

Saving Others at the Expense of Self.

Sermon preached before the N. S. Central Association at Mahone, June, 1905, by Rev. H. B. Smith.

Matt. 27:42.—"He saved others; himself he cannot save."

After his unjust trial, Jesus was scourged after the manner of a slave, treated as one of the lowest and most despised of mankind, and delivered by Pilate, as judge, into the hands of Roman soldiers who nailed Him to the cross. The cross was then erected, and it dropped into the hole prepared for it with a thud causing the most excruciating pain. While Jesus was in this position pouring out His life to redeem and save the world, the chief priests gave expression to the text, "He saved others; himself he cannot save."

His friends and enemies were there. His friends, as Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, James' and John's mother and John, were there in loving sympathy. No doubt but what their presence helped Him to bear His agonies. He knew the motive of those hearts, the language of those tears, the significance of those emotions. The heart of His Father was in sympathy, for He sent an angel to comfort Him in His distress. Did His friends know the intent of His suffering? Did they not hear from His own lips that He must be crucified and the third day rise from the dead? Was not Mary acting on her own advice when she said to the servants at the marriage at Cana of Galilee, "Whatsoever He saith to you, do it." As they were to lovingly submit to the dictates of His will, so He must do His Father's bidding. Not only was the presence of His friends cheering to Him, but their consciousness that He was suffering to redeem the world, in harmony with His Father's will, was comforting to them.

But His enemies, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders and the robbers, were there to mock and hurl reproach upon Him. They were there to make His disgrace as complete as possible, to add to His shame, and increase and intensify His suffering, and even His Father, by the withdrawal of His presence, made Him feel the world's burden so keenly that He exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It always has been and always will be that the man who sacrifices himself for the uplifting of others will have his heart-felt sympathizers; and, on the other hand, there will be those who will forcibly impress upon him that such a sacrifice is quite unnecessary and worthless.

These words were spoken by the chief priests not for the purpose of ascribing to Jesus the power and glory of saving men, but they were hurled at Him as cruel, cutting irony. They did not mean that He had saved men, or could or would save men, but that He only "pretended" to save them. But the words they uttered as severe sarcasm and as a cruel gibe were infallibly true. Many true sayings have come from unhallowed sources. Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man"; his wife said, "This is a just person"; Voltaire said, "Christianity is in the twilight." He meant the evening twilight of its existence, but some one has said it is the "morning twilight." Voltaire again said, "The church must go"; he meant that it must go to the wall, must go down and under. But the church has been "going" for nineteen hundred years, going into all parts of the world, carrying the blessed news of Christ crucified, and will continue to "go" until the end of the age.

It was true He saved others. He had saved the paralytic to whom He said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He saved the woman at the well; He saved Mary, Saul, Nicodemus, and the blind beggar. But He saved no one without an effort. In the act of saving others He always took the unsaved element out of men and put into them the essence of His own being. When Christ takes the worst element out of men, He replaces it with something infinitely better. When Jesus saved the woman who had been ill for twelve years, He took from her the diseased element and put within her the virtue of His own life. Wherever Jesus went and whatever He performed He left the impress of His thought and energy. And thus it is today that he who saves others cannot save himself, but must put his thought and energy into the lives and affairs of men.

But Jesus was tempted to save Himself. He was conscious of innate power. He had calmed the waves on blue Galilee; He had given vision to sightless eyes, restored the withered hand, and raised the sick and dead. What a temptation to use that power now and come down from the cross. What a career of ease and luxury He could have enjoyed. He could have turned the stones into bread instead of eating with publicans and sinners. He could have had houses and lands and downy pillows instead of "no place to lay His head." He could have wrung the changes from the people instead of "going about doing good." He could have lived a life free from all care instead of having the salvation of the world resting upon Him. He could have sat upon thrones, and nations would have bowed at His feet instead of being nailed by soldiers to the cross, and dying amid the scoffings and insults of the Jewish nation.

