

Christ's Salvation

Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light
My chains fell off, my heart was free. I rose went forth and followed Thee

Charles Wesley And *Can It Be?*

The goal of this chapter is to show what salvation is from a biblical standpoint. It is seen as the work of God and not the result of a religious exercise of man. "It is the Spirit that makes alive, the flesh profits nothing." (John 6:63).

The thing above all else I want you to see is that you cannot generate faith, you cannot work it up and you cannot manufacture it. God Himself must impart it. You cannot obtain faith by struggling or by affirming that something is, nor can you turn your hope and desire into faith by your own power. You can get faith only from the Lord...No man in himself, however, possesses that faith. It must be given...

Unbelieving humanity...could never develop in their sinful hearts enough faith to believe in Christ as saviour, let alone receive Him. So the Holy Spirit must not only impart conviction of the need of a saviour, but also impart the faith to receive Him. Never think it was your faith that enabled you to receive Christ as your saviour. (Charles S. Price, *The Real Faith For Healing.*)

In this chapter we look at:

- The importance of the law in evangelism.
- Methodological approaches to evangelism.
- What new birth actually is.
- The importance of preaching.
- The gift and source of faith.
- What salvation means.
- The evidences of salvation.
- Faith in action.

Evangelism

The first part in explaining salvation is to bring down man's hand, pride or part in it. When Paul goes through the gospel in the epistle to the Romans he starts by showing that all have sinned. He starts with the law and shows how all Jews have fallen short of the law of God. He then shows the Gentiles that they too have fallen short of the law written upon their own conscience. He concludes both Jew and Gentile are condemned under sin:

That every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.
(Rom 3:20).

This is how God evangelised, by starting with the law. He sent the law a long time before He sent the Saviour. This is why it is said Jesus came "in the fullness of time", so the law might first show the condemnation of man. Jesus came to deliver those under the law.

God sent the law first to lead us to Christ, to show us our sin. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ..." (Gal 3:24). This law is not only sent to the Jew, but through the

Diaspora, the dispersion of the Jews throughout the ancient world, the law was also made known to many nations. Thus before Christ came, the fall of Israel was dispersing the knowledge of God to the world.

Jesus Preached the Law

When Jesus came we see Him doing the same. He preached the law. One man came to Jesus and asked, "What must I do to have eternal life?" (Matt 19:16). Jesus recited the commandments and said, "Do these and you shall live.". When we talk about "doing" then this is what we must do. We must fulfil the whole law.

The man however had not realised his own inability to keep the law. He said, "From my youth I have kept these commandments.". The man had not realised the full weight of the law. So Jesus pointed this out. Jesus did not answer him about grace, but pointed out his covetousness, showing he had not kept the law. The man could not accept this and went away.

The man's lack of knowledge of himself is contrasted with Paul (Rom 7:24) and shown in Jesus' *Parable of the Unforgiving Steward* (Matt 18:23-35). The steward owed *ten thousand talents*. This sum is similar to a country's national debt. It is utterly un-payable.

(The terms used by Matthew show the debt is moral, not just financial. Matthew used terms common in the Hebrew setting of the time of Jesus. The Gospels do this continually, showing they are the actual words of Jesus, not the redactions [edited compilations] of latter Greek Church scholars.)

But the steward's response was, "Give me time and I will pay.". This is how every person views himself. We think that we are able to meet the debt we owe to God, through keeping the law and living rightly. This betrays a complete misunderstanding of the debt that we owe to God and by how much we have missed the mark of His righteous law and nature. It is impossible for us to pay.

In the *Sermon on the Mount* Jesus preached the law. The Jews had come to believe that righteousness was an outward observance of the law. But Jesus said that God requires an inward observance, from the heart. He said that adultery and murder are first in the heart. He said that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees (outward) we cannot enter the kingdom. God requires that the thought and intent of the heart be pure because God is pure.

Jesus' preaching was not a new higher standard for the new kingdom. Everything that Jesus said was in the law. Lev 19:17 says, "You shall not hate your brother from your heart.". The 10th commandment is, "You shall not covet...". Ex 23:3-5 says that if you see your enemy's ox in trouble you shall help it. That is *turning the other cheek*. Jesus said this to show us our sin. "Unless you believe I am He, you shall perish in your sin." (John 8:24).

The Holy Spirit

Sometimes, instead of the gospel being preached, people are told that their problem is sickness, or lack of money, or a need for a job or a baby. This is sometimes called "need-felt" evangelism. It may draw people to the church. People use entertainment, a band, a choir, a gifted speaker and then invite others to come and give their life to Jesus. But they have not yet been told who this Jesus is and what He came to do and have not been told their real need.

Jesus "came to save His people from their sin." (Matt 1:21). If people are not told this and are not made by the law to see their sin, then which "Jesus" are they receiving? It is true that Jesus heals and meets needs, but that is not the gospel we preach. The gospel is that He came to redeem us and transform our lives from sin to righteousness, as a gift.

A preacher of the gospel lets the “blood of Abel cry out” (Gen 4:10, Heb 12:24). People need to hear two things: the blood of Abel cry against them and the blood of Jesus speak for them. If we quench the blood of Abel no one can be saved. Jesus came to save those who are under the condemnation of sin. We need to preach Moses and Jesus Christ. But only the Spirit of God can bring a true saving conviction to a person’s heart.

