

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING DOCTRINE VOLUME 2

Introduction

In the first of this two volume set we examined a number of things related to Biblical doctrine or teaching. We discovered that all true pastors and church leaders need to have this as a priority in their preaching and teaching ministries as:

- it will strengthen believers and direct them to live in a God honouring way
- it will challenge the lost who need to be told about their terrible position and the salvation they so desperately need is to be found in Christ alone
- and above all it will stir us to give glory and praise to God for revealing these precious truths to us in his Word, the holy Scriptures

In this second volume we are going to consider a number of doctrinal subjects. The earlier chapters consider different aspects of salvation in more detail. Our prayer is that this will help you to understand more about the ways of God and create in your own heart and mind the desire to study the Bible in much greater depth to see what the Lord has to say to us. But this is not meant to be a merely academic exercise. If we only approach it in that way we will find that our hearts will remain untouched and even become cold towards the truths of God. Instead, consider these subjects prayerfully and ask the Lord himself to enlarge your understanding of his Word. Then respond to

him in love and devotion, with the determination to teach these great truths to others.

Philip Grist, who first gave these talks in the ‘*Serving Today*’ radio programme, has kindly agreed to us putting the remainder of that series into written form in this book. We are indebted to him for the work and study of the Bible that he has put in to make both the programmes and this book available for us.

Above all may the Holy Spirit himself be our instructor as we examine the Scriptures on each of the subjects under consideration.

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July 2005

Chapter 1 Salvation – Election

How often do you sit quietly and meditate on the wonder of salvation? Most of us are so busy in the Master’s work that we can easily neglect to think upon what God has done for us. Over the next few chapters we are going to think about important aspects of our salvation in Christ. This is to help us reach that point where we say with wonder, **“This is entirely the work of God”** and then bow in adoration and praise before him who planned every detail even before the world was created. Of salvation, Paul writes in Ephesians 1:6, *“to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves... (that is, in Jesus Christ).”*

An important answer

Have you ever asked the question “Why am I saved?” If so, you may have answered, “Because I trusted Jesus Christ.” That is absolutely true. Jesus certainly saves all who trust in him. But your salvation goes back long before that. In Ephesians 1:4 Paul writes, “*For he (God) chose us in him (Christ) before the creation of the world...*” That is a truly remarkable and glorious statement. If we are Christian believers today it is because before time began God chose to save us. What privileged people we are! We certainly have never deserved to be chosen by God to become his children for we are sinners, but none-the-less God in his grace has chosen us for himself.

Now this may surprise you, but many true followers of Christ fight against this great Biblical doctrine of God’s choice, or as it is often described, God’s election. We may well ask, “Why do genuine Christians react in such a way?” Part of the problem is that as sinful human beings we naturally have proud hearts, and want to think that we have contributed in some way to our salvation. But the doctrine of election throws every scrap of pride in our hearts on to the spiritual rubbish heap and gives all the glory to God alone for saving us. Indeed, Paul anticipated such opposition in many of his writings. For example, he challenged the believers in Rome when speaking about God’s sovereignty in salvation with the words from Romans 9:20, “*But who are you O man, to talk back to God?*” We always need to remember that if God were not

the Author of salvation, if he had not chosen us that we might be his holy children, we never would have come to him at all. The same letter to the Ephesian believers from which we quoted earlier shows us in chapter 2 that by nature we were “*dead in your transgressions and sins*”. In other words, we were spiritually lifeless and could not respond to the call of the gospel to follow Christ. God had to start the work in us, and mercifully God did choose us to eternal life and so God is the one who gives life.

There are many verses in the Bible that teach this truth, this doctrine. For instance, writing to the Thessalonians Paul says, “*For we know, brethren, beloved of God, that he has chosen you...*” (1 Thessalonians 1: 4-5). Again to the Thessalonians in his second letter and chapter 2: 13 “*...God chose you from the beginning to be saved...*” If you have a concordance look at the many references to God’s choice or election and it will surprise you just how often this theme is presented to us.

Objections to this biblical doctrine

An objection that is often made about this aspect of Biblical teaching is, “This isn’t fair, is it?” The answer is quite simple. This would only be unfair if God owed us salvation but did not give it to some. In fact the only thing we are owed as our dessert is death and condemnation, the wages for our sin. We must recognise that if God had not made the first move, we never would have been saved because we are spiritually dead and no dead person can

raise himself. You see, by nature, we are so steeped in our sin, that we never would have sought God's salvation.

Another accusation that is made against Biblical election is put in the form of this question, "If God chooses whom he is going to save, then why bother to preach the gospel because we'll be saved anyway." The answer is that Jesus himself told us to preach the Gospel to the whole world because that is the way by which he calls people out of darkness and away from their sin. (e.g. See Matthew 28:19 & 20.) Somebody once said that on the outside of the door to eternal life is the free invitation to come to Jesus. On the inside of that door are the words, "*...elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...*" (1 Peter 1:2)

Great benefits

To believers, election is a great comfort as they know that having been called according to God's eternal purpose, God is their Father, and in Christ is their Saviour and Friend who is working everything for their eternal good.

Again, the doctrine of election is a humbling truth because it causes us to realise that our salvation is of God from start to finish and it leads us to fall before God in our hearts and praise him for his great mercy towards us. Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:12 that we have been destined and appointed to eternal life "*... for the praise of his glory*".

Election rightly understood is also an encouragement to evangelise because preaching the Gospel is not a hit and

miss thing. God knows who are his and through your preaching he will call them to follow him. Paul wrote to Timothy, "*I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory.*" May the God who chose us, saved us, and then called us to serve him by telling others, help us to be faithful teachers of this God honouring truth.

