

“BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED”

January 1975

I have in my heart a sincere and earnest prayer that the Spirit of the Lord will rest mightily upon me, and upon you, as we now turn our attention to some of the most basic and fundamental principles in the whole realm of revealed religion.

If I speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, what I say will be true; it will be the mind and will and voice of the Lord. My words, if inspired from on high, will guide all of us in that course which assures us of peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

If you hear or later read my words by the enlightening power of that same Spirit, you will know they are true. You will then know that my interpretations of some difficult and much abused scriptural passages are exactly what was designed and intended by the original authors.

Let us, then, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as I teach and you hear or read what Paul and others, who wrote with apostolic insight, meant by some of their deep and profound proclamations.

I shall speak of the eternal Christian verity that we are Saved by grace, as a free gift from God, and as Paul said, “not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9.) I shall consider his true doctrine that we are “justified by faith” alone and not by “works.” (Rom. 3:23-28.)

With one single exception, this doctrine of how salvation comes, as it does, by the grace of God through the atoning sacrifice of his Son, is the most abused and least understood principle in the whole gospel.

The first and foremost heresy of the Christian Era is the prevailing mass of confusion as to the nature and kind of Being that God is. It is the concept, found in the creeds, that God is a spirit, an incorporeal, uncreated, immaterial nothingness, an essence or power that fills the immensity of space and in some incomprehensible way is three gods and yet one.

Next to this false concept of God, comes the number two heresy of Christendom—the common view that men are saved by God’s grace, without effort on their part, but by the simple expedient of confessing the Lord Jesus with their lips and exercising what is considered by some to be faith in him. It is the view that men are justified or saved by faith alone, without ordinances, without church membership, without keeping the commandments of God, but simply by believing in Christ and accepting him as a personal Savior.

How truly the ancient apostle wrote of our day of darkness and apostasy, when he said: “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thess. 2:11-12.)

Some truths are so obvious, so apparent, so self-evident that they cannot be rejected unless man deliberately turns from the light and elects to Walk in darkness. Every man knows that the sun shines, that the rains fall, and that crops grow. No one has to quote a scripture to prove there is light and darkness, pain and sorrow, hot and cold; or, that men live and move and have a being, that some persons are male, others female, and that all are subject to disease and death.

So it is with many gospel truths. They are known by instinct and experience, or they grow naturally and obviously out of other known basic truths. For instance, Jesus said: “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.” (John 14:2.)

That is: Since we already know that all men vary in abilities and achievements and since we already know that men will be judged according to their works, it automatically follows that there are degrees of reward in eternity; there are different levels and kinds of salvation; and if this were not so it would violate sense and reason and a special revelation would be required to deny what all reasonable men should instinctively accept as fact.

So it is with this false doctrine that men are saved who do not, as Paul expressed it, “work out” their “own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12); and who believe instead that salvation comes by grace alone without the need to join the Church and live the gospel.

It is in fact inherent in the whole eternal scheme, and nature itself teaches us, that all blessings come by obedience to law and that there is no such thing as an unearned blessing.

If we gain physical prowess, it is by obedience to law. If we develop spiritual talents, it is by obedience to law. If we grow in faith, virtue, knowledge, or any of the attributes of godliness, it is by obedience to those laws upon which their receipt is predicated. Nothing produces nothing. There is no instant salvation. If there is no righteous conduct there is no reward of righteousness. If we do not keep the commandments we do not gain salvation.

But we need not rely on sense and reason alone A gracious God has revealed, in one dispensation after another, his mind and will as to how his children can earn salvation in his kingdom.

Next in importance to those revelations which set forth who Deity is, and which proclaim him as our Eternal Father, next to these stand the revealed truths concerning Jesus Christ and the atoning sacrifice he wrought by the shedding of his own blood.

Any person who knows what is involved in this infinite and eternal atonement knows also what men must do to win a celestial inheritance; and any person who does not understand the true doctrine of our Lord's redeeming sacrifice does not and cannot know how salvation comes.

Let us state, simply and plainly, what is involved in the redemption wrought by the Son of God. To believe the true doctrine of the atonement we must believe the following:

1. "There is a God in heaven who is infinite and eternal." He has all power, all might, and all dominion. He knows all things. He is our Father, the Father of our spirits, and he ordained and established the plan of salvation whereby his spirit offspring have power given them to progress and advance and become like their Eternal Father. The name of the kind of life he lives is eternal life.
2. Our Eternal Father created mortal man on this earth, "male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness created he them."

