

THE PRIVILEGE OF GOD'S SALVATION (I Cor. 2:10-16)

2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom [*Amp. in lofty words of eloquence or human philosophy*], declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear [*dread*], and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 [*So*] That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men [*human philosophy*], but in the power of God. 6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect [*spiritually mature*]: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory [*to lift us into the glory of His presence*]: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed [*unveiled*] them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God [*the divine counsels and things hidden and beyond man's scrutiny*]. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? (*i.e. only the person him/herself knows what is going on in their mind*) even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the [*Holy*] spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth (*or can understand*), but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural [*non-spiritual, unsaved*] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness [*meaningless nonsense*] unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned [*he is incapable of knowing and understanding them*]. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth [*examines, investigates, inquires into*] all things, yet he himself is judged of no man (*because no earthly-minded person has the ability to judge as God judges*). 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

There is nothing so precious as knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. That powerful personal knowledge permeates into every aspect of our lives. Over these next four Sundays we are going to consider five aspects of God's Salvation. It is a subject you could never study often enough ... and when you know God's Salvation you never want to add any of man's latest innovations.

As Pearl and I stood on the Mount of Olives and looked over Jerusalem we couldn't help but try to understand even to a small degree the burden

on the heart of the Lord Jesus as He surveyed the city, [Mt. 23:37](#) [O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!](#)

We stood with a group of tourists who had absolutely no comprehension of why Jesus came to this earth. We were being led by an excellent Jewish guide who knew all the history, and all the facts *about* Jesus ... but he stubbornly refused to accept those facts personally.

A few days previously, we stood in the largest mosque in Cairo and listened to the Muslim guide tell us Christianity and Islam worship the same God, and we have so much in common ... and you could tell by the expressions on the faces that the people were 'taking it all in'. They had not a clue about true religion, - the relationship Christ came to this earth to establish.

When I was a young boy many of my good friends and neighbours were Roman Catholic. I remember being in their chapel for funeral services and watching their form of worship; I remember being at their wakes and seeing the candles burn round the coffin and reading the prayers to the Virgin Mary and to the various saints regarding the soul of the departed.

In our own Protestant faith many have journeyed so far away from the Reformation truths that the Christianity of the Bible has been lost in the mists of man's empty philosophies.

You look around you this morning and you see just a few people ... The numbers in our churches in the United Kingdom and throughout Europe are dwindling and we are told we are a dying breed. But, my Saviour and Lord assures me, - and my confidence is in what *He* says, - [Mt. 16:18](#) [I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.](#)

Believer, this morning I trust the Holy Spirit will empty our minds of all things else and that He would cause us to consider again the depth of the great truth of **The PRIVILEGE of God's Salvation.**

THIS PRIVILEGE DETERMINES OUR COURSE (DIRECTION)

* This privilege is founded on the basis of God's plan and purpose, [v.7](#) [But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which](#)

God ordained before the world unto our glory ... 9 the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

* Paul describes God's salvation as a mystery, what does Paul mean when he uses the term 'mystery'? ... As you can imagine, it describes something that is hidden, secret, something that is not open to the understanding of all.

* In a very special way, the Gospel is such a *mystery*. It makes no sense to the unsaved that the Second Person of the Godhead should die in the place of sinners. "The Gospel cannot depend upon something so unbelievable!" ... You see, the Gospel makes no sense to the mind which is not illuminated and awakened by the light of the Holy Spirit.

* It is the mystery, said Paul, Col. 1:26 even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

* The mystery of God's salvation is hidden to the unsaved, - they cannot understand it nor take it in; it makes no sense to them. It is like you are speaking a foreign unknown language.

* Worldly, secular wisdom cannot grasp its meaning; the greatest educational and purely human intellectual minds are confused by it for it is something beyond the understanding of this world.

* Where did this mystery originate? ... Did it originate in Nazareth? Or with Paul? With the Apostles? ... No, this mystery originated in eternity for it was ordained *all* of God. He had determined it long before the worlds were created ... in eternity.