Chapter 2 Salvation – Redemption

As we continue to consider the doctrine of salvation we come to the Bible's teaching on "redemption". This doctrine is to be seen all the way through the Bible. Indeed, the Bible is primarily the book of redemption. Redemption is about paying a ransom price for somebody's freedom. Spiritually this means that sinners like us may be freed from slavery and death. By nature we are slaves to sin and Romans 3:23 warns of the penalty that such sin merits, "*...the wages of sin is death...*" As sinners we are hopelessly captive to all our sinful ways and by ourselves and our own efforts there is no way out.

An Old Testament example

The book of Exodus teaches us that God's people Israel were captives in Egypt until God sent a deliverer in the person of Moses. They were under slave masters who as Exodus 1:11 says who "*oppressed them with forced labour*". Later, when they were on the wilderness journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, Moses sang a song to God which included these words found in Exodus 15:13, "*In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have*

redeemed...” So how did God redeem them from slavery in Egypt? You may remember that just before Pharaoh let them go, Moses instituted the Passover. You can read it for yourself in Exodus 12. The sign for their redemption from Egyptian slavery was the blood of an animal that they were to put on the sides and tops of the doorframes of their houses. When the destroying angel passed through the country God said to them, *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you”* (Exodus 12:13)

This then is an important Old Testament picture of the doctrine of redemption. Like the children of Israel we are held in bondage by our sin. Sin is a hard taskmaster like the slave masters in Egypt who according to Exodus 1:13-14, *“...worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labour...”* Like the children of Israel we cannot deliver ourselves from this slavery. We need a deliverer as they did.

The Redeemer

Jesus Christ is the deliverer of his people but a ransom had to be paid. The price was very high, far beyond our ability to pay. We are like the man in the parable Jesus told, who could not pay his huge debt that he owed the King. He owed millions (Matthew 18:21-35). The New Testament teaches us that Jesus Christ has paid our debt completely and has freed us from our sins. The ransom price paid for our sins was his own precious blood. That means his death on the cross. Peter wrote that believers had been

“...redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect”. One of the loveliest passages in the New Testament is Colossians 1:13-14 which tells us that God *“...has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”*.

Have you ever considered the tremendous cost to Christ? God did not see anything good in us to merit his grace. Every part of us was polluted by our sin and rebellion. We were like dead bones - completely unattractive. God would have been perfectly just had he left us to wallow in our sin and live in hell for all eternity. But out of his matchless mercy and love, the Son of God humbled himself, came into this sad world, allowed himself to be arrested and judged by mere human beings and then suffered the cruellest of all deaths reserved for the world’s worst criminals, which was the torture and death of the cross. There on the cross he paid the full price for our eternal redemption so that we could be freed from the condemnation of the law of God. Out of every country, tribe and language group Christ has redeemed a vast multitude which is beyond counting. Let us bow before our glorious God and worship him for the redemption we have in Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God.

Chapter 3 Salvation – Calling

In the last two chapters we have stressed the truth that salvation is God’s work in our hearts, and that work is entirely God’s doing. Salvation is by God’s grace. We

come now to consider a third activity of God in the matter of salvation. The Bible makes it very clear that God calls sinners in the gospel so that they are irresistibly drawn to Christ and trust him as their Saviour.

General and special calling

In what is often referred to as the “golden chain”, Paul, writing to the Roman believers says in Romans 8:30 “...those he predestined, he also called...” How are we to understand this calling? The answer is in two ways. First, God calls generally through the means of his word. All who hear the gospel of Christ preached, hear that general call. What we are concerned about in this chapter is the second answer which is called God’s special call, which is also heard when the gospel is preached. This is the reason why in the same congregation, listening to the same Bible passage being preached some respond positively and put their faith in Christ, while others appear to be unaffected. Many Christian believers heard the gospel often before they ever trusted the Lord Jesus Christ. But there was a time or period when they were listening to the preaching with others and they felt God was speaking to them alone. He exposed their sin and made them realise their desperate need of his salvation. The result was that they could no longer resist, but had to flee to Christ. This is God’s special, or as it is sometimes described, his ‘effectual call’. The Holy Spirit took the Word of God which was being proclaimed and effectively applied it to the heart of the hearer. In chapter 10 of Romans Paul writes, “*Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard*

through the word of Christ.” When God calls a sinner to himself it is through the message of the word of God which the Holy Spirit uses to call them to Christ. This is usually through the preaching of the word. Other times it can be when someone reads the Bible or some evangelistic literature which explains the message of the gospel. On other occasions it might be as they have a conversation with a believer who shares with them their personal testimony and how the word of God spoke to them. The result is that they are drawn to Christ, just as iron nails are drawn to a magnet. God has called them and they are compelled by God’s grace to become followers of Christ.

Some examples

Before Jesus went back to heaven, he commanded his followers to “*Go into all the world and preach the good news*”. That is what the early Church did and this has continued through the centuries. And through that faithful proclamation of the gospel the Lord our God has been effectively calling sinners to himself. We have many examples of this in the New Testament. A lady called Lydia heard the preaching of Paul at an open-air meeting and we read in Acts 16:14, “*The Lord opened her heart and she responded to Paul’s message.*” A little further on in Acts 16, a hard and maybe cruel jailor asked Paul how he could be saved. God’s call to that man came through Paul’s answer to his question in verse 31, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.*” The jailor obviously responded to the call because we are told, not only that he

was baptised as a witness to his faith but, “...*he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God*” (v.34).

