

The Teaching of CHRIST

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PART II

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST CONCERNING SIN AND SALVATION

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCERNING SALVATION

"Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?"
(Luke 6:9).

"Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7:50).

"Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (Luke 8:48).

"Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole" (Luke 8:50).

"Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:19).

"Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke 18:42).

"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

THE title, Saviour, the abstract noun, salvation, and the verb, to save, have gained a peculiar sanctity by their Christian associations. These words have a common origin, coming to us from the Latin *salvus*, simply signifying *safe*. All the cognate words in the Latin language have equivalents in our language, of which we are perpetually making use in the realm of Christian truth. These words again have their exact equivalents in the language of which our New Testament is a translation, and all of them became current coin in the language of Christianity at a very early period.

The words Saviour, salvation, and save, are found in the writings of everyone of the New Testament authors. In one form or another the thought runs through all the apostolic writings, and we are constantly confronted in our reading of the New Testament with the theme of salvation.

The original idea conveyed by these words is that of immunity from harm or danger. The verb to save, however, has acquired a new sense in Christian use.

In ordinary use the verb to save means *to preserve from danger*. In the Christian sense to save is *to deliver out of the danger, and to rescue from all the harm which has already been wrought*. The substantive salvation in Christian speech refers at once to the activity which produces such safety, and to the state of safety which results from that activity. The title Saviour, in the New Testament, and in the sanctified and intelligent speech of the Christian Church has been reserved for the One Who saves in this great sense.

With these preliminary and technical definitions in mind, we turn to a consideration of CHRIST's teaching on the subject; distinctly recognizing that we are not now dealing with the method, but confining ourselves strictly to the idea conveyed.

In subsequent chapters we shall further consider this great theme of salvation, considering other aspects; but now we are investigating the thought as revealed in our Lord's teaching on the subject.

What material have we at our disposal? We have no single recorded instance of our Lord's employment of the word Saviour, as applying to Himself. Only on two occasions do the Gospels record His having made use of the word salvation; once when talking to a Samaritan woman, He said to her, "**salvation is of the Jews**" (John 4:22), by which He most evidently meant that in the Divine economy the Hebrew nation was that through which the Messiah Saviour should come; and once when He said to Zacchaeus, "**This day is salvation come to this house**" (Luke 19:9).

But while it is true that He never used the word Saviour, and that we only have the record of His use of the word salvation twice, the word to save He constantly employed, both in the material and moral realms. Indeed the word is stamped upon the page in all the stories of the work and teaching of JESUS; He was constantly speaking of saving. It is however very suggestive that our Lord is never recorded as having used the word to save in any lower application than that of human life. We talk about saving property; He never did. He used the word only when referring to humanity, and to the physical, to the mental, or to the essential spiritual life.

We shall concentrate our attention upon the story of Zacchaeus as illustration and declaration.

The whole story affords an illustration of our Lord's thought about salvation, for in the moment when Zacchaeus stood and made his great confession of purposed restitution, our Lord said, "**This day is salvation come to this house.**" That warrants us in using the story as an illustration of His conception of salvation.

And immediately in connection therewith He made His great claim, "**The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost**" (Luke 19:10). I propose therefore to concentrate upon that story; but; also propose to interpret, by our Lord's use of the verb to save, elsewhere what He meant thereby when He declared that He had come to save the lost.

The setting of this incident must be emphasized in order to make it plain that in this story we have a supreme illustration of the work of CHRIST as Saviour; and an exposition of the declaration that the purpose of His coming was that of seeking and of saving.