But to save others He could not save Himself; so the temptation to a life of ease and luxury was promptly crushed. While Jesus, with full purpose of soul, was putting His life's blood into the "cleansing wave," the chief priests thought that He was absolutely under their control, and that He possessed no

power to free Himself from their grasp and come down from the cross. They misjudged their man. They were unmindful of what Jesus said the night He was apprehended in Gethsemane. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53). If Jesus had summoned the legions of angels to His assistance, and had come down from the cross and saved Himself, the world today would be plunged into hopeless despair.

I.—All Men need saving.—Christ has a people that He will save from their sins. He is able and willing to save even to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. He possesses saving and keeping power, for "all power is given unto Him." Its a power that works successfully upon the hearts of men. "The same Divine Power that has transformed 'one' can renew and transform 'all.' The same sun that lights the eye of an Englishman can light the eye of all men. "The world has a common ground in Christ. Here our hearts and hands touch as brothers. In commercial and social life men may have their separate spheres, but in the Kingdom of Christ there is a common throne where all men kneel as brothers of the household of faith.

(a.) Why does man need saving?—Because of his natural unbelief, he is condemned and lost. The carnal mind is enmity to the law of God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The love, thought, purpose and ambition of men need directing. No man can direct himself. As a blind man cannot direct himself, neither can the spiritually blind. The psalmist felt the need of guiding and directing Power in his life when he said, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Salvation brings men into harmonious relations with God, when every desire of the heart and every expression of life are brought into loving sympathy with His will. Two cannot sup together, live together, or walk together unless they are in perfect agreement. Light has no fellowship with darkness. A sinful man would be miserable were he obliged to live with praying people; and a prayerful man would be very uncomfortable were he compelled to abide with profane men. We not only believe that men need saving, but we firmly believe in the "possibility to save. The Word of Life has in embryo all the highest achievements and developments of the Kingdom of Christ. Thus the Word in men will produce large results. The acorn contains in embryo the trunk, branches and leaves; as we plant the acorn we are sure that these things will, according to the laws of growth, be produced. So the Word that contains in embryo great possibilities, when it is sown into the heart, will produce the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

(b.)—He saves men to mould them.—The element of humility is inseparable from a Christ-like life. God cannot mould the unbending will. The metal must first be softened before it can be shaped into symmetrical proportions. The wood must first be steamed before it can be bent to the mould. So the heart must be softened and saved before it can be moulded to the will and design of God. God has high ideals for men; but in order for us to realize them He must first win, and then He can mould our thoughts and purposes in harmony with His will.

(c.) Christ saves men to serve.—It is a great thing to save one's self; and the Gospel is a strong principle if it can only tell a man how he may escape the inevitable results of sin. But the Gospel is the greatest of all benedictions for it saves men to save others. Service has its unlimited results; it strengthens, elevates and broadens one's usefulness. It twice blesses, it blesses him who serves and them whom he serves. Service is triumph, while some one has said, "Idleness is the sepulchre of any man."

(d.) All men are worth saving.—Man is destined to possess an influence. His natural influence is ruinous; but an influence prompted by the Spirit of God is uplifting. When we consider the good that had been done through a godly influence, we readily see that man is worth saving. It was not Saul of Tarsus, but Saul of Tarsus "saved" who wielded such a power for good, bringing men into the Kingdom of God, founding churches and scattering the seed of truth that would fill the earth with righteousness.

Man, though imperfect, is the best and only medium for the truth. Angels would not do; it must be man filled with the Spirit face to face with man. It is impossible for man to perfectly represent the truth. He can possess the Spirit of Truth which is all important, but at his very best he is an imperfect medium marring the truth more or less.

As the sun shines directly upon us how bright and pure it is, but let it shine through a prism, and how it is broken up into its different hues. So if the truth could fall directly upon our ears from the lips of Christ how sweetly would the joy-bells of the Gospel ring; but as it comes through men to men it is broken up into various shades of meaning. As man is God's earthen vessel for the conveyance of the truth he is worth saving, and God has ordained that men will accept the living message from him under one condition that he be "pure." If you were to offer a man nourishing food in an unclean dish it would be rejected, but if it were offered to him in a plain, homely, though pure, dish, he would gladly receive it. So men will not receive the pure truth from an impure man; but let a man be ever so plain, humble, and homely if he is only "pure" men will gladly accept the word of life.