Paul himself speaks of having been called. In testifying to the Galatian churches he said that God “...*called me by his grace*” (Galatians 1:15). Right through the New Testament again and again Paul reminds believers that they were called. Writing to the believers in Thessalonica he reminds them that God not only chose them to salvation but “*He called you to this through our Gospel.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:14) There are many other references that you could find in a concordance.

Our task

Preachers will and must urge people to seek the Lord while he may be found and so issue the general call of the Gospel to everybody. Only God the Holy Spirit can make that call effective in the hearts of those who hear. When God calls through the Gospel he makes that call so powerful that the sinner responds willingly. The whole of us, intellect, emotions, mind and will respond gladly. We hear, as it were, the voice of the Good Shepherd, seek forgiveness and pardon and come to Jesus just as we are resting our hearts in him for free salvation. The invitation or the call of Jesus is marvellously expressed in the words of Matthew 11:28, “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.*” These are literally the recorded words of Jesus and so it becomes like listening to his very voice. But the whole of the Bible is God’s word and through it his voice, by faith, is heard.

Do you begin to see the importance of the call of God? Do you see also the importance of proclaiming the Gospel because that is how God calls sinners by his Spirit? Does it excite you that the Gospel preached and the invitation given will be effectual in the lives of all those known to God from eternity? Your business is to preach the Gospel urging sinners to seek the Saviour. God the Holy Spirit will do the calling.

Chapter 4 Salvation – Repentance and Faith

In salvation these two: repentance and faith are absolutely essential. Some people say, “All we have to do is come to Jesus and receive him as our Saviour.” or, “Jesus loves you” they say, “Nothing else matters.” Certainly Jesus does love sinners but part of the good news of the Gospel is also knowing the bad news and the bad news is Romans 3:23, “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” God being who he is must have all the glory. Our lives being full of sin and unrighteousness have denied him that glory which belongs to him alone. Indeed the Old Testament declares, “*All our righteous acts are like filthy rags...*” (Isaiah 64:6).

That is not a very nice thing to know, is it? Every kind of sin is described as “*detestable*” to God. For example, lying. The book of Proverbs states “*The Lord detests lying lips ...*” (Proverbs 12:22) The word “*lying*” literally refers to something “disgusting” or “abhorrent”. If that is what we are like in the eyes of God, then surely we need to

repent of our sins. All our sins are ultimately against God who is pure and holy. Let's look at these two terms and a third and related term, 'conversion':

a. Repentance

This must be important because at the beginning of his ministry, it is recorded of Jesus that he "*went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God*" (Mark 1:14). But what did he proclaim? "*The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.*" On the day of Pentecost, having preached the memorable sermon, what was Peter's first challenge as he applied his preaching to his hearers? "**Repent...**" (Acts 2:37). The word "*repent*" means more than just being sorry for the wrong we have done and the good we have left undone. We can all feel sorry about something we have said or done. Judas Iscariot when he betrayed Jesus was afterwards filled with remorse. Matthew's Gospel says that he "*was seized with remorse*" (Matthew 27:3). He admitted that he had sinned and wished he had not done so. "*I have betrayed innocent blood,*" he said. Did he repent? That is, did he express true sorrow and turn away from his sin to Jesus? That is the full meaning of "repentance". It means, "to turn right round" turn from sin to God as a result of a complete change of heart. No, Judas merely was remorseful and in desperation he committed suicide. The Bible says that we must repent. We do express deep sorrow for our sins that we have committed against God **and we turn away from sin absolutely hating it and forsaking that way of life.**

That is because we know that sin dishonours God and we want to love him.

b. Faith

Faith is "to believe in", "to trust in". Having seen ourselves as sinners deserving eternal punishment we believe in the One who has declared himself not only willing to save but who has the ability to save. Jesus said, "*I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners*" (Mark 2:17). Faith then is not only to trust the truth of that wonderful statement. It goes further. Faith trusts the very person who made that statement. It is to believe that he will do exactly what he says he will do.

There is a marvellous illustration of faith in the Old Testament. One of the earliest characters who may have lived around the time of Abraham is a man named Job. Everything in his life seemed to go wrong. He lost all his family, he lost his health, his wife turned against him and three of his best friends insisted that his troubles were all due to unconfessed sin in his life. Yet God's verdict on Job had already been stated. There was not a more righteous man in the whole earth of those days. In the middle of his severe physical pain and the turmoil of his mind when he could not understand what was happening to him, his faith triumphed and he cried out, "*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And though after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God...*" (Job 19:25-26). That is faith! So saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ rests solely in him

even though my sin is so bad that my condition appears beyond redemption. Faith believes that all my sins were laid on my Substitute, Jesus Christ and he has made full atonement by his death on the cross. Faith trusts in the cleansing power of his precious blood shed on the cross. So faith humbly says, “On Christ the solid Rock I stand....” Faith, the gift of God, looks to Jesus alone.

c. Conversion

Conversion is often a misunderstood word. Many think the only people who need to be converted to Christianity are those of another religion or those with no religion at all. In fact, that is quite inadequate. Everyone in the whole world needs to be converted. Now some may want to protest and say, “But I was brought up in a Christian family so I’m already a Christian and there is no need for me to be converted.” Such statements are totally unbiblical. Even those who have the extra privilege of having believing parents and having been taught the Scriptures from childhood, still need to be converted. And what does that term ‘conversion’ mean? It means to have turned to God in **repentance** and have **faith** in our Lord Jesus. (See Acts 20:21.) This is because even those brought up in a Christian family are still sinners, and therefore need personally to repent and trust in Christ. Without these two things no one can be a genuine Christian believer – that’s how important it is that we preach about **repentance and faith** to all.

