's own deep joy in reconciliation.

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