We do not rush people into “receiving Christ”. They have to be ready. Saying the “sinner’s prayer” will not save people. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that saves people. The Holy Spirit uses the law to show people their need of Christ. The law leads us to Christ, when it is in the hands of the Spirit of God. This is not an academic conviction. We have to keep preaching and wait for the Holy Spirit to fully work on the person’s heart.

Church history shows that altar calls were not practiced until recent times. Ministers preached the gospel until the Holy Spirit brought assurance of salvation. Altar calls started around the time of Charles Finney in the 19th Century. It is not right to tell people that they are saved because they have responded. If they do not have the Spirit they will backslide and claim the gospel does not work. As Whitefield said,

There are so many stony ground hearers who receive the word with joy that I have determined to suspend my judgment till I know the tree by its fruits...Do you think any farmer would have a crop of corn next year unless he ploughed now? You may as well expect a crop of corn on unploughed ground as a crop of grace until the soul is convinced of its being undone without a Saviour.

That is the reason we have so many mushroom converts, so many persons that are always happy! happy! happy! and never were miserable. Why? Because their stony ground is not ploughed up; they have not got a conviction of the law...they fall away...That makes me so cautious now, which I was not thirty years ago, of dubbing converts too soon.

Now I wait a little, and see if people bring forth fruit; for there are so many blossoms which March winds blow away that I cannot believe they are converts till I see fruit brought forth. (Quoted by Iain Murray in *The Invitation System*.)

People cannot be born ahead of time, or it will be an “abortion”. We cannot pre-empt nor do the work of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit, not the pastor, is the only one that the Bible says bears witness of salvation to a person’s heart. We are not saying that we should not preach of assurance. We are saying that assurance is personal and that each one of us needs to have it from the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we are inclined to think that a very great portion of modern revivalism has been more a curse than a blessing, because it has led thousands to a kind of peace before they have known their misery; restoring the prodigal to the Father’s house, and never making him say, ‘Father, I have sinned.’

How can he be healed who is not sick, or he be satisfied with the bread of life who is not hungry? The old-fashioned sense of sin is despised...Everything in this age is shallow...The consequence is that men leap into religion, and then leap out again. Un-humbled they came to the church, un-humbled they remained in it, and un-humbled they go from it. (Charles Spurgeon 1892. See also Charles Spurgeon, *Soul Winner*.)

Four Spiritual Laws

I was evangelised by a man who taught me the four spiritual laws. This method is sometimes seen as getting people to “make a commitment to Christ”. Making a commitment to Christ is not new birth,

neither is it salvation. New birth is receiving the Holy Spirit within. The four spiritual laws are correct and need to be taught, but they will not save. Jesus Christ saves. The four laws are often expressed as follows:

1. All have sinned.
2. The wages of sin are death.
3. God loves you.
4. Make a commitment to Christ.

After this I was asked whether I believed these four laws. I said, "Yes, I have to, they are in scripture and I believe that is the word of God." After three weeks of this teaching I was asked, "If you believe this, will you pray and give your life to Jesus, sign here and join this group?". I answered, "No, I believe with my head, not with my heart." They wanted to put me into a discipleship plan based on a signature and prayer, whether or not I received the Spirit. I knew that I could not live this life on my own resources.

I knew that to be born again, God would have to do it. I knew that it was not in my power, but that it was a gift, extended by God's mercy alone and not by some spiritual law that I could take hold of myself. So I read the Bible, went to church sporadically, prayed and asked God to accept me in Christ and fill me with His Spirit.

It was one year later that I was born again and Jesus changed my heart. There was an immediate change. This does not mean that I was humanly perfect thereafter, but faith came into my heart and this changed me from the inside. I went back to the former group and found I could not fellowship with many of the people in the group. I did not understand it then, but later I realised that many of them did not have the Spirit of God. They had joined the group because they believed it was the right thing to do.

An academic assent to the doctrines of the gospel is not salvation. We must be born of the Spirit of God. The four spiritual laws can actually harm people, rather than help them because they give a false belief that they are saved. People often find the commitment did not help them or change anything in their nature. This can then harden them against the gospel in the future and they can then be the hardest people to reach.

Some evangelists have said, "Give me 20 minutes with any person and I will make them a Christian. I will convince them and get a confession from them." That is not evangelism. We cannot make anyone a Christian.

Christ Gives His Life

It is good to give our life to Christ, but that is not salvation. I knew if I was to be saved it was not going to be by giving my life to Jesus. I knew that God had to give His life to me. The foundation had to be in His work. I knew I had to be born again by the work of His Spirit and not by anything that I did. I knew that salvation was of God's mercy.

There is no point in splitting hairs about phrases and some people express their salvation saying it occurred when *they gave their life to Christ* and they have genuinely been saved. That is good. The salvation came as God opened their heart by His power. We do not care *how* someone gets saved, so long as they receive the Spirit of Jesus. Sometimes traditional clichés can lead us astray from what the gospel really is.

The New Testament says salvation is receiving the Holy Spirit, who transforms us. When we think that salvation is church membership, passing through an initiation, signing on a dotted line, going on an

altar call, being baptised, speaking in tongues or repeating a prayer then there will be people in the church whose lives are not changed. Salvation may include these things, but none of them is salvation.