Chapter 5 Salvation – Justification (part 1)

A neglected doctrine

One of the most important doctrines in our salvation is, sadly, one of the most neglected. This is the doctrine of ‘justification by faith in Christ alone’. The great 16th century reformer, Martin Luther, described justification as “*the article of faith that decides whether the Church is standing or falling*”. Historically, in all major revivals, justification has come to the fore but today many will tell us we need not bother about this old-fashioned teaching. They say that we are more enlightened in the 21st century.

How do we respond to such remarks? We need to understand that to reject justification is to reject the teaching of the Bible as it devotes whole books to its explanation. Paul’s writings, for example, are full of justification by faith in the finished work of Christ. The letter he wrote to the Roman believers is largely taken up with justification, and so is Galatians. Justification exalts Jesus Christ and humbles the sinner. Justification brings light and hope to the sinner tormented by sin and guilt. Justification points us to salvation which is entirely the gift of God to undeserving people like us. It shows us a Saviour who really saves - a complete salvation received through faith and not by any human deeds of righteousness. Hebrews 7:25 states that Christ “...*is able to save completely those who come to God through him...*” It means that as long as Jesus lives, he is able to save and the Scripture says of Jesus that he is “alive forever and ever” (Revelation 1:18).

Biblical justification by faith defined

Paul tells us in Romans 1:17 that *“In the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith”*. Paul then works this theme out in the next chapters of Romans as he answers the question, “How can a person be right with God?” That question is vital for everybody. The only simple answer is “justification by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ”.

What is justification? What does it mean? Justification is a legal term used in the law courts. For example, a judge, after extensive questioning and investigation, may declare a person “not guilty”. In human terms, the judge could be mistaken and although a defendant may go free, he could carry with him still a guilty conscience that in truth he is actually guilty of a crime. He is free as far as the court is concerned but in his own heart knows that is not the case. His guilt remains. Also, what he may not realise is, that one day he will face the Judge of all the earth who knows the secrets of every human heart. Judge Jesus will not make any mistakes.

Biblical justification means “not guilty”. The difference between the illustration just made about a judge in an earthly court making such a pronouncement and when God declares a person “not guilty” is that when God declares a person “not guilty” he not only goes free, but he is free of all guilt. This is because God views the forgiven sinner in his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who is perfect and holy.

He is spoken of in Romans 3:26 as *“Just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”* Jesus, who never ever sinned was, as the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *“Made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”*. There is a great exchange that takes place. The believer’s sin was laid on the Son of God. In other words, Jesus took my sin as though it were his, and because Jesus received punishment for that sin, my sin that he was carrying, and because he died and in his death carried my sin far away never to be recalled again, God can declare me, the sinner, as not guilty in his sight. God’s holy law can no longer condemn me. It can no longer accuse me of sin. That is what it means to be “under grace” and not “under law”. You may ask, “How can all this come about?” Christ having suffered and died for my sin now imputes or credits to me his own righteousness. He took our sin and exchanged it for his perfect righteousness. And so when we believe in Jesus Christ, God declares us as righteous in him. In other words, God the Father who views us only in Christ reckons Christ’s righteousness mine. He declares us righteous the moment we believe in Jesus.

Of course, our old sinful nature is still with us and will be till we depart this life, but because Jesus has taken my sin, I know that when I sin, I have an Advocate with the Father - that advocate is Jesus Christ. I also am assured that if I sin and confess that sin and turn from it, *“He (Jesus) is faithful and just and will forgive my sin...”* When God has declared me “not guilty” he will never change his mind. Christ paid

the full price for my sin once and for all. Romans 5:1 says, *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

An error answered

Before closing this chapter a claim that is sometimes charged against justification is that it encourages the justified persons to live in whatever way they like. They are justified so obeying God does not matter, or so it is claimed. How do we answer this? We have to stand firmly against this accusation as being completely false. In fact Paul deals with this directly in Romans 6. In verse 1 he asks the question, *“What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”* Paul then goes on to show quite clearly that those who have been truly justified by God will want more than anything to live godly lives that are obedient and pleasing to him. Our hearts ought to be so overwhelmed by the mercy of Christ to us that serving him will be our first desire.

We suggest that you read carefully through the first 8 chapters of Romans and ask God to open your eyes to the wonders of justification by faith.

Chapter 6 Salvation – Justification (part 2)

The subject of justification by faith in Christ is so important that we need to think of the practical application of this gospel truth to our own Christian lives and it is most

helpful in a number of problem areas that believers sometimes face.

The basis for our assurance

Assurance of salvation, or the lack of it, is a problem to many believers. Now this does not change the fact of justification as far as God is concerned, but lacking assurance does affect the individual Christian and his or her own comfort and joy in God. Nothing can encourage the believer’s assurance more than a clear understanding and application of justification. The best passage to help us is found in the letter to the Romans, chapter 8 and from verse 28. Having said that, the very first verse in that chapter assures us that because of God’s justifying grace *“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”*. Could we find anything more re-assuring than that?

In verses 29-30 we discover that God’s plan and determination to justify us goes back before the beginning of time. In chapter 3 of this book we referred to the “golden chain” which these verses in Romans 8 contain, and you will notice justification is one of those links. *“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”* In these verses we discover that before time God determined to save millions upon millions out of the human race. In time he called those he determined to

save. Fellow believer, God knew you in eternity and has now called you by his grace. You recognised his voice in the Gospel. His call was effectual in your heart and you responded to the gracious and loving Gospel invitation. You saw that Christ had died for your sins and then you saw that Christ rose again for your justification. Yes, your response to God's call brought forgiveness and acceptance by God and then you saw that God had declared you "not guilty" or "justified". The law and sin can no longer condemn you. The fact that you are justified means that heaven is certain or as Romans 8:30 puts it, you will be "*glorified*". That simply means that at the end of this life you will live in the presence of Christ for all eternity. Notice something wonderful. All the verb tenses in verse 30 are past, even glorification. You say, "But I'm not yet in heaven." That's true. But the fact that you will arrive safely in heaven is so certain; Paul uses the past tense as though you were already there.

