

### Meditations on Eternal Salvation

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#### Salvation for eternity!

■ In Jesus Christ we have such a great Savior

He became a man like we are and He suffered all the same things that we suffer.—One Who could, having been a man, understand men and help us, and having understood us, become a great mediator between us and God (Hebrews 4:15).

God is the Judge, and we are the criminals.—All of us are sinners, all of us have broken the laws of God. The accuser of the saints, the Devil, is the prosecuting attorney who brings the charges against the criminals. But you have a Defense Lawyer, Jesus Christ, Who pleads your case. And He has the greatest defense of all. He says to the Judge, “I have already paid for this sin. I have already served time for this sin. I have already died for this sin, so he’s free!” If you’re sorry, and you have already pleaded guilty and asked the Judge to forgive you and He has handed you a pardon signed in the blood of Jesus Christ, then the Devil’s got nothing on you, there’s nothing more he can nail you for.

All you have to do is say you’re sorry and thank Him for it, believe it, receive the forgiveness, and then tell others.—That’s how simple the plan of salvation is.

■ Jesus has done it for us

I remember hearing of a young man who went to a pastor in great distress about his spiritual state. He said to the minister, “Sir, can you tell me what I must do to find peace?”

The minister replied, “Young man, you are too late.”

“Oh,” said the young man, “you don’t mean to say I am too late to be saved?”

“Oh, no,” was the reply, “but you are too late to do something. Jesus did everything that needed to be done twenty centuries ago.”

#### Salvation is a gift of grace

■ Why following Jesus’ example is not enough

At the close of a Gospel service, an intelligent-looking man came to the minister and said, “I do not see any necessity for the Blood of Christ in my salvation. I can be saved without believing in His shed Blood.”

“Very well,” said the minister. “How then do you propose to be saved?”

“By following His example,” was the answer. “That is enough for any man.”

“I suppose it is,” said the minister. “And you propose to do just that in your life?”

“I do, and I am sure that is enough.”

“Very well, I am sure that you want to be following right. The Word of God tells us how to do that. I read here concerning Christ, ‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.’ I suppose that you can say that of yourself too?” (1 Peter 2:22).

The man became visibly embarrassed. “Well,” he said, “I cannot say that exactly. I have sometimes sinned.”

“In that case you do not need an Example, but a Savior, and the only way of salvation is by His shed Blood.”

■ Mercy, not justice

A mother sought from Napoleon the pardon of her son. The Emperor said it was the man’s second offence, and justice demanded his death.

"I don't ask for justice," said the mother, "I plead for mercy."

"But," said the Emperor, "he does not deserve mercy."

"Sir," cried the mother, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask."

"Well, then," said the Emperor, "I will have mercy," and her son was saved.

This little incident gives us a good idea of the meaning of mercy. We think of "clemency" as another word for "mercy," but mercy is the "gracious attitude of one who sits in the seat of authority toward one who has given offence by breaking of the law, or by some violation of those canons of conduct which constitute offence." This is at least part of its meaning.

Grace is the unmerited favor of God toward the undeserving. Grace bestows what we do not deserve; mercy does not mete out to us what we deserve.

(Exodus 34:6,7; Micah 6.8; Hebrews 4:16)

#### ■ Another illustration of mercy, not justice

An old fellow was brought to court on serious charges. As court preliminaries were getting under way, it was very evident to the young lawyer handling the case that his client was very uncomfortable and tense. Perhaps it was because of his youth, the lawyer mused. So, in an effort to comfort the man and allay his fears, the young lawyer said, "Charlie, you don't need to be afraid. I'm going to see that you get *justice* in this court today!" A meditative look displaced the hitherto look of fright on the man's face. In measured words, he said, "Young man, it isn't justice that I want in this court today. *It's mercy!*"

### **The Mosaic Law does not save**

#### ■ The Lamb takes away sin

John the Baptist publicly identified Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, 36). This calls to mind the Old Testament sacrificial system. In the sacrifice God accepted the blood of animals as the means of atonement for sin. It is likely that John had many themes from the Old Testament in mind when he called Jesus the Lamb of God. These themes probably included the sin offering (Leviticus 4), the trespass offering (Leviticus 5), the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), and the Passover sacrifice (Exodus 12).

Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb Who was killed for our sake. As it says in Isaiah 53:12b, "He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

### **Jesus' death ended the law and ushered in the era of grace**

#### ■ Jesus paid for our sins

Two men who had been friends in their youth met years later in the police court of a great city. One sat on the judge's bench, the other in the prisoner's dock. Evidence was heard, and the prisoner was found guilty. In consideration of their former friendship, the judge was asked to withhold sentence. "No," he said, "that cannot be. Justice must be done and the law upheld." So he gave sentence: "Fifty dollars fine, or fourteen days at hard labor."

The condemned man had nothing wherewith to pay, so prison was before him. Then the judge, having fulfilled his duty, stepped down beside the prisoner, paid his fine, put his arm about him, and said, "Now, John, you are coming home with me to dinner."

Not even God can overlook sin. He must be faithful and just. But for us the Judge was crucified! Jesus paid the price for our sins! "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!' ... He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (John 1:29; Isaiah 53:12).

#### ■ Justification

A simple way to remember the word "justified" that always stuck with me since I was a boy was when the preacher illustrated how when we're justified by Jesus' blood, it's just-if-I'd never sinned!

He cleansed us from all our sins. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”—past, present, future (1 John.1:7). “Just-if-I’d” never sinned, justified. Really it means it makes you just, righteous, saved!

### **You cannot lose your salvation; once saved, forever saved!**

■ John 3:36 ends all our worries!

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.” You don’t have to wait until you die to find that you’re saved! Once you’ve received Jesus Christ and you have Him in your heart and you love Him and you know Him and you believe on Him as your Savior, there are no ifs, ands, or buts about it! You are a saved child of God! You *have* eternal life right now!—And you are the Lord’s *forever*!

You already have salvation!—And you don’t need to worry about whether or not you are going to lose it or how you are going to manage to stay saved, because eternal salvation by grace means once saved, always saved! Besides, you can’t keep yourself saved any more than you could save yourself in the first place! Only Jesus can do it! So even though you’re not perfect, and you’re bound to make mistakes, God is going to save you anyway! Once you’ve received Jesus, you are completely purified and redeemed in the eyes of God by the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary!—That’s the amazing love of Jesus Christ and the mercy of God! You’re saved right now because God has promised it and God’s Word is true! He cannot go back on His Word!

Salvation is forever! He’s already given it to you and He’s not going to take it back! It’s yours!

■ Not by feelings

Dr. Thomas was a young man Mr. Poole had been talking to night after night, endeavoring to win him to Christ. Nothing he said seemed to cut through the mental fog that blocked the way to a clear understanding of salvation. Finally realizing that the young man’s difficulty was his own inability to “feel” saved, Mr. Poole took a coin, handed it to Dr Thomas, and asked him to put it in his shirt pocket.

“Do you *feel* you’ve got it?” Mr. Poole asked. “No,” replied the young doctor, “I *know* I have.”

“So,” Mr. Poole continued, “we know we have Christ when we accept Him and believe His Word, without feeling it.”

Dr. Thomas testified later, “When I awoke the next morning my soul was overflowing with joy, and since then I have never doubted that it was on that Saturday night I was “born again”—converted to God.”

### **Reflections: Expressions of Devotion to Jesus**

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If I only possessed the grace, good Jesus, to be utterly at one with You! Amidst all the variety of worldly things around me, Lord, the only thing I crave is unity with You. You are all my soul needs. Unite, dear Friend of my heart, this unique little soul of mine to Your perfect goodness. You are all mine; when shall I be Yours? Lord Jesus, my beloved, be the magnet of my heart; clasp, press, unite me for ever to Your sacred heart. You have made me for Yourself; make me one with You. Absorb this tiny drop of life into the ocean of goodness whence it came.

—Francis de Sales, 1567–1622



I love You, O my God, and my only desire is to love You until the last breath of my life. I love You, and I would rather die loving You than live without loving You. I love You, Lord, and the only grace I ask is to love You eternally. My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love You, I want my heart to repeat it to You as often as I draw breath.