Salvation is God giving His life to us. *The need is to have His life and faith.*

We do *give up* our life. We give up our self-righteousness, our pride, our selfish plans and the idols we hold to. We cannot do this, but He does it as Christ's faith changes our heart. Now that we have a life which He has given, we live it in Him, for without Him we have nothing. We do not live for ourselves, but are poured out in His service. It is love that compels through the new heart *He gives*.

Testament

The common Hebrew word for covenant is *b'rith*. It can mean a conditional covenant enforced by a greater partner onto a weaker partner, where both partners have obligations and rights. This is the law. *B'rith* can also mean a gift or testament, where there is a testator and the heir is a passive recipient through grace. Both the *law* and the *testament* existed in the Old Testament, but both came into fulfilment in the resurrection of Christ.

In the New Testament the Greek word used for covenant is *diatheke*, which means *testament*. The New Covenant is not two parties meeting conditions and receiving rights by obligation. It is a testament. Jesus is the testator and also the executor, the one who makes it sure. Hebrews 9 shows this. (See also J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament*.)

Salvation is not given to us *if* we give our life to Jesus. That is the law. That is two parties striking a deal. The gospel is God bequeathing His inheritance to those He calls. He then brings us into that inheritance through the adoption of sons, by the new birth, which He undertakes by Himself. Is the gospel about us receiving Jesus and believing? Yes it is, but we do that by the power of God, not by the law.

Acts Two

In scripture, salvation is *receiving the Holy Spirit*. Ideas on this have been changing lately and it is now often a surprise to people to find out the part that *charisma* and Pentecost actually play in what it means to be a Christian.

When Peter finished preaching on the Day of Pentecost, the crowd was "pricked to the heart." (Acts 2:37). Peter preached without avoiding confrontation, pointing out their sin, need for repentance and the provision of salvation through Christ. The Holy Spirit convicted the people. Then they asked, "What shall we do?". Peter answered, "Repent, be baptized and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

In response the people would repent and be baptized. But these two steps were not yet salvation. They did this under John the Baptist's preaching, but none were saved in the New Testament sense then. Their sins were forgiven, but they were not born again. Peter mentioned the New Covenant promise, that they would receive the Holy Spirit. We can repent and come towards God and that is good, but the point that we become Christian in the New Covenant is the point that we receive the Holy Spirit.

This may happen on the first day or afterwards. Each person in their relationship with God is an individual and God works in each one personally, individually as He wills. Paul taught that a Christian was one who had received the Holy Spirit:

Now if any man does not have the Spirit of God, he is not His...The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Rom 8:9, 16).

In the book of Acts, Luke is not putting forward formulas for salvation. There were times in which there was evidence that people received the Spirit instantaneously (Acts 10:44) and there were other times when that was not the case (Acts 8:16, 9:17). The point is that someone is saved not by some traditional means, but by the Spirit of God, when they are filled.

This is not *tongues to be saved* doctrine. We are not saying that unless people have strong manifestations of the Spirit they are not saved. We are saying that salvation is the point when the Holy Spirit comes into a person's heart and gives faith and a revelation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is the circumcision of the heart (Col 2:11).

Born of God

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:13).

This is speaking about the new birth. It is a miracle. It is a creative act of God in which the Spirit of God renews our inner man, from spiritual death to life. This does not come about by *the will of man*. It is not brought about by anything we do. Nor can our preaching get anyone saved. We are called to preach the gospel. The gospel is the power of God to salvation. We are co-workers with God, but it is God who saves.

No matter how well we preach, how good our doctrine is, how good the delivery of our message and no matter how anointed and effectual our utterance, it is completely unable to save anyone. The sooner we know this the better. Then we realise it is God who saves and this takes the burden off us. We should preach with all our might, but the results are the Lord's. He does the work.

Decisional Regeneration

Salvation is not a decision. When the Holy Spirit moves in our heart we make decisions, but salvation is not brought about by our decision. It is not "by the will of man, nor the will of the flesh". The Holy Spirit renews our inner man. There is no "decisional regeneration". There is regeneration *by the Holy Spirit*. We are not saved by *making a decision for Christ*, but by receiving the Holy Spirit.

People have said, "If we believe in our heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead and confess with our mouth that He is Lord we will be saved." (Rom 10:9). That is true, but this belief is of the heart and is by the power of God. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot genuinely call Jesus Lord. This is why many call Him Lord and fall away.

This does not mean that decisions are wrong. We may repent in a halting, inadequate way before we receive the Spirit, but at new birth we are "given repentance". This is the effectual repentance that is the gift of God (Acts 5:31, 11:18, 2 Tim 2:25). When Christ comes into us we make effectual decisions by the faith that He gives to us. Without the Spirit, decisions are as ineffectual as *New Year resolutions*.

People can even clean up their lives and live right by decision and this is good and to be encouraged, but this is not salvation, or receiving the Spirit. We are not discouraging decision making, which is a faculty that God has given us for good, but we are saying that no man by a decision can be born again. By "taking thought you cannot add one cubit to your stature." (Luke 12:25).