Precious benefits

In the closing verses of Romans 8 Paul goes on to encourage the believer. The fact that you are "not guilty" means that God is always on your side (v.31). It means that because Jesus has offered himself for your sins he will now give everything necessary for your spiritual growth and blessing. He will give all that is necessary for us to live a life here below that is pleasing to him. The Holy Spirit lives in every believer. Receiving the Holy Spirit is not some future blessing given to some privileged Christians. If you are a believer the Spirit of God lives

within you. Then you find that because you are justified, absolutely nobody can rob you of your position in Christ (v.33). All kinds of false accusations can be brought against you. Satan is good at doing this but tell him that you are "not guilty". Christ is your Saviour and he answers for you. Not only that, he pleads on behalf of you before the Father and that is how it will be on the final Day of Judgment when the whole world will stand accountable before his throne. This will be a very solemn day for many but not for the justified. Of them Jesus will say to the Father, "These are mine. I have redeemed them. There is no condemnation for them."

In the final verses of Romans 8 Paul sums it all up by reminding us that having been justified, nothing in heaven, earth or hell can separate us from Christ. We may pass through terrible trials, hardships and persecutions, but the promise in Isaiah 43:2 stands, "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you...*" The "*waters*" stand for trials and hardships of every kind. Paul then concludes that justification assures us that nothing in the whole of creation, and that means everything, can ever separate us from the everlasting love of God.

Those who claim that the doctrine of justification by faith is not relevant for us today are completely wrong and are depriving themselves of these great benefits. Indeed, we have to say that if a person is not justified by faith in Christ then he or she is not a Christian believer.

Chapter 7 Salvation - Sanctification

We have considered the wonderful doctrine of justification. Within the whole subject of salvation we must also think about the very practical doctrine of “sanctification”. Justification and sanctification are inseparable. We must be careful that we do not make the mistake that many have that Paul in Romans teaches justification by faith and James in his letter teaches justification by works. That is not true. James is not contradicting Paul’s teaching. He is complementing it. He is showing his readers that justification by faith must be proved by holy living. Indeed, that is the meaning of “sanctification”. To quote Derek Prime again from his book “Questions of Christian Faith”, he writes, *“In sanctification, God’s will is that sinful attitudes and actions should be put to death in the Christian’s life, his nature and character renewed after the image of God in Christ, his obedience to God increased, so that he lives to please God.”* In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 Paul writes, *“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified.”* Further down in that same chapter (v.7) we read, *“God did not call us to be impure but to live a holy life.”*

These few examples of the many Bible passages on sanctification illustrate its meaning and importance. The believer is sacred to God, set apart for his service. Paul teaches three important truths:

a) The Christian believer does not belong to himself.

God made us in the first place. By our sin and disobedience we separated ourselves from God. We have

rebelled against his possession of us. However, when we saw our helpless condition through sin and repented, we gave ourselves back to God. We placed ourselves into the hands of our Rescuer, the Lord Jesus Christ, and willingly said, *“I am yours.”*

b) The Christian believer has been purchased for God at great cost.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Paul reminded the believers in that Church, *“You are not your own; you were bought at a price.”* We have been purchased at great cost, the very life of the Son of God. Yes, Jesus *“loved us and gave himself for us”*. If I go into a shop and buy something, once I have paid for it the article belongs to me. Nobody else has any right to it. In that way, Jesus purchased us from the slavery of sin. I now belong quite rightly exclusively to him. Therefore for his sake and honour we should want to live as he directs us in Scripture.

c) We are to glorify God with our bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:20 quoted in the previous paragraph goes on to give us this vital challenge, *“You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.”* This is because, although sin is expressed through the body, the body itself is not evil.

Consider an example. In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 Paul wrote, *“The body is not meant for sexual immorality.”* Sex is God’s gift and is intended to express deep love between husband and wife and not outside that sacred relationship

of marriage. That is just one instance we could give of the pure and the sinful use of the human body. As followers of Christ, God has redeemed us body and soul for himself. Our bodies therefore are to be devoted to the service of Christ. Spiritual service is expressed through the physical body. Every part of us belongs to Christ. We are to be holy because he is holy. Only the Holy Spirit who lives in the believer can give us the strength to be holy. The writer to the Hebrew Christians solemnly challenges them and us in chapter 12:14; *“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy.”* Then he adds some very searching words, *“Without holiness no-one will see the Lord.”* So our justification is proved genuine by being progressively sanctified through life in this world. We shall not be completely holy until we reach heaven where sin can no longer reach us, but the teaching of the New Testament is that through this present life, we are increasingly to seek to be holy and Christ-like. If there is no evidence of that, we must question the genuineness of our faith.

Chapter 8 The Return Of Christ (Part 1)

Our last chapter concluded with a challenge - without the evidence of holiness in our lives, we will not see the Lord as our Saviour and eternal Friend. The Bible is quite categorical that Jesus will come again to this earth. In Revelation 1:7 we are told, *“Every eye will see him”*. Those who do not see him as their loving Saviour will indeed see him but only as their Judge. In his sermon to the people of Athens, Paul said in Acts 17:31 that God

“...has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed”, that is, Jesus Christ who often referred to himself when on earth as the *“Son of Man”*.