He placed them here in this probationary estate, with bodies of flesh and blood, to be tried and tested and gain the experience needed for eternal exaltation.

And he gave them commandments that they should love and serve him, "and that he should be the only being whom they should worship."

3. "By the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish, and became fallen man." (D&C 20:17-20.) The first man of all men fell and brought temporal and spiritual death into the world.

As it is written: "Because that Adam fell, we are; and by his fall came death; and we are made partakers of misery and woe." (Moses 6:48.)

Spiritual death is to be cast out of the presence of God and to die as pertaining to things of righteousness.

Temporal death is the separation of body and spirit, the body returning to the dust from whence it came and the spirit going to a world of waiting spirits to live until the day of resurrection.

4. The Firstborn of the Father, the Lord Jehovah, was born into mortality as the Son of God. From his immortal Father he inherited the power of immortality, which is the power to live forever. From his mortal mother he inherited the power of mortality, which is the power to die.

He came into the world to do the will of his Father and his Father sent him that he might atone for the sins of the world. This he did as he sweat great drops of blood in a garden called Gethsemane; this he did crucified between two thieves, on a hill called Calvary.

5. It is through the atoning sacrifice of his Son that God manifests his grace to man. The grace of God consists of his condescension, mercy, and love in sending his Son to ransom man from the effects of Adam's fall and to reconcile him once again to him who is the Father of us all.

Thus it is written: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.)

6. Through our Lord's atonement all men are raised in immortality, while those who believe and obey his laws are raised also unto eternal life. He is the Resurrection and the Life.

To be resurrected is to be ransomed from the temporal death brought upon us by the fall of Adam. In a manner of speaking this comes as a free gift to all men. All are resurrected. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22.)

But in an eternal sense, even the fact of resurrection was earned because only those who were faithful and obedient in pre-existence are born into mortality.

To be resurrected and to also gain eternal life is to be ransomed from the spiritual death brought upon all men by the fall; it is to be reconciled to God so that we once again enter his presence, and being pure and holy as he is, enjoy that eternal life which is his.

7. The atonement could be wrought only by a God. None other could bring such wondrous eventualities to pass.

No man has power to resurrect himself. No man has power to raise himself to a celestial heaven. No amount of works, either those of the Mosaic law or of that gospel revealed by Christ, could redeem man.

It is not works of any sort that makes salvation possible. This greatest of all the gifts of God comes to us by his goodness and grace and in no other way.

Now with these basic and eternal truths before us, let us see what Paul and others have written and how their sayings fit into the eternal scheme of things.

Paul wrote some things which are difficult to understand; of course he did; all scripture is hard unless men have the spirit of prophecy and revelation.

There is no way of understanding any scripture unless we are enlightened by the same Spirit which rested upon the prophet or apostle who wrote it in the first instance.

Such was the case with Paul's hearers. He wrote to people who had already received the gospel, who had the gift of the Holy Ghost, and who understood the doctrines of salvation.

To the Ephesians he said: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8-10.)

Congratulations Paul! You said it exactly right. We are saved by the grace of God—by his mercy, love and condescension in sending his Only Begotten Son to work out the infinite and eternal atonement.

We could not save ourselves. No matter how perfectly we lived the law of Moses; no matter if we kept, in its fulness and perfection, every law ever revealed, we could not save ourselves.

We had to be redeemed by the shedding of the blood of Christ. As the angel said to King Benjamin: "Salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent." (Mosiah 3:18.)

Yes Paul, you said it well: "By grace are ye saved through faith!" God's grace makes salvation available, but it comes to those who have faith in his Son, whose faith is like the ancients, whose faith is based on righteousness, whose faith works miracles.

How well the Nephite prophet spoke who said: "Believe in Christ, and . . . be reconciled to God, for . . . it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do." (2 Ne. 26:23.)

Paul said to the Romans that men are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath sent forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," and "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Rom. 3:24-28.)

True! Men are justified before the Lord, and he therefore saves them in his kingdom, if they have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and work the works of righteousness, and this salvation comes because of the redemption of his Son.

In other words, "through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel." (Third Article of Faith.)

Salvation is available because of the grace of God, through the atonement of his Son.

Salvation comes to those who perfect their faith through keeping the commandments.

These are the words of the Lord Jesus spoken anciently:

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21.)

These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to all men today: “Whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.

“17. And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father

“19. And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

“20. Now this is the commandment”—and please note that men are commanded to repent and be baptized—”Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

“21. Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel.” (3 Ne. 27:16-21.) In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.