The real salvation of God must be clearly proclaimed. Having a dance, singing a song, having a good speaker, followed by an altar call to receive Jesus is not evangelism.

We are not saying altar calls and the sinner's prayer are wrong, but that the true gospel must be preached and we must know that salvation is receiving the gift of the Spirit. We are not against one method and for another. We are for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Where there is the gift of faith the

laying on hands and prayer on altar calls changes lives. Other times it does not. We follow the Lord as we minister.

The point is two fold: That we do not think that salvation is of us, so that we have the right foundation on Jesus Christ; and that we do not think that we evangelise others by making an environment conducive to an emotional or rational decision, without the Holy Spirit working through the preaching of the gospel.

We know so many people who have prayed on altar calls and who have made decisions for Christ, who are not in Christ today. The main factor in evangelism and salvation always must be a plain, straight forward preaching of the gospel. Through this, God does the work and saves people by Himself, even as they sit and hear.

Hear My Voice

No one gets saved by listening to us preach and agreeing with us and giving their life to Christ. An individual is saved by hearing the voice of the Son of God.

Truly, truly I say to you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. (John 5:25).

This verse is speaking of salvation from spiritual death. Verse 24 states, "He that hears My word and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life.". This is not mental ascent, where people believe as Satan does, but a faith from God that changes the heart. This passage tells us that:

1. Those who are not saved are spiritually dead.
2. Because they are dead there is nothing they can do to save themselves.
3. They come to life by hearing personally the voice of the Son of God.

Faith comes by hearing the *word* spoken into our heart by the Spirit of God, Christ speaking and implanting gospel faith and life into our inner being. *Faith comes by hearing* (Rom 10:17) does not mean that faith is built by reading the scripture or by hearing a preacher. Faith comes by hearing *the voice of the Son of God*.

God who at different times and in various manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last-days spoken to us by the Son. (Heb 1:1-2).

This verse includes both Jesus speaking through His ministry in the flesh and speaking within our heart in salvation through the Holy Spirit. Salvation is an individual encounter with the Son who speaks the gospel from heaven into the heart of man.

See that you refuse not Him that speaks...from heaven. (Heb 12:26).

This is the word of faith. It is not something we get from reading the scriptures, but *it comes from heaven from the Son of God*, who speaks into our heart through the Holy Spirit. This is the faith of the gospel by which we are saved – *Christ in us*.

When we say faith does not come from reading the scriptures, we mean faith comes only one way, by hearing from the Son of God. Reading and knowing the scriptures is important, but the scriptures of themselves do not give faith. God does.

Winning People

When Paul spoke of winning people to Christ, he meant through the power of God and not according to man's wisdom in persuading others to make a decision by reason, emotion, or atmosphere. Paul tried to win some *by all means*. By this he meant through the power of the gospel.

To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake...(1 Cor 9:22-23).

Paul humbled himself, as Christ did when He came in the flesh, so that he might reach all with the gospel. This is what Paul is speaking about here. He was not speaking about alternative means of ministry apart from plain gospel preaching and caring. His plan was always to keep the gospel at the forefront.

And I...came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I was determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified...

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. (1 Cor 2:1-5).

When the gospel takes a back seat while the arts, soft speaking or promises of a good life are used as a bait to hook people, then their faith will not be founded by Jesus Christ and they will not stand. Our preaching must be direct and the gospel must be at the forefront.

We are not saying that apologetics has no part in ministry. We are saying that the new birth is wrought by the power of God alone. The gospel must be preached and accepted by faith. Unless it mixed with faith it has no power to save.

Faith and Preaching

We are born again as God speaks into our heart. We are born again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, renewing our nature (1 Pet 1:3). This is why we preach the living Christ. He is the one that ministers salvation. We are His spokesmen, messengers, or ambassadors. He has the power.

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree. He has God exalted with His right hand, to be a Prince and Saviour, to *give* repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him. (Acts 5:30-32).

Salvation faith comes by hearing *and hearing by the word of God*. This word is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel which is the power of God to salvation (Rom 1:16). Like Paul, we too cannot be ashamed of it (Rom 1:15). It is essential that the gospel be preached as *it is*, clearly and directly.

...how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace...So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Rom 10:14-17).

Preachers are raised up and sent by the Holy Spirit and He confirms them by His own power. God confirms the preached word from heaven, speaking faith through the gospel into the hearts of His people.

...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe...for God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise...(1Cor 1:21, 27).

This shows again the utmost importance of preaching. It is not optional. It is not a cultural choice. It is God's own chosen way. The world looks for a wiser method because preaching is offensive. We must preach Jesus Christ.

In whom also you trusted (believed) after you heard the word of truth...(Eph 1:13).

Faith was given to the Ephesians by God as Paul preached the gospel to them. This is how they "believed". Hearing is not hearing just with the outward ear. Many hear outwardly, but hearing is the Holy Spirit Himself speaking individually to each one.

The Source of Faith

Some people have said they put *their faith* in Christ. If this means they are trusting God then this is good, but the phrase can also mislead us about the nature of faith. *Saving faith* is not our natural faith that we put in our car or in the chair we sit on.