The Bible reminds us that time as we know it now is going to come to an end. However, the Bible nowhere tells us when time will end. Indeed, Jesus indicated that his coming will be when the world least expects him and even Christians can become negligent. In Matthew 24:42 Jesus said, *“You do not know on what day your Lord will come.”* There are some who try to fix a date for Christ’s coming. You must not listen to them. They are false prophets because what they say and predict does not agree with the Bible.

Again and again the Bible refers to the Lord’s return. For example, as Jesus faded out of sight at his ascension into heaven described in Acts 1, two angels appeared and said to his watching followers, *“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”* The simple meaning is that just as Jesus ascended into heaven, so he will, at the end of time, descend from heaven.

The only people who saw him ascend was a small group of followers, possibly just the eleven disciples. Furthermore, his first coming was seen only by Mary and Joseph, then by a group of shepherds and sometime later by some wise men from the East. His second coming will be vastly

different. Paul describes it very graphically to the Thessalonian Church in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, *“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God...”* There is nothing secret about Christ’s second coming. Jesus himself said that his coming would be *“with power and great glory”* (Matthew 24:30). It is clear therefore that Christ’s coming will be glorious.

a) He will come with regal majesty.

The great splendour of the Lord Jesus Christ will be far beyond anything ever seen throughout history. The nearest to it is when the Lord was transfigured in Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9.

b) He will come with a command that will reverberate throughout the whole universe.

We have all heard the loud and powerful noise of thunder but that can be heard only over a small area within the world. The noise that will accompany Christ’s coming will be worldwide in every continent and country, in all the islands of the sea and across the vast oceans. No living being will not hear his coming.

c) His coming will be accompanied with the piercing note of a trumpet.

Trumpets were used in the Old Testament days as a rallying call. In Exodus 19 and from verse 16, as God was about to give the ten commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, the people were called to the foot of the mountain by

“a very loud trumpet blast”. Everybody in the camp trembled when they heard the sound of the trumpet and so it will be when Jesus comes again. Those not ready for his coming throughout the earth will tremble. Rev.6: 16 tells us that the unsaved will call to the rocks and mountains to hide them *“from the face of him who sits on the throne”*. It will be a dreadfully sad day for the lost. Therefore we must warn our hearers of this coming day so that they will be prepared for it by trusting in Christ.

Chapter 9 The Return Of Christ (Part 2)

In this second chapter on the subject of the second coming of Jesus Christ we want to answer the question *“What happens when Jesus comes again?”* For this purpose we will take you to two major passages of the New Testament - 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4.

The whole of 1 Corinthians 15 is taken up with the subject of the resurrection of the dead, a truth so certain that Paul argues that if the dead are not raised, then Christ did not rise - see verse 13. The resurrection of Christ was an already established fact whereas the resurrection of the dead was future! There are a number of things we can say about this event.

a) The dead will be raised.

In 1 Corinthians 15:52 Paul simply says, *“The dead will be raised”*. The inference from the context could be dead believers although it does not actually say that. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is specific in stating *“The dead in*

Christ will rise first". The strict context there is that the dead in Christ will be raised before the living are taken up into heaven. Jesus however made it very clear that "all" would be raised at the last day. Note John 5:28-29, "All who are in the graves will hear his voice - those who have done good will rise to live and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." So one thing is clear. All who have died will rise on the final day and at the coming of Christ.

b) When Christ comes, millions will still be living in this world.

They will be going about their daily work or sleeping in bed because in some parts of the world it will be day and other parts night. The believers in the world, that is, those who have genuinely trusted Jesus for salvation, will be caught up together with the rising dead in Christ. Paul taught all this to the Thessalonians because there were some Christian believers who were worried about those who had already died. What would happen to them? We will answer that question in the next chapter.

c) Our bodies will be transformed.

When a believer dies he or she will be with Christ. Paul looked forward to that time and expressed his desire to the believers in the Church at Corinth. However, at the resurrection Paul teaches us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Philippians 3:21 that Christ will "Transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body". Jesus Christ is now in heaven in his glorious body.

d) Following the resurrection there is to be a day of judgment.

The whole world of mankind will be judged. The believer will not be judged for sin because Christ has already been punished for our sins and has paid the full price, his own blood. The believer however will be judged for his or her service for Christ. Paul said that our work will be shown for what it is worth on the final day. What has not been pleasing to God will be burned up and we will suffer loss but our salvation in Christ is secure.

We discover this in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."

The unbeliever in that day will be judged for sin. The most serious judgment will be passed against the unbeliever because the Gospel has been rejected and the wonderful works of God in creation unrecognised. Paul preached that

a day had been set by God when he would judge the world. (See Acts 17:31) The unbeliever in that day will be completely speechless and will bow the head in shame as the verdict is given, *“I never knew you...”* (Matthew 7:23) That verdict will be unchangeable and final and covers eternity!

Chapter 10 Death

In the last two chapters we considered the coming again of Jesus Christ. It is such an important subject that we need to look at the related subject of death. We do not know when Jesus is coming again and so we do not know whether we shall still be alive on earth when he comes. It does not really matter although it did concern some believers in Thessalonica and maybe it still does cause anxiety to some. Be sure you read and study 1 Thessalonians 4 and from verse 13 on. In this chapter we will deal with death for the believer and death for the unbeliever.

