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**THE WARRANT AND DUTY OF SINNERS TO BELIEVE
THE GOSPEL:**

FROM A SERMON

BY

EBENEZER ERSKINE,

WITH

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE OTHER SERMONS,

OF THE SAME AUTHOR.

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THE WORD OF SALVATION.

ACTS xii 16—*To you is the word of this salvation sent.*

PAUL is here preaching Christ Jesus in the chapter; and in this verse he makes application of his sermon to his hearers, and that very close. More particularly in the words you may notice, (1.) The nature of the gospel described, it is the word of salvation. (2.) The indorsement or direction, shewing to whom it is directed or sent, *To you*, &c. you men and brethren, you Jews or Gentiles, to whom it is preached.

OBSERVE, That the gospel, as a word of salvation, is sent to every sinner that hears it.

In prosecuting the observation, we shall observe the following method.

I. I shall speak a little of this salvation.

II. Of the word of salvation.

III. Of the sending of this word.

IV. Make application.

I. We shall speak a little of this salvation, and consider what it supposes, and what it implies.

1st, What it supposes, *viz.* misery. Our miserable state by nature is a state of alienation and estrangement from God. It is a state of enmity—It is a state of darkness and ignorance—It is a state of bondage to sin—It is a state of impotency—It is a destitute state—It is a state of spiritual and legal death.

2dly, What does salvation imply? It implies the whole redemption purchased by Christ, and the whole of the application of it by the Spirit. It is salvation from a state of estrangement to a state of acquaintance with God; from enmity to peace and reconciliation; from darkness to light; from bondage to liberty. It includes pardon and justification, adoption and filiation, sanctification of nature, heart, and way, communion with God; afterwards a glorious resurrection of the body, and eternal life and glory, in being for ever with the Lord.

II. The *second* head proposed was, to speak of the word of salvation, which I may do by answering these four questions.

Quest. 1. What is the word of salvation?

Ans. Not the law, but the gospel; that is that which is the power of God to salvation, (Rom. i. 16.) Whatever discovers Christ, and salvation through him, is the gospel.

Quest. 2. Why is it called the word of salvation?

Ans. Because it discovers salvation, it describes salva-

tion, it conveys salvation, as a charter does an estate, or as a testament does a legacy; it offers salvation, it establishes a connection between faith and salvation to all mankind sinners; for "He that believeth shall be saved;" and because it is the organ or instrument by which the Spirit applies salvation.

Quest. 3. How does the word operate in the hand of the Spirit, when believed unto salvation?

Ans. It operates as seed cast into the ground. It operates as rain and dew: "My doctrine shall drop as the dew:" As light; "They that sat in darkness saw a great light; It is a light shining in a dark place:" As fire; "Is not my word like a fire?" As water, as wind, as a seal imprinting the divine nature: as a glass, through which we see God's glory; as balm for healing; "He sent his word, and healed them."

Quest. 4. What are the qualities of this word of salvation?

Ans. 1. It is a divine word; "the word of God." God Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the Author of it. Hence the gospel is called "the gospel of God," Rom. i. 1. and xv. 2, 16. 2. It is a word of God in Christ, Heb. i. 1, 2. and ii. 3. It is secured "in the hands of a Mediator, yea, and amen in him." It is given to us by Christ, and sealed in his blood; "This is the New Testament in my blood." 3. It is a gracious word of God in Christ; it is free; it does not move upon our goodness or badness; our goodness doth not further, nor our badness hinder it. It is a word that comes from pure grace, and springs from His free mercy, who is the God of all grace. It is such a gracious word, that it contains all grace. Hence, 4. It is a complete word, containing all our salvation; for it contains God in it, Christ in it, and the Spirit in it. It contains a righteousness in it, founding a legal title to life eternal, namely, the obedience of Christ; and a legal security from eternal death, namely, the satisfaction and death of the Surety. It contains all the parts of life, and may well be called the word of life; life in the beginning of it in regeneration; "Of his own will begat He us by the word of truth." The life of justification; we are justified in believing and receiving of Christ our righteousness, as offered in the word. The life of sanctification, the life of consolation, the life of glory hereafter. 5. It is a sure word; "the sure mercies of David;" sure, and more sure than a voice from heaven, such as even that which the disciples heard on the mount, 2 Pet. i. 19. "We have a more sure word of prophecy,"

&c. 6. It is a gracious, complete, sure word of God in Christ to sinners, as well as to saints; it is to sinners of Adam's family, for it presents a remedy for their malady. This leads to,

III. The *third* head proposed, namely, to speak of the sending of this word. Here it may be inquired from whom, by whom, to whom it is sent, and for what purpose.

1st, From whom is it sent? *Ans.* it is a word of salvation, sent from the God of salvation, to whom belong the issues from death; and it carries the impress of himself upon it. As the word is God's word, so it is of God's sending; "He sent his word, and healed them," Psalm cvii. 20.

2dly, By whom is it sent? *Ans.* Not by angels, but by men; "We are ambassadors for Christ," 2 Cor. v. 20. It is true, God sent his word first by Christ; "He so loved the world that he sent his only-begotten Son," &c. Then Christ sends it by men, that we may not be afraid at his appearance, as Israel were of old; "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, 2. Cor. iv. 7.

3dly. To whom is it that He sent this word of salvation? *Ans.* To all sinners that hear it. Whosoever look to the word of salvation, will find it looking to them, Gen. xii. 3. What was the gospel preached to Abraham? "In thee, or in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Is not this a word of salvation to us also? It includes all, so as every sinner may take hold of it, See John iii. 16. 1 Tim. i. 15. Christ came to call sinners to repentance. See Prov. i. 20. Isa. xlvi. 12. It is a word that, suits the case of sinners; and therefore, if it be inquired.

4thly, For what purpose is it sent to sinners? *Ans.* For the same purpose that a healing remedy is sent to a deadly malady; for Christ comes in the word, and is presented there, "for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" 1 Cor. i. 30. and Rev. iii. 17, 18. More particularly, it is sent as a word of pardon to the condemned sinner; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my own name's sake." Hence may every condemned sinner take hold of it, saying, this Word is sent to me.* It is sent as a word of peace to the rebellious sinner, saying, "Christ hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious." O! I am a rebel, may the sinner say, here is a word for me: it is sent as a word of life to the dead; "the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live:" as a word of liberty to the captives;

* See Appendix, Note A.

