

from enmity, to peace and reconciliation; from darkness to light; from bondage to liberty. It includes pardon and justification, adoption, sanctification of nature, heart, and way, communion with God; afterward a glorious resurrection of the body, and eternal life and glory, in being for ever with the Lord.

For what purpose is this word of salvation sent to sinners? even as 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 1:30; Rev 3:17-18*). 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. Oh! I am a rebel, may the sinner say; yet 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." It is a word of liberty to the captives; "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" (*Isaiah 61:1*). It is sent as a word of healing for the diseased; "I am the Lord that healeth thee."

It is a cleansing word to the polluted; "I will sprinkle you with clean water; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." It is sent as a word of direction to the bewildered; "I will lead the blind by a way they know not, and in paths which they have not trod." It is a refreshing word to the weary; "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary." It is sent as a comforting word to the disconsolate; it brings the good news of the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; and of Christ, the consolation of Israel. It is sent as a drawing word, and a strengthening word to the soul destitute of strength, 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 complete salvation and redemption to the lost soul, saying, "Christ came to seek and 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.

See here 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, not one word; "They are reserved in chains to the judgment of the great day"; but it was sent unto mankind; "To you, O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." Hence see the

inexcusableness 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 lay hold upon.

Hence see how culpable they are who straiten the door, and hamper the call of the gospel, saying, in effect, If you have not such and such qualifications, this word of salvation is not to you: if you have not such and such marks and evidences, 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. 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 salvation sent": to you, O sinner, is the door of salvation opened. Whatever straitens this door; whatever doctrines you hear, that hamper or limit the gospel-offer, and tend to make you suppose, that there is no room for you, no access for you, you may suspect that to be either 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 at a distance from Christ and salvation.

See here also an antidote against common errors of the day: against Antinomianism; for, by this salvation we are not saved to sin, and to work wickedness, and break the law of God, but saved from sin and wickedness. The gospel being a word of complete salvation, the grace of God therein appears to all men, teaching effectively what the law does preceptively, namely, "To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world" (*Titus 2:11-12*).

An antidote is laid down here against Legalism, which turns the gospel into a new law, and the covenant of grace, as it were, to a covenant of works. This text and doctrine shows that we are not saved by a work, but by a word; not by any work of ours, but by a word sent from God to us, even a word of salvation: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (*Titus 3:5; 2 Tim 1:9*).

An antidote is laid down here against ignorant preachers of the gospel, that confound the marks of faith with the ground of faith, or the evidences of faith with the warrant of faith, 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 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 what-

soever, and leaves no room for any sinner to say, I am not allowed to come in.

Hence the question: Have you received this word of salvation in a saving way? Have you received it as the word of God in Christ, not as the word of man, of this or that man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God (*1 Thess 2:13*)?

Have you received it as a word of salvation, as a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance (*1 Tim 1:15*)? This reception of it supposes a view you have of yourself as being a lost sinner welcoming a Saviour.

Have you received it as a sent salvation; as God's send, as God's gift, sent by the hand of Christ, sent by the hand of his ambassadors, sent freely and sovereignly, without your seeking after it, sent out of the storehouse of divine grace (*2 Cor 5:18-20*)?

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 make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (*Isaiah 25:6*).

Have you received it as sent to 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, 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 mine unbelief"?

Have you 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 this word of salvation, and been 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?

Hence see matter of terror to those who neglect this great salvation that is sent to them: "How shall they escape who neglect so great salvation" (*Heb 2:3*) and so near to them? O sinner, it is a salvation sent to your house, and will you reject it? A word of 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, "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 Sirs, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall we not escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (*Heb 12:25*).

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 hear his word of wrath in the law, 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 fear the Lord and his wrath, manifested in the word of condemnation, which the law pronounces against them who believe not the gospel: "He that believeth not is condemned already" (*John 3:18*). And there is no escaping this sentence of condemnation, but by receiving the word of salvation.

Consider 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 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 of it 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, righteousness, sanctification, 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.

