
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>



The Scripture-Way of SALVATION:

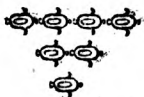
A

S E R M O N

On. EPHES. ii. 8.

B Y

J O H N W E S L E Y, M. A.



B R I S T O L:

Printed by WILLIAM PINE, in WINE-STREET.

MDCCLXIX.





The Scripture-Way of Salvation :

A

S E R M O N.

EPH. ii. 8.

Ye are saved thro' Faith.

NOTHING can be more intricate, complex, and hard to be understood, than Religion as it has been often described. And this is not only true concerning the Religion of the Heathens, even many of the wisest of them, but concerning the Religion of those also, who were, in some sense, Christians: Yea, and Men of great Name in the Christian World, Men *who seemed to be Pillars* thereof. Yet how easy to be understood, how plain and

A 3

simple

simple a Thing is the genuine Religion of Jesus Christ ! Provided only, that we take it in its native Form, just as it is described in the Oracles of God. It is exactly suited by the wise Creator and Governor of the World, to the weak Understanding, and narrow Capacity, of Man in his present State. How observable is this, both with Regard to the End it proposes, and the Means to attain that End ! The End is, in one Word, Salvation : The Means to attain it, Faith.

2. It is easily discerned, that these two little Words, I mean Faith and Salvation, include the Substance of all the Bible, the Marrow, as it were, of the whole Scripture. So much the more should we take all possible Care, to avoid all mistake concerning them, and to form a true and accurate Judgment concerning both the one and the other.

3. Let us then seriously enquire

I. What is Salvation ?

II. What is that Faith whereby we are saved, and

III. How we are saved by it ?

I. 1. And, first, let us enquire, What is *Salvation* ? The Salvation which is here spoken of, is not what is frequently understood by that Word, the going to Heaven, Eternal Happiness. It is not the Soul's going to Paradise, termed by our Lord *Abraham's Bosom*. It is not a Blessing which
lies

lies on the other side Death, or (as we usually speak) in the other World. The very words of the Text itself, put this beyond all question. *Ye are saved.* It is not something at a Distance : it is a present Thing ; a Blessing, which thro' the free Mercy of God, ye are now in Possession of. Nay, the Words may be rendered, and that with equal Propriety, *Ye have been saved.* So that the Salvation which is here spoken of, might be extended to the entire Work of God, from the first Dawning of Grace in the Soul, 'till it is consummated in Glory.

2. If we take this in its utmost extent, it will include all that is wrought in the Soul, by what is frequently termed, *Natural Conscience*, but more properly, *Preventing Grace* : All the *Drawings of the Father*, the Desires after God, which, if we yield to them, increase more and more : All that *Light*, wherewith the Son of God *inlighteneth every one that cometh into the World*, shewing every Man, *to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with his God* : All the *Convictions* which his Spirit, from time to time, works in every Child of Man. Altho', it is true, the Generality of Men stifle them as soon as possible ; and after awhile forget, or at least deny, that ever they had them at all.

3. But we are at present concerned only with that Salvation, which the Apostle is directly speaking of. And this consists of two general Parts, *Justification and Sanctification.*

Justifi-

Justification is another Word for Pardon. It is the Forgiveness of all our Sins, and (what is necessarily implied therein) our Acceptance with God. The Price whereby this hath been procured for us, (commonly termed the *meritorious Cause* of our Justification) is the Blood and Righteousness of Christ, or (to express it a little more clearly) all that Christ hath done and suffered for us, 'till he *poured out his Soul for the Transgressors*. The immediate Effects of Justification are, the Peace of God, a *Peace that passeth all Understanding*, and a *Rejoicing in hope of the Glory of God*, with Joy *unspeakable and full of Glory*.

4. And at the same time that we are justified, yea in that very Moment, *Sanctification* begins. In that Instant, we are *born again, born from above, born of the Spirit*. There is a *real* as well as a *relative* Change. We are inwardly renewed by the Power of God. We feel the *Love of God shed abroad in our Heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*, producing Love to all Mankind, and more especially to the Children of God: Expelling the Love of the World, the Love of Pleasure, of Ease, of Honour, of Money; together with Pride, Anger, Self-will, and every other evil Temper: In a word, changing the *earthly, sensual, devilish Mind*, into the *Mind which was in Christ Jesus*.

5. How naturally do those who experience such a Change, imagine that all Sin is gone? That it is utterly rooted out of their Heart, and has no more any Place therein? How easily do they draw that
that

that Inference, “ I feel no Sin : therefore I have none.” It does not *stir* ; therefore it does not *exist* : It has no *Motion* ; therefore it has no *being*.

