

“Salvation is of the Lord” – Jonah 2:9

Sermon preached by Fred Phelps, Pastor of Westboro Baptist Church, on May 1, 1960.

The work whereby men are saved from their natural estate of sin and ruin, and are translated into the kingdom of God and made heirs of eternal happiness, is of God, and of him only. "Salvation is of the Lord." To begin, then, at the beginning, the plan of salvation is entirely of God. No human intellect and no created intelligence assisted God in the planning of salvation; he contrived the way, even as he himself carried it out. Charles Spurgeon once said: "The plan of salvation was devised before the existence of angels. Before the day-star flung its ray across the darkness, when as yet the unnavigated ether had not been fanned by the wing of the seraph, and when the solemnity of silence had never been disturbed by the song of angel, God had devised a way whereby he might save man, whom he foresaw would fall." And, God devised it, because without God it could not have been devised. It is a plan too splendid to have been the product of any mind except of that mind which afterward carried it out. "Salvation" then is older than creation; and it is entirely "of the Lord." And as it was of the Lord in the planning of it, so it is of the Lord in the execution of it. No one has helped to provide salvation; God has done it all himself. The banquet of mercy is served up by one host; and that host is he to whom the cattle on a thousand hills belong. And none have contributed any dainties to that royal banquet; he bath done it all himself.

The royal bath of mercy, wherein black souls are washed, was filled with the veins of Jesus; and not a drop was contributed by any other being. He died upon the cross, and as an expiator he died alone. No blood of martyrs mingled with that stream; and no blood of noble confessors and of heroes of the cross entered into the river of atonement; that is filled entirely from the veins of Christ, and from nowhere else beside. He hath done it all; atonement is the unaided work of Jesus. So far, my friends, we're probably all agreed: but now we shall have to separate a bit, when I assert that "Salvation is of the Lord" in the application of it, too. "No," says the Arminian, "it is not; salvation is of the Lord, inasmuch as he does all for man that he can do; but there is something that man must do, which if he does not do, he must perish." And, that is the Arminian way of salvation. In England, there is a window in Carisbrooke castle, in which King Charles was kept prisoner, and out of which he tried to escape. Everything was provided for this escape; his followers had means at the bottom of the wall to enable him to fly across the country, and on the coast they had their boats lying ready for his escape. But here was the important circumstance: his friends had done all they could; he was to do the rest; but that doing the rest was just the point and brunt of the whole matter. It was to get out of the window, and down the wall, and he was not able to escape by any means, so that all his friends did for him went for nothing, so far as effecting his escape. And, so it is with the sinner. If God had provided every means of escape, and only required the sinner to get out of his dungeon, he would have remained there to all eternity. Why, is not the sinner by nature dead in

sin? And if God requires him to make himself alive, and then afterward God will do the rest for him, then verily, my friends, we are not so much obliged to God as we had thought; for if he requires so much as that of us, and we can do it, then we can do the rest without his assistance, too. The Roman Catholics have an extraordinary miracle of their own about St. Dennis, of whom they tell the lying legend that after his head was cut off he took it up in his hands and walked with it two thousand miles. Someone has well said, "So far as the two thousand miles go, that is nothing at all; it is only the very first step that St. Dennis took holding his head in his hands where there is any difficulty at all." And, so I believe, if that is taken, all the rest can be easily accomplished. And if God does require of the sinner—who is dead in sin—that he should take the first step, as the Arminians preach, then he requireth just that which renders salvation as impossible under the gospel as ever it was under the law, seeing man is as unable to believe as he is to obey, and is just as much without power to come to Christ as he is without power to go to heaven without Christ. The power must be given to him of the Holy Spirit. He lieth dead in sin; the Spirit must quicken him. He is bound hand and foot and fettered by transgression; the Spirit must cut his bonds, and then he can escape from the window, and make good his escape afterward; but unless the first thing be done for him, he must perish as surely under the gospel as he would have done under the law. I would cease to preach, my friends, if I believed that God, in the matter of salvation, required anything whatever of man which he himself had not also engaged to furnish. When I come to preach am I to believe

that men are to do something before God's Spirit will or can operate upon them? If so, I should come with a faint heart, feeling that I never could induce them anyone to believe the truth and be saved. But now I come to this microphone and to the pulpit of our little Church with a sure confidence—that God the Holy Spirit will, sooner or later, compel every one of the sheep into the fold. They are by nature as bad as they can be; and they have no desire to be otherwise; but God by and by will put a new thought into their hearts; he will give them new desires, new wishes, and new wills; and those who hated Christ will desire to love him; and those who once loved sin, by God's divine Spirit, will be made to hate it; and here is my confidence, that what they cannot do, in that they are weak through the flesh, God sending his Spirit into their hearts will do for them, and so they shall be saved. Well then, says one, that will make people sit still and fold their arms. Sir, it will not. But if men did so I could not help it; my business is not to prove to you the reasonableness of any truth, nor to defend any truth from its consequences; all I do here, and I mean to keep to it, is just to assert the truth, because it is in the Bible. "Salvation is of the Lord." The Lord has to apply it, to make the unwilling willing, to make the ungodly godly, and bring the vile rebel to the feet of Jesus, or else salvation will never be accomplished. Leave that thing undone, and you have broken the link of the chain, the very link which was just necessary to its integrity. Take away the fact that God begins the good work, and that he sends us what the old divines call prevenient grace—I say take that away, and you have spoiled the whole of salvation; you have just taken the key-stone out of the ark, and down it tumbles.