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because He hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound,” &c. : as a word of healing for the diseased ; for the word says, “I am the Lord that healeth thee :” as a word of cleansing, or a cleansing word for the polluted ; “I will sprinkle you with clean water,” &c. : as a word of direction to the bewildered ; “I will lead the blind by a way they know not,” &c. : as a refreshing word to the weary ; “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary :” as a comforting word to the disconsolate ; it brings in the good news of the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, and of Christ the consolation of Israel : as a drawing word, and a strengthening word to the powerless soul, saying, “He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me.” It is sent, in short, as a word of salvation, and all sort of salvation and redemption to the lost soul, saying, “Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost ; and that we are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.”

IV. The *last* head proposed was, to make application. Is it so, that the gospel, as a word of salvation, is sent to every sinner that hears it ? Then,

1st, Hence see the kindness of God in Christ to sinners of mankind. Why hath He made such a difference between sinning men and sinning angels ? There was never a word of salvation sent to angels that sinned ; no, they are reserved in chains to the judgment of the great day ; but to you, “O men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men ; *to you is the word of this salvation sent.*” *

2dly, See what a valuable book the Bible is, which contains this word of salvation. O how ought we to search the scriptures ! for in them we think, and think aright when we do so, that we have eternal life and salvation conveyed to us. Why ? They testify of Christ ; and we ought especially to search out the words of eternal life, the words of salvation that lie there.

3dly, Hence see what a valuable blessing the gospel is, and the dispensation thereof, and how welcome a gospel ministry should be unto us ; “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace !” Rom. x. 15. that publish the word of

* See Appendix, Note B.

salvation. How sad is it when the gospel-ministers have not beautiful feet, when they defile their feet by stepping into the puddle of defection and corruption, and so make poor souls to nauseate the very gospel preached by them ; and how sad is it when these that profess to preach the gospel of peace, have their feet defiled in the puddle of error ! how desirable is it, when they have both the gospel of peace in their mouth, and beautiful shoes upon their feet, and are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and with a gospel conversation, declining to walk with others in a course of defection !

4thly, Hence see the inexcuseableness of unbelief in rejecting the gospel, since it is sent to every one that hears it. Men have no cloak for their unbelief, no ground to say, This word of salvation is not sent to me ; yea, it is sent to thee, whosoever thou art ; it is a rope cast down for thy drowning soul to grip to.*

5thly, Hence see how culpable they are that straiten the door, and hamper the call of the gospel, saying in effect, if you have not such and such marks, it is not to you ; it is only upon such and such terms that it is to you. This is to make the gospel no gospel. It is as if Christ came to save saints, but not to save sinners. They contradict the very design of the gospel, which is a word of salvation to sinners of all sorts and sizes. *To you is the word of this salvation sent.* To you, O sinner, is the door of salvation opened. Whatever straitens this door, whatever doctrines you may hear that hamper the gospel-offer, and tend to make you suppose, that there is no room for you, no access for you, you may suspect that either to be no gospel doctrine, or that has such a legal mixture accompanying it, as you ought to shun like the devil, because it would keep you back from Christ and salvation.†

6thly, Hence see the ground of God's controversy at this day, together with an antidote against the errors and evils of the day. The great ground of God's controversy, at this day, with the generation we live among, is their rejecting the word of salvation. Wherefore is he now speaking in wrath and war, but because we will not hearken to him speaking in mercy. Scotland hath been deaf to the word of God, and to the warnings of God. Judicatories have been deaf to the word of God, to the word of salvation, calling them to reform, and return to the Lord ; deaf to any testimony lifted up for

* See Appendix, Note C : † See also Note D.

reformation: and the whole land hath been deaf to the voice of God in the gospel. And what if God now thunder and roar out of Zion, and say, you shall hear at the deafest side; if you will not hear the voice of the word, you shall hear the voice of the sword. O what is the quarrel; Why, God says, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him:" No, but we refuse to hear him. General Assemblies have refused to hear him; they give ear more to a patron, or a great man, and give more obedience to him, than to the voice of Christ. He said, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs:" No, say they; but let them be worried with wolves, rather than displease and offend men of rank and power. How justly may the Lord say to such, "Go to the gods whom ye have served," and see if they can deliver you in the day of death, or in the day of wrath.

See here also an antidote against many errors of the day. Here is an antidote against enthusiastic delusions, viz. if we take the word of God for the rule and the warrant of faith, and of every particular duty. Some will say, we must wait for the Spirit being poured out; and till the Spirit comes, there is no doing; therefore we may sit still, and do nothing, either in the matter of our salvation-work, or generation-work, either in personal or public work. Why, here is a delusion, here is enthusiasm, to make the Spirit the rule of faith and duty, and not the word of God. When God spake to Moses at the Red Sea, saying, "Speak to the people that they go forward." What! go forward, might unbelief say, into the sea, and be all drowned! Nay, stay till we see the water divided. No, says God, "Speak to the people that they go forward:" and in going forward at the word and call of God, making his call and word the rule of faith and duty, in this way they were to find the sea divided before them. To wait upon God's working, either outwardly or inwardly, without answering the call of his word, and going forward in the way of duty, is to wait without a warrant; it is a delusion, a tempting of God. You are to mint at believing the word of salvation sent to you. The people we call Quakers say, they ought not to pray till the Spirit move them, making the inward motions of the Spirit, and not the word of God, the rule of duty. Thus it is no wonder that they be misled by a delusive spirit; for the word of God is the sword of the Spirit, and though we cannot fight without the Spirit, yet the

Spirit will not fight for those or with those, that will not take his sword in their hand; though we can do nothing without the Spirit, yet the Spirit will do nothing without the word. But if once we take the sword of the Spirit in our hand, I mean, take the word for our rule, and mint at duty, and at the work of believing, which is the work of God, according to the direction of the word of God; then, and not till then, are you to expect God will work powerfully; for out of his own road he will not, namely, if you turn away your ear from hearing his word, or if he do, he will bring you to this road before he do any thing more.