The story of Zacchaeus is closely connected with the revelation of the hostility of CHRIST's enemies, which is more clearly marked in this Gospel than in either of the others. There is a development of it clearly manifest through the narrative. The fifteenth chapter is closely linked to the fourteenth. That is seen as we connect the last words of the fourteenth chapter with the first words of the fifteenth. They never ought to have been separated. JESUS was speaking, and He said: "**He that hath ears to hear, let him hear**"; and immediately the story runs on: "**Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.**"

That is a sequence, almost hidden by the division of our Bible into chapters. Then, still in unbroken continuity, the writer tells us, "**And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.**"

Observe very carefully that their criticism of Him was due to the fact that He received sinners. If we would understand this, and get at the true meaning of it, we must set our minds free for the moment from the great values which we associate with the words, "**This man receiveth sinners.**"

We hear all the music of the evangel singing through them; but let them be read as they were spoken, as words of criticism. Then let us endeavor to see what these men saw which caused their difficulty. CHRIST came from the house of a Pharisee, where He had been entertained, and immediately made Himself, to all outward seeming, perfectly one with a great crowd of sinning men.

His attitude towards them was not that of patronage, was not that of superiority; He took them to His heart; if I may say that which almost sounds irreverent, His attitude was that which would have been designated to-day as, "hail fellow well met," towards all the rabble gathered about.

That was the astonishing thing, which perplexed the Pharisees, and made them afraid of Him. Technically and traditionally they were men of extreme purity of life. "**He receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.**"

This then is an outstanding illustration of the hostile atmosphere in which our Lord was doing His work. He answered their criticism by the parable of lost things which immediately follows; the one parable with its threefold value; the lost sheep, the lost silver, the lost son; the good shepherd, the seeking woman, and the rejoicing father; an interpretation, to those who had eyes to see, and hearts to understand, of the meaning of His familiarity with sinning men; an unfolding of the fact that He was there in the midst of sinners for the one purpose of saving them.

The parable was not perfectly understood; and I follow the story on until I come to the eighteenth chapter, and there I see Him with His face set towards Jerusalem, and I hear these words, "**Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.**"

For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken” (Luke 18:31-34).

He was on the same pathway, the same mission was still the passion of His heart. His face was now set towards Jerusalem. He passed through Jericho, and there occurred the incident of Zacchaeus.

In this sequence our story is seen to be a remarkable illustration of His own conception of His work;

- First we see His attitude criticized by the Pharisees;
- Secondly, the passion that drove Him towards the Cross was declared to disciples who were unable to understand; until
- Finally in concrete form came a revelation of His own conception of His work.

Let us first refresh our memories as to the actual facts of the incident.

In spite of all the commentators and expositors, Zacchaeus did not climb the sycamore tree because he was anxious to see JESUS. He climbed the sycamore tree because there was a crowd, and he wanted to see who was causing it. The crowd was passing that way, and he climbed, notice carefully the words: **"He sought to see Jesus who he was"** (Luke 19:3).

The real fact was that this man was curious because of the crowd. Humanity is the same in London as in Jericho. If there is a crowd in London, men always want to know what is happening; and Zacchaeus, suffering from the limitation of his stature, climbed the tree to do so. It is not that he knew JESUS, and was eager to look upon Him. Zacchaeus was a Roman tax-gatherer, and he was rich. He was therefore a rogue. That needs no argument. There have been many attempts to whitewash this man, but it is impossible.

He was not a rogue because he was rich, but because he was a tax-gatherer, and rich.

When John the Baptist began his ministry, he said to the publicans: **"Exact no more than that which is appointed you"** (Luke 3:13); and those familiar with the method of this gathering of the Roman taxes know that the tax-gatherer farmed a district; and if he exacted no more than his due, he never became a rich man. But Zacchaeus was a rich man, and therefore a rogue.

When CHRIST arrived beneath that tree, He halted, and looking up, He said **"Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house"** (Luke 19:5); I am not quite sure which of two things may be more accurately suggested by that self-invitation of JESUS to the house of Zacchaeus. Perhaps both are true.

First it was a sign of perfect friendship and comradeship. How many houses are there in this country to which we can invite ourselves? That is the final sign of a perfect friendship, and in that view we find another instance of the familiarity with which CHRIST approached these men.

He asked hospitality. Or was it the word of a great sovereignty; for the King ever informs those whose hospitality He is prepared to accept?