There is nothing left. And then "Salvation is of the Lord," in sustaining of the work in the Christian's heart. When a man is made a child of God he does not have a stock of grace given to him with which to go on forever, but he has grace for that day; and he must have grace for the next day, and grace for the next, and the next, until days shall end, or else the beginning shall be of no avail. As a man does not make himself spiritually alive, so neither can he keep himself so. I do verily believe that if it should be my lot to put my foot upon the golden threshold of Paradise, and put this thumb upon the pearly latch, I should never cross the threshold unless I had grace given me to take the last step whereby I might enter heaven. No man of himself, even when converted, hath any power, except as that power is daily, constantly, and perpetually infused into him by the Spirit. But Christians often get quite independent; they get a little stock of grace in hand, and they say, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved." But ah! It is not long before the manna begins to be putrid. It was only meant to be the manna for the day, and we have kept it for the morrow, and therefore it fails us. We must have fresh grace.

**"For day by day the manna fell;
O to learn that lesson well."**

So look day by day for fresh grace. Frequently too the Christian wants to have grace enough for a month vouchsafed to him in one moment. "O!" he says, "what a host of troubles I have coming—how shall I meet them all? O! that

I had grace enough to bear me through them all!" "My dear friends, you will have grace enough for your troubles, as they come one by one. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be;" but thy strength shall never be as thy months, or thy weeks. Thou shalt have thy strength as thou hast thy bread. "Give us this day our daily bread." Give us this day our daily grace. But why is it you will be troubling yourself about the things of tomorrow? When a trouble comes, attack it, and down with it, and master it ; but do not begin now to forestall your woes. "Ah! but I have so many," says one. Therefore say, do not look further before thee than thou needest. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Do as the brave Grecian did, who, when he defended his country from Persia, did not go into the plains to fight, but stood in the narrow pass of Thermopylae; there, when the myriads came to him, they had to come one by one, and he felled them to the earth. Had he ventured into the plain he would have been soon devoured, and his handful would have been melted like a drop of dew in the sea. But, stand in the narrow pass of today, dear friend, and fight your troubles one by one; but do not rush into the plains of tomorrow, for there thou wilt be routed and killed. And, as the evil is sufficient so will the grace be. For "Salvation is of the Lord." But, lastly, upon this point, let me say that *the ultimate* perfection of salvation is of the Lord. Soon, very soon, the saints upon earth shall be saints in light; their hairs of snowy age shall be crowned with perpetual joy and everlasting youth; their eyes now suffused with tears shall be made bright as stars, never to be clouded again by sorrow; their hearts that tremble now are to be made joyous and fast, and

set for ever like pillars in the temple of God. Their follies, their burdens, their griefs, their woes, are soon to be over; sin is to be slain, corruption is to be removed, and a heaven of spotless purity and of unmingled peace is to be theirs forever. But it must still be by grace. As was the foundation such must the top-stone be; that which laid on earth the first beginning must lay in heaven the top-most stone. And, as they were redeemed from their filthy behavior by grace, and grace alone, so they must be redeemed from death and the grave by that same grace too, and they must enter heaven singing:

**"Salvation is of the Lord alone;
Grace is a shoreless sea."**

There may be Arminians here, my friends, but they will not be Arminians there; they may here say, "It is of the will of the flesh," but in heaven they shall not think so. Here they may ascribe some little to the creature; but there they shall cast their crowns at the Redeemer's feet, and acknowledge that he did it all. Here they may sometimes look a little at themselves, and boast somewhat of their own strength; but there, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us," shall be sung with deeper sincerity and with more profound emphasis than they have ever been sung here below. In heaven, when grace shall have done its work, this truth shall stand out in blazing letters of gold, "Salvation is of the Lord."

In 1831, William H. Bathurst wrote these words:

**O, for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe!**

**That will not murmur nor complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But, in the hour of grief or pain,
Will lean upon its God.**

**A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt.**

**That bears, unmoved, the world's dread frown
Nor heeds its scornful smile;
That seas of trouble cannot drown,
Nor Satan's arts beguile.**

**Lord, give us such a faith as this,
And then, whate'er may come,
We'll taste, e'en here, the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home.**

**And, now, "peace be to the brethren, and love with faith,
from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with
all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."
(Ephesians 6:23-24). I love you. Amen.**