The faith by which we are saved is not *first of all* our faith. It is the faith of Jesus Christ. It is His faith. Paul said the life he now lives he lives "by *the faith* of the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). It becomes *our faith* when He lives in us. Our faith is His faith, which is much more precious than fine gold (1 Pet 1:7).

We are saved when His faith comes in. This is what eternal life is. We do not have the faith to be saved. Faith is of *such a quality* that natural man cannot have it. It is impossible for natural man to have the faith whereby he can be saved."It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle." The natural man cannot receive the things of God (1 Cor 2:14).

We are not the source of faith. Only sons of God have faith. "For after that faith is come...we are all children of God...baptized into Christ." (Gal 3:25-27). Faith comes from this baptism and makes us sons. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." (Rom 8:14). "Peter, I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail." (Luke 22:32). Who upheld Peter's faith? Jesus did. He was its source.

Faith does not precede salvation, as a pre-condition that we are able to fulfil ourselves. Salvation is a gift of God and this includes the faith. Jesus is the one who met the conditions on the cross. He purchased our salvation and grants to us what we cannot earn, achieve or even believe. In the gospel Jesus continually pointed out the inability of people's own faith.

The Gift of Faith

It is wonderful that God should make the condition of salvation a gift. He sets a condition on salvation, which is faith, but knowing that we are dead in sins we cannot meet that righteous condition, He grants that faith to us as a gift, so He may be the Author of our salvation.

Are there conditions to salvation? Yes, but God, knowing our bankruptcy, meets those conditions for us. This is what *salvation* means. It is total. This is what grace means, not that He *helps* those who meet the condition, but He provides for the condition Himself. This is the gospel.

For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. (Eph 2:8).

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus...to give repentance...(Acts 5:30-31).

He gives repentance by turning the heart with resurrection faith. Here is the orthodox Christian teaching, that faith is God's gift, by which we are regenerated. It is not of ourselves, so we may not

boast. No person in heaven has any boast in being there. "God has dealt to each man the measure of faith." (Rom 12:3). This means each man in Christ.

"Salvation"

Salvation means what it says. It is not partial. It does not mean that God helps those who help themselves, or God does His part and we do our part. Salvation does not mean assistance. God is not our assistant. He is our Saviour.

There was an advertisement on television where a man was lost on an island. He saw a boat passing in the sea. So he struggled to get enough stones to make a large sign on the sand saying "HELP". He sweated and worked hard and finally had the sign ready before the boat passed. The people on the boat saw the sign and came near the island. The man swam quickly out to meet the boat half way. The people then put out an arm and pulled the man into the boat and so he was rescued.

To many that is salvation. They have quite a considerable part in it. On this advertisement the man was quite pleased with himself. He was smart. He was industrious. He put a lot of effort into the venture. He was a good swimmer. In fact without his effort he would not have been *saved*. The boat was just the vessel that carried him away. This is self-righteousness.

For some, salvation is like a man drowning in the sea and calling out for help. God passes in a boat and throws out a life-float and says, "If you can hang onto that you will be saved". So we reach out and grab it and so are saved. We are saved so long as we can hold it. The float is not holding us. It is up to us to hold the float, or perish.

The gospel is instead like this: The man is not struggling on the sea, but has already drowned and perished. He is on the ocean floor thousands of feet down in utter darkness and encased in concrete. There is absolutely nothing he can do. He does not even know that he has perished. He is too spiritually dead to know his condition, let alone call out for help.

He is "dead in trespasses and sins...without God and without hope." (Eph 2:1, 12).

It is "on the sea bed", in the death of trespasses and sins, that the grace of God finds us and regenerates us, makes us alive and raises us up, above principalities and powers and sits us down in Christ in heavenly places. It is entirely an act of God. We have no part in it. We did not contribute to it. It was not a mutual agreement of equal parties. We have no self-righteousness in it. None.

We do not seek Christ first. He came "to seek and to save those which are lost" (Luke 19:10). I was not seeking Christ. I was rebelling. So were you. That was our natural heart. Salvation is God overcoming our rebellion by His grace. We remember walking down a village road with an elderly uneducated Ugandan woman who said to us, "I did not find God, He found me.". This is how richly the gospel is appreciated when we first believe.

While someone is trying to do something they will not get saved. God saves those who come to the end of themselves, who cannot help themselves. He saves those who cannot believe. He then takes over and does it Himself by implanting the faith in us. If we want to save a man from drowning, we wait until he gives up the fight, or he will struggle too much and pull us under the water as well.

God saves the sinner. He does not meet the *half-righteous* in the middle.

Salvation is of such importance that God did it Himself. We made such a mess of it under the Old Covenant that God said, "I will have to do this without any assistance from man, *to make it sure*. This is something I will entrust entirely to My Son from beginning to end.". This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we really think about it, it cannot be any other way, unless we really do not know our self.

Parts

Salvation is not “God does His part and you do yours”. How could that work? That is the Old Covenant and it did not work. This is why God brought in the New Covenant. Salvation is not “God did His part by sending Jesus to die for our sins and we do our part by responding, accepting, believing and consecrating ourselves.”.

Salvation has two parts. These are:

1. “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us.” (Col 2:14). This is the cross.
2. “You are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead.” (Col 2:12). This is the believing part. He implanted His faith in us by the operation of the same power through which He raised Christ from the dead.