Was it not rather supremely the evidence of a profound compassion, in which sovereignty and service merged and mingled? But be that as it may, to the surprise of the man, He asked his hospitality; and gladly and joyfully he came down and received Him. As they passed together into that home, the multitude murmured. It was the last wail of hopelessness, **"He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner"** (Luke 19:7).

What was the effect produced? We are told sometimes to-day that the revival we need is ethical. Here was an ethical revival. We do not know how long they were together in converse, or what JESUS said to him in the loneliness of his own house. But we know the results. Within a very brief period the man was disgorging his ill-gotten gains.

Now mark most carefully that, in this connection, our Lord made His one recorded public definite use of the word salvation: **"This day is salvation come to this house"** (Luke 19:9). The proof that salvation had come was that the man was revealed as **"a son of Abraham."**

Do not confuse cause and effect in this story.

CHRIST declared salvation had come to the house. How did He prove it? **"Forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham."** Was he not a son of Abraham before? JESUS did not recognize his sonship until he did the works which were the outcome of faith.

In the hour of supreme conflict with the rulers, later on, JESUS said, **"If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham"** (John 8:39).

Of this man, giving up ill-gotten gains, swinging back to lines of righteousness; morally remade, and demonstrating his moral reconstruction by his righteous act; CHRIST said, That is a son of Abraham. To-day salvation is come to this house. There is the evidence of it!

Salvation then is a power that takes hold of a man, and remakes him. And immediately following, in closest connection, our Lord declared in simple words the meaning of His own mission in the world, **"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"** (Luke 19:10).

"This day is salvation come to this house." The Son of Man came to do that! He was criticized for eating with sinning men, for accepting the hospitality of a rogue! But the results reveal the purpose of His going into that house. He came to seek and save that which was lost.

Now let us turn to other illustrations, in order that we may know what He really meant when He said in the presence of Zacchaeus, that His business was that of saving. Let us take one or two occasions on which He used the word in the material realm. When He was about to heal the man with the withered hand in the synagogue, He challenged the scribes and Pharisees by asking this question, **"Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?"** (Luke 6:9).

When the woman touched Him and was healed of her issue of blood, He turned and said, **“Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace”** (Luke 8:48).

When He was taken to the house of the dead child of Jairus He said to Jairus, **“But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole”** (Luke 8:50).

After the cleansing of the ten lepers, He said to the one who alone returned to praise GOD, **“Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole”** (Luke 17:19).

Once again, when He healed the blind man, He said to him, **“Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee”** (Luke 18:42).

- In the case of the man with the withered hand, what did He mean by saving? The withered hand was restored.
- In the case of the woman with the issue of blood what did He mean? **“immediately her issue of blood stanchd.”**
- When He spoke of the dead child being saved, what did He mean? **“Her spirit came again,”** and immediately she rose.
- When He spoke to the leper, what did He mean by saying **“thy faith hath made thee whole”**? He was cleansed.
- What did He mean by being saved when the blind man received his sight? He saw.

Gather together those illustrations, and we find in every case that on the lips of JESUS the word save meant the negating of destructive forces, and the restoration to men and women of all that had been lost thereby. That is in the material realm alone. The withered hand was restored whole as the other. For long, long years in the case of the woman the blood had been flowing, and she had suffered ostracism, excommunication, and the loss of everything; and in a moment the fountain of her blood was stanchd, the whole trouble ceased. The child was dead; He uttered one soft rhythmic command, *“Talitha cumi,”* and the spirit came back, and the eyelids fluttered, the lips opened, the limbs moved, and she rose and went to father and mother. Leprosy was cleansed, so that the flesh was again the flesh of a little child. Blindness was ended, and sight given. That was His common use of the word.

Pass from these material illustrations, and take two only in the moral realm.

The first is that of the woman who was a sinner, who came into the house of Simon; and Simon stood in amazement and in anger. What did Simon see that shocked him? Simon saw a fallen woman fondling JESUS; and we miss the whole impact of the story if we dare to put it in any softer form or fashion.