* It is a mystery that originated in the perfect and infallible mind of God, - it did not begin with theologians, it did not begin at the Reformation, and neither did it begin with the Apostles ... but it began wholly and completely with God.

* Paul was not setting out to be rude or insulting when he wrote, v.8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. He was simply stating pure fact.

* The Roman Caesar and the Roman Governor, the Jewish rulers and Sanhedrin knew nothing of it. A few weeks ago I listened to Tony Benn and another commentator speak about a particular religious issue and they were so far off the mark as far as the Bible is concerned ... because the deep things of God are a *mystery* to the unsaved ... no matter how clever and respected these people are in their own field.

* And it is a mystery that can only be revealed by God as He chooses, as Paul quotes from Is. 64:4, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have

entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

* Such expectation caused Isaiah to cry out, 25:9 Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. ... These are issues that lie outside the sphere of human ability to comprehend. We cannot boast we have discovered this truth, apart from the Holy Spirit showing it to us in His Word.

* Only as God reveals these great *mysteries* through His Word can His people come to understand them.

* And surely the greatest mystery of all is the one that touches each individual believer so intimately, - the mystery of God's salvation; v.10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.

* The Spirit of God comes from God, the Spirit of God is God. Holy men spoke of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, II Pet. 1:21 ... The apostles spoke by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, - He taught them, He gave them utterance. The great truths were revealed to Paul by God through the Holy Spirit, v.12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the [*Holy*] spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth (*or can understand*), but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

* These are not from the mind of man, - not even just from someone like Paul! They are as a consequence of the Holy Spirit speaking.

* It is a dangerous route many take in the church nowadays when they well-meaningly say, "This is what I believe". I hear so many people justifying their doctrines using such a statement ... which is so fraught with opening up their minds to error. What you believe, - no matter how sincerely you believe it, - could be so dangerously wrong!

* Paul speaks about tradition. Now, as Baptists, we shy off from tradition, but there are actually two types of tradition. There is the traditions of men, e.g. Gal. 1:13 ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the *traditions of my fathers*. ... Paul warned any Jew that became a Christian, Col. 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after *the tradition of men*.

* There is also the 'traditions' of the New Testament Church, and they are altogether different, - traditions that had not lasted as long as the traditions of the Hebrew Fathers, - but the traditions of the New

Testament Church encapsulated the true teachings of God. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, II Thess. 2:15, Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

* He emphasised the importance of these New Testament traditions, II Thess. 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and *not after the tradition which he received of us*. There is a clear command to stay away from ecumenism and all false attempts at our Christian faith!

* You see, we *have* traditions relating to our Christian Faith and as a Baptist, I understand these *traditions* to be clearly defined in our own *Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)*, which is faithful to the whole counsel of the Word of God. I do not set the Confession on an equal par with God's Word, but I understand it to be subordinate to the Truth God's Word teaches.

* Therefore tradition is not harmful; tradition is necessary when it is Biblical, and tradition that is of God is the bedrock of the Church of God.

* Such Biblical tradition, however, remains a mystery to the unsaved, - it is 'lost' on them, because they cannot understand it.

* Therefore, this same privilege that belongs uniquely to the people of God determines our course in following after God for this salvation which is all of God is the only salvation that has His Divine guidance, His protection and His seal of approval.

* It is a mystery of Sovereign Grace that God's salvation determines the work of redemption He has applied and continues to apply upon His own Redeemed and blood-bought people. ... **this privilege determines our course ...**

THIS PRIVILEGE DETERMINES OUR CONDUCT (BEHAVIOUR)

* Paul instructed these believers that their salvation in Christ needed no *garnishing* by human skill or eloquence, - God does not need man's wisdom and intellect to improve His salvation.

* Firstly, God's salvation is perfect and needs no improvement ... and secondly, man is the created and has no right to dictate to the Creator how things could be done better!

* The minds of the greatest intellects, - even within the Christian arena, - are no match for the Spirit of God. Nowadays we have people within Christendom 'queuing up' to tell you how to improve on Biblical instructions. The Bible needs to be updated and brought into the 21st century!