Here also see an antidote against all, or most of all the errors of the age wherein we live. Here is an antidote against all practical error, against all profanity, looseness, and luxury, whoredom, and debauchery, that have been long running down, like a mighty stream, through all ranks of persons, from the throne to the dunghill, in every corner of the land. What would remedy these evils? Even the receiving of this salvation that is sent in the gospel to us. Unbelief in rejecting this salvation, which is a salvation from all sin as well as misery; this unbelief in slighting the Saviour and salvation, is the root of all the looseness and profanity in the age. Men do not see this root that lies hid under ground. Here also is an antidote against ignorant preachers of the gospel, that confound the marks of faith with the grounds of faith, or the evidences of faith with the warrant of faith, or the condition of the covenant with the qualities of the covenanted, as if the gospel call were only to saints, or to sinners so and so qualified; and so, leading men in to themselves for a ground of faith, instead of leading them out of themselves to Christ, exhibited to them in a word of salvation sent to them. The gospel method of salvation is the reverse of all the legal schemes in the world. The legal strain supposes always some good quality about the sinner, before he be allowed to meddle with the word of salvation, and so shuts the door of the gospel, which it pretends to open. But the gospel strain brings the word of salvation freely to every sinner's door, and supposes him to be destitute of all good qualities whatsoever, and leaves no room to any sinner to say, I am not allowed to come in.*

7thly, Hence see how much it concerns all and every

* See Appendix, Note E.

one, to try and examine what entertainment they have given the word of salvation that is sent to them. Have you received it, or not, in a saving way?

1. Have you received it as the word of God, the word by way of eminency, the word of God in Christ, 1 Thess. ii. 13. and received it not as the word of man, of this or that man; but, as it is in truth, the word of God? &c.

2. Have you received it as a word of salvation, or as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, both as a truth and as a good? This reception of it supposes a view you have of your being a lost sinner welcoming a Saviour.

3. Have you received it as the word of this salvation, a present salvation, a particular salvation? This particular salvation from sin and wrath that you need, this near salvation; "I bring near my righteousness to the stout-hearted, and far from righteousness; my salvation shall not tarry," Is. xlvi. 12, 13. this great salvation, this purchased salvation, this promised salvation, this offered salvation, presently offered. Faith fixes upon something present. You need not say, Rom. x. 6—8. "Who will ascend to heaven, &c. the word is nigh," &c. Again.

4. Have you received it as a sent salvation, as God's send, as God's gift, sent by the hand of his ambassadors, sent freely and sovereignly, without your seeking after it, sent out of the storehouse of divine grace.

5. Have you received it as sent to sinners, to sinners in general? For here is glad tidings of great joy to all people. "Upon this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees," &c. Is. xxvi. 6.

6. Have you received it as sent unto you in particular? To you, sinners, says the general dispensation: To thee, sinner, in particular, says the particular offer: "Whosoever will, let him come." Hast thou then received it, as sent to thee, though a guilty sinner; to thee, though a vile sinner? Hast thou entertained it with a *me*, *me*, of particular application, saying, Here is an offer to me, a gift to me, a promise from heaven to me? Hast thou found thyself called by name, and said, I am warranted to take hold of Christ, and the salvation he brings with him, in this word of salvation; and even so I take him at his word, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief?" Have you hereupon found the virtue of this word, as a word of salvation, saving you

from your doubts and fears, saving you from your bonds and fetters, saving you from your helpless and hopeless condition, and making you to hope for complete salvation from sin and misery? Have you found salvation begun in the faith of the word of salvation, and being begotten to a lively hope thereby? And does this hope begin to purify your heart, and this faith begin to work by love to God, and hatred of sin, and of yourself for sin? And is your continual recourse to this word of salvation, or to the promise of God in Christ, for all your salvation?*

9thly, Hence see matter for terror to those that neglect this great salvation that is sent to them by this word. "How shall they escape who neglect so great a salvation," and a salvation come so near to them? O sinner, it is a salvation sent to your house, and will you reject it? Salvation sent to your soul; a word of salvation sent to your hand to receive it, and will you reject it? A word of salvation sent to your ear, saying, "But hear, and your soul shall live:" A word of salvation sent to your heart, and by it God is knocking at the door of your heart: O will you refuse him that speaketh from heaven? See Heb. xii. 25. If you will not hear God's word of grace in the gospel, saying, "To you is the word of this salvation sent;" you must lay your account to hear his word of wrath in the law, saying, yea, swearing in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest. If you have no fear of God, as it is in the verse where my text lies; if you shall never be persuaded to fear the Lord, and his goodness manifested in the word of salvation sent to you, you must lay your account to fear the Lord, and his wrath, manifested in the word of condemnation, which the law pronounces against them that believe not the gospel, John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already." And there is no escaping this sentence of condemnation, but by receiving the word of salvation.

10thly, Hence see how much it is the interest of every one to receive, and entertain, and welcome this word of salvation. "O hear, that your souls may live." Hear the joyful sound of salvation, O lost perishing sinner, before the door of mercy be shut, and the day of grace be over. Consider,

1. What sort of a salvation is offered to you. It is a spiritual salvation, the salvation of the immortal soul. "What shall a man profit, though he gain the whole

* See Appendix, Note F.

world, if he lose his own soul?" If you would not lose and ruin your souls, O receive the word of salvation. It is a costly salvation, it comes running in the channel of the blood of Christ. It is brought to your hand, and free to you, however dear bought by the Redeemer. You have nothing to pay for it; the price of it is paid already; the condition is fulfilled. It is a complete salvation, salvation from every thing you need to be saved from; salvation from unbelief, enmity, atheism, heart-hardness, heart-deadness, and every thing that you make an objection against receiving of this salvation. You say you cannot believe, you cannot repent; but would you be saved from your unbelief and impenitence? This, and all the other branches of salvation is sent to you, when the word of salvation is sent. Will you welcome a Saviour to save you from all, to be wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and all to you? It is an everlasting salvation. Would you be happy after death, and have an eternity of happiness? Life and immortality is brought to light by this word of salvation. O poor dying sinner, consider what an everlasting salvation this is.

2. Consider what need thou hast of this salvation. Thou hast a dark mind, and needest salvation from that darkness and ignorance. Thou hast a guilty conscience, and needest salvation from that guilt. Thou hast a hard heart, and needest salvation from that hardness. Thou hast a powerful and strong corruption, and needest salvation from that. Thou hast a corrupt nature, and needest salvation from that. Thou hast many heart-plagues, and needest salvation from these plagues, and healing. Behold all this salvation, and infinitely more, comes with the word of salvation; no salvation thou needest is excepted. Thy need is great, death is at hand, judgment at hand; "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." There will be no word in the day of judgment to sinners, but a word of condemnation: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But now, in the day of salvation, is sent to you this word of salvation; now, now is the day, and perhaps now or never.