6. But it is seldom long, before they are undeceived, finding Sin was only suspended, not destroyed. Temptations return and Sin revives, shewing it was but stunned before, not dead. They now feel two Principles in themselves, plainly contrary to each other, *the Flesh lusting against the Spirit*, Nature opposing the Grace of God. They cannot deny, that, altho’ they still feel power to believe in Christ, and to love God ; and altho’ his *Spirit still witnesses with their Spirits, that they are the Children of God* : Yet they feel in themselves, sometimes Pride or Self-will, sometimes Anger or Unbelief. They find one or more of these frequently *stirring* in their Heart, tho’ not *conquering* : Yea, perhaps, *thrusting fore at them, that they may fall* : but the Lord is their *Help*.

7. How exactly did *Macarius*, fourteen hundred Years ago, describe the present Experience of the Children of God ? “ The unskilful (or unexperienced) when Grace operates, presently imagine, they have no more Sin. Whereas they that have Discretion cannot deny, that even we who have the Grace of God, may be molested again.— For we have often had Instances of some among the Brethren, who have experienced such Grace, as to affirm that they had no sin in them. And yet after all, when they thought themselves entirely freed from it, the Corruption that lurked within

within, was stirred up anew, and they were well nigh burnt up."

8. From the Time of our being *born again*, the gradual Work of sanctification takes place. We are enabled *by the Spirit to mortify the Deeds of the Body*, of our evil Nature. And as we are more and more dead to Sin, we are more and more alive to God. We go on from Grace to Grace, while we are careful to *abstain from all Appearance of Evil*, and are *zealous of good Works, as we have Opportunity of doing good, to all Men*. While we walk in all his Ordinances blameless, therein worshipping him in Spirit and in Truth : While we take up our Cross, and deny ourselves every Pleasure, that does not lead us to God.

9. It is thus that we wait for entire Sanctification, for a full Salvation from all our Sins, from Pride, Self-will, Anger, Unbelief ; or, as the Apostle expresses it, *go on to Perfection*. But what is Perfection ? The Word has various Senses : here it means, Perfect Love : It is Love excluding sin : Love filling the Heart, taking up the whole Capacity of the Soul. It is Love *rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, in every Thing giving Thanks*.

II. But what is that *Faith thro' which we are saved* ? This is the second Point to be considered.

I. Faith in general is defined, by the Apostle *Ἐλπίς ἐν πραγμάτων ἔστι βλαπομένων* *An Evidence, a divine Evidence and Conviction* (the word means both)

both) of *Things not seen*: Not visible, not perceivable either by Sight, or by any other of the external Senses. It implies both a supernatural *Evidence* of God and of the Things of God, a Kind of *Spiritual Light* exhibited to the Soul, and a supernatural *Sight* or Perception thereof: Accordingly the Scripture speaks sometimes of God's giving Light, sometimes a Power of discerning it. So St. Paul. *God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our Hearts, to give us the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ.* And elsewhere the same Apostle speaks, *of the Eyes of our Understanding being opened.* By this twofold Operation of the Holy Spirit, having the Eyes of our Soul both *opened* and *enlightened*, we see the Things which the natural *Eye hath not seen, neither the Ear heard.* We have a Prospect of the invisible Things of God: We see the *Spiritual World*, which is all round about us, and yet no more discerned by our natural faculties, than if it had no Being: And we see the *Eternal World*, piercing thro' the Veil which hangs between Time and Eternity. Clouds and Darkness then rest upon it no more, but we already see the *Glory* which shall be revealed.

2. Taking the word in a more particular Sense, Faith is a divine Evidence and Conviction, not only that *God was in Christ, reconciling the World unto himself*; but also that *Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.* It is by this Faith, (whether we term it, the *Essence* or rather a *Property* thereof) that we *receive Christ*, that we receive him in all his Offices, as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

It

It is by this that He is made of God unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.

3. "But is this the Faith of Assurance, or Faith of Adherence?" The Scripture mentions no such Distinction. The Apostle says, *There is one Faith, and one Hope of our Calling, one Christian, saving Faith, as there is one Lord, in whom we believe, and one God and Father of us all.* And it is certain, this Faith necessarily implies an Assurance (which is here only another Word for Evidence, it being hard to tell the Difference between them) that *Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.* For he that believeth, with the true, living Faith, bath the Witness in himself. *The Spirit witnesseth with his Spirit, that he is a Child of God.* Because he is a Son, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into his Heart, crying *Abba, Father:* Giving him an Assurance that he is so, and a child-like Confidence in him. But let it be observed, that, in the very Nature of the Thing, the Assurance goes before the Confidence. For a Man cannot have a child-like Confidence in God, till he knows, he is a Child of God. Therefore Confidence, Trust, Reliance, Adherence, or whatever else it be called, is not the first, as some have supposed, but the second Branch or Act of Faith.