God clearly does both parts. The scenario of *God’s part/our part* was the case of the Old Testament. Joshua said to Israel, “God brought you out of Egypt, *now you* must serve Him.”. They all said, “We will serve the Lord.”. Joshua answered, “You *cannot* serve the Lord.” (Josh 24:19).

They were not saved within. They were only saved from Egypt. Joshua was correct. They could not serve the Lord. What is the answer? Is it more seriousness, more consecration, or more effort? Or is it new birth? The answer is the promise of God, “I will put My Spirit within you and I will give you a new heart.” (Ezek 36:26-27).

He sent Jesus to die for our sins. He raised up Jesus to sit at His right hand. He sent the Holy Spirit to implant faith in our heart, to bring us into sonship. God takes care of the whole process of salvation from start to finish. This is why it works. These are the *better promises* of the New Covenant. That is why Jesus is the “surety” of our faith. This is the only way man in his depravity can be saved.

The jailer asked Paul, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”. Paul answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house.” (Acts 16:30-31). There is no doubt that it was the Holy Spirit who provided the jailer with the heart to believe. Genuine salvation faith is Christ in you. “And they spoke to him the word of the Lord and to all in his house.” (Acts 16:33).

We can and should be exhorted to believe, but the faith to believe must and does come from *His fullness*. “Of His fullness have we all received and grace for grace.” (John 1:16). This is the gospel. Jesus is the author and finisher of the whole thing. There is no other gospel than this. It is Him.

This sometimes appears as a contradiction to other verses in scripture: “The Bible instructs us to hold fast, be not moved, hang onto the *life-float*, be immovable.”. Yes, the word of God instructs all these things of God’s people. And believers are to do all these things. But we do it by the power of the faith of God within us, which He gives to us freely and there is no other power that can do this.

No Help

Nebuchadnezzar is a good picture of salvation. He was lost, eating grass with the cattle. His mind was gone and his body was covered in hair like a beast. His state was helpless. There was nothing he could have done for himself. He even was unaware of his need. This is a picture of fallen man, dead in trespasses and sins. This is the depravity of man when common grace is lifted from him. This is man *handed over* by God.

But when God’s time came, He reached into Nebuchadnezzar and changed his heart and mind. Nebuchadnezzar played no part in this. It was entirely an act of grace. It is totally remarkable how God could take a wicked king such as Nebuchadnezzar and change him into a trophy of His grace. In

the Old Testament God changed hearts and turned them towards Him, but this was not the new birth, which was kept for the New Covenant.

To show that we do not help God in the new birth, Sarah conceived Isaac when she was past the age of contribution, her womb as good as dead. It was Abraham's attempt to help God fulfil His promise (Ishmael) that did not help at all. Mary also conceived as a virgin. This is all through the scripture. The axe head that floated, to recover the debt the disciple owed, shows the depth of depravity from which God takes us without human agency (2 Kings 6:5).

Of God are you in Christ Jesus

The scripture consistently says God is the one who puts us into Christ, or who puts us into faith. It is not us who do it. He is the baptizer into faith. Faith joins us to Christ and it is God who deposits this faith. Faith fuses us into the Vine. Faith is the power by which we abide. Faith is His life and Spirit within. Just a few of these texts follow:

Who are born not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, *but of God*. (John 1:13).

But *of Him* are you in Christ Jesus...(1 Cor 1:30).

For we are *His workmanship, created* in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:10).

Being confident of this very thing, that *He which has begun* a good work in you will perform it (complete it) until the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil 1:6).

For unto you *it is given* on the behalf of Christ, not only *to believe* on Him... (Phil 1:29).

For it is *God who works in you* both to will and to do of His good pleasure. (Phil 2:13).

...you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Col 2:12).

This is not our faith in God's operation, but His faith, the faith that God implants through His miracle and operation in us when He gives us birth into Christ. He, who raised Christ from the dead, also raises us into life by the same power.

Looking to Jesus *the author* and finisher of our faith... (Heb 12:2).

It is plain in scripture that Jesus authors the faith by which we believe. His life imparts the faith that justifies and sanctifies. There can be no faith in God, faith that pleases God, faith that mixes with God's word, without it being created in us by the operation of God's Spirit in new birth. Faith does not precede salvation, it accompanies salvation. We can believe the gospel with human repentance, but Christ alone brings living faith.

Does Hebrews 11 exhort people to have faith? Does it speak of the necessity of faith to please God? Does scripture point out the bankruptcy of those who do not have faith? Yes, absolutely. But it points us to Jesus, the Son of God, to have that faith. The answer is "looking unto Jesus."

Fruits of Salvation

Jesus told the Pharisees not to worry about the fruit, but to make the tree good (Matt 12:33). He said the tree bears fruit naturally, according to the type of tree it is. He said the Pharisees bore bad fruit

because they were bad trees. It was their nature. The answer was a new nature, a new birth, a new tree.

Jesus said the same thing about fasting. He said no man puts new wine into old wine skins. Jesus did not come for us to add more works, but that He might give a new heart. It is not patching old religious skins. A new heart is zealous for good works, not works of religion, but works of love and life. It is He who works in us (Eph 2:10). When someone is born of God there are evidences. Some of these evidences are listed here, not in a particular order, but all these happen simultaneously as Christ comes in.