3. Consider what a firm ground this word of salvation is for faith to believe upon. It is the word of God, the God that cannot lie. It is ratified by an oath of God. It is a word confirmed by the blood of the Son of God.* It is a word attested by the Three that bear record in heaven. It is a word spoken by the inspiration of the

* See Appendix, Note G.

Spirit of God: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. The Spirit and the bride say, Come;" come and hear this word of salvation; come and believe; come and apply to thyself what is offered to thee.

4. Consider the good warrant you have to intermeddle with this word of salvation. It is sent to you on purpose that you may believe it with application to yourself; and that every one of you, thou man, thou woman, may take it home to thy own heart; for to thee is the word of salvation sent. To thee is this love letter sent from heaven. Read the indorsement, and see if it be not to thee. It is backed to thee. O guilty sinner, saying, Christ came to save sinners. It is backed to thee, O inhabitant of the earth, that art not yet in hell; "Look to me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" It is backed to thee, O scorner, that hast hitherto been a mocker of God and godliness, Prov. i. 20, 22, 23. It is backed to thee. O rebellious sinner. If thou wert excepted, all mankind would be so. Behold Christ hath ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them. It is backed to thee, O black and bloody sinner, Is. xviii. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." It is backed to thee, O sinner, that art thirsting after other things than Christ, Isa. lv. 1, 2. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come. Wherefore spend ye your money for that which is not bread?" &c. Wherefore do ye thirst and pant after other things that cannot give you satisfaction? Yea, it is backed for thee, O unhumiliated, unconvinced sinner. Say not that cannot concern thee, because thou art not convinced of thy sin. O, the word of salvation comes even to thee also, Rev. iii. 18. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," &c. even thee, that, as in the proceeding verse, art saying that thou art rich and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing; and knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Unconcerned sinner, to thee, even to thee, is the word of this salvation sent. Is this love-letter backed for thee? O then, know, that though you have no will, you have a warrant to receive it, and Christ in it.*

See Appendix, Note H.

APPENDIX

Note A.

“Let news be never so true, though never so great and good, yet if we have no interest or concern in them, it mars the sweetness and comfort of them. Tell a poor man of mountains of gold and silver, what relief will that afford him, if he hath no access thereto, or interest therein? But tell him, that all these treasures are his, and that he has the owner’s warrant and command to take and use them as his own, this will make him rejoice indeed. Tell a hungry and starving man of a rich feast or banquet, what is that to him, if he be not allowed to taste it? Tell a naked man, exposed to the injuries of wind and weather, of fine robes and excellent garments, what will it avail him, if they be not for him, or for his use? But tell the hungry man that the feast is for him; and the naked man that the clothing is for him, this will create joy and triumph. So here, the gospel report doth not tell us of a Saviour and salvation that we have no interest in: no, but it tells us, that *to us is the work of this salvation sent; that unto us is this child born, unto us is this son given; that he is “made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;”* and that, as the great Trustee of, heaven, he “received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also.” Now, faith accordingly it applies all these good news, this Saviour and his whole salvation, to itself in particular. And hence it comes, that it fills the heart with joy, and the tongue with praise.” Vol. I. page 188.

Note B.

“If the question was asked, *what is God* to a guilty sinner, that has violated his laws, trampled upon his authority, and lifted up rebellious arms against his Sovereign? One would think the answer would be, God is a God of fury, God is wrath, God is hatred, God is vengeance; but, to the eternal surprise of men and angels, the very reverse! the answer is, *God is love.*” Vol. I. page 309.

“The gospel it is just the warm breath of a God of love. Love is the imperial attribute of His nature; and to make way for its manifestation in a consistency with the honour of justice, God spared not his own Son but give him to the death for us all; O herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The gospel is the proclamation of this love of God, in giving Christ and all things freely with him: (John III. 16.) Every word of the gospel smells rank of the love of God to lost sinners. Here we may see His wings of love, spread out to cover and hide them from avenging wrath and justice, the arms of love stretched out to embrace them, the hand of love held out to help them, the eyes of love beholding them with infinite compassion, the bowels of love sending out a sound after them, crying, “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn unto me and live.” Vol. I. page 488

“See hence the way and method that God takes to “lead sin-

ners to repentance"; why, He just pursues them with his kindness, and draws them "with cords of a man, with bands of love; knowest thou not, O man, that the goodness of God leadeth the to repentance?" The first thing that melts and thaws the heart of a sinner, in a kindly way, is an uptaking of the love and kindness of God to man, especially as it vents through the death and blood of Christ, in the free pardon of sin, and acceptance through Christ." Vol. III. page 157.

Note C.

"Is the law *magnified and made honourable*? Then it follows, that the great bar that lay in the way of our salvation is removed. Upon the first Adam's violation of the holy law, mountains of wrath were rolled in the way of salvation; the way was so filled with briars and thorns, woes and curses, that it became altogether impassable for any of Adam's race. Hence came that horror and despair that was seated in the hearts of our first parents immediately after they had sinned. The sight of the cherubim and the flaming sword turning every way to keep the way of the tree of life, had a dismal signification: well, but Christ, the second Adam, he has *magnified the law and made it honourable*, and therefore it must needs follow, that all these impediments and bars in the way of our salvation are now removed, and the way is clear to every soul that has a mind to enter in by faith, (John x. 9.) "I am the door: by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." All legal impediments arising from law and justice, in the way of salvation are now taken out of the way, and there is a free call to every man to enter in and be saved; in which case nothing can hinder but unbelief, which is a refusing to enter in by Christ, and they that do so, how shall they escape?" Vol. III. page 200.

"O how it will gall and torment unbelieving sinners in hell for ever, when they see others, who believed upon the same grounds that were common to them also, sitting down in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves shut up in utter darkness, with devils and damned spirits, because of their unbelief! and how will the devil himself upbraid unbelievers in hell, when fallen under the same condemnation with himself, that they had such fair warrants to believe in Christ, which he never had." Vol. I. page 198.

"Let desperate and absolute necessity be your warrant. Ye must either do or die! there is no mids; "he that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Do not stand to dispute the matter; there is no time, no, not one moment of time, wherein a man is allowed to toss this question in his breast, after the revelation of Christ to him in the gospel. Shall I believe or shall I not?" Vol. I. page 195.