1) The death of a believer

(i) In describing death, Paul likens it to *“falling asleep”* (1 Thessalonians 4:13). He writes, *“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.”*

Now *“falling asleep”* does not mean loss of consciousness as far as the soul, the “inner me” is concerned. The Scripture makes it very clear that when we die, our spirit goes into the presence of Jesus where we shall be

completely conscious. In Luke 16:22, a passage which is a parable of the rich and poor men and their deaths, Jesus said that the poor man died and was *“Carried to Abraham’s side”*. It is another way of saying that he went to heaven, a place of perfect bliss. The Apostle Paul expressed himself to the Philippians as having a desire *“to depart and be with Christ, which is far better”* (Philippians 1:23). The inference clearly is that he would experience the conscious enjoyment of Christ’s presence. So the soul after death is conscious, but the body is spoken of as *“falling asleep”*, a very lovely way of speaking of the death of a believer in Christ. When you fall asleep naturally in this life you do so expecting to wake up. Well, that is actually what will happen on the final day.

(ii) We have noted that the spirit of the believer is taken to heaven at death. The New Testament shows that when a believer takes the final breath on earth and the heart stops beating, the brain stops functioning, that believer immediately awakes in heaven in the presence of Jesus. This means that death is not any longer an event to be feared because Christ has conquered death. Paul shows us in 1 Corinthians 15 that *“death has been swallowed up in victory”* (v.54). Indeed, in the next verse Paul challenges death, *“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?”* Because Jesus in his death on the cross has dealt once and for all with the cause of death, that is sin, death is no longer a fearful foe. When the brother of Martha and Mary had died, Jesus said to his disciples, *“Our friend Lazarus, has fallen asleep...”* (John 11:11).

So death for the believer need not frighten us. *“When I pass through the valley of the shadow of death”* sang the Psalmist, *“I will fear no evil.”*

(iii) At the resurrection day, the soul in heaven and the body in the grave now dust will be re-united to live forever. The souls of dead believers will descend from heaven with Jesus, (1 Thessalonians 4:14 *“We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”*) And will enter the resurrected bodies as they are raised from the earth. The resurrected dead together with those living will be *“caught up ... to meet the Lord in the air”* (v.17).

2) The death of an unbeliever

(i) The souls of unbelievers will also be conscious but according to Luke 16, will be in hell. We are told that the rich man in the parable *“died and was buried”* (v.22). In hell *“he was in torments”* (v.23). Obviously his soul, instead of being in conscious bliss, experienced the opposite.

(ii) At the final day, the unbeliever will be raised from death. The soul too will be re-united with the body to face judgment. The writer to the Hebrews tells us *“man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27). Judgment will be strict and just. The final word to the unbeliever from the Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be *“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”*

(Matthew 25:41). The message of God’s love and grace in the Gospel, having been rejected, the unbeliever has no hope of redemption.

Chapter 11 Hell

We have, in previous chapters, been thinking about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and what will take place at that time. For believers, Christ's coming will be a time of ecstatic joy. For the unrepentant sadly, it will be a time of untold misery.

In this chapter we are going to consider the Bible’s teaching about hell, and in the final chapter its teaching about heaven. It is interesting to note that during his earthly ministry Jesus taught more about hell than he did about heaven! There are reasons for that and I hope you will clearly see them in the following points.

a) Hell is a reality

Hell is not merely an expression of language describing something that is nasty. Hell is real. Concerning the angels who rebelled against God, Peter writes, *“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell...”* (2 Peter 2:4). In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16:22 tells us that the rich man *“died and was buried”*. Then in verse 23 we read, *“In hell, where he was in torment...”* Those sufferings were real.

b) Hell is reserved for Satan

When we say hell is reserved for Satan we must include all his agents and those under his power. This includes the unbeliever, the unrepentant. Such will be sent to hell in the final day. Jesus clearly taught that. Speaking of those who through this life rejected him, he tells us that at the day of judgment, he will say to them, *“Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire (that is a word description of hell) prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matthew 25:41). This therefore is a fearful subject. It would be much easier to gloss over it, but to be faithful to God's word, we must deal with the subject in our preaching. Remember, every preacher will be called to give an account of his faithfulness in teaching God's Word at the final day (Hebrews 13:17).

c) Hell is a place

Wayne Grudem in his ‘Systematic Theology’ defines hell as “...a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked”. We have already said that hell is real but here we add that it is a real place. The Bible language is very clearly not figurative, that is a kind of spiritual description. This comes out in the verses we have already quoted in the previous paragraph. The angels that fell were sent there. The ungodly on the day of judgement will depart from the presence of Christ to that place prepared for the devil and his angels.

d) Hell is eternal

The Bible nowhere teaches that hell is a place where the sinner goes to suffer and be punished for a time and then be

set free. Purgatory is not found in the Bible. The Bible is quite clear that punishment for all who reject the Lord Jesus Christ and his free salvation is eternal. In Matthew 25:46 Jesus said that those condemned *“will go away into eternal punishment”*. Nothing could be clearer than that. So, hell is eternal plus the fact that it is a place of punishment which is eternal. How we thank God that for the believer Jesus Christ paid the penalty. He received the punishment of the Father in our place and for the sins of all his people. The unbeliever, however, pays the penalty for his own sins, sins which are so numerous that punishment is never-ending.

There are those who have tried to teach that eternal punishment is only for a period of time and then it will cease. Not only is this contrary to the teaching of the Bible but it is also inconsistent with the use of the term ‘eternal’ elsewhere in Scripture. God is the eternal God, and heaven is an eternal place. If you change the meaning of eternal when it is applied to hell then you have to do the same with the other references, and no one would dare to claim that God is not eternal nor that heaven is not eternal.

e) Residents in hell are forever conscious

The Bible teaches that those who suffer this eternal punishment are conscious throughout eternity. Many have tried to deny this. They say that after death, the unbeliever will be annihilated. That word simply means, to be put out of existence. Or some may say that the sinner will be punished for a time in accordance with the gravity of his or

her sins, and then annihilated. However, annihilation is not consistent with the pure and righteous justice of God. To be annihilated either immediately or later is hardly punishment deserved for the inexcusable rejection of Christ's free offer of forgiveness. The punishment consistent with God's justice is eternal and conscious. We need to realise that sin against the eternal God must have eternal consequences by its very nature. We need to be very careful that we never diminish or underestimate the seriousness of any sin against God.

