

Doctrinal Outlines

SALVATION -- HOW GOD WILL RESCUE MAN!

I. Introduction

- A. "Save me!" shouted the little boy. Wind-whipped lake waters had just capsized his small sailboat, and he was in peril of drowning.
- B. And the boy was saved, by the skills of a quick-thinking lifeguard.
- C. Yes, this little boy knew that he needed saving, but today a lot of adults aren't quite so sure about whether they need to be saved, at least not spiritually. They don't even know what salvation is, let alone whether they need it.
- D. Therefore, they stand in potential peril far more terrifying than the little boy above did. They stand in peril of not obtaining eternal life!
- E. This must not happen to you. You must understand the Bible doctrine of salvation.

II. The Basic Doctrine

- A. Salvation is God's rescue of man from eternal death, which man has earned by sin, to the safety of eternal life at Jesus Christ's return.
- B. Salvation is a process made possible by the life and death of Christ.

III. The Usual Teachings of This World

- A. Often it is taught that salvation is the saving of man from ever-burning hell fire to eternal bliss as an angel in heaven.
- B. Others believe that our salvation is totally, absolutely and completely guaranteed at baptism, and that once baptized you are forever saved (or, as it may be stated, "once saved, always saved").
- C. Still others don't even require baptism, but teach that if a believer will just "give his heart to the Lord" or call upon or profess Christ's name, he will be saved.
- D. Some equate being saved with being "born again."

E. But what is the truth? What does the Bible say?

IV. The Bible Teaching

- A. To begin, even a simple dictionary definition of the word salvation reveals that to save someone means to rescue him from some sort of evil or undesired fate.
- B. But in the case of our Christian calling, we must ask, what is it that we are saved from, and why? Further, we must find out how we are saved, and when, and by whom.
- C. It doesn't take much thought to see that man's greatest enemy is death!
1. Ecclesiastes 9:5 says, "The living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten."
 2. Paul adds in I Corinthians 15:26, "The last enemy that will be destroyed is death."
- D. And why do we die?
1. The Bible records, simply, that death (that is, the second death -- death with no hope of life again) is the penalty for sin, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).
 2. The Bible further states that into the world came "death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).
- E. Thus we need to be saved from death because of sin, just like the little boy needed to be saved from death because of drowning. See also Romans 7:13 and James 1:15.
- F. This truth -- that death is the penalty of sin -- will shock those who have been falsely taught that the wages of sin is eternal life in a forever burning hell fire. Such teachings are untrue!
- G. But if salvation means being saved from death, to what are we saved? Romans 6:23 supplies more of the answer when it says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- H. Hence we are saved, logically, from death to life -- to eternal life! Yet other scriptures go on to show that this eternal life is not eternal physical life, but spiritual life.

- I. Notice I Corinthians 15, especially verses 12 to 58. The whole point of the last part of this chapter is to show that saved man is composed of spirit and not flesh, and has eternal life.
- J. In that light, Paul, speaking of the change that one who is saved goes through, from flesh to spirit, states that one starts out with a physical body, but at the resurrection "is raised a spiritual body" (verse 44).
- K. Other verses show that our level of existence will not be merely that of angels, but that our bodies will be transformed so they conform "to His [Christ's] glorious body" (Philippians 3:21), and that we will be members of God's own Family (I John 3:1-2, John 1:2-13).
- L. But understand this: Nowhere does the Bible promise heaven as salvation. Instead, it says no man has ascended to heaven except Christ (John 3:13), and specifically includes even righteous David among those not in heaven (Acts 2:34).
- M. But how does God save man? The wages of sin is death. Therefore for God to save man requires that He remove this penalty by forgiving sin, and further, that He replace man's nature with a new nature that will not sin.
- N. Numerous verses prove beyond all doubt that the forgiveness of sin is possible because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Virtually every Christian denomination would agree with that statement.
 1. Acts 2:38 states that all (because all are sinners) must repent and be baptized in an outward show of the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for our sins.
 2. Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13 make clear that salvation requires one to believe in the sacrifice of Christ and all it entails.
 3. Romans 5:10 states plainly that we are justified from our sins through the sacrifice of Christ, and then saved by His life.
 4. Ephesians 2:8 tells us that salvation is not something we earn, but a gift of grace from God, through faith in Christ.
- O. It should be obvious that our salvation is accomplished finally only at the resurrection, when our mortal bodies are changed into immortal bodies with eternal life as God's sons.

- P. Yet many in traditional Christianity persist in the notion that once a person is baptized, or once a person has at least "accepted" Christ verbally or called upon the name of the Lord, that he is now saved (Romans 10:13). Clearly, this is not the teaching of the Bible. None of us is yet finally saved or lost!
- Q. Numerous verses prove that one can be disqualified from eternal life even after baptism or professing Christ.
1. Christ plainly taught that only "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). Therefore salvation is in the future -- after the end of a person's life -- and requires enduring during this life.
 2. Paul himself confirmed that it was possible even for him to lose out on salvation, saying he fought to keep himself under spiritual subjection to Christ, "lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (I Corinthians 9:27).
- Certainly he did not teach that we are saved now, nor did he teach that we cannot lose out on salvation no matter what we do.
- R. Thus the so-called "once saved, always saved" teaching evaporates! Those who believe such misconceptions usually do so based on an incorrect understanding of some Bible verses.
1. They, for instance, look to Acts 2:21 or Romans 10:13, which both state, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."
 2. See also John 1:12.
- S. They take these verses to mean that all one must do is make some sort of verbal profession of acceptance of Christ -- either publicly, as in a tent meeting, or perhaps privately to oneself -- to have fulfilled all the requirements of Christianity for all time!
- T. But the Bible shows what it means to call upon the Lord -- that it takes knowledge, understanding, obedience, overcoming, faith and enduring.
- U. Even as the saving of a drowning victim has certain stages (such as the throwing of the life buoy, the victim's reaching for it, his being towed in and, finally, his reaching dry land), so also is salvation a process begun with repentance, baptism and forgiveness of sin, continuing through a life of overcoming and culminating at the resurrection.

- V. But it is only then, at the resurrection, that we can say we are truly "saved" in the final sense.
- W. To be fair, however, we must look finally at II Timothy 1:9 and Titus 3:5, which both state that God has saved us. In light of what we have already proven, it is clear what Paul means.
- X. Those on the road to salvation are in a special category -- they are the saved as opposed to the lost. Paul phrased these statements this way not because our salvation is now complete, totally assured or perfected (for remember, Paul himself stated that even he could fall away and lose out), but because our salvation is sure if we continue faithfully in the category God has called us to.

V. Key Verses

Here are some verses to remember about this important subject:

- A. Romans 6:23 -- we are doomed to die because of sin, but can have eternal life if saved.
- B. I Corinthians 15:12-58 -- eternal life comes through a change from a mortal body to a spiritual, immortal body at the resurrection.
- C. Acts 2:21, 38 and Romans 10:13 -- to be saved we must profess Christ.
- D. Matthew 10:22 -- to be saved we must endure.
- E. I Corinthians 9:27 -- we can lose out on salvation after baptism.

VI. Conclusion

Whether we are a drowning boy or a man or woman full of years, we all know that we are, apart from God's salvation, doomed to death. But the good news is that our God stands ready to rescue those He calls, who come to Him in obedience for forgiveness, with a cry of "Save me!"