"If thou hast a will to embrace him, the great difficulty is over, for there lies the principal stop, "ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Vol. I. page 199.

Note D.

"(Objection.) Let me mint at believing as much as I will, I shall never be able to effect it, if I be not among God's elect; for it is only they that are *ordained to eternal life*, that do believe. (Ans.) This is an ordinary sophism of the grand enemy of salvation, whereby he discourages sinners from believing in the Lord Jesus; and the fallacy or weakness of it will easily appear, by applying the objection to the ordinary business of human life. When meat is

set before you, do you decline to take or use it, for this reason, that you do not know whether God has ordained it for you? Do not ye say, meat is for the use of man, and this meat is set before me, and therefore I will take it. Ye do not say, I will not plough or sow my ground, because I know not if ever God has decreed that it shall bring forth; or, I will not go home to my house, because I do not know if ever God has decreed I should come the length. Ye would reckon a man mad or beside himself, who would argue at this rate in affairs of this nature. Why the case is the very same: as the secret decrees of heaven lie quite out of the road in the management of the affairs of this life; so neither are they at all to be the measure or rule of our actings in the great concerns of eternity: "secret things belong to the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children." And the ground of your condemnation at the great day will not be, because ye were not elected, but because ye would not believe. The reprobate Jews were cut off, *because of their unbelief*, (Rom. ii. 7 20.) I shall only add that as ye cannot know that the meat set before you is yours in possession, till ye take it; so neither can ye ever know that Christ was ordained for you, till ye take him into your possession by faith. And therefore ye must believe in Christ before ye know your election; otherwise ye shall never know it, and shall never believe either." Vol. I. page 200.

"Election does not belong directly and immediately to the business of believing, but only things revealed: and if revealed things belong unto us, then put in your claim, for the promise is to you and your seed." Vol. III. page 140.

Note E.

"May the poor guilty and convinced sinner say, "I am one of the most miserable creatures upon earth; I am destitute of all grace, of all goodness: I have no qualifications to commend me unto a God of mercy." Well, but says the Lord "I am *gracious*." I do not seek any grace, goodness, or qualifications, in the sinner, to commend him to me; but I would have the poor, blind, naked, miserable sinner, to come, to get, and not to give, to come and get gold tried in the fire, white raiment, eye salve, (Rev. iii. 18,) milk and honey, (Isaiah li. 1.) and all grace and goodness from me, *gratis*, freely "without money and without price." Do not seek for faith, repentance, love, humility, brokenness of heart, as a price to purchase grace and favour at the hand of God; but come destitute of all grace, "to the throne of grace, that ye may obtain mercy, and find grace." (Heb. iv. 16.)" Vol. III. page 299.

Note F.

"Christ is offered *particularly* unto every one of the hearers of the gospel, and accordingly faith receives him with *particular* application. The general call and offer reaches every individual person; and God speaks to every sinner as particularly as though He named him by his name and surname; remission of sin is preached to *you*; we beseech *you* to be reconciled; the promise is unto *you*. And for my part, I do not know what sort of a gospel men make, who do not admit this. Now I say, faith, which is the echo of the gospel offer, and call, must needs receive an offered Christ and salvation with *particular* application to the soul itself. For a person to rest in a general persuasion that Christ is offered to the church, or offered to the elect, or a persuasion of God's ability and

readiness to save all that come to Christ, is still but a general faith, and what devils reprobates, and hypocrites may have. Man, Woman, Christ stands at *thy* door, *thou* in particular, even *thou* art called and commanded to believe in the name of the Son of God." Vol. I. page 249.

"To *believe* in God, is to trust that this word of a reconciled God in Christ, is not only true in the general, but that it shall be true to *me* in particular, that it shall be made good to *me*." Vol. I. page 155.

"How faith can fill the soul *with joy and peace*, yea, with "joy unspeakable and full of glory" if it have no certainty in it as to these things in which it doth rejoice, is what I think no man is able to account for. How a man can rest on Christ, and apply him and his salvation to himself in particular, and yet not believe "that he shall be saved through the grace of Christ", to me appears a paradox. I do not say that Faith excludes doubts out of the believer, but I say, that faith excludes doubting out of its own nature." Vol. I. page 158.

Note G.

"The covenant grant or promise as well as the other declarations of the grace and love of God in the word to perishing sinners, *must needs* go upon the footing of the blood and satisfaction of Jesus. 2. Cor. v. 19." Vol. II. page 28.

Note H.

"Allow me to tell you, that none are excluded from coming within this rainbow, or from coming to Christ who sits on the throne of grace, by virtue of this covenant of grace, but only they who exclude themselves by their unbelief. Every one hath liberty to look to the natural rainbow, and improve the faithfulness of God in his promise as a security against the universal deluge; so every soul that hears the gospel, is allowed to look to the rainbow of the covenant of grace, and improve it as a security, through the satisfaction of Christ, against the deluge of divine wrath due to him for sin." Vol. I. page 422.

"If the promise does not belong to *you* and to all to whom it is revealed as a ground of faith, it is impossible to conceive how it is that an unbeliever makes God a liar, John v. 10." Vol. III. page 293.

"All mankind have such an interest in the death and satisfaction of Christ, as the devils have not. Yea considering that it was the human nature that was the sacrifice, and that all mankind are related to him, through his taking hold of the human nature, it is impossible to conceive how all mankind, especially gospel hearers, should not have an interest in his death. I mean, such as warrants, them to say in faith "he loved me, and gave himself for me" Gal. ii. 20. Rom. iv. 25. Isa. liii 5. & xxv. 6" Vol. III. page 290.

"The gift or grant of Christ in the word, is just the very foundation that faith goes upon. Why, we durst not bid you meddle with him unless he were given. It is theft and robbery to meddle with that which doth not belong to us. Our offer of Christ, and the call to receive him, it certainly supposes he is given, or else we durst not bid you meddle with him. Unbelief is the great sin of the hearers of the gospel that God threatens mest to resent, but unbelief would not be your sin if Christ were not given." Vol. II. 559.

THE GREAT SALVATION.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.—HEB. ii. 3.