4. It is by this Faith we are saved, justified and sanctified, taking that Word in its highest Sense. But how are we justified and sanctified by Faith? This is our third Head of Enquiry. And this being the main Point in Question, and a Point of no ordinary

dinary Importance, it will not be improper, to give it a more distinct and particular Consideration.

III. 1. And first, How are we justified by Faith? In what Sense is this to be understood? I answer, Faith is the Condition, and the only Condition of Justification. It is the Condition: None is justified but he that believes; without Faith no Man is justified. And it is the only Condition; this alone is sufficient for Justification. Every one that believes is justified, whatever else he has or has not. In other Words: No Man is justified, 'till he believes: Every Man when he believes is justified.

2. "But does not God command us to *repent* also? Yea, and to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*? To *cease*, for instance, *from doing Evil*, and *learn to do well*? And is not both the one and the other of the utmost Necessity? Inasmuch, that if we willingly neglect either, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all? But if this be so, how can it be said, that Faith is the only Condition of Justification?"

God does undoubtedly command us, both to repent, and to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance: Which if we willingly neglect, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all: Therefore both Repentance, and Fruits meet for Repentance, are in some Sense necessary to Justification. But they are not necessary in the *same Sense* with Faith, nor in the *same Degree*. Not in the *same Degree*;
B
for

for those Fruits are only necessary *conditionally* ; if there be Time and Opportunity for them. Otherwise a Man may be justified without them, as was the *Thief* upon the *Cross* : (If we may call him so ; for a late Writer has discovered, that he was no *Thief*, but a very honest and respectable Person !) But he cannot be justified without Faith : This is impossible. Likewise let a Man have ever so much Repentance, or ever so many of the Fruits meet for Repentance, yet all this does not at all avail : He is not justified till he believes. But the Moment he believes, with or without those Fruits, yea, with more or less Repentance, he is justified. Not in the *same Sense* ; for Repentance and its Fruits are only *remotely* necessary, necessary in order to Faith : Whereas Faith is *immediately* and *directly* necessary to Justification. It remains, that Faith is the only Condition, which is *immediately* and *proximately* necessary to Justification.

3. “ But do you believe, we are sanctified by Faith ? We know you believe, that we are justified by Faith : But do not you believe, and accordingly teach, that we are sanctified by our Works ? ”

So it has been roundly and vehemently affirm'd, for these five and twenty Years. But I have constantly declared just the contrary : and that in all Manner of Ways. I have continually testified in private and in public, That we are sanctified, as well as justified, by Faith. And indeed the one of these great Truths does exceedingly illustrate the other. Exactly as we are justified by Faith, so are we sanctified by Faith. Faith is the Condition, and the

the only Condition of Sanctification, exactly as it is of Justification. It is the Condition; none is sanctified but he that believes; without Faith no Man is sanctified. And it is the only Condition: This alone is sufficient for Sanctification. Every one that believes is sanctified, whatever else he has or has not. In other Words: No Man is sanctified 'till he believes: Every Man when he believes is sanctified.

4. "But is there not a Repentance consequent upon, as well as a Repentance previous to, Justification? And is it not incumbent on all that are justified, to be *zealous of good Works*? Yea, are not these so necessary, that if a Man willingly neglect them, he cannot reasonably expect, that he shall ever be sanctified in the full Sense, that is, *perfect-ed in Love*? Nay, can he *grow at all in Grace, in the loving Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*? Yea, can he retain the Grace which God has already given him? Can he continue in the Faith which he has received, or in the Favour of God? Do not you yourself allow all this, and continually assert it? But if this be so, how can it be said, that Faith is the only Condition of Sanctification?"

5. I do allow all this, and continually maintain it, as the Truth of God. I allow, there is a Repentance consequent upon, as well as a Repentance previous to Justification. It is incumbent on all that are justified, to be zealous of good Works. And these are so necessary, that if a Man willingly neglect them, he cannot reasonably expect, that he shall ever be sanctified. He cannot *grow in Grace,*

in the Image of God, the Mind which was in Christ Jesus, Nay, he cannot retain the Grace he has received, he cannot continue in Faith, or in the Favour of God.

