

THE POWER OF GOD'S SALVATION (Acts 26:1-23)

One of the most powerful weapons in the armoury of the believer is the testimony they have of what Christ has done in their lives. People can do their best to argue away our doctrines, but they cannot deny us our personal experience of Saving Grace that God has applied to our souls.

God's salvation took a rascal like John Newton and placed in his heart Amazing Grace. He took a man like Martin Luther out of idolatry and superstition and wonderfully saved him ... Luther wrote, "Put thou thy trust in God; In duty's path go on; Fix on His Word thy steadfast eye, So shall thy work be done".

Last week we were considering **The Privilege of God's Salvation**, and we honed in on how **this privilege determines our course, our conduct, and our conclusion**. ... It is often not until something is *done* to you that you realise its magnitude. When you first became a believer you were rightly filled with a great feeling of how God has loved you so much that He came to save you. Then after the initial period, - as you begin to 'settle', and God's Word becomes more precious to you, - it opens up to you the body of sound doctrine that shows you what lay behind His work *in* saving you, i.e. how He saved you.

At this point I feel it necessary to say I reject totally any gospel that presents man being able, - of himself, - to attribute one single morsel to his own salvation. Salvation is all of God, ... from its beginning in eternity, throughout the expanse of time, and continuing in eternity when time has been completed.

Let's consider together, then, **THE POWER OF GOD'S SALVATION** ... and we shall use Paul's testimony before King Agrippa as the basis of our study. ... First of all, **the power of God's salvation** is ...

THE BASIS OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY

- * "Kill Paul" was the cry of the Jewish leaders to the civil authorities. "Get rid of this man who is polluting the faith by his preaching about Jesus of Nazareth!"
- * Porcius Festus was the new governor who succeeded Pontius Pilate, and he was a better man because he wanted to try to do things right.
- * However, that is always easier in theory than it is in practice because the Jews kept 'nipping' at him to do something about Paul, i.e. kill him!

* Festus wanted to, - and he needed to, - be careful. He went 'up to' Jerusalem to be confronted with the Jews' request and then he brought the Jewish leaders 'down' to Caesarea (Acts 25:1-6). It did not really work though the way Festus wanted it to work because in the midst of the proceedings Paul 'threw a spanner in the works', 25:10 I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. 11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. **I appeal unto Caesar.**

* As it happened, - in the plan and will of God, - King Agrippa and his wife Bernice came on a state visit to Festus in Caesarea (King Herod Agrippa II was great-grandson of the Herod who tried to kill Jesus as a baby). Festus saw this as the perfect opportunity to introduce the problem of Paul and 'pass the buck' into Agrippa's domain.

* It is so amazing that a small little character like Paul, - just an ordinary man, - was the centre of attention in Caesarea, he was the centre of Satan's attention too, and of course he was also the centre of the attention of God.

* It is interesting to trace the ambition of the devil throughout Scripture, - he has always focussed on one thing, i.e. since God said in Gen. 3:15 I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel he has been determined to erect every barrier to the work of God on this earth.

* He provoked the nations to seek to destroy the people of Israel. When he saw he could not make that happen, he polluted the religion of the Israelites and spoiled their relationship with God. When he could not completely do that either, - because God always keeps a remnant unto Himself, - the devil tried to use the Jewish leaders to silence Jesus. ... And yet, even with Jesus 'gone', his problem still remained ... because a group of people were still talking about Him!!

* The devil's ambition has always been against Christ ... and he remains today with that focus in view as he continues to 'set his sights' firmly upon the Church.

* What keeps the Church, - the born-again, redeemed people, - going? Surely it is the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst convincing us that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord!

* Why did Paul stand before these men? He stood before them because he saw it as yet another opportunity to preach Christ crucified.

* It did not matter they were men of importance and authority ... what was pumping within his heart was the truth upon which he stood, [I Cor. 9:16 necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!](#)

* He began by telling his audience where he had come from, - his credentials were second to none! The Jewish leaders identified with his childhood and upbringing, - each one of them would have gone through a similar experience. They were all 'groomed' the same way in the faith.

* How proud each of them were at their *bar mitzvah*; how proud each of them were when they entered the Jewish university and graduated to become a member of the strictest of Jewish orders. ... *Paul had been there too!*

* They knew where Paul had come from and could identify with how he was reared. Furthermore, Saul of Tarsus was one of the most virulent persecutors of false religion, and he even persecuted, - aye even giving agreement to the killing of Christians! ... *How could he possibly have changed so much?!!* He was as they were now!

* On one of his trips he was walking along a particular road with his mind filled with hatred and what he was going to do to these Christians ... when he had a meeting with Someone he had not intended to meet.

* He remembered, [v.13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven](#). The midday sun was hot ... but not hot enough to make Paul rest in the shade and hold him back from chasing those Christians!

* The light was supernatural for it was the glory of God revealed from Heaven, and it actually blinded Paul. Only a fool would look straight into the sun, and Paul was no fool ... but yet this supernatural light, - it was not the s-u-n, - shone into his eyes, - that was how God worked it!

* Yes, it blinded him ... but yet in another way, - blinded as he was, he *saw* it was Jesus meeting with him because the light was nothing less than the glory of God!

* And then he told his listeners, [v.14 I heard a voice speaking unto me ... as clear as crystal](#). Jesus Christ spoke to him personally, - the others only heard a noise, but Saul of Tarsus heard the voice of Jesus!

* Paul told Agrippa and Bernice and Festus and all the others of how Jesus spoke directly to him ... they continued to keep quiet and to listen as he related to them God's call of salvation and God's call to service.