THIS is a short, but it is a very comprehensive and important passage of Scripture. It speaks to us of salvation; and you all know, that salvation is, of all subjects that can engage the attention of sinful immortal beings; the most important. It is a subject so interesting and so important, that the man who is careless and unconcerned about it, is acting the most foolish part we can conceive, because it is the one thing needful, compared with which all other things fall into absolute insignificance. The salvation of the human soul is of so much importance, that God is interested in it, for he sent his Son into the world, "not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

Christ is interested in the salvation of mankind, or he never would have left the bosom of his Father, and been born in Bethlehem's manger—he never would have left the throne on high, where he was surrounded with angelic worshippers, continually casting their crowns at the feet of him on whose head are many crowns—to tabernacle upon earth, and at last be crowned with thorns, crucified on Calvary's cross, and laid in the dust of death, that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The Holy Spirit is interested in men's salvation, for he strives with them; he knocks at the door of the sinner's soul—he takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. He is the great teacher sent from God to show unto men the way of salvation. Angels are interested in men's salvation, for they desire and delight to look into the stupendous scheme; and they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. And we are told that there is joy among the angels of heaven over the return of a sinner to God. And since God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and the angels that surround the throne of a Triune God in heaven, are all interested in, and desirous of the salvation of sinners, surely it is of the utmost importance. And is it not wonderful that there should, notwithstanding all this, be so many neglecting it altogether, and living as careless and unconcerned as if there was no God, no Saviour, no heaven, and no hell; living as careless as if they

had no souls to be saved or lost throughout all eternity? There are, it is to be deplored, thousands living around us who forget that now is the accepted time, and that now is the day of salvation. They put it off, until they are unexpectedly called to cross the dark Jordan of death, and give in their account as they enter the shores of eternity. Their doom will be fixed, and fixed for ever, and their language will be—The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved! For there is no escape, and can be none, in the world to come, for those who neglect the great salvation in this. Be not deceived—God is not mocked. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.”

Look at the value of the human soul, and you will behold the importance of salvation. And every human being, be it remembered, who comes into the world, has within him a spark of immortality, of more real value than a material universe; and every human being, under the sound of the gospel, must perish for ever, if he has no knowledge of that way of salvation, which God in his infinite love and mercy has condescended to make known to us in the Scriptures of truth. This is eternal life, that they might know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. We see from this, that with gospel hearers, at least, there is no salvation apart from a knowledge of the character of God, and apart from a knowledge of the character and work of the Son of God. A knowledge of God is the food of the soul—the immortal, undying soul; and nothing short of this can satisfy it. And since this is the case, what though we had a knowledge, a perfect knowledge, of all the arts and sciences which have yet been found out by the investigation and discovery of man; what would it avail us though we knew all the substances of which this globe is composed, from its surface to the centre, and could unfold to the view of men all the beauties of its landscapes, and all the precious metals of which it is composed; what would it avail us though we could descend into the depths of the sea, and discover and unfold all the precious things which lie hid beneath its waters; what though we could ascend to those worlds, innumerable as the sand on the sea shore, and speak of their distance, their magnitude, their velocity, and the beauty with which they are adorned, and speak of the holiness, the happiness, and the high station which the beings

that people them, occupy in the scale of creation? All this, and a thousand times more knowledge than all this, would avail us nothing as sinners, as rebels against the moral government of God, if ignorant of the character and work of him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, for we would still be destitute of the pearl of great price, the one thing needful, and, consequently, ignorant of the way of salvation.

And in farther consideration of this subject, I would, in the first place, remark, that all men need salvation. When man received his existence from the hand of the Creator of all the mind and matter which adorns the universe, he was a holy and a happy creature; he was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour, and in whose bosom a spark of immortality was placed—a soul which ennobles man, and places him high above the beasts that perish—a soul, spiritual in its nature, and endless in its duration—capable of endless improvement, and designed by its Creator to study and investigate his wondrous works, and give him that worship to which no other being in the universe is entitled, and that glory which is due unto his name.

But he soon rebelled against God. His probation in Eden soon came to an end. He disbelieved his Maker, and yielded to the tempter, and by so doing he became a sinner in the sight of God, and all his posterity are born in his likeness; and by means of his sin, disease and death is the lot of all his posterity. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” And not only by means of Adam’s transgressions are all men subject to pain and sickness, disease and death, viewed as temporal; but by our connection with, or being descendants from him, as streams from a fountain, our natures are so depraved, that whenever man becomes a responsible being, such is the wickedness of his heart, and the aversion which he has to God, and to his ways, that he breaks his laws, disobeys his commandments, and sins against him with a high hand. “For the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Who can know it? The imagination of his heart is evil, only evil, and that continually. And this being the case, all men, without exception, are sinners in the sight of God. “There is none righteous, no not one. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. We have all gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.” There is no limitation here. All, without one solitary excep-

tion, are included. We have neglected duty, and committed sin times without number. God has not been in all our thoughts; and it is the duty of all of us, being subjects of the moral government of God, to keep his law perfectly. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." But we have forgotten the God that made us, and lightly esteemed the rock of our salvation. And here is the awful curse pronounced against all such—the soul that sinneth, it shall die. And here it is that we see the character, condition, and desert of all men. They are said to be enemies of God, children of wrath, under condemnation, and under sentence of death. For whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. And after this sweeping description of men's character, condition, and desert, by the Apostle Paul, nothing is clearer than this—that all men need salvation; because all are by nature under condemnation, and no man ever was, or ever can be, brought out of this state of condemnation unto a state of justification, by any thing that he ever did, or ever can do. No; for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified. The Ethiopian cannot change his colour, the leopard cannot change his spots, and far less can the sinner change his rags unto a robe of righteousness, with which to appear before the Judge of all the earth. He cannot satisfy the law which he has broken, he cannot atone for the sins which he has committed, though he were to give his first-born for his transgressions, and the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. Nay, though the sinner was possessed of all the cattle upon a thousand hills, and offered them all up as a burnt-offering, they would not satisfy the justice of God—they would not save him from the punishment which his sins deserve; he would still be under condemnation, still an enemy, still destitute of light, and life, and liberty. It is not necessary to say a single word more to prove that man needs salvation, and cannot possibly save himself, because he is a sinner, and the law condemns him. But here in this miserable, wretched, ruined, helpless, lost, and undone condition, the gospel finds sinners. Turn to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope, is its joyful sound to all whose ears are favoured with its proclamation. And this leads us to the second observation.