What is the Inference we must draw herefrom? Why, that both Repentance, rightly understood, and the Practice of all Good Works, Works of Piety, as well as Works of Mercy, (now properly so called, since they spring from Faith) are in some Sense necessary to Sanctification:

6. I say, "Repentance rightly understood." For this must not be confounded with the former Repentance. The Repentance consequent upon Justification is widely different from that which is antecedent to it. This implies no Guilt, no Sense of Condemnation, no Consciousness of the Wrath of God. It does not suppose any Doubt of the Favour of God, or any *Fear that bath Torment*. It is properly a Conviction wrought by the Holy Ghost, of the Sin which still remains in our Heart, of the *φρόνημα σαρκός* the carnal Mind, which "does still remain," as our Church speaks, "even in them that are regenerate:" Altho' it does no longer reign, it has not now Dominion over them. It is a Conviction of our Proneness to Evil, of an *Heart bent to Backsliding*, of the still continuing Tendency of the *Flesh to lust against the Spirit*. Sometimes, unless we continually watch and pray, it lusteth to Pride, sometimes to Anger, sometimes to Love of the World, Love of Ease, Love of Honour, or Love of Pleasure more than of God. It is a Conviction of the Tendency of our Heart to
Self-will,

Self-will; to Atheism, or Idolatry; And above all to Unbelief, whereby in a Thousand Ways, and under a Thousand Pretences, we are ever *departing*, more or less, *from the living God*.

7. With this Conviction of the Sin *remaining* in our Hearts, there is joined a clear Conviction of the Sin remaining in our Lives, still *cleaving* to all our Words and Actions. In the best of these we now discern a Mixture of Evil, either in the Spirit, the Matter or the Manner of them: Something that could not endure the righteous Judgment of God, where he *extreme to mark what is done amiss*. Where we least suspected it, we find a Taint of Pride or Self-will, of Unbelief or Idolatry: So that we are now more ashamed of our best Duties, than formerly of our worst Sins: And hence we cannot but feel, that these are so far from having any thing meritorious in them, yea so far from being able to stand, in Sight of the Divine Justice, that for those also we should be guilty before God, were it not for the Blood of the Covenant.

8. Experience shews, that together with the Conviction of Sin *remaining* in our Hearts and *cleaving* to all our Words, and Actions, as well as the Guilt which on account thereof we should incur, were we not continually sprinkled with the atoning Blood. One thing more is implied in this Repentance, namely a Conviction of our Helplessness, of our utter Inability to think one good Thought, or to form one good Desire; and much more to speak one Word aright, or to perform one good Action, but through his free, almighty Grace first preventing us, and then accompanying us every Moment.

9. "But what Good Works are those, the Practice of which, you affirm to be necessary to Sanctification." First, all Works of Piety, such as Public Prayer, Family Prayer, and praying in our Closet : Receiving the Supper of the Lord : Searching the Scriptures, by hearing, reading, meditating : And using such a Measure of Fasting or Abstinence, as our bodily Health allows.

10. Secondly, All Works of Mercy, whether they relate to the Bodies or Souls of Men. Such as feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, entertaining the Stranger, visiting those that are in Prison, or sick, or variously afflicted. Such as the endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid Sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feeble-minded, to succour the tempted, or contribute in any Manner to the saving of Souls from Death. This is the Repentance, and these the Fruits meet for Repentance, which are necessary to full Sanctification. This is the Way where in God hath appointed his Children to wait for compleat Salvation.

11. Hence may appear the extreme Mischievousness of that seemingly innocent Opinion, That "there is no Sin in a Believer ; that all Sin is destroyed, root and branch, the moment a man is justified." By totally preventing that Repentance, it quite blocks up the Way to Sanctification, There is no Place for Repentance, in him who believes there is no Sin either in his Life or Heart. Consequently there is no Place for his being *perfected in Love*

Love to which that Repentance is indispensably necessary.

12. Hence it may likewise appear, that there is no possible Danger in *thus* expecting full Salvation. For suppose we were mistaken, suppose no such Blessing ever was, or can be attained, yet we lose nothing: Nay, that very Expectation quickens us in using all the Talents which God has given us; Yea, in improving them all, so that when our Lord cometh, he will *receive his own with Increase*.