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 corrupt nature, many heart-plagues, and needest salvation 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 is 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.

Consider what a firm ground this word of salvation is for faith to build upon. It is the word of God; the God that cannot lie, ratified by his oath, 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 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; apply to thyself what is offered to thee.

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 endorsement, and see if it be not to thee. It is to thee, O guilty sinner, saying, "Christ came to save sinners." It is to thee, O inhabitant of the earth, that art not yet in hell; "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth." It is to thee, O scorner, that hast hitherto been a mocker of God and godliness, "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets: How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scornors delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you" (*Pro 1:20-23*). It is to thee, O rebellious sinner, 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 for thee, O black and bloody sinner; "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (*Isaiah 1:18*).

It is to thee, O sinners that are thirsting after other things than Christ, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come. Wherefore spend you your money for that which is not bread? Wherefore do ye thirst and pant after other things that cannot give satisfaction?" (*Isaiah 55:1,2*). Yea, it is for thee, O unhumiliated, unconvinced sinner. Say not that it cannot concern thee because thou art not convinced of thy sin: Oh! the word of salvation comes even to thee also, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; eye-salve, that thou mayest see; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed" (*Rev 3:18*). Even to thee that, as in the preceding verse, art saying, that thou art rich and increased with goods, and standest in need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Unconcerned sinner, to thee, even thee, is the word of this salvation sent.

If you say, you will not take it to you, then remember you are subscribing your own doom. Why dare you not

do what God enjoins you? Why dare you not take what God offers you? How could you sin against God, when he forbade you? And now you dare not take his word for your salvation, when he requires you! How could you venture on his fury against his command? And now you dare not venture on his favour, through Christ, at his call and command? Was it not enough to offend his justice? Will you now venture to slight his mercy? This is worse than all your former sins, to refuse salvation that he freely offers from the guilt of all.

If you say you cannot, because of utter impotency, that shall be no stop. You cannot believe, you cannot come to Christ; but, as the word of salvation is sent to you, so salvation is come to you, because you cannot come to it. The Saviour is come to you, because you cannot come to him. The word of salvation is a word of power, and drawing power is in it, to draw you that cannot come: "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me." Are you willing to be drawn? Then the word of salvation hath so far taken effect upon you, as to remove your unwillingness and to make you willing. The word of salvation is a word of omnipotence; it is the almighty word of the almighty God. Saving power, drawing power is in it. Welcome it as such; and, in due time, you shall be able as well as willing.

Your faith is not to be acted in the sense of self-ability and sufficiency, but in the sense of self-inability and insufficiency. "Our sufficiency is of God"; salvation is of God; saving faith is of God; "All things are of God, who hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (*2 Cor 5:18*), and given to you this word of salvation: and it contains all your salvation. And if any part of it were left to you, it would not contain all your salvation. What you cannot do, this salvation can; therefore receive it, and bless God for it, that—"To you is the word of this salvation sent." □

—by **Ralph Erskine** (1685-1752)

TOMORROW!

"Boast not thyself of **TOMORROW**; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" —Proverbs 27:1

He was going to be all that a mortal should be — **Tomorrow**.

No one should be kinder or braver than he — **Tomorrow**.

A friend who was troubled and weary he knew,
Who'd be glad of a lift and who needed it too;

On him he would call and see what he could do — **Tomorrow**.

Each morning he stacked up the letters he'd write — **Tomorrow**.

And thought of the folks he would fill with delight — **Tomorrow**.

It was too bad, indeed, he was busy today,

And hadn't a minute to stop on his way;

More time he'd have to give others, he'd say, — **Tomorrow**.

The greatest of workers this man would have been — **Tomorrow**.

The world would have known him, had he ever seen — **Tomorrow**.

But the fact is he died and faded from view,

And all that he left here when living was through

Was a mountain of things he intended to do — **Tomorrow**.

ARE YOU BORN AGAIN?

Many professing Christians have none of the marks of being born again. John, in his first epistle, lists these marks that we might *know* if we've truly been born again.