—Jean-Baptiste Vianney, Curé d’Ars, 1786–1859

Lord, give us hearts never to forget Thy love; but to dwell therein whatever we do, whether we sleep or wake, live or die, or rise again to the life that is to come. For Thy love is eternal life and everlasting rest; for this is life eternal, to know Thee and Thy infinite goodness. O let its flame never be quenched in our hearts; let it grow and brighten, till our whole souls are glowing and shining with its light and warmth. Be Thou our joy, our hope, our strength and life, our shield and shepherd, our portion for ever. For happy are we if we continue in the love wherewith Thou hast loved us; holy are we when we love Thee steadfastly. Therefore, O Thou, whose name and essence is love, enkindle our hearts, enlighten our understanding, sanctify our wills, and fill all the thoughts of our hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake.

—Johann Arndt, 1555–1621



As I take off my dusty, dirty clothes, let me also be stripped of the sins I have committed this day. I confess, dear Lord, that in so many ways my thoughts and actions have been impure. Now I come before You, naked in body and bare in soul, to be washed clean. Let me rest tonight in Your arms, and so may the dreams that pass through my mind be holy. And let me awake tomorrow, strong and eager to serve You.

—Jakob Boehme, 1575–1624



To me, Jesus is the Life I want to live, the Light I want to reflect, the Way to the Father, the Love I want to express, the Joy I want to share, the Peace I want to sow around me. Jesus is everything to me.

—Mother Theresa, 1910–1998

## Food for Thought: The Resurrection of Jesus

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The resurrection is the pivot on which the Christian faith turns. It has been asked, “How did it come about that a Man, living in a peripheral province of the Roman Empire, leaving virtually no trace in contemporary secular history, writing no book, and dying an ignominious death, has been dominant in human life and thought ever since?”

Of course, we know the answer! Jesus was no mere man, but the Son of God. We know this by faith, yet we can also be encouraged by looking at some of the historical pointers:

### Jesus mentioned in secular history

Outside the Bible, there are several secular writers who make mention of Jesus Christ:

Tacitus—in *Book XV*, Ch.44—writing in A.D.114, tells us that the founder of the Christian religion, Jesus Christ, was put to death by Pontius Pilate in the reign of the Roman emperor, Tiberius.

Pliny the Younger wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan on the subject of Christ and Christians (*Book X*–96).

Josephus, the Jewish historian, in A.D.90, has a short biographical note on “Jesus Who is called Christ” in his *Antiquities*—Book XVIII, Ch.III, Section 3.

The *Babylonian Talmud* makes mention of Jesus Christ.

### Evidence of the crucifixion

The Roman secular historian, Tacitus, writing in his *Annals* (early second century), spoke of the Christians as a “class hated for their abominations.” He said that the name derives from “Christus ... [who] suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate.”

### **What happened next?**

Consider this thought: Something happened between Good Friday (the day of Jesus' crucifixion) and Pentecost (the giving of the Holy Spirit). The demoralization of the disciples, caused by the arrest and execution of their Master, is undeniable. Equally undeniable is the fact that within a short space of time, those same disciples were defying the authorities who had previously seemed so threatening, and they were proclaiming the One who had died disgraced and forsaken, as being both Lord and Christ (God's chosen and anointed one). So great a transformation *had* to have a cause!

### **Can we be sure the resurrection happened?**

The evidence is solid. The tomb was empty and nobody could produce the body. For more than a month after, the disciples kept meeting Jesus alive, always unexpectedly, usually in groups (from two people to five hundred). Hallucinations don't happen that way!

The disciples, for their part, were sure that the risen Christ was no fancy and tirelessly proclaimed His rising in the face of ridicule, persecution and even death.

### **No venerated grave!**

In Matthew 28:11–15 we read how the Jewish elders started to circulate a false story that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body. This story does show that in the first century, even those hostile to Christianity accepted that the tomb had been found empty.

Consider this: There is the complete lack of any evidence of a cult associated with the burial place of Jesus. Ancient Jewish piety was much given to respectful veneration of the tombs of prophets and patriarchs. The total absence of this in the case of Jesus strongly suggests that from the first it was realized that for Him the tomb was an irrelevancy. (Christian interest in the possible burial place only dates from later centuries.)

### **Read about the Resurrection**

☐ John 20:1–18

☐ 1 Corinthians 15:1–28