

THE WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR ALL BELIEVERS

Assorted Passages of Scripture

Intro: The Bible teaches us that salvation is totally a work of God. No amount of our works can save us. Salvation is not even the result of God and man working together. Salvation is totally a work of God by His grace which means that instead of giving us what we deserve to get, which is eternal judgment, we get what we could never earn and do not deserve, which is eternal salvation.

Salvation was never man's idea. Salvation was initiated by God, and He is the One Who does the saving. John 3:16 emphasizes this. Ephesians 2:8-10 is another familiar passage which tells us basically the same thing. In Paul's letter to Titus, chapter 3, verses 4 through 7 gives us the same teaching. Please turn in your Bible to the book of Titus, and follow me as I read to you from chapter 3, verses 4, 5, 6, and 7.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:4-7).

With your Bible open at that passage I want to point out to you that all Three Persons of the Godhead are involved in our salvation: God, in verse 4, the Holy Spirit in verse 5, and the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 6. So that when we say that salvation is a work of God, and all a work of God, without any assistance from us, The Father chose us. The Lord Jesus died for us. And it is the Holy Spirit Who convicts us and draws us to Christ.

Now we know that there is perfect unity among the Members of the Godhead. God does not attempt to do one thing, while the Lord Jesus Christ had other ideas, and then we find that the Holy Spirit had another plan all together. God chose, He elected those whom He intended to save. He gave them to His Son Who came into the world to die for them. And then the Holy Spirit was sent to seek, convict, and draw to Christ those chosen by the Father. This is the divine plan that has been in operation since

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creation, and which is in full operation to this very day.

Sometimes the Bible speaks of God seeking and saving His elect. Sometimes it is the Lord Jesus, we are told, Who came to seek and to save the lost. But the emphasis today is definitely upon the work of the Holy Spirit Who convicts and draws sinners to Christ. Just before the Lord Jesus ascended back to the Father after His death and resurrection, He told His disciples that they were to “wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me” (Acts 1:4). And then He added a few verses later, these words:

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

But there always has been a major problem in witnessing to the people of this world about Christ and the Gospel. Basically it is stated twice in the OT (Psalms 14 and 53) and quoted by Paul in Romans 3:11) that “there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” – NONE! The Apostle Paul said about the people of the world, and incidently it applied in the past to Paul himself, that “the natural man received not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Paul was talking about the Gospel when he said, “Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8).

In 2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4 Paul wrote,

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:
4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God should shine unto them.

On one occasion which is mentioned by the Apostle John in John 8 our Lord was speaking to a group of Pharisees, He finally said to them,

43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

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45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not (John 8:43-45).

He was telling those religious Jews that they were spiritually deaf!

But the most difficult problem that stands in the way of the salvation of sinners is that they are “dead in trespasses and in sins” (Eph. 2:1).

When we put all of these verses together (and there are others that could be added to them), we see that man by nature is spiritually blind, spiritually deaf, “dead in trespasses and in sins,” and totally without the ability to understand his true need, and not even interested in hearing about it, and you see how hopeless our condition was before the Lord saved us, and that humanly speaking there is not the slightest possibility that we can get others to recognize their need, and to see that Christ, by virtue of His death, is the only One Who can meet our need. How were we saved? And what hope do we have that we might be able to see others confessing their sin, and turning to Christ?

These passages that we have been reading together describe for us what Bible teachers in the past have called **total depravity**. That does not mean that we all, and all others, are as bad as we can possibly be. But it does mean that every part of our being has been affected by sin. We are seeing in our country today how terribly America has been affected by sin. The problem is that we don't know what our need is until the teaching of God's Word is made clear to us by the ministry of the Spirit.

The Apostle John gives us a very simple answer in words which he used to close his first epistle. This is what He had to say:

19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen (1 John 5:19-21).

God is the One Who gave the people to whom John was writing, the understanding that they needed to know the true God, and Jesus Christ, uniting them to Christ Who is eternal life.

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Time and time again the Apostle Paul saw the power of the Gospel at work in the lives of people all over the Roman Empire, and I want us to look again in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 to see what he had to say about his own ministry. In Acts 16 the Apostle Paul was in Philippi teaching and preaching the Gospel. And in verse 14 we read these words:

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul (Acts 16:14).

With all of the obstacles in every human heart that hinder the preaching of the Gospel, the obstacles can be overcome instantaneously by the mighty power of God. Those whom God has chosen, He without fail will save. The saving is not our job. That is a work that only the Members of the Godhead can do. Our responsibility is to spread the Gospel, trusting the Lord to use it when and with whom He wills to use it.

Let us go back to 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 where Paul has explained in detail what is involved in the salvation of God's elect. I want you to notice that Paul links together two mighty and effective instruments in reaching people for Christ. One was his message, Christ crucified; the other is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And notice also that when Paul spoke of the calling of certain Corinthians to Christ, he indicates that those who were called were those whom God had chosen. These are important truths to keep in mind.

(Read from 1 Corinthians 1:17 to 2:13.)

Do you remember how Paul described his own salvation in his letter to the churches of Galatia? I don't know of any evidence in the NT that tells us that anyone was praying for the salvation of Saul of Tarsus. Believers in those days probably felt that he was a special agent of Satan – and he probably was! And so our Lord intervened directly in Saul's life, and saved him. This is how he expressed his salvation to the Galatian churches:

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

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14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

24 And they glorified God in me (Gal. 1:11-24).

I can imagine that the Apostle Paul could hardly hold the tears back when he wrote Ephesians 1:3-7:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Our salvation may not have come to us in the spectacular way that Paul was saved, but ours is just as amazing as his was. Our hearts were just as depraved as his was. None of us here today deserve the salvation we have. It was not our love for God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit, but Their love for us. And it was not because of anything that we did for Him that obligated Him to save us. It was because of what Christ did on the Cross

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in putting away our sins which the Father sent Him to do by His death, and what the Holy Spirit has done in drawing us Christ. What a glorious thing it is when a spiritually dead sinner is given life, and he begins to see and hear and love the One he had no interest in hearing about before the Holy Spirit drew him to Christ.

When you place the Scriptures along side of most of the things that are going on today in the name of evangelism, doesn't it make you wonder at the patience of God in seeing the Gospel distorted as it has been. When we get back to doing things God's ways, we may see blessings again such as have characterized the work of the Lord in the past. Salvation is a work of God. Let's keep proclaiming the truth of the Gospel out of love for Him, and watch to see what He will do. The need has never been greater.

This is the first of many things that the Holy Spirit does for all believers. We are all "born of the Spirit," as the Lord told Nicodemus. No one is saved, no one has eternal life, but by the marvelous regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. But this is the beginning of all that the Spirit does for all of the elect. More always accompanies the new birth as we shall see in the coming days.

Let us pray.