(1) "Whosoever is born of God **doth not commit sin**" (*1 John 3:9; 5:18*). A man that is born again doesn't commit sin as a habit. There was a time when he did not think whether his actions were sinful or not, and never felt grieved after doing evil. But all that has changed. Now he hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be delivered from it altogether.

(2) "Every one that **doeth righteousness** is born of God" (*1 John 2:29*). A man that is born again is a holy man. He strives to live according to God's will, to do things that please God. His desire is to love God with all his heart, and to love his neighbour as himself. He is continually looking to Christ as his example as well as his Savior, and shows himself Christ's friend by doing whatsoever Christ commands (*John 15:14*).

(3) "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we **love the brethren**" (*1 John 3:14*). A man who is alive in Christ has a special love for all true disciples of Christ. Like his Savior, he loves the worst of sinners, and can weep over them; but he has a peculiar love for those who are in Christ. A true Christian is never so much at home as when he is in the company of other believers. Others may value learning, riches, or rank in society—the regenerate man values grace. Those who have the most grace, and are most like Christ, are those he loves most.

(4) "Whosoever is born of God **overcometh the world**" (*1 John 5:4*). A man born of God overcomes the love of the world. This world's opinions are not his rule of right and wrong. He doesn't mind going against the stream of this world's ways and customs. He overcomes the fear of the world. He's ridiculed; it doesn't move him. He loves the praise of God more than the praise of men. He's counted the cost. He's no longer a slave to fashion. His first aim is to please God.

(5) "He that is begotten of God **keepeth himself**" (*1 John 5:18*). He that is born again is very careful of his own soul. He endeavors not only to keep clear of sin, but also to keep clear of everything which may lead to it. He's careful about the company he keeps. He's very careful over his own behavior. He knows that his own heart is deceitful, the world is full of wickedness, and the devil is always working to do him harm. He desires to live like a soldier in enemy territory, to wear his armor continually, and to be prepared for temptation. He's watchful, humble, and prayerful.

The apostle sets forth these marks. What would he say about you? Are you born again? He says a person who is born of God: (1) does not commit sin (2) does righteousness (3) loves the brethren (4) overcomes the world, and (5) keeps himself. We must conclude that only those who have these marks are born again; and that all men and women, regardless of their religious profession, who have not these marks, are not born again. □

The Word of Salvation Sent to Sinners

"To you is the word of this salvation sent" —Acts 13:26

The gospel, as a word of salvation, is sent to every sinner who hears it. Whosoever will look to the word of salvation, will find it looking to them. It includes all; so as every sinner may take hold of it (*John 3:16; 1 Tim 1:15*). Christ came to call sinners to repentance (*Pro 1:20*). It is a word that suits the case of sinners. It is even sent to them who reject it, having no fear of God; this is plain both from this text and context, compared with other Scriptures. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (*Mark 16:15*). "Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness" (*Isaiah 46:12*). "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me" (*Rev 3:20*). Any man, be what he will.

In short, the word of salvation, importing all salvation necessary, looks to all sinners that need this salvation. The gospel would not be glad news to all people, if any sinner were excluded. "Look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth" (*Isaiah 45:22*). "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (*Rev 22:17*). "Unto you, O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men" (*Pro 8:4*). "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (*Isaiah 55:1*).

What does this salvation suppose? This salvation supposes, namely, misery. Our miserable state by nature is a state of alienation and estrangement from God. We are without God, and are alienated from the life of God. It is a state of enmity; for, "The carnal mind is enmity against God"; we are in actual rebellion against him. It is a state of darkness and ignorance; we are destroyed for lack of knowledge. A state of bondage to sin, Satan, and the world, and our lusts; we are fettered and imprisoned, led captive. It is a state of impotence: we are, by nature, without strength; we cannot so much as ask deliverance: "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." It is a destitute state, a pit wherein there is no water; a comfortless state, a bewildered state, a cursed and condemned state; for "he that believeth not, is condemned already": he that believeth not the gospel, is condemned already by the law, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." It is a state of death: spiritual death, and legal death.

What does this 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;