Second, Where is this great salvation to be found, and by what means does the sinner obtain it? We have seen that man being a sinner, being under sentence of condemnation, and in danger of perishing, and that to all eternity, for breaking that good, holy, and just law of a God of love, that he deserves nothing short of everlasting destruction at the hand of him against whom he has so often rebelled. And no sooner does the sinner see this, see his rags, see his misery, see his wretchedness, see his state and his demerit as a condemned criminal, than he exclaims, "What must I do to be saved?" And, fellow-sinners, as there is but one ark provided, to save a wicked and rebellious world from the floods of God's anger against sin—as there is but one foundation laid in Zion, on which alone any sinner can build with safety—as there is but one hiding-place from the wind, and covert from the tempest—as there is but one fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, in whose waters alone the sinner can wash and be cleansed—as there is but one robe in the universe, clothed in which he can appear acceptably before God, and that robe is the Redeemer's righteousness—in a word, as there is but one bright spot on which alone the sinner can stand with safety—so there is but one answer to the sinner's question, when he is in search of salvation, and that answer is, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," for there is salvation no where else. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.) Other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. There are multitudes, it is true, at the present day, doing all they can that they may get salvation, performing what they conceive to be good works, attending regularly the house of God, and sitting down at the table of the Lord, and going often to their knees in private, and wrestling sincerely, but unsuccessfully; and the reason why they are unsuccessful and unsaved, is just because they are seeking salvation by their external observances, and their good works. Attending the church cannot save them, because attending the church is not Christ. Prayer cannot save them, because prayer is not Christ. Good works cannot save them, because good works are not Christ. They are performing all these duties that they may get salvation; and what is this but seeking salvation by works of law, and not by the finished work of Christ, and that alone, they are deluding their own souls, and the souls of their fellow men around them. They are doing nothing else, nor

less, than building upon the sand, and seeking to establish a righteousness of their own, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of Christ. (Rom. x. 2, 3.) For a sinner to perform good works—I mean works from a right motive, and acceptable in the sight of God—before he believes the record God has given of his Son, is both impossible and absurd. There never was a sinner loved God; and there never will be a sinner who will love God, and seek the promotion of his glory, until that sinner first see that God loves him, and so loved him as to give his Son to die for him. Then, and not till then, will he love God, and seek to promote his glory. Then, and not till then, can he take up the language of the Apostle, “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John, iv. 19.) You perceive from this, that to perform good works in order to get salvation, leads those who are seeking it in this way straight to the law, straight to Sinaiah, straight to the scene of blackness and darkness, which filled the Israelites with terror, and caused Moses to say, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” (Rom. iii. 20.) O that the self-righteous would but look to where their refuge of lies is leading them, and turn in time to the stronghold, whilst yet they are prisoners of hope. Let them but come to the hill of Calvary, and there they will behold the greatest manifestation of the love of God to their souls the universe ever beheld—the death of Jesus for the human race is the wonder both of heaven, earth, and hell. It was to save the world that the Saviour suffered; it was to destroy the works of the devil that the Saviour suffered; and the glorious results of the cross of Christ shall be seen, felt, and enjoyed in heaven, throughout all eternity, by all those who will but take salvation in the way which God has appointed. Christ and him crucified is the only way to the Father. Christ and him crucified is the only city of refuge. Christ and him crucified is the only cure for sin, the only food that can nourish the hungry, the only water that can quench the thirsty; the only ladder to glory, honour, and immortality. Were it possible for you to ascend to the celestial city, and ask those innumerable company of ransomed sinners, which no man can number, who have already been gathered out of every nation under heaven, where they got salvation? how they got salvation? how they got their pure white robes, harps, and crowns?—the answer of one and all would be, We came here by Calvary, and the white robes we wear is the imputed righteousness of Christ, which we re-

ceived and put on simply by faith in his blood, when we heard on earth the proclamation of the great salvation. O that they who are seeking salvation from any other quarter understood this. If they understood but the first line of the saved sinners song now in glory, then would they cast aside every qualification of their own as rags and wretchedness, and come to the Saviour, the only Saviour, the all-sufficient Saviour, the very Saviour which they need, and rest upon him alone, and receive a full, a free, an everlasting pardon.

You know that when the question was put to our Saviour, when he tabernacled among men, Are there few that be saved? his answer was, " Strive ye to enter in ; for I say unto you that many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." And why is it that many seek to enter in and are not able? Just because they are seeking to enter in by a way of their own. Jesus says, " I am the way, the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." (John xiv. 6.) There were many who strove, and wrought, and laboured, by their good works, their long prayers, and their external observances, to get salvation. Take for instance the Pharisee who went up to pray, for an example. He was striving that he might enter in, (Luke xviii. 11, 12 ;) he was labouring that he might get salvation, and he was not able, just because he would not take it for nothing ;—he was doing those things that he might get it. And so is it with many at the present day—they will not take salvation without money and without price ; they will not take it in God's way, Christ's way, and the Holy Spirit's way—simply by faith in the finished work of God's own Son, (Rom. v. 1.) and then perform good works, and then labour for Christ, and then wrestle with God at a throne of grace for the spirit to be poured out from on high, that others may be brought to the knowledge of the truth. Not that you may get salvation, but because you know that you have got it. For good works, unless they proceed from right motives, are as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. (1 Cor. xiii. 1 ;) and prayer without faith is a contradiction in terms, and can never reach the ear of Him who is the hearer of the hearts of men. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb. xi. 6.) Whatever is not of faith is sin. All that the sinner does is sin, until he believes the record which God has given of his Son. But no sooner does he believe the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, than he has peace with God, joy in the Holy Ghost,

and hope of the glory of God. Then, and not till then, will he find Christ's yoke to be easy, and his burden light, and his language will be that of the Psalmist, "I will rejoice in thy salvation; my mouth shall show forth thy salvation. Thou art the God of my salvation." Or with Simon, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." (Psalm ix. 14; xi. 15; xxv. 5; Luke ii. 30.)