- * But then we must ask ... Has God not kept up-to-date? Has God fallen behind? Is He out of kilter with His Church?!
- * No, God does not change ... and neither do His ways change. They do not need to be updated ... The children do not need to come to their Heavenly Father and tell Him we must modernise or become extinct!
- * God's ways are still the only ways that command His blessing ... **The privilege of His salvation determines our conduct.** God does not change, and neither ought our understanding of Him change!
- * What He expected of His people two hundred years ago, - or one hundred years ago, - He still expects of His people today. Our conduct as believers is not determined by the developments in society, our conduct is instead determined by the privilege of being sons and daughters of the Most High and Everlasting God Who gives clear instruction in His Word as to how we should conduct ourselves.
- * It doesn't matter how the world has 'moved on', - it accepts all sorts of things the Bible condemns, - the instructions of God's Word remains the same ... *true to its Author.*
- * It doesn't even matter how many in the so-called higher echelons of the Church pontificate, - God's Word is perfect, it is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). Its instructions are clear and its purpose is to lead us home safely to God, God's way.
- * Indeed, a Christian's conduct and behaviour is governed by the Word of God and our adherence to it is the proof of our standing in Him ... **the privilege of His salvation.** ... I Jn. 1:6 *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*
- * It governs your walk with God and it governs your walk with your fellow-believer. ... In fact, if you cannot get on with your fellow-believer who you *can* see, how on earth can you possibly hope to get on with God Who you *cannot* see! It turns out to be a mere delusion.
- * As a child of God we all have the same privilege, we are all saved the same way, we are all indebted to the same Saviour and Lord, we are all going to the same Heaven, entering in through the same door, and it took the same capacity of the blood of Christ to save us from the penalty of our sin.
- * ... And so, **the privilege of God's salvation determines our course and determines our conduct** ... Finally, ...

THIS PRIVILEGE DETERMINES OUR CONCLUSION

* What keeps a person 'saved' is nothing less than the work of God in our salvation. You and I have known people who have started out well, they were completely taken up by their new faith; they were enthusiastic, they loved Jesus, they were at all the meetings, and they were a joy to be with. ... But where are they today?

* Jesus said, Mt. 5:13 if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? ... Many who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost (Heb. 6:4) but they have fallen away. The things of God hold no attraction to them any longer.

* You see, it is not merely how you start out in the race that tells the whole story of whether or not true grace has been applied... **The privilege of God's salvation** causes the athlete to maintain to run faithfully and unstintingly to the finishing line, Phil. 3:13 this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

* Along the route all sorts of obstacles try to trip you up, including many other runners who have sneaked onto the racecourse ... Paul wrote about them too, Phil. 3:18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

* They are runners in the race who have not started at the beginning but have climbed 'over the fence'. They have neither started at the right place and they will not finish at the right place either! ... v.14 the natural [*non-spiritual, unsaved*] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness [*meaningless nonsense*] unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned [*he is incapable of knowing and understanding them*].

* They might 'wear the garb', 'talk the talk', and even manage for a while to 'walk the walk' but they will never reach the 'finishing line' because it is neither in them to persevere sufficiently and neither do they have the preservation of God to keep them.

* The truths of God elude them, they are foolishness to them, Jn. 1:5 the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

* On the other hand, the true child of God in whose life God has worked salvation savours the things of God and the truths associated with Him. They love God's Word. They love spending time in God's company and among God's people.

- * They are on a different plain; they are not bound by imagination, but they enjoy the freedom of knowing Christ. Jesus is not a stranger, but a Friend. He is not beyond them, but with them.
- * Whereas the unsaved can never grasp the correct understanding of life with God, the Redeemed know Him personally, [v.16 who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.](#)
- * Paul declared to Timothy, [II Tim. 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.](#)
- * So you see, it is not just how you start in the Christian life, it is how you continue and how you finish, - **the privilege of God's salvation determines our conclusion.**