1. The revelation of Christ comes into the heart. The veil that hides Christ is taken away by the Spirit of liberty. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." We believe in our heart that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead (Rom 10:9). All that Christ is in the New Covenant opens to our understanding.
2. Faith comes into the heart (Rom 10:6-10) and remains, abides.
3. Love comes into the heart. This is God's love, not ours, just as the source of the faith is God also (Rom 5:5). God's faith works through His love.
4. The power of sin is destroyed. The old nature is crucified and buried and we are raised up with Christ. The power of sin over our life is instantaneously broken by faith (Rom 6:4-14).
5. Legalism is vanquished. We are no longer under the law, but live by a relationship with Christ through grace. Liberty comes immediately with the new birth (Rom 7:4, 2 Cor 3:6).
6. Love for the brethren. "We know we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren", the church (1 John 3:14, 5:1-3).
7. An opening of the word of God. The word of God comes alive. Faith that all the scripture is true, from creation to the redemption of Jesus Christ is natural to the new heart (2 Cor 3:16-18).
8. "Desiring the sincere milk of the word of God that we may grow thereby", comes naturally into the new heart (1 Pet 2:2). It is not a discipline. It is natural for us to desire to learn from the scriptures.
9. Prayer, not as a discipline or a new religious rule to follow, but a relationship that flows naturally from the new heart. We "receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father." (Rom 8:15).
10. We are filled with the Spirit of God. His power and life fills us at new birth. This means His gifts (faith, wisdom, healings, etc.) will be manifested, not by our will, but by His will. We have the inner witness of the Spirit (Rom 8:9).
11. There is fruit that immediately begins to flow from the new life. Repentance becomes complete, not the hesitant repentance when we are first drawn to God, but the power of God that transforms the life and turns it totally towards God (1John 2:3-6).
12. A dropping of culture, distaste for culture when it is contrary to the will of Jesus Christ. We become a disciple of Jesus Christ. We say with Peter "You alone have the words of eternal life, to where else shall we go", so we follow the word of God and not the traditions of man (John 6:68).

13. We overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5).
14. We are persecuted. The world does not love the faith of Jesus Christ, or the Father. If the world loves us, then we are not born again.
15. Victory over curses and Satan. This occurs at the new birth, when we are raised up in Christ in heavenly places far above principalities and powers (Eph 1:20-23, 2:6). Spiritual warfare is accomplished (a finished work) in the new birth.

All this comes as *one gift* in Christ when we are born again. It is His life within us. It is not achieved by any works on our part. No works we do add one cubit to it. This does not mean that we will walk perfectly as soon as we are born again. If we trip, we get up. We walk and then we run. There is still natural growth in God.

If we say the new birth is minimal in its impact and we have to do all the growing after that, then we miss the power of the gospel. If we say that there is no growth after being born again then we condemn ourselves for failure. We should neither neglect the power of the gospel, nor walk in arrogance as though we were perfect. It is by the power of the gospel message that we grow in Christ.

Faith

Looking through the Gospels we see faith in action in people's lives. Grace operated in the Old Covenant, prefiguring the New Covenant and the Spirit moved upon people giving faith. People came to Jesus in the face of opposition. They did not give up or turn back, but pressed through the crowds to touch Him. We touch Him from within, knowing His great compassion.

The woman with the issue of blood said, "If I can touch the hem of His garment I know I shall be healed." Even though she was unclean by Jewish Law she was not deterred. Jesus turned to her and said, "Be of good comfort, your faith has made you whole." (Matt 9:22). We press through religious mindsets, putting them aside for the knowledge of Christ.

Blind Bartimaeus called out, "Son of David", when he heard Jesus going by (Mark 10:46). The disciples discouraged him, but he cried all the louder. When Jesus called him He asked, "What do you want?". He was not offended, but answered boldly. Four friends carried the lame man to Jesus to be healed. When they could not get through to Jesus they took tiles off the roof and lowered the man down to Jesus. Jesus "saw their faith" (Mark 2:5).

A Gentile woman came to Jesus for healing for her daughter and at first Jesus put her off, calling her a dog, but still the woman was not discouraged (Matt 15:28). She held onto Jesus and received what she came for. The Gentile soldier came and said, "Speak Your word only and I know my servant shall be healed.". Jesus marvelled at his faith and healed his servant (Matt 8:8).

In each case we see faith demonstrated in the face of contrary circumstances. In each case the people involved would not give up or take "No" for an answer. They would not be discouraged and took risks to get through to where Jesus was, to get His attention. Faith is action. It takes risks, trusting the Lord. People who have faith move, at the right time. Faith that lacks zeal dishonours God.

In each of these cases the faith of the people glorified God. It was not a limp, hesitant faith, unsure of the Master's compassion or ability. If they lacked faith they found that in the Master there was faith. The Lord did not commend them for their character, their holiness, their education, their skill, their achievements, their race, their gender, their riches or their religion. The only quality was they recognised Jesus and knew that He would help.

The thief on the cross was forgiven by faith. The harlot Rahab was taken into Israel by faith. The Gentile Ruth became an ancestor of Jesus, Son of David, by faith. David the shepherd boy slew the giant and became king of Israel by faith. Jesus received every one without respect for persons. It is not a matter of how right we are. It is our confidence in Him that justifies us.