In the *third* place, When is this salvation to be found? This is a point of very great importance, when we consider the shortness of human existence, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time and place when the brittle thread of life may be broken. It is very much misunderstood by some who call themselves Christians, but being a point of great importance, we may expect that the Scriptures will be plain, pointed, and expressive upon it. "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." This is the language of inspiration. And whenever, and wherever, and by whomsoever, the good news and glad tidings of great joy are proclaimed in the ears, and exhibited before the minds of sinners still in their sins, still under condemnation, still children of wrath, and enemies in their minds and by wicked works, the Spirit is there knocking, there and then striving with them, there and then taking of the things of Christ, and shewing it unto them, that they may receive the truth, believe the truth, and be saved by the truth, (Rev. iii. 20;) for God is waiting to be gracious, and willing to save all who hear the gospel proclaimed. At that very moment the gospel is proclaimed in their hearing, then it is that the Holy Spirit says, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb. iii. 15.) At the very time when the truth is preached, and the very place where the sinner hears it proclaimed, is God's time and God's place; and if the sinner does not believe the truth then and there, he is neglecting the great salvation, he is acting the part of a Felix; he is calling God a liar, and the truth of God a lie; he is trampling under foot the blood of Christ; and not only so, but he is at the same time resisting the Spirit, quenching the Spirit, and grieving the Spirit of God, which is knocking, for it is with the word of the truth of the gospel that the Spirit knocks. And surely resisting, grieving, and quenching the Spirit, is a great sin. A soul destroying, God dishonouring, Saviour despising crime. Oh this is a criminal and cruel sin—the greatest of all sin—sin with which the Prince of Darkness never was, and never

can be charged ; a Sin which all the devils in hell, throughout all eternity, cannot possibly commit; and it is committed by the sinner every time he hears the word and believes it not—for present unbelief is present sin, and present faith is present duty. And how comes present unbelief to be sin, and faith the sinner's duty Now ? Just because God is willing Now, Christ is willing Now, and the Holy Spirit is willing Now. For if a three one God was not willing to save the sinner, when the proclamation of the great salvation is sounding in his ears, he would not be blameable for not being saved, his unbelief would not be crime, and his faith would not be a duty Now—for he would have no object to fix it upon. But this is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, for we are expressly told that all things on God's part are Now ready. (Luke xiv. 17.) That he is ready to pardon, able to pardon, willing to pardon, and waiting to be gracious. That Christ is able to save, willing to save, ready to save. And it is a glorious truth, that God is as willing to save Now as he was to send his Son into the world. Jesus Christ is as able and as willing to save Now as he was when he uttered these words, " Father, here am I, send me !" as he was when he trod the shores of Galilee with his beloved disciples ; as he was when he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. And seeing this is the case, Now is, and cannot but be, the accepted time, and the day of salvation, and the whole of the blame for not being saved, and saved now, lies at the sinner's own door.

This leads us to remark, in the *fourth* place, that the punishment of those hereafter will be greatly increased who neglect the great salvation here, when it is so fully and freely set before them for their acceptance. It is clear, from the verse itself, although we had no other proof, that this great salvation may be neglected. It has been neglected in numberless instances ; for many have rejected the counsel of God against themselves—many have denied the Lord that bought them, and brought upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Pet. ii. 1.) And we have seen that this is a sin which the devils in hell cannot commit. And the reason why they cannot commit this sin is plain, when we consider that no salvation has been provided for them. It is true they believe in the birth, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; they believe that he is the only Saviour of sinners, and that there is no salvation to gospel hearers but by faith in his

blood ; but although they believe all this, and much more than all this, as firmly as we can do, they do not believe, they cannot believe, it never was intended by God that they should believe, that a child was born for them, and a Son given to them ; and that that Son suffered, and bled, and died for them ; that he magnified the law against which they in their pride rebelled in the regions of perfect happiness, and opened up a channel through which the love and mercy of their offended lawgiver and king might flow to them, in consistency with his holiness and justice ; that he put away their sin by the sacrifice of himself, and that now the door of heaven and hope is open, and salvation fully and freely provided for them, and the Spirit striving with them, and calling upon them to believe and be saved. No, no. They cannot believe this, because it is not true to them. He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, (Heb. ii. 16 ;) and therefore they cannot neglect the great salvation, they cannot quench the Spirit, because it never strives with them ; they cannot resist the Spirit, because it never knocks ; they cannot grieve the Holy Spirit, because its still small voice is never heard by them. It is both impossible that they can commit this sin, which unbelieving gospel hearers are committing, or be punished with that sorer punishment which awaits all those who now, in the day of God's merciful visitation, neglect the great salvation. (Heb. x. 28, 29.) They for whom salvation never was provided, cannot neglect it, because it never existed. And here is the difference between those who are now in the place of misery, for neglecting this salvation which was provided for them, and free for their acceptance when here on earth, and those apostate spirits who were thrust out of heaven ; it is because they broke the moral law that they are in chains under darkness. This is the cup of their misery, but gospel despisers are punished far more than this. The essence of their misery in the place of woe is, and will to all eternity be, that Christ, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, died for them, and they would not believe it. They are there for neglecting the great salvation ; and they could not neglect the great salvation if there had not been a day of grace with them—if there had not been salvation actually provided for them. The reason why they are there is just because they said, when here on earth under the sound of the gospel, Not yet, when God said, Now. The reason why they are there is because when God said, Come now, and let

us reason together, they said, Not yet; go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee. When God followed them by his Word and Spirit, as they trod the downward road to ruin, crying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" their answer was, Not yet. And now their journey is ended, and hell is their home, just because they chose it. Death, the second death, is their portion, just because they chose death rather than life, darkness rather than light, damnation rather than salvation; and the flames of hell are now their only comforters, because they would not come to the wells of salvation, and quench their thirst at its life-giving streams.

It is here, and here alone, that we clearly see the justice of God, in the everlasting destruction of those who believe not the gospel; for the Lord himself shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of Christ. (2 Thess. i. 8, 9.) And there can be no way of escape at that day for sinners. All the family of Adam must appear before the Judge, to receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad. And oh what remorse, misery, and pain, will fill the bosoms of unsaved gospel hearers, when that very Saviour they despised, shall say, I have called, but ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, but no man regarded. Ye have set at nought all my counsels, and would none of my reproofs. I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. (Prov. i. 24, to the end.) Many are seeking here to cover themselves with the robe of empty profession, refusing at once, and now, when the fountain is open, to come and wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb. And even then they will seek to hide themselves under the rocks and the mountains, from the wrath of the Lamb. But all will be in vain, for nothing awaits gospel despisers but a certain fearful looking for judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour them as adversaries. The punishment which must be endured shall be great, because the salvation which is neglected is a great salvation.

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