* When God calls you to be saved His voice is the only voice you hear. You do not hear the clamouring of the world, you do not hear its busyness, or its objections ... when God calls you to be saved you hear no other voice but the irresistible voice of the Almighty God.

* “He speaks and the sound of his voice is so sweet” ... “My hardened heart was touched; Thy pardoning voice I heard; ... A sinner saved by grace When Thy sweet message came.”

* Saul of Tarsus was on his way to Damascus to confront the believers ... but on his way *he* was *confronted* by God’s grace! ... Such is **the power of God’s salvation!**

* Did you ‘idle into’ being saved? Was it a notion you took? ... No, not if you are truly saved. God placed His eternal love upon your soul and sealed it with the eternal seal of His salvation and God worked in your heart the work he carried out in the heart of Saul of Tarsus, - you are saved with the same grace, - the same salvation, - God took to save him! ... “Not the labour of my hands Can fulfill Thy law’s demands; Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow, All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone”.

* There is no salvation from sin outside of God’s salvation. There is no power that saves from sin except **the power of God’s salvation.**

* All other attempts rise out of the perverse, corrupt and fallen heart of man and can never save a single soul. It took Christ on the cross to lay down His own precious life to be your Substitute for the price of your sin to be met eternally.

* Religion does not save, reading your Bible of itself does not save, neither does saying a prayer at the end of the evening, - only Christ is **the power of God’s salvation** to save from sin and nothing or no-one else!

* Paul had not been expecting to meet Jesus ... but Jesus had it all planned, *even from eternity!* He had it planned the very day Saul would go to Damascus, He had it planned the very spot where they would meet, at the exact time, and how Saul would respond. God had it all planned.

* ... God had it all planned that this Saul of Tarsus would lose his religion and gain the relationship with Jesus Christ. ... He lost his religion and God granted him salvation! ... At that very moment the blind persecutor saw the risen Christ!

* He discovered in a single moment the wretchedness and unrighteousness of his soul and he needed the righteousness of Christ.

* As Paul’s hearers listened, the thoughts would have been going round in their heads. The Pharisees would have been seething, - the smoke of anger would have been coming out of their ears that Paul was being allowed to say all this.

* Festus was simply amazed at Paul’s wild imagination, v.24 *Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.*

- * And Agrippa, ... he was listening so intently, so much so that he was heard to say to Paul, [v.28 Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.](#)
- * Friends, I must emphasise that I can persuade no-one to be saved, - that is beyond my capability for not one single word of mine can bring life into a dead soul ... *only God can do that!* No clever words, no clever arguments can awaken that which is dead ... It needs Christ to come to the door of the tomb of your heart and cry out *your* name for you to be saved.
- * Church membership does not do it, neither does baptism ... only the voice of God awakens the dead.
- * I have spent most of our time concentrating on **the basis of personal testimony** ... perhaps now we ought to move on and emphasise ...

THE BOAST OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY

- * It is God alone that saves. In just the same way that He came to find Saul of Tarsus God came to you ... and He found you, believer.
- * He may have found you in a church meeting, or at home, or at work ... or maybe even in a pub or a dance club, there is no barrier to where the Lord finds the sinner ... the Shepherd finds His sheep.
- * God found Saul on his way to do a job and God stopped him and even when Saul could not see with his eyes, Saul saw God with the sight He gave him on that day, - the spiritual sight he needed to see Jesus!
- * From that day, God led Saul into Caesarea, his eyes were open ... and his new life had begun, - he was born again of the Holy Spirit of God, he was a new creation in Christ, the old life had gone and God had made all things new ... God even gave him a new name.
- * God gave him a new direction in life. He gave him new friends and a new job. He gave him boldness to stand in front of the most influential people who mocked and beat him and laughed at him.
- * Looking King Agrippa straight in the eye, he told him, [v.19 I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision](#), and in the strength and **power of God's salvation** he went on to tell him, [v.22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.](#)
- * Nothing saved Paul but God's salvation, and nothing was keeping Paul but God's salvation so that Paul could write to the Corinthians, [I Cor. 1:31 He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.](#) ... **The Basis of Personal Testimony and the Boast of Personal Testimony.**

CONCLUSION

* When you look back at when you were saved, isn't it amazing what God has done for you? His Son died on the cross for you, the Holy Spirit arrested you and led you to the door of God's salvation. He gave you that energy within to lift up your hand and open the door and to walk in to accept Christ as your Saviour and Lord.

* So therefore, it is all of God that you boast. He called you, He brought you along, He saved you ... Ps. 34:2 My soul shall make her boast in the Lord ... 3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. ... Eph. 2:8 by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

* To those of you who stubbornly continue to reject God's salvation ... when the day of God's judgement comes, what will you have to put in its place? How will you plead? Will you plead you didn't know? Will you plead you always meant to? Will you plead you attended a church and sometimes prayed?

* Listen and pay attention please to the words of the hymnwriter ... "My faith has found a resting place, Not in device or creed; I trust the ever living One, His wounds for me shall plead. ... I need no other argument, I need no other plea, It is enough that Jesus died, And that He died for me."

* ... There is no substitute for Christ dying on the cross. If you believe that He died for you, then He took away your sin on that day at Calvary.

* He is looking on you today and He loves you; He is calling to you, Mt. 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

* He knows all about your sin, He sees into your heart, He knows how you are grappling with the things of this world and the claims of the Gospel, and He calls upon you to accept Him as Saviour and Lord.

* He is here today. Joel 2:32 whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call ... Acts 2:21 whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

* True saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is **The Basis of Personal Testimony** and our **Boast of Personal Testimony** so I urge you to trust today in no-one or nothing else but in **the power of God's perfect salvation**.