Perhaps the most terrible thing about hell for the unrepentant is summed up in the words spoken to the rich man in Luke 16: 25, "*Son, remember...*" The wicked in hell will forever remember the lives they lived on earth and the fact that during God's day of grace they turned away from his gracious invitation to believe and be saved. Bitter and unremitting remorse will be their eternal experience.

f) A word for preachers.

We need to add one warning to all preachers. Beware of preaching the doctrine of hell in a cold, legalistic way. The subject must be preached from a heart deeply moved by the love of Christ and for those to whom we preach this terrifying subject. We must do so with a heart longing for our hearers to turn from their wicked ways to a loving Saviour who is willing to receive the worst and the vilest sinner who cries out for forgiveness. A godly minister of the gospel who lived many years ago said that no preacher should ever preach about hell without a tear in his eye and

heart, longing that all who hear him will turn to Christ before it is too late. May the Lord help us to have a similar heart full of compassion whenever we are called to preach about eternal punishment.

Chapter 12 Heaven

In this final chapter we are going to think about the loveliest of all subjects, heaven. God's gift to all who seek salvation in Christ is eternal life (e.g. John 3:16 & 17:3). That life begins here but in this life we continue to battle with our old sinful natures. We suffer with physical weakness, pain and the problems of old age. But eternal life will find its ultimate fulfilment in the perfection and bliss of heaven where sin and all its consequences will trouble us no more. The new heavens and new earth will be filled with righteousness (2 Peter 3:13). All fear will be gone. That is heaven.

At the moment, our minds cannot grasp the pure beauty of heaven. We after all live in an imperfect world and we are ourselves imperfect people. This in part is the reason why the Bible describes heaven to us generally in picture language. We could not understand anything else. The book of Revelation is full of symbolism. Some have tried to interpret all its picture language literally. That has created confusion in the minds of believers. Indeed, the confusion is often so great that many interpretations are downright ridiculous. But having said that, we do need to look at the marvellous descriptions we have of heaven in

the last two chapters of Revelation. There are five things for us to note.

a) Heaven is a place

It is referred to in Revelation 21:3 as a “*dwelling*”. This reminds us of Jesus' words in John 14. In verse 2 Jesus said to his disciples, “*I am going there* (that is, to his Father's “*house*” [heaven] *to prepare a place for you.*” Notice then that he refers to heaven as a “*place*”.

b) Heaven is a place of perfect peace

This might seem to state the obvious when saying heaven is a place of perfect peace, and you may be wondering why this point is being made. The reason is found in Revelation 21:1 where we read, “*There is no longer any sea.*” Sea is a picture of restlessness. The sea is never still and is often heaving and raging due to fierce weather conditions, perhaps a tsunami caused by under-water earthquakes causing devastation on land. Heaven has none of that. There is perfect peace.

c) Heaven is without sorrow

Heaven is a place where sorrow and grief have gone forever. There will not be any more pain or suffering. Nobody will die due to disease or old age. Parting will be non-existent. Revelation 21:4 tells us that God “*will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying, for the old order of things has passed away*”. The reason for all this is that sin has been removed from the scene. Satan and all his evil agents have been

banished to hell so we will never have to battle against temptation there. Further, we know that Jesus vanquished death once and for all when he rose from the dead.

d) The Beauty of heaven

The beauty of heaven is especially described at the beginning of Revelation 22. The mention of a lovely, gently flowing river through the centre speaks of prolific life and fertility. It also paints a peaceful scene. The water of that river is described as “*clear as crystal*”. There is no pollution whatsoever, such a contrast with the filthy and often polluted rivers of the world. Verse 1 refers to the river as “*the river of the water of life*”. Many rivers in the world breed death. Prolific life and growth is noticeable all along the sides of the river. That is something often noted in very hot countries where the soil on riverbanks is particularly fertile.

The thought of life is enlarged upon in Revelation 22 where we read of the “*tree of life*”. It bore “*twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month*”. This again all symbolises the superabundant nature of our salvation. Heaven is full of the abundance of God's love. There is also continuous and everlasting communion with God for all its inhabitants. When Jesus spoke to his followers shortly before his final sufferings he told them that within the Father's house (John 14) there were many spacious apartments - the English Authorised Version translates the word as “*mansions*”. It indicates that although the redeemed of the Lord total millions upon millions, there is

absolutely no overcrowding. There are no shantytowns there!

e) Christ in the Centre

This is the most important matter concerning heaven. Everything else merely enhances the glory of the central figure. Revelation 22:3 tells us that the throne of God and the Lamb is in the centre of heaven and believers will gaze forever on the one who died for their sins. We shall never be allowed to forget what it cost Jesus Christ to secure for us a place in heaven. Everything in heaven is lovely but Christ is the one of supreme beauty and loveliness. *“They will see his face,”* says verse 4. To see Jesus Christ in his glory is beyond all human description. Heaven without him would not be heaven. In the often dullness and poverty of life here in this world, rejoice! The best is yet to come. Christ is altogether lovely to the believer now. He will be more than altogether lovely in heaven. And having rejoiced in this glorious future ensure that you share it with others in your preaching.

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