Man is worth saving because he can be made happy. In this man is distinguished from all other of God's creation. The lower animals have their physical appetites in common with man, but he has a spiritual nature to satisfy, and to satisfy this is to make him happy; and, said Stevenson, "A happy man is a better thing to find than a five pound note."

"Unhappiness is the hunger to get,
True happiness is the hunger to give."

The degree of happiness that we can enjoy depends upon how we, through consecrated service, enlarge our receptive powers. There's a comfort, a consolation and a happiness that comes from the indwelling of the truth that cannot possibly come from any other source. Said St. Augustine, "In Cicero and Plato I meet with many things that excite a certain warmth of emotion, but in none of them do I find these words, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' The truth lightens our burdens and cheers our hearts; while the world burdens and crushes. There is a legend which tells us of a tree with symmetrical branches and fair bunches, but whose shook the tree to obtain the fruit found to his sorrow that not fruit descended, but stones to crush. Truth never disappoints in the golden fruit it produces, but he who seeks the tempting fruit of the world becomes its victim.

II. How He saves others.—He saved others by losing Himself, i.e. in suffering and dying in our stead. To save others he could not save Himself. All the energy of His mind and soul and agonies of body were put into His great redemptive work. While the world was thoughtless, He was thinking; while the world was revelling in sin, His soul was exceeding sorrowful; while others were indulging their bodies in pleasures, His body was agonizing and bleeding upon the cross. Because Christ put His thought, soul and life into the way of salvation, we have today the principle of Christianity and the enlargement of the Kingdom of God. But had Christ saved His thought, had He shrunk from suffering, had His soul known no sorrow for humanity, had no tears fallen because of a hardened world, the world today would be lying under condemnation with no avenue of escape.

The same principle that applies to Christ applies to us. We are His followers, and He has left us to carry on the work in His name and in His strength. And how is it that we are to be a blessing to the world? Is it by saving our thought, energy and means? No! but by putting all we have and are into the work. As we are lights, we are to shine; as soldiers, we are to fight; as workmen, we are to labor. This is the seed sowing that brings desired results. As we look about us we see parallels. The man who would make and save his farm cannot do it by saving his thought and energy in idleness and pleasure-seeking, but by putting his thought, strength, himself into it, he makes and saves his farm. It is the man who is unwilling to put himself into his work who fails, but to succeed he must sacrifice himself upon the altar of his business.

And how have our Educational Institutions been saved? And how are they to be saved to subsequent generations? The Baptist denomination of the Maritime Provinces did not secure for our Institutions such progress and development as they have attained through the retaining and saving of its means and strength. The history of this work is too well known to entertain such a thought. A growing need forced itself upon the denomination that a college was an absolute necessity. They said, "Let us rise and build." This sentiment thrilled in hearts of all and energized them with an indomitable spirit to do and dare. Those who had cash invested it in the work; those who had lumber brought it; women spun and knit and sold the fruit of their hard labor, and put the returns into the work. What an inspiring effort! And the putting of their means and strength and thought and prayers into the work was the sacrifice of themselves which has brought our educational work to such high proficiency. And shall our Institutions continue to flourish in the decades to come? Shall they continue to be a strong factor in shaping the destiny of our land? If so, this work of sacrifice must go on and in proportion as we lose ourselves in the work, as we toil and sacrifice and pray, we will make them more efficient to do their part among the Educational Institutions of our country.

And, further, will not this principle apply to Missions? How is it that many weak churches in the Maritime Provinces have been cared for and nursed into a self-sustaining condition which have produced fruit an hundred fold? Was it not that the denomination has not been mindful of saving itself, but possessed a spirit to lose itself in its contributions for the work. But had our denomination endeavored to save itself and closed up its bowels of compassion against the cries of our needy churches, it would have lost its strength and power and spirit as an efficient agency in the extension of our Master's kingdom.

Again, why is it that we have twenty-one mission-aries among the Telugues with a converted membership of about three hundred? Surely this has not been the result of endeavoring to save ourselves as a denomination, for "he that saveth his life shall lose it," but because we were willing to put into the work our earnest endeavor represented by \$50,000 annually,

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