CONCLUSION

- * Have you started yet? Is there anyone in our meeting for whom this great truth of **the Privilege of God's Salvation** continues to be an incomprehensible mystery?
- * ... You have not turned to God and asked for the blood of His perfect Son to cleanse you completely from your sin?
- * Christ is still a stranger ... but the Bible invites you, [Rom. 10:13 whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.](#)
- * Salvation is within your grasp, just reach out and believe.
- * Christian, what a privilege it is to be saved! What a privilege to know your sins forgiven, your place is reserved in Heaven, and you are a child of the Heavenly King ... a prince for whom the Son of the King gave His life.
- * He gave for you ... Have you given Him all? ... You are not holding back anything, are you? You are not holding back from Him your time, or your commitment, your money, your health and strength ... you are not holding anything back from Him, are you?
- * Give to Him everything and He will return to you more than you could ever imagine. ... I'm not meaning an over-loaded bank account or a fancy home, but I am meaning peace with God and a contentment the world knows nothing about.
- * What a conclusion Paul brings us to, [v.16 who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.](#)
- * ... **The Privilege of God's Salvation.**

THIS PRIVILEGE DETERMINES OUR DIRECTION

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* Was it by accident that you were born where you would come into contact with the Gospel of Saving Grace? Was it simply because of your father and mother that you were born in a land where the Gospel is freely available? ... Was it merely 'good luck' that all things worked together that has brought you in here today?

* No, these things do not apply to God. You were not born in outer Mongolia or in the jungles of Africa simply because it was the direction of God for your life that you would be born in a land where the Gospel would be heard.

* Believer, God brought you to the place where you would believe and He opened your heart up *to* believe, and He drew you with those mighty arms of lovingkindness into the Kingdom. The Psalmist declared, [Ps. 139:16](#) Your eyes saw my unformed substance, and in Your Book all the days [of my life] were written before they ever took shape, when as yet there was none of them.

* If you are *not* a believer yet, - if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, - I trust and believe He has a purpose for you coming along to our meetings ... and He has privileged you would hearing His Gospel.

* You might not understand all that there is to understand about it; you might not fully understand why He died on the cross, and you might not understand why God, - the beautiful and wonderful and perfect God of Heaven, - ever sent His Son to this world because of His love for you!

* ... But each and every one of us here today has come under **the privilege of God's salvation**.

* God loves you, and even before your mother or your father held you in their arms ... God loved you. He sent His Son to die on the cross of Calvary because He loved you.

* Long before you ever gave Him a single thought He had His mind set upon you ... and He has you in this place today because He determines your course.

* How do I know I am saved? Is it because I am a Minister? ... No, sadly that has no guarantees. Is it because I read my Bible? No, that has no guarantees either. ... How then do I know I am saved?

* I am saved only by believing that Jesus Christ died on the cross for me and he took all my sins away forever, - all my past sins, all my present sins, and all the sins I shall commit. [The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, I Jn. 1:7](#) ... and so **this privilege determines our course.**

* A Christian is different to a non-Christian ... how? Well, first of all, a Christian has been 'born again', a Christian has new life, a Christian is no longer 'dead in sin' but alive in Christ!

* The difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is the difference between life and death! It is the difference between one who follows God the devil and one who doesn't.

* Ah ... and the heckles on the back of the neck might be beginning to rise ... are you saying that because I don't actively follow God I follow the devil?! I am a good person, I am not a murderer or a rapist or a child molester ... *I don't follow the devil!*

* Well then, who do you follow ... because Christ says you either follow one or the other?

* Do you follow God? Are you a Christian? Have you believed in Christ to have your sins forgiven? Have you repented of your sin? ... Well, no, not when you put it like that!

* ... Well, - not 'to put too fine a point on it', - Christ put it like this when He spoke to some of the most religious men in the country, [Jn. 8:43](#) [Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44](#) [Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. ... 45](#) [And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.](#)

* When you become a Christian you become a follower, - a disciple, - of God. *He takes over your life.* He determines your conduct. He makes changes to 'fall into line' with what He expects from His privileged children.

* When we read and study His Word we come to

* He drew me and I followed on. He leadeth me