Luke with fine delicacy says, **“A woman in the city, which was a sinner”**; and this woman crossed the threshold of the house of Simon, knelt behind the couch on which JESUS reclined at the board, and began to wash His feet with her tears as she wept, and wipe them with her hair. Simon in amazement saw a woman who had never crossed the threshold before, - a sinning

woman, - fondling JESUS; and he said within his soul, That either means that He will be polluted, or else that there is some guilty secret in the past.

Now listen to the words of CHRIST: "Simon, **I have somewhat to say unto thee**"; and to the reply, "**Master, say on!**"

Then the Master put that woman into comparison with Simon, and said in effect: Simon, your mistake is that you are looking at the woman as she was. Look at her as she is. You only know her past. Look at her now. You have criticized her as being a sinning woman. I tell you, Simon, that, by the side of her, you are as coarse sack-cloth in comparison with finest silk. In the matter of common courtesy that woman has made up for your boorishness by her sweetness and her love.

And, Simon, now I will tell you the secret. Her sins which are many are forgiven; - for CHRIST did not mean to say that she was forgiven because she loved; but that she loved because she was forgiven.

He had known her before, He had met her before. He had wrought in her soul the moral healing that had remade her! Then He looked at her, and He said, "**Thy faith hath saved thee**" (Luke 7:50).

He used the word now in the moral realm, and what does the story reveal as to its meaning? A sinning, soiled, smirched woman, held in profound contempt by Simon the Pharisee, had become the gentle, the refined, the beautiful, who made up for the boorishness of his failure in the tenderness of her ministry to her Lord.

His moral use of the word has the same significance as His material use of it, with a broader reach, and a more spacious application. To save, according to this conception of CHRIST, is to take hold of all the destructive forces, and to destroy them, and to realize the highest beauty and glory of life.

The other occasion is that of Zacchaeus who, at first hard and unscrupulous, suddenly became repentant, and compassionate, giving half his goods to the poor, making restitution fourfold. Of that change CHRIST said, That is salvation, to-day is salvation come to this house; and I came to bring it; "**the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost**" (Luke 19:10).

Salvation then according to the teaching of CHRIST is the complete change from one condition to its opposite. The withered hand healthy and powerful, cessation of the issue of blood, the dead child alive, the leprous men cleansed, the blind eyes seeing; all these He described as saved. Passing to the moral, we reach the realm of mysticism.

But we may interpret the moral by the material. The forgiveness of sins is not merely that GOD will never again mention the things done in the past. The forgiveness of sins means sins put away, not as guilt merely, but as virus, poison, disability.

Salvation in all its full sense is not a present experience of the saint.

The apostle wrote, and his meaning grows upon me, "**Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed**" (Romans 13:11).

There is a sense in which we come immediately into possession of the force that destroys the destructive, and that remakes; but never in this world is either salvation or condemnation completed. Nevertheless the process is one that culminates in perfection; and CHRIST will never think of me as finally saved until He gathers me into His presence, and in the last beatific vision makes even my body to be conformed to the body of His glory. That is His purpose, and for that purpose He has power adequate.

According to the teaching of JESUS, salvation or safety is the state of having the destructive forces destroyed, and the essential life realized. The Son of Man came to do that work.

Place this meditation in relation to our previous one, in which we saw what CHRIST taught concerning sin, as to the element of human responsibility, the fact of bondage in sin, and the awful peril of fixity in sin.

Place that awe-inspiring teaching concerning sin by the side of this concerning salvation. Salvation means, according to the interpretation of JESUS,

- First the forgiveness of a man for failure to fulfill responsibility;
- Secondly the liberty of a man in that he had become the bond-slave of sin; and
- Finally power in the man, denying, breaking up the fixity of sin, and bringing him into a glorious liberty.

Every material miracle had in it the element of moral value, and the final truth revealed is that, according to JESUS, salvation, when it is accomplished, is immunity from all harm, and all danger; and His mission is that of bringing such salvation to men who need it.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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