13. But to return. Though it be allowed, That both this Repentance and its Fruits are necessary to full Salvation, yet they are not necessary either in the *same sense* with Faith, or in the *same Degree*; not in the *same Degree*; for these Fruits are only necessary *conditionally*, if there be Time and Opportunity for them, Otherwise a Man may be sanctified without them. But he cannot be sanctified without Faith. Likewise let a Man have ever so much of this Repentance, or ever so many good Works, yet all this does not at all avail: He is not sanctified till he believes. But the Moment he believes, with or without those Fruits, yea, with more or less of this Repentance, he is sanctified. Not in the *same sense*; for this Repentance and these Fruits are only *remotely* necessary, necessary in order to the Continuance of his Faith, as well as the Increase of it: Whereas Faith is *immediately* and *directly*, necessary to Sanctification. It remains, that Faith is the only Condition, which is *immediately* and *proximately* necessary to Sanctification.

14. " But what is that Faith whereby we are sancti-

sanctified, saved from Sin and perfected in Love?" It is a divine Evidence and Conviction, 1. That God hath promised it in the Holy Scripture. Till we are thoroughly satisfied of this, there is no moving one Step further. And one would imagine, there needed not one Word more, to satisfy a reasonable Man of this, than the antient Promise, *Then will I circumcise thy Heart, and the Heart of thy Seed, to love the Lord your God with all your Heart, and with all your Soul, and with all your Mind.* How clearly does this express the being perfected in Love? How strongly imply the being saved from all Sin? For as long as Love takes up the whole Heart, what room is there for Sin therein?

15. It is a divine Evidence and Conviction, Secondly, That what God hath promised he is able to perform. Admitting therefore that *with Men it is impossible*, to bring a clean Thing out of an unclean, to purify the Heart from all Sin, and to fill it with all Holiness, yet this creates no Difficulty in the Case, seeing *with God all Things are possible.* And surely no one ever imagined it was possible to any Power less than that of the Almighty! But if God speaks, it shall be done. God saith, *Let there be Light: And there is Light.*

16. It is, Thirdly, a divine Evidence and Conviction that He is able and willing to do it now. And why not? Is not a Moment to Him, the same as a thousand Years? He cannot want more Time to accomplish whatever is his Will. And he cannot want or stay for any more *Worthiness* or *Fitness* in the Persons he is pleased or honour. We may therefore boldly say, at any Point of Time, *Now is the*

the Day of Salvation. To day, if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts. Behold! All Things are now ready! Come unto the Marriage!

17. To this Confidence, That God is both able and willing to sanctify us *now*, there needs to be added one Thing more, a Divine Evidence and Conviction, That *he doth it*. In that Hour it is done. God says to the inmost Soul, *According to thy Faith, be it unto thee!* Then the Soul is pure from every Spot of Sin; *it is clean from all Unrighteousness*. The Believer then experiences the deep Meaning of those solemn Words, *If we walk in the Light as he is in the light; we have Fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all Sin.*

18. "But does God work this great Work" in the Soul *gradually* or *instantaneously*? Perhaps it may be gradually wrought in some: I mean, in this Sense. They do not advert to the particular Moment, wherein Sin ceases to be. But it is infinitely desirable, were it the Will of God, that it should be done *instantaneously*; that the Lord should destroy Sin *by the Breath of his Mouth*, in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye. And so he generally does, a plain Fact, which there is Evidence enough to satisfy any unprejudiced Person. *Thou* therefore look for it every Moment. Look for it in the Way above described; in all those *good Works* whereunto thou art *created anew in Christ Jesus*. There is then no Danger: You can be no worse, if you are no better for that Expectation. For were you to be disappointed of your Hope, still you lose nothing. But you shall not be disappointed of your Hope: it will come,

come, and will not tarry. Look for it then every Day, every Hour, every Moment. Why not this Hour, this Moment? Certainly you may look for it *now*, if you believe it is by Faith. And by this Token you may surely know, whether you seek it by Faith or by Works. If by Works, you want something to be done *first*: *Before* you are sanctified. You think, "I must first *be* or *do* thus or thus." Then you are seeking it by Works unto this Day. If you seek it by Faith, you may expect it *as you are*: And if as you are, then expect it *now*. It is of Importance to observe, that there is an inseparable Connexion between these three Points, Expect it *by Faith*, Expect it *as you are*, and Expect it *now*! To deny one of them is to deny them all: to allow one, is to allow them all. Do *You* believe, we are sanctified by Faith? Be true then to your Principle; and look for this Blessing just as you are, neither better, nor worse; as a poor Sinner, that has still nothing to pay, nothing to plead, but *Christ died*. And if you look for it as you are, then expect it *now*. Stay for nothing: Why should you? *Christ* is ready. And He is all you want. He is waiting for you: He is at the Door! Let your inmost Soul cry out,

"Come in, come in, thou heavenly Guest!

"Nor hence again remove:

"But sup with me, and let the Feast

"Be everlasting Love."

F I N I S.