All of these were in the Old Covenant. In the New Covenant we are told to come boldly before the throne of grace that we might obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:16). Our boldness comes from our faithful High Priest, Jesus Christ, who knows the feeling of our infirmity. Our boldness of faith is found in Jesus Christ, never in our own merits. We have faith through grace.

Faith never gives up. It is the same as love. Neither gives up. Faith and love work together, one energizes the other. Jesus gives faith to all that call upon Him. Hosea was told to take back his wayward wife (Hos 3), because God calls those "who were not a people", "the children of God" (Hos 2:23). This faith is given to every person born of God.

When Christ comes into a person He comes with faith. The question is what are we doing with it? Faith is our talent, "To everyone is dealt a measure of faith" (Rom 12:3). What we do with that is a responsibility we have. In the new birth we all have a talent of faith with which to serve God.

We do not choose of our self what we will do, but we have a calling in God. He has a purpose for our life and He directs us in His path. But inactivity, hesitancy, doubt and fear are overcome by the faith He gives and we make full use of our lives as talents in His kingdom. We have been given talents to produce. God has given us our life as a talent, giving the wonderful grace of being a co-worker with Him.

Some buried their talent because of fear of risk (Matt 25:25). But we have not received the spirit of fear, but of love and of power and a sound mind (2 Tim 1:7). Faith does not mean we will not make mistakes. Those who are doing something are more certain to make mistakes than others. But by faith we do not succumb to fear of mistakes. We move on, knowing that God is good and His fruit is sure.

Faith is not positive thinking. It knows that there is a good God. It is not faith in self-ability, but in a God who is kind and faithful and who accommodates our faults. It is not a formula or method, but is deposited in us through our union with Jesus Christ. Faith is not confidence in faith, or in our confession, in our religious observance, or in healing, or in any other object, but confidence in God Himself. God does not guarantee us a particular outcome, but does guarantee us victory in Christ.

Faith is not seeking experiences. We do not need a balance between academics and experience. They both must agree: the word and the Spirit. Reformed theology was about the living faith of Christ. Genuine Pentecostalism is about the living faith of Christ. When the two movements are both biblical and Spirit empowered, they are one movement. Faith is the source of experience. Experience is not the source of faith.

The seeking of experience is cultism. Moves of God like Azusa Street have been influenced by it. "We walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor 5:7). Faith does not say, "Who shall bring Christ down from above?". It says, "The word (Christ) is in my heart, in my mouth." (Rom 10:1-8). *Faith comes by hearing*, not by seeking spirits or angels. It does not say, "I need Christ to die for me again, I need something more." It says, "Christ was once offered and it's done. By His power I believe and therefore speak!" (2 Cor 4:13).

Abraham considered not his body, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb, but grew strong in faith giving glory to God, being fully persuaded that what God promised He was able to do (Rom 4:17-22). Caleb said, "We are well able to take the land" and later in life said, "Give me this mountain". The men that

worked with David were like this (2 Sam 23:8-39). Today, God works in our heart and gives faith to serve Him and bear much fruit and so prove to be His disciples.

Prayer works with faith. Prayer does not and cannot produce faith, but is the exercise of faith in a relationship with our Father and Jesus Christ. Prayer should be heart-felt. It should move our whole soul, spirit and body. In prayer we lay hold of the promises that God speaks into our heart by His Spirit. Faith prayer is Spirit empowered praise and leads to corresponding action, even before we see the promise.

Faith is being a co-worker with God, in the new birth as a son. It builds determination into our character, by which we lay hold of the purpose of God in Christ. Prayer comes with patience, because God is sometimes instant, but He also said we should be instant in and out of season. God is the rich rewarder of those who call upon Him. He makes all things beautiful in His time.

Faith is looking to Jesus, the author, the one who speaks, and the finisher (intercessor, surety) of our faith. We do not copy faith. We must *have* faith. Faith has nothing to do with the economy or conditions around us, as Abraham proved. Speaking of the fire that would come upon Jerusalem after John the Baptist came, Malachi said those who fear the Lord would come out as fatted calves (Mal 4:2). The smell of smoke will not even cling to our garments (Dan 3:27).

God uses seasons, such as weather, agricultural and economic seasons, to alter powers in the world as He works out His purposes. They are inevitable. He distinguishes between Egypt and His people in Goshen, by the faith He puts within us. This is not advocating fatalism, an unscientific approach to world problems, but faith. Jesus said, "Have *the faith of God*...That whosoever shall say to this mountain..." (Mark 11:22-23). This faith comes by every word that proceeds *from the mouth of God* (Matt 4:4).

In times of trial God makes a difference between those He knows and those He does not know, by the faith He gives: "Then shall you return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between he who serves God and he who does not serve Him." (Mal 3:16-4:3).

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed (unstable). For let not that man think that he will receive anything of the Lord...And the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up... (James 1:6-7, 5:15).

The faith walk pleases God (Heb 11:6). We call things that we do not see as though they were (Rom 4:17). Faith is the evidence of things we do not see and are assured of (Heb 11:1). We walk in faith because it pleases God, not because we will always have the results the way we think. We know that God will be faithful and good.